

**A Qualitative Study on the Professional Identity Transformation
of ESOL Teachers in the Asia-Pacific Context**

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Abstract

Despite the growing research on the professional lives of teachers of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) and the established link between social environment and individual professional identity development, a challenge remains in understanding how changing contexts in workplaces and teacher education shape who they are and why they do what they do. Using a qualitative interpretive research approach, this study investigated the lived experiences of 16 mid-to-late-career ESOL teachers working in pathways to university programmes across nine Asia-Pacific countries. This included interpreting the meanings of teachers' beliefs about, roles in, and experiences of professional practice within the global discourse of the TESOL profession. The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors impact their professional identity development. The data, generated through a qualitative survey, individual semi-structured interviews, and artefacts, were analysed thematically using Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases and articulated through the meta-theoretical framework 'identity-in-activity' (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007).

The study's findings show how the ESOL teachers' professional identity is being challenged by the changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their social environment as mediating sources of professional practice, learning, and development. The findings demonstrate the dialectics between *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective and reflexive, proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a workplace culture). Drawing on Vygotsky's legacy and his identification of language as a cultural and psychological tool of mediation, this research proposes a novel model for theorising professional identity transformation by using interrelated units of analysis. The transformation of professional identity, as a dialectical unity of *Belonging* and *Being* in a continuous process of *Becoming*, is expressed through *perezhivanie* as another key theoretical concept and its practical application in dialogic partnerships in

learning for development. In addition, this study theorises the mediation of ESOL teachers' professional identity in the intertwined and non-linear interactions across the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural-historic domains. From a practical perspective, this study potentially establishes new ways for teachers and leaders to support their workplace social infrastructure for professional development, informs the knowledge base of ESOL teacher education, and enhances teachers' practice.

Keywords: professional identity transformation, TESOL, experienced teachers, teacher professionalism, neoliberal contexts, Asia-Pacific, teacher agency, professional development, sociocultural perspective, CHAT, perezhivanie, mediation, language, qualitative methodology

Declaration of Authenticity

I, Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *A Qualitative Study on the Professional Identity Transformation of ESOL Teachers in the Asia-Pacific Context* is no more than 80,000 words in length, including quotes and exclusive tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

Signature



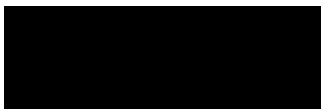
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Ethics Declaration

All research procedures reported in this thesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC), Approval Number: HRE22-013.

Date



05/09/2025

Dedication

To Lev S. Vygotsky, whose legacy has guided this work.

*In every word, there lives another voice,
a thought born not in silence;
meaning is never mine alone.*

*My every struggle, a possibility for growth,
a hope folded into hardship;
now, I am what I have lived,
yet, I know only what I have acted upon.*

(Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska, 28 August 2025)

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List of Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CHT	Cultural-historical Theory
CHAT	Cultural-historical Activity Theory
CoP	Community of Practice
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELTE	English Language Teacher Education
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GE	Global Englishes
GELT	Global Englishes Language Teaching
HE	Higher Education
LTE	Language Teacher Education
LTI	Language Teacher Identity
L2	Second Language
NEAS	National Education Assurance Services
NEST	Native-English-Speaking-Teachers
NNEST	Non-native-English-speaking-teachers

NNS	Non-nativeness
NS	Nativeness
SCT	Sociocultural Theory
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
WE	World Englishes
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

“through others we become ourselves”

(Vygotsky, 1931/1997, p. 105)

1.1. Rationale for this Research

Over the past two decades, the repositioning of the previous notion of teachers as “empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 401) into the current notion of teachers-as-learners, each with their own evolving knowledges, beliefs, values, experiences, and identities, took place, and this move has affected our understanding of what it means to be a teacher, and more importantly, *who* teachers are (Cross, 2020). Since then, teachers, as “agentic social subjects” (Cross, 2020, p. 39), have received significant attention in teacher education research. As a result, this sociocultural shift has been recognised as a critical component in conceptualising and implementing teacher education initiatives with profound implications for teaching practice and continuous professional development (Beauchamp et al., 2017; Freeman, 2018/2020; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Sachs, 2005).

Following the growing research in language teacher identity (LTI) within the broader field of language teacher cognition, research focus shifted on what English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers do, know and believe, how they think and learn, and ultimately, who teachers are, what language teaching is, and how all is mediated by the contexts within which it emerges. While early studies on LTI mainly focused on linguistic identities and the dichotomy between English teachers’ nativeness (NS) and non-nativeness (NNS) (e.g., Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003; Trent, 2012), recent writings have considered the interrelationship between LTI, teacher cognition (Borg, 2006), agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate,

2016) and emotions (Amory & Johnson, 2023; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2016) as instrumental in shaping ESOL teachers' interpretation of their professional lives.

In this sense, constructing and transforming the professional identity during the ESOL teacher education coursework, practicum, and early teaching years has frequently been the focus of such investigations (e.g., Abednia, 2012; Beltman et al., 2015; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024). The transition from pre-service to in-service teaching is a multidimensional, complex, and fluid experience filled with tensions and dilemmas that requires teachers to overcome them by undergoing various qualitative changes, leading to the (re)construction or transformation of their professional identity. As a dialectical process of action and reflection, the pre-service and novice teachers' emerging identity functions as an interpretive frame (Olsen, 2016), which they use to construct and shape their professional knowledge base and orient their present and future professional growth (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017; Johnson, 2009; Yazan, 2017, 2018a).

Although exploring these early experiences of transitioning and teacher learning is valuable for understanding how ESOL teachers construct and transform their professional identity, few studies have investigated the experiences of in-service mid- and late-career ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation (Li & Lai, 2024; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023; Xie & Dong, 2020). Stemming from initiatives promoting 'lifelong learning' proposed by supranational organisations such as UNESCO and OECD in the 1960s and 1970s, the current educational discourse, policy, and practice highlight the importance of continuous learning and development (Biesta, 2009, 2010, 2013). Teachers now must be able to use, evaluate, and extend their knowledge while adjusting to the complexities of the teaching context and the unpredictable nature of their professional lives and roles (Johnson, 2009). Therefore, researchers have called for greater attention and scaffolding to support ESOL teachers' professional identity

transformation, helping them maintain commitment to teaching throughout their careers (e.g., Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023; Xie & Dong, 2020).

In recent studies, researchers have used various conceptual and theoretical frameworks and methodologies to investigate teacher professional identity, cognition, and agency, which, in turn, has led to multiple understandings of the phenomenon of teacher identity (Truong et al., 2025). Beijaard and Meijer (2017, p. 2) saw teachers' selves and their beliefs as sources of their identity work. They argued that developing a teacher identity is not about "internalising and performing externally formulated competencies" but fuelling development by the power of one's inner, personal side within a context in which it is actualised. Extending Freeman's (2002, p. 11) argument that "in teacher education, everything is context" and building on Morgan's (2004, p. 176) description of school places as being not neutral and impossible to "insulate oneself from the social consequences of one's activities" in those spaces, Yazan (2018b, p. 35) claimed that despite being underscored by researchers as significant factors, contexts are imperative to be examined if the aim is to better understand teachers' professional knowledge and their identity development. In a similar vein, Varghese et al. (2005, p. 23) noted that "identity is not context-free but crucially related to social, cultural, and political context", and Beltman et al. (2015, p. 226) accordingly summarised the complexity of the personal and contextual factors' interplay: "identity is shaped by multiple personal and contextual factors; these factors interact in a reciprocal and dynamic way; and so identity is continually reshaped over the life of an individual".

Therefore, if the goal is to understand who ESOL teachers are and who they wish to become within their situated environment, how and why they do what they do in the contexts in which they work, and what kinds of learning opportunities they are willing to create for their students, then it is critical to account for the sociocultural, historical, and political factors of ESOL teachers' professional worlds (Cross, 2020; Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020). Although the impact of context upon practice has long been noted in the literature, still a challenge

remains for English language teacher education research on how to theorise context and systematically investigate its influence on teachers' practice and identity development (Dang & Cross, 2022). Since teachers' practice and cognition shape and are shaped by who they are in relation to their social environment, the dialectical relationship of environment and individual deserves greater attention in English language teaching and teacher education research.

Furthermore, to understand ESOL teachers' professional worlds, we need to look beyond their immediate environment and into the broader political and economic contexts of those worlds. Over the last century, education has undergone dramatic changes. The global market-oriented education movement has driven a lot of what Asia-Pacific countries are implementing in terms of policy, standardisation, assessment, corporate management models, and style (Probert, 2023). With the direction towards 'lifelong learning' with an economic rationale in mind for developing human capital to ensure competitiveness and enhance growth, "the aims and ends of education" (Biesta, 2010, p. 19) have distorted into formal notions of 'quality', 'choice' and 'customer comes first', reinforcing the erosive power of the contemporary culture of measurement upon the democratic potential of education professionals (Biesta, 2020a). The rise of a new culture of accountability and standardisation within the evidence-based approach to education led to a redefinition of key stakeholders' relationships (e.g., between schools/teachers and parents/students) in economic terms and ends (Biesta, 2010), where educational success is seen as quantifiable and measurable through teacher evaluations and student assessments. Additionally, this standardisation paradigm often results in centralised top-down control over curriculum and teaching practice (Hong et al., 2022), shifting schooling priorities towards enhancing efficiency, performance, and competitiveness. Seeking to capitalise on an individual's potential for economic growth, such standardisation practices empower an audit culture (Zhu, 2022) and encourage managerial professionalism (Evetts, 2008, 2009, 2014; Sachs, 2001, 2016).

Within this climate, established during their teacher education courses, ESOL teachers' ideals about good language teaching, their values, beliefs, thoughts, and actions seem secondary to performativity (Hong et al., 2022). Between political-economic thinking and changing TESOL contexts, ESOL teachers' professional identity is being shaped and reshaped in relation to their shifting roles and responsibilities, autonomy in enabling knowledge, and commitment to professional practice and development. At the nexus of that intricate interplay between the multidimensional and dynamic professional identity of the ESOL teachers and the varying education contexts in the Asia-Pacific, conditioned by the neoliberal phenomena of globalisation, massification, and commodification of education, teachers' decisions unfold: Whether and how they will exercise agency and invest in professional practice and development (Yazan & Lindahl, 2020)? What is their professional role and responsibility within the education system? Are they autonomous enablers of knowledge or just employees following employers' values and decisions (Hooley, 2007)?

1.2. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study's overarching aim is to contribute to the current understanding of the understudied area of professional identity of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers in a pathway program or at the university level in the Asia-Pacific context. Its immediate goal was to explore and understand the impact of historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors that enable or constrain ESOL teachers' professional identity by interpreting the meanings teachers attributed to their beliefs about teaching, roles in, and experiences of professional practice. Against this background, the proposed study sought to answer the following main research question:

- How do historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors impact Asia-Pacific ESOL teachers' professional identity?

The following sub-questions were set out as guidelines:

- What do ESOL teachers think about their pedagogical roles within the different contextual levels of their practice, and why do they think that?
- How do ESOL teachers' past professional experiences impact their current commitment to practice?
- What pedagogical practices do ESOL teachers use to manifest and promote their professional identity?

1.3. Significance and Contribution of the Study

This study's sociocultural approach enabled the investigation of the teachers' situated teaching practice concerning the sociocultural, historical, and political macro-structures that constitute the microenterprise of ESOL teachers' professional worlds, i.e., the dialectical relationship between environment and individual. Prior research (e.g., Abednia, 2012; Beltman et al., 2015; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Teng, 2017; Wang, 2021) has extensively pointed out the struggles pre-service and novice ESOL teachers face at the beginning of their teaching careers, and how going through various kinds of qualitative changes leads to their professional identity (re)construction; however, not many studies have explored the dilemmas of professional identity transformation of mid- to late-career ESOL teachers.

To expand this body of knowledge, this study examined the meaning-making of mid- to late-career ESOL teachers' lived experiences working with adult students primarily in a pathway to university program (e.g., EAP) across nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region. To my knowledge, no prior study has employed an interpretative inquiry of larger, multi-country samples from the university TESOL pathway courses in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, this study is significant because it integrates Vygotsky's genetic method with Braun and Clark's thematic analysis, thus bringing together developmental theory and empirical analysis. This data analysis approach views thematic patterns not as static themes, but as dynamic relations

shaped by sociocultural developmental processes, tracing the transformation of teachers' professional identity over time.

The present study contributes to a deeper understanding of who ESOL teachers are as professionals, who they wish to become within their situated environment, how and why they do what they do in their work contexts, and what kinds of learning opportunities they can create for their students. The study highlights how the professional identity of ESOL teachers is shaped by the intertwined and non-linear interactions across the genetic domains, resulting in a socioculturally situated, historically informed activity. It also illustrates the immediate tensions and dilemmas in the ESOL teachers' everyday practice, thus revealing the interplay between the structural (social environment) and agentic (individual) aspects of professional identity transformation. Hence, this study shows how the professional identity of experienced ESOL teachers is being challenged by the changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their environments as mediating sources of professional practice, learning, and development.

Based on the results and drawing on Vygotsky's legacy, this study proposes a novel model for theorising professional identity transformation. Despite the growing interest in teacher professional identity within English language teaching and teacher education research, understanding the concept of professional identity as a mediating activity remains a relatively underexplored research area. Moreover, while prior studies focus mainly on key dimensions of teacher professional identity such as teacher agency, cognition, beliefs, and emotions, these are viewed as elements or aspects that contribute to, but do not fully constitute, the holistic nature of teacher professional identity. Drawing on Vygotsky's distinction between elements and units, it becomes evident that these constructs used in isolation lack the integrative capacity to investigate how ESOL teachers experience, interpret, and react to their sociocultural and political realities in ways that transform their professional identity over time. Therefore, this study contributes to the conceptual and theoretical knowledge by looking at ESOL teachers' professional identity holistically through a cultural-historical and activity-theoretical lens.

In addition, this study responds to the call for greater attention on the subject within the activity system of TESOL and the impact of the expanding sociocultural and political contexts on their practice and professional development (Cross, 2010; Dang & Cross, 2022) by theorising the dialectical process of professional identity transformation in relation to the understanding of what it means to be a good teacher, the ESOL teachers' sense of belonging to the TESOL profession and the workplace culture, and their ongoing becoming a reflective and reflexive, proactive practitioner through professional learning and development. As teacher identity remains an under-investigated area within activity theory (Cross, 2020), this study contributes to the body of knowledge about the role of the activity system in transforming ESOL teachers' professional identity. To place the attention on the subject within the activity system of TESOL and the contextual impacts on their practice and professional development, the study uses Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie* as "the minimal unit of the whole, the organic unity of the personality and the environment as it is represented in its process of development" (Veresov & Fler, 2016, p. 331); thus, it theorises how ESOL teachers' professional identity is mediated by the intertwined and non-linear macro-meso-micro interactions across the genetic domains.

From a practical perspective, this study's results may be useful for informing and rethinking the knowledge base of ESOL teacher education and the direction of teachers' continuous learning and professional development. As teachers are now expected to be able to use, evaluate, and extend their knowledge while adjusting to the complexities of the teaching context and the unpredictable nature of their professional lives (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2016), this study proposes ESOL teachers' engagement in social acts of language as a springboard for teacher collaboration through *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development*, emphasising the role of language as a mediating instrument for enhancing collegiality and democratic professionalism.

Shifting the value of the ESOL teachers' professional identity from its primarily theoretical application in researching teachers' practice and development to a practical

implementation for their learning and development may provide teachers and teacher educators with the necessary resources to support fellow teachers and pre-service teachers, accordingly, to critically (re)consider and actively transform their professional identities in relation to others. If teacher professional identity is to be placed at the centre of teacher education and professional development – by bringing together personal conceptual and practical knowledge – the result will be an empowerment of teachers' role and ownership of practice.

1.4. Theoretical Perspective

This qualitative study employed a meta-theoretical framework of 'identity-in-activity' (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007), incorporating Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory (CHT) and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), to understand the impact of historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors on ESOL teachers' professional identity. While Vygotsky's concept of mediation by cultural artefacts is central to the framework, the approach to studying mediation in terms of its sociocultural and historical perspective on the investigation of human behaviour and development is Vygotsky's genetic method. Drawing on Vygotsky's thesis of human development – based on the dialectic between teachers' microgenetic domain, where teachers' everyday activity occurs, and the broader social, cultural-historical, and political contexts from which the teachers' activity emerges – the microgenetic domain is the foundation for defining who the teacher is in relation to the situated social practices (i.e., activity) of their professional worlds. Here, the dialectical relationship between the individual and their immediate environment is analysed through an activity theory lens.

CHAT adopts a holistic approach by analysing both personal and contextual factors, as well as the changes resulting from their interaction over time and space. It captures how the incorporation of cultural artefacts mediates, enables and even constrains the interaction between the subject and the community (Dang, 2013; Engeström, 1987) and this can reveal the process by which teachers' professional identity is historically, socioculturally, and politically determined. In addition, tools, rules, community, and division of labour are the contextual,

social, and material structures that mediate human agency, which, as “an important element of professional identity” (Beijaard et al., 2004), is the active intention of the teachers to pursue their goals.

As ESOL teachers’ professional identity is seen as an ongoing and complex developmental process of social interactions within changing sociocultural contexts (potentially leading to sociocultural dramatic events), this framework allows insight into the ways teachers use cultural artefacts to mediate their activity, meaning-making, and knowledge negotiation, and thus transform their unique professional identity.

1.5. Research Design

Qualitative methodology was chosen as the most appropriate approach for this study because of its focus on direct lived experiences and meanings (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 287). Considering the research questions’ aim towards obtaining an understanding of participants’ views and experiences in context, a qualitative approach proved to be suitable in providing “an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings” and in investigating “issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviours and actions” (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 288).

Guided by the beliefs provided in the interpretivist and pragmatic paradigm, this study’s broad qualitative research design applied an interpretive logic of inquiry or way of knowing (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Stake, 2010). It is an iterative, recursive, and flexible process focused on understanding people’s meaning-making in context through interpretation. To generate the data, this qualitative study used a multi-method approach that included a qualitative survey, individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, and media data in the form of relevant articles from online TESOL magazines. The generated data were analysed following the six phases of thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) and articulated through the analytical lens of Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory and its related Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a meta-theoretical framework – ‘identity-in-activity’ (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007).

The qualitative interpretive research approach and its power to illuminate people's meanings and actual-world experiences align with the study's goal – to obtain an in-depth understanding of ESOL teachers' meaning-making of their experiences and to investigate how their professional identity is mediated within their contextual spaces. As context dependence and situatedness are integral to qualitative interpretive research, this design was instrumental in studying the interrelationship between the phenomenon and its contexts.

1.6. Thesis Outline

The introductory chapter presented the rationale for the research and highlighted the situatedness of ESOL teachers' practice. It summarised the research study's aims, questions, design, and theoretical framework. Moreover, it considered the possible implications and significance of this study, investigating the impact of historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors on the professional identity of ESOL teachers in the Asia-Pacific region. This chapter also explored the potential contribution to knowledge about ESOL teachers' practices and their connection to learning and transformation of professional identity.

Chapter Two reviews relevant literature across three aspects related to ESOL teachers' practice and professional identity development: the sociocultural and neoliberal turns in educational practice, and the concepts of teacher professionalism and professionalisation linked to the recognition of ESOL teaching as a profession and the ESOL teacher as a professional. This chapter highlights the gaps in the literature and how this study may contribute to new knowledge in ESOL teachers' education, practice, and professional identity transformation.

Chapter Three provides the study's theoretical framework. It outlines the consideration of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory and its related Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a meta-theoretical framework – identity-in-activity – to investigate the dialectical relationship between the historical, sociocultural, and political environment of ESOL teachers' practice and their professional identity transformation. It provides insight into the ways teachers utilise cultural

artefacts to mediate their activity, meaning-making, and knowledge negotiation, thereby reconstructing their unique professional identity.

Chapter Four provides the contextual background for the present study and describes the interpretive logic of inquiry employed in this qualitative study to best address the research questions. It starts with a philosophical discussion of ontological and epistemological priors that informed the research approach. It then describes the research approach by building on the interpretative methodological presuppositions and argumentation, focusing on the goals of understanding people's context-specific, situated meaning-making. The chapter then delves into the aspects of positionality and the relational dimensions of researcher access, extending the discussion into the participants' descriptions and the study's ethical considerations sections. The chapter highlights the iterative and recursive processes and methods of generating and analysing qualitative data, and concludes with a discussion about the study's quality considerations.

Chapter Five reports the study's results. It draws on the theoretical framework and employs an interpretive logic of inquiry to represent the thematically analysed data from the qualitative survey, the interviews, and the artefacts. This chapter underscores how the ESOL teachers' professional identity is shaped by the intertwined and non-linear interactions across the genetic domains, resulting in a socioculturally situated, historically informed activity. It also illustrates the immediate tensions and dilemmas in the ESOL teachers' everyday practice, revealing the interplay between the structural (social environment) and agentic (individual) aspects of professional identity transformation.

Chapter Six brings together, interprets, and discusses the results in light of the reviewed literature. It proposes a novel system of interrelated units for theorising professional identity transformation. Moreover, focusing on the subject within the activity system, it theorises knowledge using Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*. Here, it emphasises professional identity transformation analysis through *perezhivanie* as a unit, and the role of language as a mediating

instrument for enhancing collegiality and democratic professionalism by engaging in social acts of language. This chapter highlights a series of key insights arising from the study's results that may generate further research and discussions. It concludes with recommendations for practising teachers, teacher educators, leaders, and Vygotskian researchers.

Chapter Seven concludes the study by providing a summary and reflection on its limitations and implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

To truly understand ESOL teachers' practices and inform the knowledge base of language teacher education, we must first grasp *who* teachers are. However, a teacher's professional identity extends beyond the individual. To comprehend who teachers are, we must consider their professional lives as situated within their working environments and the circumstances of their professional worlds. Furthermore, to understand these professional worlds, we must look beyond their immediate environments and into the broader sociocultural contexts that shape them, influenced by neoliberal, market-oriented thinking and elements of political economy. Therefore, this chapter reviews the relevant literature across three contextual aspects related to ESOL teachers' practices and the transformation of their professional identity: the sociocultural and neoliberal turns in educational practice, as well as teacher professionalism and professionalisation linked to the notions of TESOL as a profession and ESOL teachers as professionals. To initiate this conversation, it is also necessary to outline the epistemological shifts influencing ESOL teacher education research and teaching practice. Important to note here, however, is that the discussion is intended to emphasise the homogenising impact of the global discourse without accepting the global universalisation thesis in terms of embracing "one particular way of being in the world, seeing the world and educating children and adults" (Takayama et al., 2023, p. 325).

2.2. A Brief Overview of the Evolution of ESOL Teacher Education Research and Teaching Practice against the Backdrop of the Epistemological Shifts in Human Learning Research

Historically, the evolution of ESOL teacher education research and teaching practice has been influenced by shifts in the broader intellectual traditions accumulated around the fundamental questions of knowledge – what knowledge is and how we acquire it. According to

Johnson (2009), there has been a dramatic shift in how educational research conceptualises teacher learning and development in the past decades. Namely, as the knowledge assumptions shifted from the positivist towards the interpretive epistemological perspective, the research activities and thought variety documented about human learning and how it happens organically evolved, subsuming into four main theoretical approaches to learning – behaviourist, cognitive, constructivist, and sociocultural.

The research on teaching between the 1960s and early 1980s centred on answering questions about patterns of teacher behaviour and good teaching that promote student learning. Underpinned by the belief that knowledge is out there, objective, identifiable, and generalisable through systematic processes within scientific methods, the research informing the behaviourist approach, often referred to as “process-product studies”, hypothesised the causality between effective teaching processes and student achievements as sought-after products (Shulman, 1986). Furthermore, predicated on the notion of transferability of knowledge from one person to another or from one place to another, it emphasised the abstraction and decontextualisation of the teaching activity. Therefore, teacher education and practice (including TESOL) focused on replicating effective teaching behaviours.

The understanding of human learning at that time, marked by the Method Debate (e.g., Krashen, 1981; Seliger, 1975), resulted in TESOL education programs that aimed to *train* teachers to use particular teaching methods deemed appropriate for achieving effective learning outcomes. Zhang (2022) suggested that precisely this way of thinking about knowledge and the approaches to teacher education and human learning at that time determined the adoption of *teacher training* to describe the nature and scope of teacher education programs. A good example of a teaching method that was advocated for its effectiveness in the mid-1970s and early 1980s is the communicative approach, which superseded the grammar-translation approach to second language acquisition and became a dominant force in language pedagogy.

However, subsequent investigation into its efficacy raised questions about its authenticity, acceptability, and adaptability (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Despite the explosion of quantitative research attempts to compare and evaluate teaching methods, inevitably, criticism started to arise. The most vocal complaints directed at method-based pedagogies and teaching effectiveness-oriented research pointed out the simplification and decontextualisation of the issues under investigation, guided by underlying assumptions of generalisable knowledge. In his seminal work on teacher knowledge, Schulman (1986, p. 7) made the case against the centeredness in educational research on teaching effectiveness and pedagogy, and noted the absence of focus on subject matter as the “missing paradigm” problem. Moreover, Shulman (1986, p. 6) attributed the generic treatment of teaching to the lack of reference to the subject matter of teaching, giving way to simplification of the complexities of classroom life and whitewashing the complex historical, sociocultural, economic, and political dimensions within the teaching contexts.

In what followed, the complexities of ESOL teaching and research became evident again; however, this time, the investigative lens focused on the language learners. The goal was to establish the causal factors that enable ESL/EFL learners to acquire the language, grounded in the assumption that if we can consciously understand how learners learn, we can adjust teaching accordingly. Admittedly, these research efforts accounted for a better understanding of behavioural processes in language learning; nevertheless, the main reason for the inability of this approach to guarantee a more effective language teaching is that it sought to establish a firm pedagogical application based on an insufficient knowledge-base of language acquisition (Zhang, 2022), and again, it ignored the complex and dynamic contexts of the learning process (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

By the mid-1970s, a notable paradigm shift was underway in navigating the uncharted waters of the teaching profession. In contrast to the dominant positivist epistemological stance, and following the raised issues and concerns around over-simplification and decontextualisation

of educational research, the focus turned towards the need to explore the complexities of *teachers' mental lives* (Walberg, 1977, as cited in Johnson, 2009) and understand why teachers teach the way they do, what they know, and how they make decisions about their teaching; thus, it became evident that such demands require a new lens. Embracing an interpretive epistemological perspective meant a shift not only in philosophical assumptions about knowledge but also in theoretical and methodological approaches to human learning. Knowledge was no longer assumed to be objective, identifiable, and generalisable, but socially constructed; hence, the goal was no longer for knowledge to be captured by applying scientific methods but created by people through their participation in the social reality. Most importantly, educational research could no longer ignore the teachers' lived experiences, the interpretations of their activities, and the contexts of their professional worlds (Johnson, 2009).

Chomsky's linguistic contributions to the cognitive sciences signalled the move away from behaviour theories. Building on the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), which was rooted in a Kantian orientation and saw language as *a priori* condition of knowledge, Chomsky viewed language capacity as a cognitive phenomenon and argued about the innate capacity of the human mind to acquire structured knowledge of language as a result of the unfolding of innate propensities stimulated by the environment and culture (Chomsky, 1972, 1986). His work in linguistics had significant implications for the theory of mind and language education within a democratic classroom; however, according to Code (1980, p. 254, emphasis in original), he ignored the distinction between "having a knowledge *of* a language and acquiring knowledge *through* language" – a concept that is evident in Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

The shift of focus from what teachers do and how they behave to how they think and why they behave the way they do marks the reorientation in educational research toward teacher cognition (Borg, 2006, 2009; Freeman, 1996; Johnson, 2006). In 1981, Shavelson and Stern, in their review of the progress made in research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts,

judgements, and decisions over the past decade, raised the question of the relationship between thoughts and actions to understanding teaching by arguing that research on the teachers' cognitive processes and behaviours rests on two fundamental assumptions: "teachers are rational professionals who, like other professionals such as physicians, make judgements and carry out decisions in an uncertain, complex environment. ... a teacher's behaviour is guided by his thoughts, judgements and decisions" (p. 456).

Over the decades, aspects of teachers' thinking, knowledge, and beliefs about their professional practice became the focus of research. The extensive literature on teacher cognition drew on various research traditions to capture the complexities of teaching practice and acknowledged the social nature of teacher learning processes and activities (Johnson, 2009). Acknowledging the theoretical and methodological diversity, Borg (2005) outlines two contrasting perspectives, one deriving from educational research literature on decision-making (Shavelson & Stern, 1981) – focused on the identification of antecedents for teachers' decisions – and another one on teachers' personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Elbaz, 1981) – focused on a more holistic view of teaching, such as considering the role of emotional or moral factors in the teaching practice. For example, Johnson (1992), in her study on pre-service ESL teachers' instructional actions and decisions, reported that the teachers' actions were directed by a desire to maintain the flow of the teaching activities and that the teachers made most decisions to ensure students' understanding and motivation. The same year, Nunan (1992), in his study on five experienced and four inexperienced ESL teachers in Australia, found that teachers' comments on their decisions did not reflect their concern for language but their personal philosophy of language learning and teaching.

The vast literature on teacher cognition also attracted criticism. Kagan (1990), upon reviewing the various approaches to teacher cognition research, discussed the ambiguities and paradoxes inherent in the literature. She stressed the contradictory nature of techniques derived from different epistemological stances, which called into question the studies' validity and made

it difficult to compare their findings within the same subject matter. Moreover, Kagan noted the tendency among teacher cognition researchers to regard teachers as passive subjects and use the rhetoric of positivism. Ultimately, she pointed out how teacher cognition research failed to affect the reality of teacher education and practice by ignoring the political necessity for linking teacher cognition to student outcome; therefore, she questioned whether the information generated through the research is regarded as knowledge in the eyes of those in power, given that they are the same ones who determine the course of future teacher education and practice.

Another significant aspect of this period in time is the conceptualisation of teacher *learning*, which is seen as a complex, lifelong enterprise (Johnson, 2009). As a way of looking at what the profession of teaching entails, this conceptualisation or politics of *lifelong learning*, which stemmed from the significant role that UNESCO played in the period of the 1960s to the end of the 1970s and the publication of the *Learning to Be* report in 1972, was further supported by other major players, such as the Council of Europe (1973) promoting permanent education followed by OECD's (1973, 1975) introduction of recurrent education, seems to be in line with the notable increase in the use of the word 'learning' and with what Biesta (2013, p. 5) calls the rise of the *learnification* of educational discourse. Over time, the politics of lifelong learning shifted toward a more economic rationale for developing human capital to ensure competitiveness and enhance growth. Currently, the same supranational organisations, UNESCO, the EU, and the OECD, envision lifelong learning as a response to the growing economic and societal pressures (Kinnari & Silvennoinen, 2023). In light of this understanding of teacher education as lifelong learning, teachers are to become "adaptive experts" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, as cited in Johnson, 2009, p. 10) able to apply and assess their knowledge about teaching and learning while adjusting to the complexities of the teaching context and the unpredictable nature of their professional lives. Consequently, educational research must support the development of teacher learners and in-service teachers as practitioners within complex sociocultural settings.

The notion of *teacher learning* led to a shift in focus on how teachers learn to teach as opposed to the earlier approaches centred on how teachers are trained to teach (Zhang, 2022). This new approach to human learning, represented in the constructivist school of thought, assumed that knowledge and meaning are individually constructed through a socially negotiated process of an active and subjective nature. Here, learning focused on individual knowledge construction, and theorists within the cognitive constructivist line of thinking consequently emphasised learner-centred approaches, where the social environment and interaction merely induce individual cognitive conflict (McInerney & McInerney, 2002). In contrast, the social constructivists, whose work is said to derive from Vygotsky (1978, 1986), propounded the central role of the social environment in the learning process. Thus, learning is seen as a situation-specific and context-bound activity (McInerney & McInerney, 2002).

As a leading figure in the cognitive constructivist school of thought, Jean Piaget (1985) proposed that learners individually assimilate or accommodate new knowledge into their prior ways of thinking – either the new knowledge aligns with previous knowledge, like a puzzle piece, or their knowledge needs to be revised to take account of the new knowledge; the outcome of these processes is equilibrium – a sense of inner balance of the new information with the existing knowledge. This idea of building on existing knowledge, on prior ways of thinking, and the centrality of teachers' individual experiences, values, and beliefs that inform and shape their teaching and learning, unavoidably redirected the discussion from one about teachers' use of methods and materials to one about teachers' individuality within the social contexts (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 1992; Richards, 1998). The changes in the conceptualisation of what teaching is and who teachers are are evident in the following words of Freeman and Johnson (1998, p. 402):

We recognize teaching as more than the accumulation of research knowledge because it is evident that giving more research knowledge to teachers does not necessarily make them better practitioners. Learning to teach is a long-term, complex, developmental

process that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching.

Freeman and Johnson's (1998) (re)positioning of L2 teachers as individuals with identities, values, experiences, and knowledges who are actively engaged in their own professional development set the tone for the recast of the conversation in TESOL about teacher education and the proposal for a new knowledge-base of L2 teacher education that will no longer draw solely on positivist epistemological perspectives of how language learners acquire a second language (disciplinary or subject matter knowledge from the fields of linguistics and SLA) but build on a broader epistemological framework that focuses on the activity of teaching to answer the question "Who teaches what to whom, where?" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 405). Therefore, they proposed three domains for the knowledge base – the teacher-learner, the social context, and the pedagogical process – to serve as a framework for research in L2 teacher education and practice.

2.3. The Sociocultural Turn and ESOL Teacher Identity Research

At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, a sociocultural perspective on human learning began to gain popularity within the second language (L2) research community. A possible explanation for such a turn might be the readiness of the applied linguistic community "to accept a more socially based theory as a reaction to the dominant psycholinguistic approaches in the 1970s and 1980s" (de Bot, 2015); or perhaps it was a response to the urges in the emerging body of research on L2 teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, 2006; Freeman, 1996; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Golombek, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003) for a shared theoretical framework of learning, "upon which to ground a common understanding of what the internal cognitive processes of teacher learning actually are" (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p. 728). On a similar note, Borg (2015, p. 334) succinctly elaborated why having such a coherent theoretical framework would be beneficial for linking the existing understandings of teachers' thinking, knowing, and doing, as follows:

Such a framework is necessary for several reasons; it militates against the accumulation of isolated studies conducted without sufficient awareness of how these relate to existing work; it reminds researchers of key dimensions in the study of language teacher cognition; and it highlights key themes, gaps and conceptual relationships and promotes more focused attention to these.

2.3.1. Epistemological Assumptions of the Sociocultural Turn

Conversely to the cognitive learning theories, grounded in the positivistic paradigm, that view human learning as an internal psychological process isolated from the social and physical contexts, the epistemological perspective of the sociological turn assumes that human learning happens through active participation in social activities, where physical and sociocultural contexts are critical to human cognitive development (Johnson, 2009; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). With its epistemological tenets drawn from the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and his followers, Leont'ev (1981) and Luria (1982) among others, the sociocultural perspective assumes knowledge to be mediated by the very sociocultural environment in which it is situated and human forms of higher-level thinking to be created in the social relationships mediated through culturally constructed tools or artefacts. By participating in the sociocultural environment, humans acquire and use cultural tools, among which language is “the tool par excellence” (Stetsenko, 2004, p. 505). Therefore, human cognition is developed through “an interactive process, mediated by culture, context, language, and social interaction” (Johnson, 2009, p. 1).

Furthermore, a sociocultural perspective recognises the significant role of human agency in the developmental process. Vygotsky (1931/1997) argued that all higher mental functions are inherently social; however, they do not appear *in* social relations but *as* social relations; “every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation of two people” (p. 105, emphasis in original). This distinction here is important because it recognises the individual as an active participant in

changing social contexts. Therefore, cognitive development is not a straightforward enculturation or acquisition of cultural tools but the transformation of those cultural tools – the individual's active use or creation of cultural tools to reorganise the social situation of choice or challenge (Veresov, 2020a). Put bluntly,

How an individual learns something, what is learned, and how it is used will depend on the sum of the individual's prior experiences, the sociocultural contexts in which the learning takes place, and what the individual wants, needs, and/or is expected to do with that knowledge. (Johnson, 2009, p. 2)

Ultimately, a sociocultural perspective assumes that the meanings of social activities and the cultural tools that regulate them are constantly changing and are historically and culturally determined.

The sociocultural theory (SCT), as inspired by Vygotsky's (1986) cultural-historical theory of psychological development, is "a theory of mind ... that recognises the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artefacts play in organising uniquely human forms of thinking" (Lantolf, 2004, p. 31). It offers educational researchers a holistic framework for systematically investigating teacher cognition and cognitive development in light of their engagement in the social activities of their teaching and learning contexts, as embedded within the broader sociocultural histories. As Wertsch (1995) highlights: "The goal of research is to understand the relationship between human mental functioning ... and cultural, historical, and institutional setting" (p. 56).

As SCT highlights the social nature of human learning, its impact extends to how we understand teacher learning and what the process entails. Johnson (2009) summarises the theory's contribution to L2 teacher education in "five *changing points of view*" (pp. 3-6, emphasis in original) about teacher learning (in terms of the link between the cognitive and social), language (as a psychological tool used to make sense of social experience, thus transforming it into cultural knowledge), language teaching (as dialogic mediation), the role of the broader

social, cultural, and historical macro-structures in L2 teaching profession (e.g., educational reform policies, high-stake tests, school norms, as part of teachers' professional worlds that constantly mediate and shape their work and development, and in turn the students' learning), and about what constitutes professional development (in terms of the need for redrawing the boundaries of professional development and going beyond the visible or formal professional development activities).

Against the epistemological backdrop of the sociocultural perspective on human learning, a few schools of thought have also developed their understandings of how humans learn. For example, theories of situated cognition, most notably represented by Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of *communities of practice* (CoP), argued that the learning process is negotiated through what people do and what they experience in active social participation in communities, where they generate meaning within a specific practice through shared context-driven knowledge. Hence, individual knowledge is constructed through CoP knowledge.

These ideas of situated learning overlap with Bakhtin's (1981) view of the social nature of language within the intellectual processes. Namely, he argued that people appropriate other people's uttered words to make them their own, to serve their needs and impart their meanings; thus, "as a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" (p. 293). Furthermore, Bakhtin notes that "the ideological becoming of a human being ... is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (p. 341); hence, language is connected to ideology because meaning only occurs inside a dialogue. The ideological nature of language is a focal point of critical theory. The proponents of this view (Canagarajah, 1993, 2005; Norton, 1997; Pennycook, 1999, 2001) see the role of power relations as a key to understanding the social practices and interactions within the participating community. Ultimately, this understanding should lead to more equitable social relations and sustainable educational change.

2.3.2. Rise and Development of Language Teacher Identity as a Sociocultural Phenomenon

As the epistemological shifts in how broader intellectual traditions conceptualise human learning reoriented the educational researchers' focus towards what teachers do, what they know, what they believe, how they think, how they learn, and ultimately, who teachers are, what language teaching is and how all is mediated by the contexts within which it emerges, this gave rise to a related interest in the topic of language teacher identity (LTI) within the broader field of language teacher cognition. Teachers were no longer perceived as mere technicians who do their work without contemplating their actions, but as cognitive (Borg, 2015) and social beings (Barkhuizen, 2016a). Pointing out the social nature of the teaching profession, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005, p. 22) argued:

In order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them.

The early 1990s represent a significant period for the evolution of scholarly thought on LTI. With the rise in the popularity of classroom-based research in previous years, the complexity of the classroom and the teachers' roles were no longer to be ignored (Nunan, 1988). The emerging research on teacher beliefs, decision-making, knowledge, and attitudes began to recognise the wholeness of the teachers and their role within the realities of the classroom (Johnson, 1992, 1994; Woods, 1996). As these lines of research developed, the concept of identity began to gain traction and evolve.

The shift from an essentialist standpoint of identity – as a fixed construct of qualities that can be either acquired or biologically inherited – towards critical conceptual lenses (Yazan, 2018b) led to a new understanding of teacher identity – “as *relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming, and transitional*” (Miller, 2009, p. 174, emphasis in original). The view of

teachers as intentional beings with their own agency in constructing and negotiating their identities is of crucial significance. Furthermore, another important aspect is the interrelatedness between identity and the outer world, reflected in the importance of the 'other' – how teachers are recognised and positioned by others – and the social, cultural, and political contexts in which the identity negotiation happens.

Norton Pierce's (1995) groundbreaking work on identity marked the beginning of a new strand of thought, "away from identity in terms of psychological processes towards contextualised social processes" (Miller, 2009, p. 173). Even though Norton (1997) followed the research trend at the time and investigated the identities of English language learners, the topic of learner identities and its implications for the teacher's role as not a neutral player in the classroom (Varghese et al., 2005) attracted considerable attention. Norton's (1997; 1995) key arguments, initially published in the mid-1990s and subsequently supported in collaboration with others (Kanno & Norton, 2003; McKinney & Norton, 2008; Norton & Gao, 2008; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007), highlighted the need for a comprehensive theory of identity, which would integrate the multiple positions that learners take concerning the target language community and the need for addressing the socially constructed relations of power that affect learners' access to opportunities for developing the target language speaking, reading, and writing skills within the target language community.

Early studies on LTI primarily focused on linguistic identities and the dichotomy between English teachers' native-speaker (NS) and non-native-speaker (NNS) status. For example, by exploring the experiences of one East Asian non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) before and during her TESOL program in an era of global mobility, Park (2012) found that, by questioning the legitimacy of her identity in a heterogeneous context, the participant transformed her linguistic identity. In the same year, building on the concept of positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990), Trent (2012) explored how native English-speaking teachers (NEST) discursively position themselves in Hong Kong schools and how they perceive how local English

teachers and school managers position them. The study's findings suggested tensions in the self-positioning of the NESTs as professional language teachers stemming from the perceived negative valorisation of their teaching experience and practice by the local teachers and school managers. Furthermore, researchers in the field of LTI also explored the tensions that NNESTs experienced when claiming membership in imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

More recently, going beyond the simplistic NS/NNS dichotomy, researchers drew on a poststructuralist perspective and looked at the competing discursive positioning and ideologies challenging the notions of NS/NNS speakerism (Aneja, 2016; Fan & de Jong, 2019; Lawrence, 2020; Wang & Mantero, 2018). Lawrence (2020), for example, conducted a linguistic ethnographic investigation to explore the discursive identity construction of two English teachers, one 'native' and one 'non-native' English speaker in a tertiary institution in Japan. Interestingly, at the institutional level, a clear distinction was made between NEST/NNEST; however, at the classroom level, the teachers exerted greater agency and resisted straightforward identity ascriptions. Furthermore, grounding their discussion about the composite, personalised, and institutionalised teacher identity of NNESTs in the 'identity-in-practice' framework (Holland et al., 2003), Huang and Varghese (2015) challenged the static NS/NNS dichotomy, concluding that this linguistic binary is heavily influenced by the composite multiple identifications of NNESTs that involve crossing linguistic, racial, and geographical boundaries.

The sociocultural turn suggested "a more interdisciplinary and socially informed approach to SLA research" (Block, 2003, p. 1). Many studies, conducted within this perspective (e.g., Golombek & Klager, 2015; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Tsui, 2007; Vélez-Rendón, 2010), examined LTI development as situated in and emerging from sociocultural practices and contexts. For example, Tsui (2007), in her pivotal study on the

complex processes of LTI formation, focused on the six-year teaching career of one Chinese EFL teacher. She drew on Wenger's CoP framework (1998) – the concepts of identification and negotiation of meanings – to describe the teacher's struggles with the multiple identities, membership, participation, competence, power, and legitimacy of access to practice.

The strong influence of the situated or practice-oriented theories, such as situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), may be contributed to the 'practice turn' in the social sciences that views cognitive phenomena (e.g., beliefs, knowledge) as part of social practices (Morton & Gray, 2018). Within these perspectives, 'narrative knowledging' (Barkhuizen, 2011) has gained traction as a rich source for making sense of teachers' worlds and the intricacies of their professional lives. Precisely that discursive power of storytelling, with language at the centre stage within social life, is what made narrative research gain popularity within the LTI research.

For a multifaceted understanding of LTI, other researchers called for combined theoretical approaches to researching LTI (Cross, 2006, 2010; Cross & Gearon, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005). Given the conceptual complexity of teacher identity, Varghese et al. (2005), for example, advocated for openness to a more complex approach. They proposed combining the poststructuralist lens of identity as discursively constructed – "identity-in-discourse" – with a sociocultural lens of identity as enacted in practice – "identity-in-practice" (p. 39). Pointing out the weaknesses in Varghese et al.'s approach – the problem of the practice/discourse dichotomy and the lack of unity of the two lines of inquiry – Cross (2006) and Cross and Gearon (2007) proposed a meta-theoretical framework, "identity-in-activity" that unites the "identity-in-practice" and "identity-in-discourse" conceptions, for researching LTI, from the perspective of Vygotskian cultural-historical (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) and its related theory of activity (Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1981).

Additionally, within recent writings, the link between LTI and agency, as well as the role of emotions in LTI development, are also emerging areas of interest. For example, on the one

hand, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) investigated pre-service teachers' identity-agency exercise in relation to their past and present experiences within and beyond the education context. They argued that teachers are "active in using agentic experiences in the making of their professional identity" (p. 319). On the other hand, the centrality of emotions in teachers' lives was addressed in Golombek and Doran's (2014) study of a novice language teacher's journals. Highlighting the interrelationship between emotion, cognition, and activity, and, following a content and discourse analysis of the texts, they demonstrated that the teacher's emotional content spreads throughout the novice teacher's journals and that "her emotions are tied to her *perezhivanie* and her thinking about and activity/outcomes of her teaching" (p. 110). They proposed that their understanding of the teacher self as a cognitive (Borg, 2003) and feeling being engaged in the goal-oriented activity of teaching should orient language teachers' professional development.

As interest in research on LTI rose, various disciplinary influences, conceptual frameworks, and methodologies were used to investigate the phenomenon, which, in turn, led to multiple understandings of the notion of LTI (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, the dynamic, fluid, and evolving nature of the concept of LTI itself (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Vermunt et al., 2017) contributed to the difficulty of its conceptualisation as a concept that is "hard to articulate, easily misunderstood, and open to interpretation" (Olsen, 2008, p. 4). In the following section of the literature review, after a brief discussion of the genesis of the concept of identity, I review some contemporary conceptualisations of LTI.

2.3.3. Genesis and Conceptualisation of ESOL Teacher Professional Identity

The relatively recent interest in the topic of identity in educational research, in general, and English as a second/foreign language teaching and learning, in particular, may be attributed to the epistemological shift in thinking about how humans learn and the role teachers have in the teaching practice as situated within the contexts from which it emerges; however, as a related concept to 'identity', intellectual discussions about the 'self' can be traced back around

2500 years in the past, with Plato's (ca. 428-347 B.C.) concept of the 'true self' derived from the (rational) soul that is separable from the body. Conversely, Plato's student Aristotle (ca. 384-322 B.C.) viewed the 'self' as both soul and body, inseparable, where the soul animates the body, but neither has primacy over the other. Moreover, according to Leary and Tangney (2003), writings in Eastern literature evidence the grappling with the problem of the 'self' even earlier – the *Upanishads* in India (circa 600 B.C.), the *Tao te Ching* in China (ca. 500 B.C.), and the philosophy of Gautama Buddha (ca. 563-483 B.C.).

Further down the history lane, a notable obsession with identity is evident in the 17th and 18th-century European Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason. Before this period, however, a series of scientific, religious, and political upheavals challenged the notions of intellectuality, power, liberty, and equality and transformed society. These events again ignited the everlasting discussions of civil rights, freedom, democracy, and, ultimately, free will. Notable Enlightenment thinkers, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, opposed absolute monarchy and called for democracy as we understand it today. Writers, such as Voltaire, criticised the church and its involvement in matters of the state, and renowned scholars, such as Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, wrote about aspects of human existence and the nature of knowledge and reality.

Precursors of the contemporary interest in identity, according to Block (2021), are the innovative thinking and writings of the two founders of modern psychology, William James and Sigmund Freud. Block (2021) proposes the possibility that the work of James and Freud, regarding "the self as one's inner being, which stands in contrast to 'social identity'", has set the foundation for three developments taking place in the 20th century: "the rise of individualisation and individualism; the eventual – and by now pervasive – infatuation with 'me and who I am'; and finally, the rise of a particular way of seeing identity" (p. 4).

Historically, it appears that we tend to talk about our identity only when challenged, in circumstances of significant socio-cultural and political environmental or situational changes.

The periods discussed are certainly not the only periods in history when humanity has questioned its existence and essence; nevertheless, the question is: What led to the notably heightened interest in identity at those periods in the first place, and, more importantly, why are we talking about it today?

In *The Problem of the Environment*, Vygotsky (1934) addressed the issue of personality (*lichnost*) and how it is affected by dramatic situations in the social environment. Why does the same event not hold the same meaning for every person? To answer this question, Vygotsky (1934) employed the concept of *perezhivanie* to refer to “how a child becomes aware of, interprets, [and] emotionally relates to a certain event” (p. 341). He claimed *perezhivaniya* (plural form from *perezhivanie*) are units of the personality and “personality is both the product and producer of life’s *perezhivaniya*” (Blunden, 2021, p. 85), which “stand out from the general background of experience, have a beginning, a middle and an end throughout the course of the experience, have a unity and a certain emotional colour” (Blunden, 2021, p. 52).

In the literature, there are various interpretations of the term *perezhivanie*, even some attempts at direct English translation of the Russian word ‘переживание’, such as ‘lived experience’ or ‘emotional experience’, which have been deemed inaccurate (Blunden, 2021) or too narrow (González Rey, 2016). As Veresov (2017) contended, “[t]he term *perezhivanie* is quite difficult to explain and almost impossible to translate” (p. 47, emphasis in original).

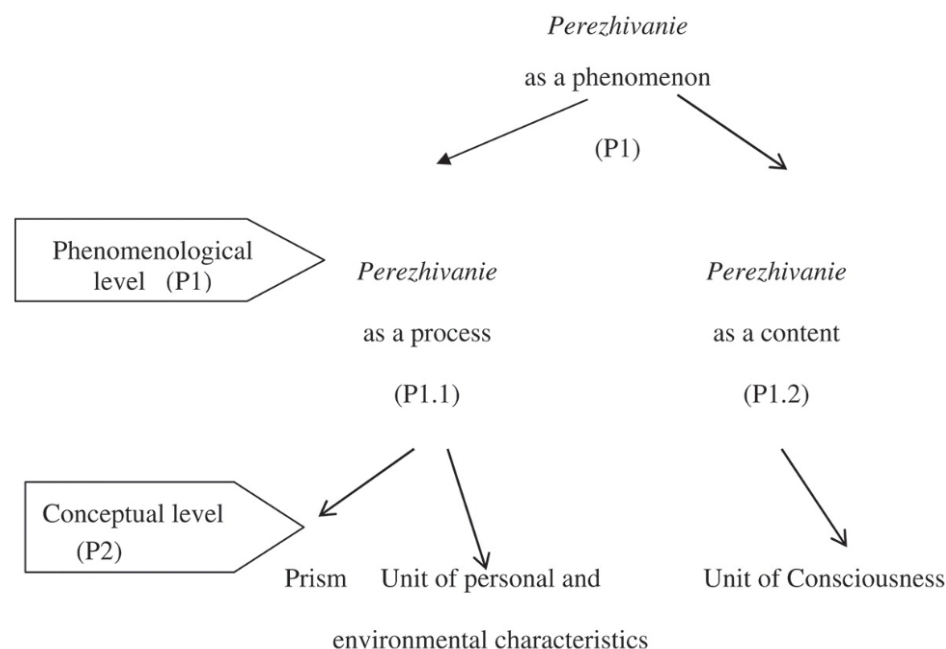
Recently, Veresov (2017, 2019, 2020b) offered a comprehensive interpretation of the meanings of *perezhivanie* in Vygotsky’s work. He showed that Vygotsky initially defined the term in line with its traditional classical meaning as it existed in psychology at that time – a psychological phenomenon. However, Veresov (2017, p. 48) explained that *perezhivanie* as a phenomenon can mean a process (“How I am experiencing something”) and a content (“What I am experiencing”). Moreover, Veresov showed that in Vygotsky’s later work, *The Problem of the Environment*, *perezhivanie* has a radically different meaning from the first one. This is the meaning of *perezhivanie* as a concept, and “concepts have theoretical content and their place

within the theory (Veresov, 2020b, p. 49). Here, *perezhivanie* is “related to the process of *development*. ... it is related to the role and influence of *environment on development*. ... [and] it has a strong reference to the *psychological laws of development*” (Veresov, 2017, p. 49, emphasis in original).

Accordingly, Veresov and Fler (2016) suggested a model of two levels – phenomenological and conceptual (see Figure 1 below). By focusing on *perezhivanie* as a concept related to other concepts within the cultural-historical theory, they argued that it enables us to study *perezhivanie* not as an individual, observable phenomenon but as a refracting prism, a unit of environmental and personal characteristics, and a unit of consciousness.

Figure 1

Perezhivanie as a Phenomenon and a Concept



Note. This is a model of two levels of *perezhivanie*. From *Perezhivanie as Theoretical Concept for Researching Young Children’s Development*, by N. Veresov, and M. Fler, 2016, in *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 23(4), p. 333, Copyright 2016 by Taylor & Francis.

Perezhivanie, as a refracting prism, refers to the principle of refraction in understanding the dialectical process of development, where the social becomes the individual. By indicating that different individuals experience (live through) the same social environment differently, which results in their unique developmental trajectories, it challenges the principle of reflection as a dualistic principle that connects stimulus and response as two separate domains (Veresov, 2020b, p. 52). Here, *perezhivanie*,

arising from any situation or from any aspect of his environment, determines what kind of influence this situation or this environment will have on the child. Therefore, it is not any of the factors in themselves (if taken without reference to the child) which determines how they will influence the future course of his development, but the same factors refracted through the prism of the child's *perezhivanie*. (Vygotsky, 1934, pp. 339-340)

In this quote, Vygotsky highlighted that the role and influence of the social environment on the child's development depend on the relationship between the child and the environment. In other words, social environment as a source of development "exists only when the individual actively participates in this environment, by acting, interacting, interpreting, understanding, recreating, and redesigning it" (Veresov, 2020b, p. 53). Therefore, "[c]onceptualising development in this way allows us to investigate how a certain social situation becomes a social situation of development" (Veresov & Fler, 2016, p. 329).

Moreover, Veresov and Fler (2016) discussed the theoretical content of the concept of *perezhivanie* as a unit. They emphasised that the human mind is not a mechanical but a complex organic system, and thus should not be analysed by elements, but as a whole. Here, *perezhivanie* "represents the minimal unit of the whole, the organic unity of the personality and the environment as it is represented in its process of development" (p. 331). As Vygotsky (1934) explained, "*in perezhivanie we are always dealing with an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics, which are represented in the perezhivanie*" (p. 343, emphasis in original). In this sense, the social situation of development (SSD) is the

relationship between the individual and the social environment – the unity of personal and environmental characteristics – and *perezhivanie* is its unit of analysis – a unit of the personality and the environment (Veresov, 2020b).

Another aspect of *perezhivanie* as a unit, highlighted in Veresov and Fleer's (2016) close study of Vygotsky's work, is *perezhivanie* as a unit of human consciousness. Every *perezhivanie* has content – it is a *perezhivanie* of something – and every act of consciousness also has content – it is an act of being conscious of something (Veresov, 2020b). Therefore, consciousness consists of *perezhivanie*, and *perezhivanie* is its unit because it has all the basic properties of consciousness. In other words, consciousness is a unity (a developing whole), where changes in a person's concrete *perezhivaniya* “bring dynamic changes to the whole organisation of consciousness” (Veresov & Fleer, 2016, p. 333).

The difference between the two units, *perezhivanie* as a unit of environmental and personal characteristics and as a unit of consciousness, comes from different ways of conceptualising the phenomenon of *perezhivanie* as the process of experiencing (P1.1) and as the content of what happens in individual consciousness (P1.2), accordingly (Veresov, 2017; Veresov & Fleer, 2016).

In his book *Hegel, Marx and Vygotsky* (2021), Andy Blunden elaborates on the range of phenomena related to the development of personality as an element of human agency, touching on the topic of the acquisition of ideals. Referring to Leont'ev (1978), he goes on to explain that in the course of their lives, while participating in social life, people acquire *meanings* of words and cultural artefacts and understand various *concepts* that guide the practices in which they participate. These concepts are not neutral but have *motives*; therefore, through their participation, people make *commitments* and shape their *motivation*, and by engaging with others who share that commitment, they realise that *motive*. Over time, people meet difficulties and challenges, and they overcome them. During those periods of *crisis* or ‘impossible

situations' (Vasilyuk, 1984), which occur while participating with others, people develop their personality through all the phenomena of *perezhivanie*.

An interesting example of a *collective perezhivanie* provided by Blunden (2021, p. 96) is the one of a whole country going through an experience such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, where there is a change firstly in every individual, then a change in how every person acts differently towards others, and finally a change in the functioning of the entire country – emotionally charged state with periods of introspection, followed by questioning of fundamental aims and methods, change in leadership, creation of new concepts and self-transformation. Analogously, the previously discussed paradigm shifts in English language teaching can be seen as accumulations of various kinds of *collective perezhivaniya* within the process of pursuing common aims with the motive of arriving to new knowledge for improving English language learning and teaching practice.

Research on language teacher cognition argues that there is an evident link between what teachers believe, think, know, and do and who they are (Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Miller, 2009). In fact, Gray and Morton (2018) highlight the cognition-identity link, claiming that “researching and theorising language teacher thinking, cognition, beliefs, and development cannot easily be undertaken without due consideration of language teacher identity” (p. 3). However, due to the different theoretical perspectives used to research LTI, a clear and unified conceptualisation is yet to be achieved.

In their extensive literature review, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004, p. 122) shared their concern about the lack of conceptual consensus and the frequent failure to define teacher professional identity. From the reviewed studies, they identified four features critical for defining teachers' professional identity:

- it is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation;
- it implies both person and context;
- it consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonise; and,

- agency is an important element of professional identity, meaning teachers must actively participate in developing their professional identity.

The complexity of LTI was recently captured in great detail by Barkhuizen (2017, p. 4). His quite lengthy definition encapsulates the reflections of the book's contributors, in which he considers the various facets of LTI – cognitive, emotional, social, ideological, historical, context-bound, fluid, dynamic, multiple, relational, contested, and experiential. Coming from a post-structuralist perspective, Barkhuizen (2016b, p. 659) also emphasises the fluid and multiple nature of the concept by underlining the language teachers' social interactions with other members of their immediate and broader communities, as well as their material interactions with spaces, places, and objects in classrooms and institutions.

Norton (1997, p. 410), in her research on immigrant women in Canada/English language learners, defined identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. Here, Norton addresses the link to the outer world and the importance of social context in the identity negotiation process. She also discusses making sense of identity as multiple and a site of struggle in terms of (re)interpreting the lived experiences and the power relations within them that can condition the learners' ‘investment’ in learning (Norton, 2013).

The struggle in identity negotiation can also be noted in the problematic role of the ‘Other’, which is especially evident in legitimating one's identity work, e.g., as a non-native English-speaking ESOL teacher in a globalised TESOL environment (Kamhi-Stein, 2009). The reference to ‘Other’ is noted in the teacher identity definitions by Gee (2000, p. 99) – “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’” in a given context – and by Danielewicz (2001, p. 10) “who we are and who we think other people are”.

The proponents of sociocultural theory (SCT) view LTI as a complex sociocultural phenomenon and the ESOL language teacher as “a historical, sociological agent within larger

(and political) contexts for practice” (Cross, 2010, p. 434). According to Johnson and Golombek (2016, p. 12), although Vygotsky’s work does not explicitly include the term ‘identity’, its origin and construct have been theorised by others within the SCT school of thought. Namely, they refer to Penuel and Wertsch’s (1995) emphasis on the role of cultural tools in (re)shaping action in goal-oriented activity so that identity is “a being in continuous becoming” through activity (Roth, 2003, p. 8, as cited in Johnson and Golombek, 2016, p. 12). Furthermore, according to Veresov (2020a, p. 184), identity is “a sociocultural phenomenon emerging and developing within constantly changing social and cultural contexts and environments”. However, from Vygotsky’s cultural-historical perspective, identity is seen as a dialectical process of qualitative change, a “specific psychological neoformation which is the result of the qualitative reorganisation of the whole system of the psychological functions of the personality” (Veresov, 2020a, p. 184), it is a *process* of obtaining a sense of belonging within the changing sociocultural contexts and environments; from a cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) perspective (Engeström, 1987), which is grounded in Vygotsky’s work, identity is “a socially and culturally constructed sense of belonging within the social-individual space” (Veresov, 2020a, p. 182), an *outcome* of the transformation of the activity system.

2.4. Sociocultural Perspective in Researching ESOL Teacher Professional Identity

The epistemological shift in our understanding of human learning as originating from our active participation in social life and the recast of teachers as learners and language teaching as social practice embedded within and emergent from the sociocultural, historical, and political contexts invigorated the debates about the knowledge base of English language teacher education and teachers’ professional development. Nearly three decades ago, Freeman and Johnson (1998) proposed an epistemological framework for embedding theory and practice in English language teaching, focusing on the activity of teaching and driven by the seemingly straightforward question, “Who teaches what to whom, where?” (p. 405). Here, the fundamental importance of ‘who’ teachers are for understanding the activity of teaching itself and informing

the knowledge base of language teacher education, however, extends beyond the individual and, therefore, “must be understood against the backdrop of teachers’ professional lives, within the settings where they work, and within the circumstances of that world” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 405). From where we stand today, it is safe to say that progress has been made in the direction of recognising the sociocultural nature of ESOL teachers’ education and practice and emphasising the LTI development as an essential process in ESOL teachers’ professional growth (Freeman, 2018/2020; Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020).

In what follows, I discuss the concept of identity in relation to its family of associated concepts – cognition, agency, and emotion – as represented in the relevant literature on LTI research from a sociocultural perspective. The discussion is organised into three sections: (1) contextualised teacher learning – review of studies that look into LTI construction and development as part of ESOL teachers’ learning and how the teachers’ personal contextual factors and the sociocultural, historical, and political contexts within their professional worlds interplay with their experiences of professional learning, (2) the relationship between macro context and teaching practice – review of studies that consider how ESOL teachers’ activities shape and are shaped by the broader macro-structures and the influence of that interplay on teachers’ professional identity transformation, and (3) the role of language in learning and development – review of relevant literature that accounts for the role of language as a cultural and psychological tool connected to the SCT view of the relation between thought and language and the notion of learning as dialogic mediation. The review addresses various aspects in the LTI research literature, such as ESOL teachers’ prior experiences, commitments, roles, knowledges, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and actions regarding their teacher learning and teaching practice.

2.4.1. Contextualised Teacher Learning

Sociocultural theory understands human learning as socially created and mediated through culturally constructed means or artefacts, among which language is considered as the

most powerful (Vygotsky, 1978). In English language teacher education, a sociocultural perspective assumes that “knowledge, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations” (Johnson, 2009, p. 13). By participating in these sociocultural environments, teachers’ cognitive development is seen as an interactive process that involves “the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control, which results in the transformation of both self and the activity” (Johnson, 2009, p. 2). From this perspective, ESOL teachers are thought to be engaged in a process of continuous learning and potential growth, at the heart of which is the transformation of their professional identity (Freeman, 2016; Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

The process of constructing a professional identity during teacher education coursework, practicum, and the early years of teaching has frequently been the focus of investigation. For pre-service teachers transitioning into in-service teachers, the complex, multidimensional, and fluid experiences during their teacher education coursework and practicum are crucial for their future professional growth (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017; Johnson, 2009; Yazan, 2017). Therefore, exploring those experiences of teacher learning is valuable for understanding how ESOL teachers construct, develop, and negotiate their professional identity. Furthermore, teacher identity is considered an integral part of teacher learning (e.g., Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Varghese et al., 2005) as it orients and is oriented by teachers’ learning experiences. In fact, some scholars even view identity and learning as one and the same (Olsen, 2011; Yazan, 2018a). Additionally, Olsen (2016, p. 43) argues that, while participating in teacher learning practices, the pre-service teachers’ emerging identities function as an “interpretive frame”, which they use to construct and shape their professional knowledge base, and orient their understanding and interpretation of their learning experiences.

From a sociocultural perspective, learning to teach is situated and happens through active participation in new social practices embedded in sociocultural and political contexts that

inform and are informed by the demands and dynamics of the teaching realities (Freeman, 2002). Hence, a significant impact on ESOL teachers' identity construction and transformation is their engagement in teacher education programs and in various activities within professional communities of practice. Nguyen and Dao (2019), following a three-dimensional space narrative inquiry framework and theoretically drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and CoP (Wenger, 1998), explored the teacher identity development of five NNES teacher-learners studying in an Australian TESOL master's program. The participants' stories revealed how becoming part of the CoP led to growth, satisfaction, and tensions. This study emphasised the practical application of teachers' identity work to enrich the learning experience. Marcías Villegas et al. (2020) conducted a similar narrative study reaffirming these findings. Although the student teachers in their study faced internal conflicts at the outset of their teacher education program, these conflicts were only temporary and resolved through their social interactions with practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers during their teaching practicum, indicating an ongoing process of social co-construction of teacher identity.

Similarly, Neupane and Bhatt (2023) explored three English language teachers' professional identity development by looking at the teachers' professional development journey. Employing Wenger's (1998) notion of CoP, they analysed the teachers' storied lives from schoolteachers to university professors and revealed that positive prior experiences of them being English language learners encouraged them in choosing ELT as a profession, and their experiences during their schooling, followed by their in-service practice in a competitive environment, motivated them to actively and creatively engage in devising innovative teaching approaches. However, the challenging environments, institutional needs, and policies were found to be sites of struggle and points of divergence from their roots, which led to a sense of challenged identity, ultimately transforming them beyond being English teachers.

An extensive body of literature in LTI research points out the struggles and tensions pre-service and novice English language teachers face at the beginning of their teaching careers,

and how overcoming these challenges by going through various kinds of qualitative changes led to their LTI construction or development (e.g., Abednia, 2012; Beltman et al., 2015; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; He & Lin, 2013; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Marcías Villegas et al., 2020; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016; Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024; Teng, 2017; Trent, 2010; Wang, 2021; Xu, 2013; Yazan, 2017). Some researchers, however, emphasised the undermining impact of institutional norms (unsupportive leadership and staff, inflexible curricula) and structures (heavy workloads, large class size, examination fixation) on novice ESOL teachers' professional identity construction (Wang, 2021), whereas others argued about the vulnerability of experienced ESOL teachers' professional identity (Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2017; Sanczyk, 2020; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023; Xie & Dong, 2020). Notably, compared with the vast literature on the experiences of pre-service and novice ESOL teachers' professional identity construction and development, not many studies have investigated the experiences of mid- and late-career ESOL teachers and their professional identity transformation.

One example where researchers have looked into the professional identity of experienced teachers is Xie and Dong's (2020) study. In their study, the three experienced Chinese EFL teachers underwent from honeymoon phase during early career years to confusion or dilemma phase in their mid-career years featured by identity crises under interplay of macro-level social factors (curriculum reform, job insecurity), meso-level institutional factors (competitive and unsupportive work environment, low sense of professional achievement and frustration with students, staff development policy), and micro-level personal factors (teachers' private lives). The study findings showed that experienced teachers, too, are vulnerable to the contextual demands of the profession. The researchers called for more attention and greater scaffolding for teachers' professional identity development to help them maintain commitment to teaching throughout their careers.

In a similar vein, Tran-Thanh et al.'s study (2023) explored how five experienced Vietnamese ESOL teachers navigated the unique contextual changes of technology integration since the late 2000s and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic against the background of their personal and pedagogical beliefs, agency, and pre-existing identities. However, this study revealed that the teachers, as social beings in a changing contextual environment, responded differently in how they adapted their teaching and learning, and each developed a distinct professional identity, resulting from a complex interaction between their personal and professional beliefs within a supportive social environment.

The reviewed studies provide evidence of the influence of socialisation during teacher learning on ESOL teachers' understanding of themselves as professionals and of the TESOL profession. Teachers discursively experiment with and negotiate their identities with other community members; thus, their participation informs the construction and transformation of their situated professional identities. However, as the studies above show, participation in a community alone does not determine identity; rather, it is through their agentic experiences within the community that teachers transform their professional identity over their careers. It is "a dynamic process of reconstructing and transforming those practices to be responsive to both individual and local needs" (Johnson, 2009, p. 13), with a broad array of past, present, and potential future experiences that teachers can draw on. Therefore, the studies evidence the complex interplay between professional identity and agency – the *who* and the *how* (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016), where the *how* does not occur in isolation but is informed by the teachers' prior learning experiences, their goals and motives, their personal and professional beliefs, thoughts, values, and knowledges within the context-bound professional worlds.

Ample evidence suggests that teachers' personal histories, such as their prior language learning experiences (Feryok, 2012; Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Velez-Rendon, 2006), prior education experiences (Nguyen & Brown, 2016), cultural backgrounds (Miller, 2007; Nguyen, 2017), prior knowledge and beliefs about language learning and teaching (Chan et al., 2007;

Marcías Villegas et al., 2020), and early teaching experience (Borg, 2009) play a significant role in teachers' education, conceptualisation of their roles, and shaping their professional identity (Borg, 2006; Cross, 2010; Freeman, 2002; Golombek, 1998; Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

In 1975, Dan C. Lortie proposed the concept of “apprenticeship of observation” to describe teachers' own educational histories as learners and argued that this apprenticeship is responsible for pre-service teachers' preconceptions about teaching. Lortie used the metaphor of a theatre play, where the students can see the teacher's ‘frontstage’ behaviours; however, they do not see the ‘backstage’ behaviours, which are crucial for understanding the teacher's pedagogically informed actions. More recently, discussing the impact of schooling on teachers' learning about teaching, Johnson and Golombek (2016), noted a parallel between Lortie's concept and Vygotsky's understanding of learning, on the one hand, in the everyday world of being a student resulting in *everyday concepts* – a kind of unconscious knowledge formed through practical activities and immediate social interactions that may be misinformed – and, on the other hand, learning in school, which involves *academic* or *scientific concepts* – “a more systematic and generalised knowledge [that] enables learners to think in ways that transcend their *everyday* experiences” (p. 5, emphasis in original). Moreover, Johnson (2009, p. 14) described the professional development of L2 teachers as

a process of building on teachers' everyday concepts about language, language learning, and language teaching to enable them to understand the scientific concepts about language, SLA, learning, and L2 teaching that are produced, accepted, and adapted in the profession.

During this process, however, Johnson and Golombek (2016) emphasised Vygotsky's argument about the dialectical relationship between everyday and academic concepts, grounded in the goal of concept development, which is “for the *academic concepts* and *everyday concepts* to become united into *true concepts*” (p. 5, emphasis in original). Once internalised through formal schooling, the true concepts help transform teachers' prior

knowledge and beliefs and reconsider their thoughts and understanding of themselves as teachers, of teaching, and student learning through theoretical lenses.

Teachers' beliefs and knowledge are instrumental in shaping teachers' interpretation of their professional lives; however, they must be taken into account as part of teachers' whole mental lives and as intertwined with their past, present, and potential classroom experiences as learners and practitioners (Borg, 2006). Research in teacher cognition – established as an umbrella term for the unseen dimensions of teachers' work, with its early definition of what teachers think, know, believe, and do (Borg, 2003) extended to what they feel and perceive, and how these unseen factors influence what teachers do in their classrooms and how they develop (Borg, 2019) – that makes the connection with professional learning and teaching practice has proven critical for the broader enterprise of TESOL.

According to Kanno and Stuart (2011), for novice and experienced teachers alike, there is an “inextricable relationship between teacher identity and classroom practice” (p. 250). In their study, the authors explored two novice L2 teachers' identity development over one academic year and demonstrated how the novices transitioned from the identity of graduate students to that of teachers in a process of prolonged learning-in-practice (Lave, 1996). During that one year of teaching, despite some initial struggles with classroom disruptions, they honed their instructional skills and content expertise and gained a better understanding of the important aspects of teaching that are constructive for their identity formation. Their emerging identities as teachers, in turn, informed their teaching practices by enhancing their teacher authority, thereby increasing their confidence and control over their instruction. Without intending to undermine the importance of knowledge acquisition for learning-to-teach processes, they highlighted that acquiring teacher knowledge should be part of identity development, not the other way around. Their findings raised practical and ethical concerns for teacher education and teacher educators regarding the provision and maximisation of opportunities for teachers to develop activities

aligned with their professional identity development within the specific teaching contexts (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

To ground their arguments about identity development through learning- and identities-in-practice (Lave, 1996; Wenger, 1998), Kanno and Stuart (2011) also drew on Britzman's (1994, p. 54) distinction between role – as a public function assigned externally – and identity – as “a constant and tricky social negotiation” that involves inner commitment. However, they pointed out that the commitment the novice teachers made to becoming professional teachers “did not translate into automatic adoption of a teacher identity”, rather the novice teachers' initial role playing as teachers internalised after a year of learning-in-practice experience; hence their commitment was seen as a requirement for identity development through the learning-in-practice experience. Building on this understanding of commitment as related to ESOL teacher identity, Feryok and Askaribigdeli (2019) examined the relationship between identity (Gee, 2000) and commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) by looking at the contradictions (Engeström, 2015) arising from the study participant's lack of personal commitment to teaching, who had recently started teaching due to limited options based on gender discourses and financial needs. The study found that the actions undertaken by the novice teacher, Mona, along with ongoing community support in her workplace, transcended the contradictions she experienced and enabled her to develop her identity as a teacher, thereby promoting her commitment to teaching. What is important to note here is that Mona's personal and professional commitment alignment did not represent a requirement for teacher identity development, as Kanno and Stuart (2011) argued, but the outcome of her identity development.

ESOL teachers' emotions during the learning-to-teach period and the ongoing professional development process have also received significant attention in recent LTI research. Lasky (2005, p. 901), building on Denzin's (1984) understanding of teaching as an emotional practice, defined emotion as “a heightened state of being that changes as individuals interact with their immediate context, other individuals, and while reflecting on past or future

events". Furthermore, Golombek and Doran (2014) supported Kubanyiova's (2012) call for reconsideration of the conceptual boundaries of teacher cognition (Borg, 2003); rooting their argument in Vygotsky's theory of mind, they theorised the dialectical relationship of emotion with cognition and on par with activity, and pushed the boundaries of language teacher cognition arguing for a recognition of teacher's professional self "as both a thinking and feeling actor engaged in the goal-oriented activity of teaching" (p. 110). Additionally, grounding their own professional development practices as teacher educators in Golombek and Doran's (2014) conceptualisation of cognition, emotion, and activity as a sociocultural dialectic unity, Johnson and Golombek (2016) called for tapping into the emotional dimensions of teacher learning as a resource for teachers' cognitive development in order to support the process of being and becoming a teacher.

As some scholars have highlighted the importance of understanding the affective dimension of ESOL teachers' cognition (Amory & Johnson, 2023; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2016, 2018/2020; Li, 2022; Nguyen, 2018), it is worth pointing out that the research attention is mainly oriented towards the emotional dimension of constructing ESOL teacher professional identity during the learning-to-teach and early career practices (Dang, 2013; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024; Teng, 2017; Weng & Troyan, 2023). For example, researchers who explored ESOL teachers' emotional struggles found that teachers' backgrounds (Miller, 2007), interaction with students (Song, 2016), power relationships with other teachers (Trent, 2013), conflicts with mentor teachers (Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Teng, 2017), structural and material concerns (Li, 2022; Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024; Wang, 2021), lack of appreciation and recognition (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013), self-doubt about language competence (Coşgun & Savaş, 2023; Song, 2016), and negotiation of multiple and emerging identities (Dang, 2013; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023), among others, as influential factors with potentially damaging consequences for ESOL teachers' learning.

In the literature, there is consensus among researchers that the transformation of ESOL teachers' professional identity is fraught with tensions, as evidenced by the studies reviewed above. Tensions may inhibit teachers' professional growth (Nguyen, 2018; Wang & Zhang, 2021; Wang, 2021), even lead to teachers' permanent departure from the profession (Trent, 2017), or drive professional growth and identity development if resolved (Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2017; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023). However, such a professional identity transformation, as a qualitative reorganisation within the teacher, is contingent on the teacher's agency in negotiating the tensions and emotional experiences that may arise from dramatic situations within the sociocultural and political contexts of teaching practice. In the next section, I review the literature on tensions arising from the broader contexts of ESOL teachers' practice.

2.4.2. Considering the Relationship Between Macro Context and Teaching Practice

From a sociocultural perspective, ESOL teacher learning is understood as a way of conceptualising teacher learning for the long-term professional development of practising teachers and the teaching practice as a dialogic process of knowledge construction in which the teachers and the students are engaged together to advance students' cognitive abilities (Johnson, 2009). However, this understanding relies on the fundamental premise that individual cognitive functioning is not separate from the social situations in which it occurs. Therefore, if the goal is to understand who teachers are and who they wish to become within their situated environment, how and why they do what they do in the contexts in which they work, and what kinds of learning opportunities they can create for their students, then it is critical to account for the sociocultural, historical, and political macro-structures that constitute the microenterprise of ESOL teachers' professional worlds (Cross, 2020; Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020).

As ESOL teaching practice and professional development are seen as highly responsive, context-bound (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Johnson, 2009), and socially situated (Grossman et al., 2009; Korthagen, 2010), their relationship with the macro, meso, and micro contexts, has been documented in the literature (Avalos, 2011; Borg, 2003, 2009; Burns &

Richards, 2009; Cross, 2006; Dang, 2012, 2017; Dang & Cross, 2022; Dang & Marginson, 2013; Johnson, 2009). However, Cross (2010) and Dang and Cross (2022) argued that, despite the longstanding awareness of the impact of context on practice, English language teacher education research still struggles to theorise context and systematically investigate its influence on practice. Since what teachers do in their classrooms, how they think and position themselves, shapes and is shaped by who they are, these contextual forces impacting their practice also shape their professional identity transformation, and as such deserve greater attention in the ESOL teacher identity and teacher education research.

In a paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) in 2006, held at the University of South Australia in Adelaide, Cross (2006) called for more research into understanding the impact of context on LTI formation and development, and its relationship with teachers' classroom practice. Pointing out the dissonance between language teacher education and the actual practice in the classrooms, as evidenced through his study's findings, he elaborated on the ongoing debate over the focus of the knowledge base – centred on the argument about the content of teaching – and argued that the teaching practice “is *not* contingent on selecting the “right” content about how to teach language. Rather, “who language teachers are” – and, by extension then, “what language teaching is” – is grounded within, and emerges from, their contextual social, cultural, and historical circumstances” (p. 7, emphasis in original). Therefore, the key to rethinking the knowledge base lies in educating teachers to be mindful of the contexts in which they work, as this is fundamental to what they do.

Additionally, Cross (2010) noted that a renewed interest in the context-practice relationship “has emerged from the dissonance often noted between what teachers *think* and what teachers *do*” (p. 436, emphasis in original), in particular, post the psychocognitive paradigm, which assumed a causal relationship between teachers' internal mental processes and their external physical practices that later proved to be incorrect. In this sense, Johnson and

Golombek (2018/2020, p. 120) acknowledged context as expansive, including “sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and/or socioeconomic contexts that shape and are shaped by local and global events”; hence, these contexts create a teaching practice riddled with contradictions, which may be viewed as central to the development of new forms of thinking fundamental for teachers’ professional development and teaching expertise (Johnson & Golombek, 2011a).

An example from recent history of how macro context shapes micro-level teaching practice is the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic escalated into a major worldwide health and socioeconomic crisis in early 2020, governments around the globe, in an attempt to slow down the contagion, declared states of emergency and enforced radical social distancing and confinement measures. According to Marioni et al. (2020, p. 8), as of April 2020, more than 3.4 billion people or 43% of the world population, were in lockdown in 80 countries, schools and higher education institutions were closed in 185 countries, which affected 89.4% of total enrolled students. The impact of the “new normal” of the education practices – the remote online learning – envisioned then as a temporary measure, had a long-lasting effect and included the expectations that teachers can swiftly change, rethink, and adapt their practices and knowledge to a new environment, learn and manage the use of new resources and media of teaching, all while trying to cater for their students’ educational and emotional needs.

Tran-Thanh et al.’s (2023) study showed how this rapidly changing contextual environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted ESOL teachers’ teaching practice. Even though the technology integration in their practices was already underway due to national and institutional policy reforms in the late 2000s, the unprecedented situation of the pandemic imposed an enormous contextual pressure to which each of the five ESOL teachers responded differently in adapting their teaching practice and reconstructing their unique professional identity in accordance with their personal tech-related and pedagogical beliefs and their agency. Their beliefs, roles, and competence informed and were informed by their identities, continuously and cyclically; these, along with the help of their social environment at their

workplace, which served as a foundation for the teachers' agency, contributed to the way the teachers responded at the micro-level of their practice to the rapidly changing situation in the macro context.

Even though the recent pandemic provides a clear example of the impact of global macro context on ESOL teaching practice, research in TESOL has long established that powerful macro-structures play a significant role in shaping teacher learning and development, teaching practice, and ultimately, student learning (Day, 2002; Janu & Mbato, 2023; Johnson, 2009; Liu & Xu, 2011; Q. T. N. Nguyen et al., 2023; Salinas, 2017; Xie & Dong, 2020). Educational reform policies, curriculum mandates, high-stakes tests, and local and global ideologies about the norms of schooling embedded in instructional contexts are seen as cultural-historical artefacts that mediate teacher learning and practice. Typically intended to implement various types of change in content, delivery, and outcome of education practices in a top-down manner, these macro-structures are rarely evidenced to live up to the policymakers' expected impact (Johnson, 2009). Often, teachers struggle to adapt to these changes and to enact them in their teaching practice, resulting in internal contradictions that mediate their learning and development, their teaching, and their students' learning opportunities.

Indeed, this was confirmed in Liu and Xu's (2011) study. They conducted a narrative study at a university in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province in southern China, which has long been regarded as China's economic, social, and educational reform centre owing to its proximity to Hong Kong. In their study, they examined the role of the workplace – newly informed by liberal pedagogy – in teachers' professional development and in relation to the broader socio-political context of three waves of national and institutional education reforms and restructuring, with the first one taking place in 1995 and the third and most intensive one in 2004. According to the researchers, the goal of the latest institutional reform to ELT was the implementation of 'Five Differences' or changes in terms of language teaching (from teacher-centred to student-centred), content (from simplicity to multiplicity), teaching methods (from one-

way transmission to multi-way interaction), assessment (from mechanical to formative), and learning environment (reaching beyond the classroom to the internet, and into society). Their findings revealed that the teachers had to shift their LTIs to survive the changes arising from the reform. Since the teachers were more comfortable using traditional pedagogy, implementing liberal pedagogy created a tension of 'competing pedagogies, competing discourses' in their workplace. Additionally, as the reform changes were perceived as unwelcomed by the teachers, their effect on their LTI development was highly negative to the extent of resorting to non-participation as a coping strategy. The authors cautioned against implementing imported pedagogies as a top-down package and argued for recognising local teachers' agency in the implementation process. This study showed how internalising external events became an emotional experience for the teachers, significantly affecting their practice.

Similarly, the teachers in Xie and Dong's (2020) study felt marginalised and powerless to adapt to the new policy requiring teachers to be double-qualified in teaching English and other subject knowledge, such as accounting or tourism. The glim chance of becoming double-qualified had a detrimental impact on their practice and identity as teachers. Reports about feeling worthless and unrecognised and a sense of job insecurity were among the most common emotional outcomes of the situation. In line with these findings, Salinas (2017) concluded that the demands from the educational authorities (the excessive load of administrative tasks, the implementation of a non-coherent ELT national curriculum, the pressure of the national standardised test, and the frequent school inspections), that in turn derived from reform changes, had a detrimental impact on the EFL teachers' practice and identity, which resulted in a sense of frustration and even resignation.

Janu and Mbato (2023) adopted Salinas' (2017) framework of micro and macro contextual factors impacting senior teachers' professional identity development to explore how the specific micro and macro contexts impact the professional identity of Indonesian teachers working in the rural area of Manggarai, Nusa Tenggara Timur. Despite the apparent challenges

of education practice in rural areas, such as inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, unequal funding, issues of poverty and underdevelopment, and inadequate teacher salaries, the study's findings revealed that apart from the time-consuming nature of the administrative demands and the pressure from the national examination due to the educational reforms, the teachers' perceived the various micro and macro-level factors as positively influencing on their professional identity. In fact, the teachers' positive experiences from their interaction with students and colleagues, the sense of recognition, and the access to opportunities for professional support were deemed crucial for creating an environment conducive to professional growth. Contributing to the teachers' professional identity development, the study highlighted the teachers' emotional dimension, arising from the social interaction with students and colleagues, sense of appreciation and the overall positive working climate, and their cognitive dimension, which underlined the need for professional development; however, it neglected to account for the teachers' agency as a fundamental dimension in enacting their emotions and cognitive development.

In a recent study on the interplay between the nationwide English language assessment policies and provision in Vietnam – the macro context – and the practices of variety of educational institutions ranging from the public and the private sector and from secondary to university level – the micro context – Nguyen et al. (2023) concluded that even though the macro contexts provide a potentially firm ground for more consistent quality management and structured professional training for teachers to improve their assessment practices, the micro contexts of the decentralised education system hindered that potential due to the limited provision of resources and the issues arising from the teachers' varying language and assessment competences. The five participants worked as education specialists and leaders. They were selected for the study because of their position as key staff members responsible for drafting English education policies and working closely with the authorities on their implementation within their respective institutions. The data collected from the interviews were

coded and categorised into macro and micro contextual levels. The tensions between the micro and macro levels in the policy implementation process were identified as reciprocal and resolvable through a flexible approach, two-way support, and joint effort by all stakeholders.

The complexity of theorisation of context and how it shapes practice gets even more compounded by phenomena that extend beyond geographical boundaries but exert significant influence on educational activities through the intertwined global, national, and local spheres (Cross, 2020; Dang & Cross, 2022). In this sense, Dang and Cross (2022), drawing on Vygotskian sociocultural activity theory and globalisation theory, argued for a novel conceptual approach to theorising globalised macro contexts within English language teacher education and understanding globally affected micro contexts of English teaching practices and teachers' professional development. Additionally, in their paper, using data collected from a major research project on teacher learning and practices in an English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI) teacher education program established in 2000 at a public university in Vietnam (Dang, 2012, 2013, 2017; Dang & Marginson, 2013; Dang et al., 2013), they showed how their proposed conceptual lens sheds light on how global-national-local dimensions impact teachers' practice and how teacher education is globalised through the adoption of EMI in education in non-native English-speaking countries at various educational levels. The analysis revealed that the pre-service teachers' practices were shaped by macro-meso-micro interactions in the global, national, and local (glonacal) settings and highlighted the teachers' agency and augmented subjectivity in the process: "As they acted to respond to the environment ..., they also transformed themselves" (Dang & Cross, 2022, p. 19).

2.4.3. The Role of Language in Learning and Development

From a sociocultural perspective the nature of language is fundamentally social because language is seen as a constellation of social activities that gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways, where "the language used to describe an activity gains its meaning not from some underlying representation encoded in the words themselves but in concrete

communicative activity in specific sociocultural contexts” (Johnson, 2009, p. 44). From this perspective, meaning does not reside in the vocabulary or grammar of the language; rather, it is situated in the ever-changing sociocultural practices in which individuals engage; hence, language gains meaning through the ways in which people use it.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that language is essential for understanding the socially constructed meaning of human experience and for transforming that experience into cultural knowledge. Hence, language functions as a communicative or cultural tool, used to interact with others, share experiences, and jointly construct cultural knowledge that is then transmitted from one generation to the next. However, more significantly, Vygotsky argued that language, as a cultural tool, can also function as a psychological tool that shapes individual thinking and higher mental functioning. In this sense, “culturally constructed meaning is the primary means that humans use to organise and control mental functioning, and for this reason, language development and use plays a central role in Vygotsky’s theory of mind” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 1).

As a sociocultural perspective on human learning and cognitive development assumes higher forms of human mental activity and knowledge to be mediated by socially constructed symbolic means or artefacts, language is considered to be the primary means of mediation (Johnson, 2009; Lantolf, 2004; Stetsenko, 2004). In this sense, as a psychological tool, language allows humans to mediate their thinking through speech (John-Steiner, 2007). According to Blunden (2021), Vygotsky pointed to the centrality of language and the importance of analysing speech in his first publication (1924/1997), however, it took him nearly ten years to settle on the spoken word (word-meaning) as a unit of analysis to analyse the development of intellect (verbal thinking) from infancy to adulthood (1934/1987). It is important to note here that Vygotsky understood word-meaning as an action, that is to speak, to say and mean something, is to act with a word, and that action through a meaningful word carries intention (Blunden, 2021, p. 46). In his last work, *Thinking and Speech* (1934/1987), Vygotsky argued that people

appropriate the cultural knowledge of their community through communication, through the spoken word as the archetypal cultural artefact. To summarise the findings of the investigation of thinking and speech through a historical theory of inner speech, Vygotsky (1934/1987, p. 283, emphasis in original) wrote:

The relationship of thought to word is a vital process that involves the birth of thought in the word. ... The connection between thought and word is not a primal connection that is given once and forever. It arises in development and itself develops.

In continuation, referring to the primacy of the action and overvaluation of words that Goethe expressed in Faust's line "In the beginning was the *deed*" as a reply to the Biblical phrase "In the beginning was the word", Vygotsky responded by altering Goethe's emphasis on the 'deed' onto the temporal developmental trajectory and wrote: "In the *beginning* was the deed", meaning "the word is the end that crowns the deed".

Furthermore, the strong link between human cognitive development and social interaction, and the essential role language plays in the creation of higher psychological functions, is highlighted in Vygotsky's (1931/1997, p. 105) core argument regarding the process of internalisation:

Every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation of two people. The means of acting on oneself is initially a means of acting on others or a means of action of others on the individual.

Vygotsky's writings underscore the significance of social relations in driving cognitive development and point out the role of mediational means, such as language, in the reorganisation of psychological processes. As a dialectical unity of the internal (psychological) and the external (sociocultural), internalisation is a concept about the appropriation of mediational means as one's own (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Kozulin (2018, p. 38) explains that in formal learning activities, "the process of mediation is followed by that of internalisation", which

in turn “leads to the development of students’ metacognition and supports the formation of scientific or academic concepts”.

As internalisation primarily, however not exclusively (e.g., private speech), takes place in a “socioculturally mediated communicative interaction” (van Compernelle, 2015, p. 18), which allows for interpsychological functioning, language, from a sociocultural perspective, is understood as a social practice, where meaning is central, situated, and dependent on the context of language use (Johnson, 2009). Embracing a conceptualisation of language as social practice, according to Johnson (2009), means setting aside formalist approaches to language study and accepting and becoming consciously aware of how language use expresses meanings that are conceptual and that mediate thinking. Here, language, as a communicative activity, is a site of human mediation, where meanings are central and expressed through the ways of seeing, feeling, and being in the world. Similarly, Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 5) argue that acquiring language means “acquiring new conceptual knowledge and/or modifying already existing knowledge as a way of re-mediating one’s interaction with the world and with one’s own psychological functioning.”

To ground their position on language, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) and Johnson (2006) drew on Agar’s (1994) concept of *languaculture* – a reunification of language and culture – created to capture the fundamentally social nature of human consciousness and the role of humans’ most important symbolic artefact – language – in the development of consciousness. Moreover, Agar critiqued Saussurian, Bloomfieldian, and Chomskyan understandings of language as a stable system of signs that carry meanings corresponding to an external reality and are separated from culture. With the concept of *languaculture*, he reestablished the unity between culture and language, where people create meanings in social and goal-oriented activities mediated by language. In this way, he positioned meaning along form as dialectically dependent upon one another.

According to Agar (1994, p. 20), “culture is an awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and opens paths to other ways of being”. Agar proceeds by explaining that, when one learns a new language, culture starts at the point when one realises that one has a problem with the language; however, the problem that one has is with who one is. Therefore, to learn a new language, one must change oneself. Culture happens in language, and being aware of the world of meanings in one’s own language while building a bridge to another is accepting new ways of being. Accepting new meanings in relationship with others means turning a life of Being into a life of Becoming (Agar, 1994, p. 28).

From this perspective, one’s *languaculture* offers language users symbolic artefacts to construct meanings and enact socially situated identities through engagement in social activities (Johnson, 2009). However, Johnson (2009) argues that, considering the fluid and unstable nature of the *languaculture*, for language teachers to be able to provide an environment conducive to the development of their students’ capacity to generate personal meanings within the relevant *languaculture*, they must become reflective practitioners of language and consciously aware of the underlying concepts embedded in the meanings of language use. As a sociocultural perspective on formal schooling acknowledges the interrelatedness of teaching, learning, and the development of the mind, it emphasises the importance of active engagement, the resources used, and the outcome of the activity (Johnson, 2009). From this perspective, “language is at once a psychological tool to be internalised and the means through which internalisation may take place” (van Compernelle, 2015, p. 12).

As previously discussed, Vygotsky (1978) located the origins of higher psychological functions in social interaction. These functions, however, appear twice, “first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, *between* people (*interpsychological*) and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)” (p. 57, emphasis in original). To understand this internal course of cognitive development according to individuals’ abilities, Vygotsky used the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Here, he spoke of the difference between a person’s ability to

do something independently and with the help of more knowledgeable others. After elaborating on this idea, he concluded: “The actual developmental level characterises mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterises mental development prospectively” (1978, p. 86). A significant claim that Vygotsky put forward here is the possibility of uncovering psychological functions that are ‘in the process of maturation’ and only possible through external mediation and internalisation of mediational means – a claim that established the unity of the learning and internal developmental processes and presupposed that learning precedes development as a sequence, which results in zones of proximal development.

This broadening of the ZPD concept established the relationship between learning and cognitive development; however, it also stressed the central role of language (i.e., dialogic mediation) in the process of cognitive development in formal schooling. In this regard, Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 289) elaborated that the relationship of learning to development depends on dialogic mediation, i.e., the ways the socialisation processes, which include the practical engagement in learning activities mediated by expert others, provide opportunities for the construction of psychological tools that, once internalised by the developing individuals, are then used to increase their participation in and produce culturally organised activity. What this means for learning and development is that properly organised social interaction has the potential to enable cognitive development through the “social activities learners engage in, the resources they use to do so, and what is being accomplished by engaging in those activities” (Johnson, 2009, p. 71). Conclusively, considering the role of language as a cultural and psychological tool essential for social interaction and conceptual development, how language is understood, used, and transformed in purposeful professional learning activities sets the stage for learning and cognitive development.

2.5. TESOL in Neoliberal Contexts

As the understanding of ‘who’ teachers are – which is fundamental for understanding the activity of teaching itself and informing the knowledge base of language teacher education –

extends beyond the individual, it must account for teachers' professional lives as situated within the circumstances of their professional worlds. However, to understand teachers' professional worlds, we need to look beyond their immediate environment and into their broader political and economic context. Therefore, this literature review section examines the influences of neoliberal market-oriented thinking and aspects of political economy on education in general, and the TESOL industry in particular.

First, it introduces the origin and meanings of neoliberalism through its troubling development as a concept and its largely disputed nature as a term in the wider literature; it focuses on how neoliberalism came to establish itself as a common currency in academic and public discourse and looks at the role that key international organisations played in the process of the epistemological shift of neoliberal ideology into social practice. The second part reviews literature from education in general and higher education and TESOL in particular that considers the education-economy nexus and how neoliberal ideas of economisation, performativity, accountability, and managerialism have penetrated and become the norm of education policy and practice. It looks at how reforms foregrounding standardisation and evidence-based paradigm (deemed crucial for improving education 'quality') distort the democratic dimension of teachers' professionalism, opening questions about the purpose of education, the redefinition and deprofessionalisation of significant roles and relationships within the educational landscape, and, more importantly, questions about human action, thought, knowing, and creating.

The final part of this section examines how applying neoliberal market logic to TESOL has motivated research into the role of the English language in the economy and society, particularly in terms of its value. After briefly addressing the relatively recent turn to political economy in applied linguistic research, the discussion extends into the various ambiguities in the literature regarding foundational notions of the English language as a resource, commodity, capital, and instrument.

2.5.1. The Neoliberal Turn: From an Economic Ideology to an Organising Societal

Principle

The economic philosophies of Enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, laid the groundwork for liberal ideas. These ideas then evolved in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into a liberal economic ideology that advocated for a free-market economy, grounded in the self-interest of individuals and a commitment to *laissez-faire* and free trade. These developments in economic thinking, along with the turbulent years of the twentieth century, predicated the rise of neoliberal thought as theorised in the Chicago School of Economics of the 1950s and in particular in the work of its most prominent alumnus and Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman, who, as a principal critic of Keynesian economics, believed in the efficacy of free market for resource organisation and contended for enacting strict monetary policies by the government as a way out of inflation, even at the cost of social hardship.

Gaining prominence in the late 1970s and early 1980s, monetarism combined with fiscal incentives became influential in shaping the regulatory reforms of President Ronald Reagan's administration in the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's government in the United Kingdom. By the mid-1990s, with the global integration of national markets and the influence of powerful international economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, neoliberalism as a political philosophy with various permutations and a compelling narrative of high economic growth, followed by improved living conditions, had moved to the central stage as a policy in many governments of the West, Global South, and East. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the concept of neoliberalism became a common currency in academic and public discourse; since then, it has swiftly transformed into an organising principle of numerous societies across the globe (Harvey, 2005). During the last two decades, however, despite its high degree of adaptability, neoliberalism has come under a series of challenges that have boosted the politics of national populism and raised questions about its dominance and future (Steger & Roy, 2021).

Generally, neoliberalism refers to the influence of market-driven rationality on people's choices and their overall thinking, being, and acting in the world. The author of one of the most prominent books on neoliberalism, David Harvey (2005), identified neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices" grounded in the idea of advancing human well-being by "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). He further pointed out that the role of the state does not extend beyond tasks in the service of creating and preserving the institutional framework. In such an organised form of governmentality, the state advocates for creating economic-rational individuals as competitive entrepreneurs (Olssen & Peters, 2005). The marketised logic of state and individual behaviour determines the core tenets of neoliberal ideology, such as "competition, consumerism, individualisation, profit-making, and capital accumulation" (Shah et al., 2023, p. 4).

Interested in the epistemological shift of neoliberal ideology into social practice through discourse, Holborow (2012) pointed out that the term ideology captures "the interaction between the material and the representational, ... between what happens in society and what appears to be common sense" (p. 24). As neoliberal thinking pervaded key international organisations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, along with the Asian Development Bank and the Association of South East Asian Nations, the global spread of neoliberal practices energised the ideological discourse of neoliberalism transcending it as a rational worldview into all sectors of society (Hadley, 2015). For example, Shamir (2008) theorised the moralisation of the market and posited that the discourse and practice of business and morality are grounded in a market-embedded epistemology that dissolves the distinction between economy and society; in this sense, he treats neoliberalism "neither as a concrete economic doctrine nor as a definite set of political projects" but

as a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organised around a certain imagination of the 'market' as a basis for 'the universalisation

of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives. (p. 3)

In a similar vein, Harvey (2005) argued that the concept of neoliberalism has become “hegemonic as a mode of discourse” and pervaded the political-economic thought and practice to such an extent that it is now part of the “common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (p. 3).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that neoliberalism is a term predominantly used in critically oriented literature and not common in neoclassical economists' and free marketers' writings (Holborow, 2012). The largely disputed nature of neoliberalism as a term – used as an excessively vague, diverse, or all-inclusive concept running the risk of uselessness due to dilution and, more often than not, within a pejorative normative connotation – has resulted in a lack of agreement among scholars in defining its meaning (Rutar, 2023). In a similar and rather illustrative manner, Rogers (2018, para. 1) pointed out the “neoliberalism’s identity problem” rooted in the term’s conceptual ambiguity, describing it as “the linguistic omnivore of our times, a neologism that threatens to swallow up all the other words around it”.

To bring some clarity to the numerous interpretations of the concept, Watts (2022), identified four common ways of thinking about neoliberalism:

1. As a set of economic policies – usually not a normative view of the concept and referring to the dissemination and enactment of economic reforms by the Reagan administration in the US and the Thatcher government in the UK, including the global spread of these policies through international economic organisations.
2. As a hegemonic ideological project, whose proponents, among whom Harvey (2005) as the most prominent one, take up a neo-Marxist account of the philosophical-political underpinnings of the origin, rollout and expansion of neoliberalism.
3. As a political rationality and form of governmentality – understood in the Foucauldian sense as a political rule or ‘art of government’ (Foucault, 2008).

4. As a specific type of embodied subjectivity, seeking to critique the notion of a neoliberal subject as defined by neo-Marxists and Foucaultians and evidencing the extent of embodiment of neoliberalism (2) and/or (3) within actual individuals through discourse of personal responsibility, autonomy and individualism, and authenticity and self-realisation.

Hammarfelt and Hallonsten (2022), referring to Watts's (2022) overview, observe two possible ways of understanding neoliberalism. Namely, the dominant global orthodoxy of neoliberalism as a hegemonic ideology that pervades all aspects of contemporary society, including our identities, may be referred to as a wider definition of the concept or a 'broad' theory. In contrast, the view of neoliberalism as a set of economic policies and ideals about governmentality may be described as a more concrete definition or a 'narrow' theory of neoliberalism.

2.5.2. The Education-Economy Nexus

Over the last three decades, neoliberal ideas of economisation, performativity, and managerialism have gradually gained momentum, establishing themselves as "common sense" in education (Zimmerman, 2018). First witnessed in the early 1990s in the United States at a time of massive financial cuts to government support for higher education (HE), followed by a rapid shift in the HE model towards one akin to private corporations, the process of change in HE values and essence spread out globally (Aronowitz, 2000; Aronowitz & Giroux, 2000). In this system, the logic of economic efficiency sets the course of action, and things tend to be appraised by their market rather than their moral value (Naz, 2023). Perhaps Ball (2012c) most succinctly captures the essence of neoliberalism at work in education by noting that "[t]he unstated and usually unexamined subtext of neoliberalism is not doctrine but money, particularly and crucially in the form of profit" (p. 23). This shift of education as a public good towards education in the service of the market (Welch, 2013), followed by processes of privatisation, deregulation, financialisation, and globalisation, rapidly became the norm and dominant global political philosophy in education (Radice, 2013, pp. 407-408, as cited in Tight, 2019).

Tight (2019) justifiably noted that the already ripe state of standardisation and emphases on achievement and measurement in education reinforced the rapid spread of this neoliberal climate through the surge of educational reforms as part of the economic transformation processes. For example, in 1997, OECD launched its flagship Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as an international benchmarking based on a common scale measuring 15-year-old students' knowledge in mathematics, reading, and science, i.e., their learning outcomes, later updated to also explore other domains, such as students' abilities to think critically and creatively (PISA 2022) and students' capacity to engage in an iterative, self-regulated process of learning and problem-solving using digital tools (PISA 2025). This evidence-based policy seeking to quantify nations' education systems to provide evidence for 'best practice' of quality education and prepare students to be future-ready and economically competitive has been a matter of numerous concerns within the academic community (Volante & Mattei, 2024).

In May 2014, The Guardian newspaper (Andrews, 2014) and numerous other newspapers worldwide published an open letter signed by more than a hundred academics worldwide, which was addressed to the OECD Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills, Andreas Schleicher. In the letter, the main concerns raised were about the OECD and PISA reliance on quantitative measures, orientation to short-term fixes designed for competitive purposes, neglect of less measurable or immeasurable educational objectives, bias in favour of the economic role of schools, lack of clear mandates for improving education, harmful impact of continuous cycles of global testing, and decreased professional autonomy of teachers.

Such reforms that foreground a standardisation paradigm in teaching and learning as something precious and crucial for improving quality and ensuring equity in education represent a form of knowledge. This particular episteme aims to attach homogeneity to heterogeneous and diverse contexts (Rasco, 2020). Assuming a generic approach to teaching, learning, and knowledge – akin to “polyester stretch pants, one style, one size fits all” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 47)

– these practices of standardisation that seek to capitalise on an individual’s potential for economic growth promote managerial professionalism reinforced by an audit culture boasting performativity, accountability, and effectiveness (Zhu, 2022).

In line with these views, Biesta (2020a) identified three distortions of the democratic dimension of professionalism (in fields such as health care and education) due to the rise of neoliberal forms of governance and governing: “(1) the transformation of clients, patients and also students into customers; (2) the transformation of a democratic conception of accountability into a technical-managerial conception; and (3) the transformation of professional knowledge into ‘evidence’, linked to the idea of evidence-based practice” (p. 104). Biesta (2020a) further explained that each distortion, spearheading its way with formal notions of ‘quality’, ‘choice’ and ‘customer comes first’, centres around the need for data, information, and measurement, which, as readily available, reinforce the erosive power of the contemporary culture of measurement upon the democratic potential of education professionals.

Consequently, the cascading reform changes, regimes of performativity (Ball, 2012b), and pressures of high-stakes testing have led to a reconfiguration of the purpose of education. In multiple publications, Biesta (2009, 2010, 2013, 2020b) expressed his concerns about the shift in educational discourse, policy, and practice towards the ‘new language of learning’ in contemporary societies – referring to education as ‘teaching and learning’, to students as ‘learners’, to adult education as ‘lifelong learning’, to teachers as ‘facilitators’ and to schools as ‘learning environments’. In particular, he questioned the content and purpose of education within this new notion of learning that he termed the *learnification* of educational discourse and practice, describing it as “the partly unintended outcome” of the impact of constructivist theories of learning centred on learners and their learning activities, the critique of authoritarian teaching practices, the vast expansion of a variety of forms and modes of learning, and the individualising impact of neoliberal policies that position the individuals as responsible for their own lifelong learning (Biesta, 2013, p. 5).

To frame the discussion about “the aims and ends of education”, Biesta (2010, pp. 19-22) proposed a distinction between three domains of educational purpose: (1) *qualification* – how individuals acquire essential knowledge, skills, values and dispositions and become qualified to do certain things and function in society; (2) *socialisation* – how individuals become part of social, cultural, political, professional, etc. worlds through education and by appropriation of existing norms and ways of being and doing things; and (3) *subjectification* – how individuals become independent or autonomous in their actions and responsibilities. Whereas the qualification and socialisation functions play a role in preparing the future workforce by empowering individuals to operate within existing socio-cultural and political settings, hence contributing to economic development and growth, the subjectification function is oriented towards the freedom of being and doing in ways that lead to change and enactment of different ways of being and doing. What Biesta (2010) underlined here is the awareness of the differences in these three dimensions, which may lead to a potential conflict, especially between the qualification and socialisation dimension on one side and the subjectification dimension on the other; nevertheless, he pinpointed that it is securing a meaningful balance or synergy between the three domains that should be the utmost purpose of any good education.

Of great importance to Biesta (2009, 2010, 2013, 2020b, 2020c, 2023) is the concept of subjectification, which concerns freedom as an existential matter. In other words, it is not about ‘who’ but rather about ‘how’ one exists or is a ‘subject’ of one’s own life and not an ‘object’ of educational action; it is about acting or not acting at own will in situations of everyday life; it is a matter of free will and agency in and with the world. Here, ‘in and with’ the world represents the complex network through which one acts with other human beings and with consideration of the real limits this living together poses to one’s freedom (Biesta, 2020b). Therefore, it is deeply concerned with the questions of consciousness and language as well as questions of democracy concerning individual freedom and public good, which open up questions of human

action, thought, knowing, and creating – questions that collide with neoliberal imperatives of quantification and dehumanising objectification (Hooley, 2018).

In sharp contrast to Biesta's (2009, 2010, 2020c) understanding of good education stands Hadley's (2015) description of a contemporary neoliberal university as "a self-interested, entrepreneurial organisation offering recursive educational experiences and research services for paying clients", where educators become "managed knowledge producers who should ideally follow prescribed sets of organisational process" (p. 6). Here, Hadley critically depicted the economic and political dynamics of the market-driven forces prevailing in neoliberal thinking in the higher education (HE) sector. Furthermore, describing the purpose of education as a way of "producing" knowledge inevitably imposes a recalibration of the roles of students and teachers in HE as entrepreneurial subjects. In this sense, students are "knowledge consumers", "paying clients", or customers, and the teachers are "managed knowledge producers" who must act according to prescribed organisational processes and justify their teaching practice to the university through quantitative measures (Hadley, 2015).

This reduction of teachers to "producers/providers, educational entrepreneurs and managers" based on competitive performativity (Ball, 2003, p. 218) and students to consumers has contributed to the rise of the new culture of accountability within the evidence-based approach to education, which ignited a shift in the discussion or logic of accountability – from one about politics towards one about economics – and resulted in a redefinition and deprofessionalisation of significant relationships in the educational landscape, such as between schools/teachers and parents/students, in economic terms and ends, "rather than a means for achieving other ends" (Biesta, 2010, p. 59) in terms of common educational good. This process creates a gap between professionals (e.g., teachers) – now redefined as providers – and their clients (e.g., students) – redefined as customers. This gap is filled with a whole machinery of quality controllers (Biesta, 2020a, p. 107), supposedly making professionals more accountable to the public (by publishing targets and establishing procedures) and good performance

(manifested in admirable rhetoric of improvement, best practice, and respect); however what actually happens is making professionals accountable to regulators, government departments, funders, and legal standards followed by an imposition of a range of different and mutually inconsistent forms of central control and focus on performance indicators that are easily measured and controllable rather than accurate in terms of the quality performance (O'Neill, 2002, as cited in Biesta, 2010, p. 108).

Teacher evaluations and student assessments, particularly ones proliferated through high-stakes standardised testing, are the hallmarks of these educational reforms, as educational success is seen as something that needs to be quantified to be determined as effective and efficient (Hong et al., 2022). These types of measurement assume knowledge to be “a one-way conduit of truth” and learning to be an abstracted and impersonal experience (Hooley, 2015, p. 75); therefore, they treat education as an objectively categorised system (DeSaxe, 2015, p. 2), and teaching as a calculable and comparable output (Clarke, 2013, p. 230). As Hooley (2015) pointed out: “[t]esting knowledge and learning in a way that does not draw upon personal culture and experience is like being coached in tennis and being tested on swimming” (p. 75). Moreover, referring to the accuracy, reliability, and validity of testing, Hooley (2015) questioned the assumptions made regarding knowledge and learning, and whether “tests measure what we want to measure, can they be applied fairly and consistently across different groups, and how accurate are the results?” (p. 73). On a similar note, Biesta (2020a), in a discussion about the differences between the technical and normative validity of measurements, emphasised that “it is the question of whether we are measuring what we value, or whether we are valuing what is being measured” (p. 101).

Furthermore, this standardisation paradigm, as an instrument of economic policy, then leads to centralised control over curriculum and teaching practice (Hong et al., 2022). It shifts schooling priorities toward improving efficiency, performance, and competitiveness, thereby creating pressure to achieve higher student scores and university rankings. In a similar sense,

the growing authority and power of English language tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS), as global measures of English proficiency standards, have fuelled the spread of edu-businesses with significant implications for teachers' practice and role (Barnes, 2017). The economic redefinition of education as instrumental – getting good scores and pursuing education for obtaining a degree and qualification for securing a job and earning a living – ignores “the whole host of broad aims of education articulated in the history of educational thought” and manifests an inadequate view of students by conceiving them “as little more than future ‘workers’ or, more generously, future ‘economic agents’ – that is, as little more than cogs in an all-encompassing economic engine” (Siegel, 2004, pp. 226-227).

Additionally, as performativity and measures of productivity represent “the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement” (Ball, 2003, p. 216), they are also “mechanisms for reforming teachers (scholars and researchers) and for changing what it means to be a teacher” (Ball, 2003, p. 217). According to Zhu (2022, p. 3), the teacher preparation programmes underpinned by market-based logic and measurable outcomes “do not often give teachers enough time and space to reflect upon their sense of agency, identity formation, and resilience development”, which are vital factors for teachers' well-functioning and well-being in the workplace. Moreover, restricting teachers' agency in navigating the meaning of effective teaching discourages teachers' “beliefs about teaching and learning, their decision capital, and agentic judgement and actions ... as they are considered to be secondary to the primacy of performativity” (Hong et al., 2022, p. 19).

The demand for evidence-based practice grounded in the question of ‘what works’, which assumes a cause-effect relationship between aims and ends of professional action, neglects to consider professional judgment regarding the ‘how’ and the ‘what for’ and contributes to the erosion of the democratic dimension of professionalism by transforming professions into “abstract ‘machines’ in which reflection and judgement are seen as weakness

rather than an essential part of it, thus completely misunderstanding what a practice such as education actually is” (Biesta, 2020a). Within this climate, teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning, their thoughts and actions, are discouraged due to being secondary to performativity (Hong et al., 2022); this, in turn, results in removing their professional autonomy and undermining their exercise of judgement, thus reducing their teaching “to a technical rather than an ethical, critical or creative act” (Clarke & Phelan, 2015), reconfiguring their professional learning, and, ultimately, challenging their professional identity (Ball, 2003; Reeves, 2018).

2.5.3. The Role of Language in the Political Economy of TESOL

The neoliberal turn to the market as a “dominant way to frame all manner of day-to-day activity” (Block, 2017, p. 39) has had significant effects on the rapid growth of the TESOL industry and on the motives, ways, and contexts in which the English language is learned and taught. As noted in the previous section of this literature review, the effect of adopting a market-oriented mentality towards public services, such as health care and education, has been detrimental to the domains of social activity organised around the notions of service to public good and community building, as these now have come to be framed in the service of the market. The extension of such thinking brought forward the interpellation of individuals as entrepreneurial actors (Brown, 2005). In this sense, Block (2017, p. 41) noted:

This move from the collective to the individual, from human beings as social beings to human beings as individuals, leads to a pessimistic view of human existence. Human beings are seen not just as consumers and not just as skills bundles, but as competitors for resources.

The most common ways of understanding the value of education and the importance of knowledge in terms of capital and investment derived from the work of Theodore Schultz – Chairman of the Chicago School of Economics from 1946 to 1961 and winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Economic Science – and his fellow Mont Pèlerin Society member and 1992 Nobel Prize winner, Gary Becker, who popularised the term ‘human capital’ and developed it into a

theory known as the Human Capital Theory (HCT) in the early 1960s. As mentioned, the investment and human capital discourse emerged in Schultz's work. In 1930, Schultz received a PhD in agricultural economics from the University of Wisconsin. It was at a time while he was studying agricultural production and looking at the farms' resources allocation and performances, when he concluded that the human factor, more precisely the workers' education and skills, is what matters in producing greater economic output; thus, he saw education "as an investment activity which develops human capital" for economic growth (Schultz, 1962, p. 2).

Interestingly, Schultz used the term 'human capital' with caution; as he pointed out: "[t]he mere thought of investment in human beings is offensive to some among us. Our values and beliefs inhibit us from looking upon human beings as capital goods" (Schultz, 1961, p. 2). Becker, however, showed no such reservations and postulated economic growth on account of education, the rise of technology, and the need for educated workers as "investment in human capital also has an important effect on observed earnings because earnings tend to be net of investment costs and gross of investment returns" (1962, p. 43), meaning educated workers would be more productive and increase profits. Holborow (2018) summarised the HCT's motto as 'learning equals earning'.

After Heyneman (1980a, 1980b) introduced the idea of HCT into the World Bank lending program in education to replace the notion of manpower planning (as documented in the 1980 *World Development Report*), the investment and human capital discourse (as postulated in the HCT's economic optimisation logic) was employed in education policy recommendations. For example, in the report titled *Education and the Economy in a Changing Society*, OECD (1989) stated that "'education' is becoming less clearly distinct from that which is 'the economy'" (p. 19) and argued that with the increased importance of the 'human factor', the process of skills formation for the acquisition of competence and qualifications is to "become a more crucial determinant of economic well-being and self-sufficiency" (p. 20). The report then emphasised the importance of human capital and knowledge for sustained economic growth. A few years later,

in a report titled *The Knowledge-based Economy*, OECD (1996, p. 6) defined knowledge “as embodied in human being (as ‘human capital’) and technology” and as central to economic development. More than two decades later, the OECD (2020) outlined an updated understanding of education in the learning economy and stated that “[k]nowledge is the core element in the emerging mode of production, and learning is the most important process” (p. 11) with an emphasis on the increased importance of general skills, such as languages, mathematics, and information technology. The underlying pattern in these documents suggests a view of education as an economic activity, reducing knowledge to a set of skills and competencies that individuals must acquire to compete in the global market.

Within language education, the market-oriented goals of the language course providers, the pedagogical materials publishers, and the global language testing services providers, described as ‘edu-businesses’ by Ball (2012a), are notable in how they promote their services and products of language teaching and proficiency assessment as commodities that, once acquired, add value to an individual’s marketable competence and skillset (Block, 2018a; Gray et al., 2018; Simpson, 2022). This economic perspective on language education as an instrument to the neoliberal market “slotted unproblematically into the measurable economic asset category” and convertible into economic returns for investors, is particularly evident in English language education, where English, for the purposes of the individual, is framed as a technical skill required for future employment prospects and monetary gains (Holborow, 2018, p. 522). With the global spread of English and the rise of demand for English language skills, “as a linguistic conduit for international transactions and interactions in trade, media, sport, and education, to name a few” (Kettle et al., 2023), the application of market principles to English language education has motivated research into looking at the role of language in the economy and society in terms of its value.

The relatively recent turn to political economy (Block, 2017) within applied linguistics research, according to Simpson (2022), has been attributed, on the one hand, to the call for a

more interdisciplinary approach to research in the area of applied linguistics (Rampton, 1997) and, on the other hand, to the aftermath of the 2007-8 global financial crisis, which has emphasised the gap between the neoliberal promises and the political-economic realities (Holborow, 2015). The main characteristic of this emerging body of research is the move away from peripheral use of key political economy concepts toward a more substantial engagement with constructs rooted in the foundational work of Smith (2012) and Marx (1990 [1867]). Nevertheless, considering how frequently authors use terminology fundamental to political economy, such as *commodity*, *capital*, *use-value*, and *exchange-value*, direct references to the above-mentioned key figures have been scarcely made (Block, 2017) and a notable trend of misinformed understanding of economic concepts has been noted (Grin, 2021); thus, making way for various ambiguities to emerge in the literature in terms of foundational notions of English language as a *resource*, *commodity*, *capital*, and/or *instrument* (Block, 2018b; McGill, 2021; Petrovic & Yazan, 2021c; Simpson & O'Regan, 2021), which are discussed as follows.

As part of a book series titled *Language, Society and Political Economy* (Bori, 2018; Chun, 2017; Holborow, 2015; Marissa, 2022; Martín Rojo & Percio, 2019; O'Regan, 2021; Petrovic & Yazan, 2021a; Simpson, 2022), that addresses how various theoretical frameworks in political economy inform critical analysis and discussion of language in society issues, a notable space is dedicated to the recent trend of connecting language to money, and thus, to value. According to Petrovic and Yazan (2021b), scholars exploring the English language negotiation concerning neoliberal capitalism have predominantly used terms such as 'commodification' and 'linguistic capital'. Pointing to the patterns they have noticed in the literature, they categorised the emerging trends into two broader camps – “one in which language was presumed to be commodifiable and one in which language cannot be seen as a commodity” (Petrovic & Yazan, 2021b, p. 2); however, they see these camps not as rigid encampments but rather as temporary accommodations of ideas or tents, where authors, for example, may rethink Marx's notion of value through Bourdieu and thus slip into other tents.

The economic value of learning English, in the literature, often linked to countries' national positioning within the global economy, has been referred to as a national commodity, and because of its reliance on student learning as an investment into an exchangeable resource in the global marketplace, it has been treated as a personal commodity (Silver & Bokhorst-Heng, 2020; Tsui, 2020). For example, Heller and Duchêne (2016, p. 144) argued that

[t]he idea of language as commodity help us understand part of what people are trying to do with language ... not just in how they think of it but in how they concretely try to turn it into an exchangeable resource with measurable value in economic terms.

Such claims ignore the natural human capacity for language; if language is part of our intrinsic nature as a natural capacity, then it does not comply with the requirement of exchange – to be created through labour for the purpose of exchange – and therefore cannot be a commodity. Languages, like other naturally occurring things (e.g., air or water), have use-value; however, because they are independent of labour, they do not have exchange-value and cannot be considered commodities (Petrovic & Yazan, 2021c).

Furthermore, commodities produced for exchange gain their value not from their usefulness but from their ability to be exchanged; in a similar sense, the labour required to produce a commodity gains its value from its potential for exchange (Petrovic & Yazan, 2021c). However, people sell their labour *power* (Marx, 1990 [1867], p. 238, emphasis added). The kind of commodification of language that assumes English as an instrumental skill (Heller, 2007) involves an exchange, which is the selling of one's labour power (e.g., of the ESOL teacher) with an increased capacity (in this case, linguistic capacity), but not language itself (Block, 2018b; Holborow, 2015; Petrovic & Yazan, 2021c).

The body of research on the commodification of language as linguistic capital often relies on Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital as "accumulated labour ... which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour" (p. 241); he goes further to

explain that capital presents itself in “three fundamental guises” – economic (directly convertible into money and institutionalised in the form of property rights), cultural, which subsumes linguistic capital (in certain conditions convertible into economic capital and institutionalised in form of education qualifications), and social capital (made up of social obligations and in certain conditions convertible into economic capital, and institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility) (p. 242).

Understanding language as capital in this sense (e.g., Duchêne & Heller, 2011; Park, 2011; Park & Wee, 2012) usually attempts to explain the repositioning of language due to the political economy in neoliberal capitalist societies; however, it tries to do so by conceptualising language as a commodity, a concept that Bourdieu never used to describe language. Again, the notion of the commodification of English language skills assumes that language is an instrument or tool of labour. However, labour (i.e., human activity with use-value), just as language, is not a real commodity but a fictitious one because it does not comply with the forces of supply and demand (Petrovic & Yazan, 2021c).

Conclusively, looking at the role of language and its negotiation in today’s neoliberal capitalist market of English language education through Marx’s perspective of value, Petrovic and Yazan (2021c) clarify that language is a resource due to its naturally occurring use-value that should support language learning, and it is an instrument because we can add language skills to our linguistic capacity, thus increase the value of our labour power; however, language cannot be a commodity (rather a fictitious commodity) because it does not have exchange-value. Most importantly, any attempt to argue that language can be commodified, at the same time, means that “we, ourselves, can be commodified” (Petrovic & Yazan, 2021c, p. 36).

2.6. Professionalism of ESOL Teachers

This final section of the literature review delves into aspects of ESOL teacher professionalism and professionalisation, as they relate to the notions of ESOL teaching as a profession and the ESOL teacher as a professional. First, to gain a clearer understanding of

what the teaching profession entails and what teacher professionalism means, this section discusses the various ways these terms are conceptualised in the broader literature on teaching and teacher education. After a brief overview of the main discourses and issues surrounding teacher professionalism, professionalisation, and the concept of being a professional, the section considers what it means to be a professional in TESOL, in light of the neoliberal and sociocultural turns that frame ESOL teachers' professional practice.

2.6.1. What is Teacher Professionalism?

The literature abounds with definitions of professionalism. However, a clear-cut understanding is yet to be achieved. To explain the lack of consensus regarding its meaning, Evans (2008, p. 22) referred to Fox's (1992, p. 2) observation that "[p]rofessionalism means different things to different people". Moreover, given that the concept of professionalism in the broader literature has been described with various attributes relating to the notion of profession, Tapper and Millet (2015) reviewed working definitions of a profession and determined that they were all based on a series of features that make a profession, including an ideal of service and responsibility to the public good, a specialised body of knowledge, operating as a self-regulating part within a community, requiring intensive training and formal qualification, and a code of ethics or shared ethics. Accordingly, these features of a profession may be used as building blocks for conceptualising professionalism. Nevertheless, the concept of profession also falls into the category of contested concepts. Yet, Hoyle (2008) maintains that this fact does not detract from its continued value in improving education, particularly in the professionalisation and professional development of teachers, as teachers are crucial to the quality of education. Maintaining academic interest in the concept of profession through a semantic, heuristic, and normative stance, Hoyle (2008) views it as an evaluative concept suffused with values and posits that engaging with it entails addressing various dilemmas of professionalism, professionalisation, and professional.

Professionalism. In 1975, Hoyle (1975, p. 315, as cited in Evans, 2008, p. 22) defined professionalism as “those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions”; however, nearly three decades later, Hoyle (2001) modified his understanding and related professionalism to improvement in the quality of service instead of status. This shift in defining the concept of professionalism along the line of ‘quality of service’ corresponded to the educational reform movement in the UK in the 1980s and 90s, characterised by increased external (government) control over the education professions. Reflecting on the changing conceptions of teaching as a profession that he observed throughout his career, Hoyle (2008, p. 286, emphasis in original) concluded that even though the educational reform movement represented a much-needed push away from the “somewhat romantic” understanding of the teaching profession, it resulted in “an overcompensation that led to *managerialism*” embodying the view that “everything *should* be managed”, which had a detrimental impact on the teaching profession in general and the role of the teacher in particular.

According to Evans (2008), there is a broad consensus within the literature that positions professionalism as an externally imposed perception that defines “the boundaries of the profession’s actual and potential authority, power and influence” (p. 23). In this sense, teacher professionalism is interpreted in terms of the contextual relevance to its conceptualisation as “a representation of a service level agreement, imposed from above” (Evans, 2008, p. 23). However, other interpretations of teacher professionalism focus on the role of teachers as key players in the social construction of the concept (Alexander et al., 2019; Hargreaves, 2000a; Sachs, 2003, 2016).

Educational scholars have attempted to categorise the numerous interpretations of teacher professionalism. Two such broad and competing discourses represent the ‘old professionalism’ and the ‘new professionalism’ (Sachs, 2003). These two views, however, are not opposites; instead, they represent a transition from old professionalism – concerned with

exclusive membership, conservative practices, self-interest, external regulation, slowness to change, and reactivity – towards new professionalism characterised by inclusive membership, public ethical code of practices, collaboration and collegiality, activist orientation, flexibility and progressivism, responsiveness to change, self-regulation, policy-activity, enquiry-orientation, and knowledge building. Sachs (2003), who developed this categorisation, refers to the transition from an old to a new understanding of professionalism as “transformative professionalism” that emphasises teachers’ agency and responsibility for creating their own professional space and conditions for collaborative practice. This new understanding, focusing on collegial and collaborative work practices, is reflected in the conceptions of democratic professionalism (Biesta, 2017; Evetts, 2008; Hargreaves, 2000a; Sachs, 2003).

Hargreaves (2000a) wrote about the four ages of teaching professionalism; he argued that the ages should not be seen as distinct universal stages but as “a contingent history of Anglophone nations that now contribute a collage of opportunities with which other cultures engage” (p. 153). The established pedagogical certainty and teachers’ role of carrying out directives of their knowledgeable superiors while maintaining order and control over the lesson in the pre-professional age mirrors what Hoyle (1975) identified as ‘restricted professionalism’. The age of the autonomous professional represents a shift towards teacher autonomy and a notion of professionalism as a value of the profession, where education is treated as investment in human capital, teacher education becomes embedded within universities resulting in teaching as an all-graduate profession, and teachers’ special knowledge and skills advocate for trust in their professional practice. This understanding aligns with Evetts’ (2014) definition of a profession as having occupational or normative value based on trust, a strong occupational identity, and cooperation. However, it bolsters individualism, isolation, and privatism as the profession’s cultural features with extensive consequences for teachers and their practice (e.g., stagnated pedagogy, limited support structures, and a lack of professional dialogue and skills to cope with dramatic changes from within and beyond the classroom) (Hargreaves, 2000a).

The age of the collegial professional corresponds to the increasing uncertainty and complexity of schooling in a changing world. As teacher autonomy becomes unsustainable for teachers to cope with the constantly changing demands (e.g., expansion of subject and pedagogical knowledge, administrative mandates on teaching methods, increased social work responsibility in teachers' roles, growing multicultural diversity, limited structural and cultural capacities to accommodate new teaching strategies), teachers start to turn to each other for a sense of direction and support. This occurrence necessitates a re-evaluation of their roles and identities as professionals within a more consciously collegial workplace. Although this age aligns with the previously mentioned new understanding of professionalism that reflects the notion of democratic professionalism (Biesta, 2017; Sachs, 2003), there are still risks, such as imposing or forcing collegiality and transforming teacher collaboration into mandated technical tasks of coordination, which can result in teacher resistance, burnout, or a loss of purpose (Hargreaves, 2000a). These concerns are consistent with the dangers of what many refer to as managerial or organisational professionalism – widely critiqued as an attempt to control from above or outside the profession by imposing standardisation, performance cultures, and accountability structures based on market models common in the business world (Evetts, 2008, 2009, 2014; Sachs, 2003, 2016; Zeichner, 2020).

The age of the post-professional or postmodern professional depicts patterns of educational reform and the reinforcement of performance- and accountability-oriented cultures characterised by government-imposed centralised curricula and testing regimes that threaten teachers' autonomy and enactment of professional knowledge and judgement (Sachs, 2016). In this age, the notion of professionalism becomes a site of struggle between various forces and stakeholders that work towards de-professionalising teachers and teaching – setting up “teaching as a simplified technocratic practice” (Alexander et al., 2019, p. 12) and teachers as “technicians and implementers of technical knowledge” (Sachs, 2016, p. 8), thus, returning it to Hargreaves' (2000a) pre-professional age – and other forces and stakeholders that seek to

redefine teacher professionalism and professional development in a “broader, more flexible and more democratically inclusive” manner (Hargreaves, 2000a, p. 167). Here, the former is driven by significant developments of extensive global commercialisation and digitalisation of information that conquer geography and direct government response to uncertainty – often leaning towards standardised practice and contractual accountability (Halstead, 1994, as cited in Sachs, 2016) based on performance indicators that report on student learning outcomes – and the latter is or could be driven by “conscious social movement of committed people – teachers and others – who work together for its realisation” (Hargreaves, 2000a, p. 167). The latter has also been described by Sachs (2003) as an activist form of teacher professionalism, in which trust, respect, and reciprocity empower stakeholders to unite for improving teachers’ working conditions and status.

In recent years, writing on teacher professionalism has intensified. Following Sachs’ question: “Why are we still talking about teacher professionalism?” (Sachs, 2016), Alexander, Fox, and Gutierrez (2019), emphasising the Australian context, explored the core issues surrounding professionalism and teacher education and outlined the dominant contestations of teacher professionalism as a series of domains identified in the literature. They offered a model of positions in conceptualising teacher professionalism (see Figure 2 below) that considers these contestations within and across four domains, depicting coexistence in a state of contradictory tension.

Figure 2

Model of Positions in Conceptualising Teacher Professionalism

	<i>Interior/inward</i>	<i>Exterior/outward</i>
<i>Occupational</i>	AUTONOMOUS occupational value	DEMOCRATIC ideology
<i>Organisational</i>	MANAGERIAL standards and accountability for individuals	MANAGERIAL performance cultures for schools and systems

Note. This is a model of discursive positions about teacher professionalism that co-exist in contradictory tension. From *Conceptualising Teacher Professionalism*, by C. Alexander, J. Fox, and A. Gutierrez, in A. Gutierrez, J. Fox, and C. Alexander (Eds.), *Professionalism and teacher education: Voices from policy and practice*, (1st ed., p. 8), 2019, Springer Singapore. Copyright 2019 by Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.

In their model, the inward-looking lens considers the teaching profession from the perspective of the individual teacher, whereas the outward-looking lens considers it from the collective perspective. The considerations of professionalism from occupational and organisational perspectives (Evetts, 2008, 2011) are central to their synthesis of the most prevalent forms of contestation.

The four domains of this model include three of the four historical ages described by Hargreaves (2000a) and align with what Sachs (2001) identified as democratic and managerial discourses of teacher professionalism. The interior occupational domain reflects Hargreaves' (2000a) second age of a profession, where the autonomous professional practice is supported by what Evetts (2014) identifies as the occupational value of the profession. The exterior occupational domain focuses on the collegial and collaborative aspects of the teaching profession and is reflected in conceptions of democratic professionalism (Biesta, 2017; Sachs, 2003), as well as interlinked with Hargreaves' (2000a) concept of the collegial age of professionalism. Furthermore, the occupational domain also relates to the democratic discourses that contrast with the managerialist ones. According to Sachs (2001), these democratic discourses, along with their underlying assumptions, provide the conditions for the emergence of an activist professional identity marked by collaborative cultures in the form of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) as an integral part of teachers' professional practices.

The interior and the exterior organisational domains reflect an imposed approach to teacher professionalism, working towards deprofessionalising teaching. These domains align with Hargreaves' (2000a) post-professional age and what Sachs (2001) identified as the discourse of managerial professionalism that gives rise to an entrepreneurial teacher professional identity shaped by issues of accountability, economy, and efficiency. Moreover, Alexander et al. (2019) explain that although they highlight a managerial perspective on teacher professionalism, the interior approach relates to the individual professional practice of teachers as supported through standards and personal accountability, whereas the exterior approach focuses on the collection of teachers. Here, external management determines and controls teachers' work by defining practitioner/client relations, deciding quality, encouraging the standardisation of teaching practice, and relying on regulation and accountability through performance cultures. The authors caution that, combined, the agenda in these two domains is directing the teaching profession towards the pre-professional age (Hargreaves, 2000a).

An outcome of Alexander et al.'s (2019) deliberation is the identification of critical bifurcations in the principles, policy, and practice in terms of teacher professionalism, which Sachs (2016) has previously described as “a chasm between the desires and expectations of teachers and governments to the extent that governments are drawn to and endorse organisational/managerial professionalism, whilst teachers are likely to favour occupational/democratic professionalism” (p. 419). The implications of this split are well described in Hargreaves' (2000a) post-professional age. Amid such a challenging socio-political landscape, the way towards quality education for all (Biesta, 2009) seems predicated on teachers' professionalism as enacted reality of its daily practices rather than as an officially accepted shared norms and behaviour code of the teaching profession, which “represent insubstantiality ranging from articulated ideology to wishful thinking” (Evans, 2008, p. 29).

In this vein, drawing on Hoyle and Wallace's (2007) reasoning about the ironies of practice as reciprocal to the irony of policy, Evans (2008, p. 29, emphasis in original) pointed out that a meaningful conception of professionalism must reflect the ‘*reality* of daily practices’ and defined professionalism as:

professionalism-influenced practice that is consistent with commonly-held consensual delineation of a specific profession and that both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the profession's purpose and status and the specific nature, range and levels of service provided by, and expertise prevalent within, the profession, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice.

Professionalisation. Whereas professionalism in the literature “focuses on the question of what qualifications and acquired capacities, what competence is required for the successful exercise of an occupation” (Englund, 1996, p. 76), that is, the conduct, demeanour, and standards that guide teachers' work (Hargreaves, 2000a), professionalisation represents the other side of the coin. It refers to the ongoing process of “promoting the material and ideal interests of an occupational group” (Goodson, 2000, p. 182). Even though they are theoretically

and often practically complementary and in harmony, these 'projects' of professionalism and professionalisation sometimes seem contradictory.

In this sense, Goodson (2000) refers to the double-sided face of educational change, noting a distinction between standardisation and standards, and between professionalism and professionalisation, that point to a paradoxical condition of teachers' professional lives. Here, the desire for standardisation of teaching and opposition to professionalisation, driven by market-oriented principles of accountability and performativity, result in technicised rather than professionalised teaching, which contrasts with the desire to promote and improve professional standards as a logical extension of governmental rhetoric on improving education. This contradiction, however, for Goodson (2000), represents a ground for hopeful action in defining new professional practices. In his vision, these new professional practices would constitute a principled professionalism underpinned by the teaching profession's initial concerns – moral and ethical principles.

In this respect, teacher professionalisation relates to the meaning of what Hoyle (1975) identified as 'professionalism'. In contrast to Hoyle's rather political concept of professionalism at the time, as the status-related elements of the teaching profession, professionalism referred to the knowledge, skills, and procedures used by teachers in their professional practice. Although Hoyle, in his later writings, reformulated the notion of professionalism into the service component of professionalisation, some of his students sustained his original terminology. Evans (2002), for example, expanded on the notion of professionalism as the 'singular' unit and key constituent element of professionalism and defined it as "an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually- and epistemologically-based stance on the part of the individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice" (pp. 6-7); therefore, making a connection between real-world teacher practice and an operational or functional concept of professionalism that can be enacted and enhanced through the ongoing process of professional development.

As previously mentioned, the concept of professionalisation, according to Hoyle (2008), has two dimensions or components: an institutional and a service component. The institutional component indicates “the collective aspiration of an occupation to meet and sustain certain criteria” of a profession, such as theoretical knowledge, academic credentials, a professional body, and a code of ethics, among others. In contrast, the service component connotes “the process whereby the knowledge, skill and commitment of practitioners is continuously enhanced in the interests of clients” (Hoyle, 2008, pp. 287-288). The divergence between these two components is evident in the previously discussed shift brought about by the educational reform movement, which led to de-professionalisation on the institutional dimension and an emphasis on the service dimension. Subsequent questions arose: To what extent has the new professionalism become assimilated into managerialism, and what does that mean for the teacher as a professional?

Professional. Being a member and practitioner of a profession is rooted in notions of professionalism and professionalisation. Hooley (2007, p. 50), for example, defined the professional in terms of the process and requirements for formalising the professional role, as someone:

- who has completed a program of rigorous initial preparation involving specialised knowledge as decided by professionals, and
- who has been approved by the profession as a registered practitioner with the right to exercise autonomous, professional judgement,

and in terms of the professional’s activity and commitment to their practice, as a professional, who:

- negotiates the nature of the relationship with members of the public who come to their door,
- undertakes regular professional updates,

- is a member of the professional organisation, reading and contributing to the professional journal,
- acts in a professional manner according to the established ethical code, and
- due to their dedication to the field and its participants, is committed to take whatever action they see fit to protect and enhance the manner in which they conduct their work.

In a broader sense, Hoyle (2008) argued that one of the defining characteristics of a professional is “the ability to function effectively in uncertain and indeterminate situations” (p. 285). However, he further explained that a tension remains between conflicting understandings of the term ‘professional’, where different meanings are attached to it across and within various stakeholder groups. For example, politicians may associate the term with efficiency and quality of teaching in relation to performativity. In contrast, teachers often associate the term with autonomy in meeting expectations of the teacher’s role and in making judgments about students' learning.

In an attempt to translate the characteristics of the teaching profession into qualities of individual professionals, Snoek (2010) identified three contributing elements to teacher professionalism: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Here, the element of knowledge encompasses teachers’ understanding of the subject matter, the teaching and learning process, society, and educational policy and organisation. Under the second element of skills, Snoek includes teachers’ abilities in terms of communicating educational issues to a broader audience, accountability for the quality of their work to the outside world, conducting practitioner-research, contributing to professional collaborative learning communities, and translating the outcomes of educational research into classroom or school innovations. The attitudes found to be essential included teachers’ dedication to student learning, commitment to the profession, its ethical code, and the professional community, willingness to contribute to the profession’s collective knowledge and account for the quality of work to the outside world, and focus on ongoing professional development and innovation in teaching.

In line with Snoek's third contributing element of attitude, Bowman (2013) emphasised that being a professional involves much more than an intellectual exercise. He explained that professionals think and communicate in a language of ideals, such as "integrity, truth, transparency, fairness, justice, humility, and service to others"; nevertheless, being a professional involves not only living up to those ideals but also a sense of an inner and deeply personal commitment, because professionalism is "less a matter of what professionals actually do and more a matter of who they are as human beings" (Bowman, 2013, p. 17).

2.6.2. What it Means to Be a Professional in TESOL

In 2023, the theme of the annual National Education Assurance Services (NEAS) Conference, held in Sydney, Australia, was "English Language Teaching: The Profession, The Professional, Professionalism". The conference explored the diverse local and global professional landscapes in English language teaching (ELT) to understand what it means to be an ELT professional in Australia, ASEAN, and beyond, as well as how local teaching practices relate to the global context. Furthermore, it explored how ELT quality standards underpin the ELT profession and their effect on teachers' professionalisation through academic study and practical professional experience. Underscoring the need for ELT "to claim a place in the 'system of professions'" (Ferraro, 2022), the conference put forward a clear message about the unequivocal status of ELT teachers and managers as professionals (Australian Council of Professions, 2003), NEAS engagement aimed at ensuring a quality-centric culture, and the importance of building resilience at the individual and institutional levels in times of significant change.

The discussions on professionalism in ELT draw heavily on the literature from mainstream education; nevertheless, several distinctions have been identified. For example, Leung (2013) highlighted that the complexities teachers face in TESOL go beyond the complexities of teachers' practice in other subject domains, because their work is informed by knowledge and research from various related disciplines, and shaped by specific political and

curriculum requirements, local community members expectations, students characteristics, institutional practices, the prevailing intellectual climate, and teachers' own beliefs and values. Moreover, considering the unique dynamics of language education, it is evident that ESOL teachers' day-to-day challenges of professional practice extend beyond the conventional scope of teachers' roles in effective pedagogy (Leung, 2013, 2021).

In response to the call for expanding the conceptualisation of language teacher professionalism beyond unquestioning compliance, Leung (2013) emphasised the role of social interaction among stakeholders because "professionalism is not a natural phenomenon, and what counts as additional language teacher professionalism, at any one time, is best seen as a form of temporary consensus among key stakeholders" (p. 22). In this sense, Leung (2021) distinguished between sponsored (institutionally promoted and publicly endorsed views about what teachers should know and do) and independent language teacher professionalism (individually-oriented notions of professionalism, based on teachers' perspectives and reflexive examination of their values, beliefs, and actions), with the latter empowering teachers "to critically engage with sponsored professionalism in a potentially productive way ... [that] can lead to new understandings and/or workable accommodations" (p. 185).

Most recently, by combining the tenets of various types of professionalism found in the literature (i.e., sponsored, independent, occupational, and organisational) with the notion of teachers as lifelong learners, Cirocki and Hallet (2024) proposed a comprehensive definition of teacher professionalism to guide English language professionals. They described it as an ongoing concern with teaching within institutions according to professional standards – a dynamic exercise that involves "teachers shaping their professional careers through systematic interactions with others" (p. 31).

Over the years, the link between ESOL teachers' professionalism and professional identity has been established through ongoing discussions of teachers' knowledge base, agency, and quality of teaching, which are interrelated with teacher autonomy, well-being, and

professional development. Some discussions also address the moral dimensions of teachers' practice. For example, Crookes (2003, p. 5) argued that "[t]eaching is not a technical exercise, but a moral enterprise enacted through social means." In this sense, teachers' behaviour in fulfilling their professional obligations depends largely on their character, intellect, and care, because teaching is essentially about assisting in the development of students as human beings (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024).

The Knowledge Base. Despite previously documented doubts in TESOL status as a profession – based on common assertions in the 1990s that it lacks a proper career structure and that it is an occupation easy to slip into and out of (Johnston, 1997) – the most substantial implication of TESOL as a profession is its recognition as an academic discipline in its own right (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024). The TESOL empirical literature has focused on researching and developing theories of language learning and teaching, designing teacher education curricula, and promoting teachers' effective, continuous professional learning and development.

Nevertheless, historically, it is not unknown that the actual teacher education and teaching practice have struggled to keep pace with the research and theory informing the knowledge base. In the mid-2000s, the acontextual view of the cognitive paradigm and its focus on 'methods' still permeated English language teacher education. In fact, Johnson (2006) underscored that the then-emerging body of research on L2 teacher cognition has exposed an "epistemological gap between how L2 teacher educators have traditionally prepared L2 teachers to do their work and how L2 teachers actually learn to teach and carry out their work" (p. 239). In a similar vein, Cross (2006) emphasised the significant dissonance between the knowledge base of language teacher education and the nature of language teachers' activity in practice.

More recently, Freeman et al. (2019) argued that what constitutes knowledge in English language teaching (ELT) is also evolving. However, analysing the knowledge consisted within the two domains of ELT – classroom practice and English language teacher education (ELTE) –

through the framework of knowledge generations (Freeman, 2016) as a scaffold, they concluded that “it seems like ELTE is running older software on current hardware ... that is English language teaching around the world” (Freeman et al., 2019, p. 23).

Two decades after proposing their reconceptualisation of the ELTE knowledge base, Freeman and Johnson put forward new arguments in separate papers. Against the background of the rapidly changing nature and role of English in the world and its implications for the world of ELT and its knowledge base, Johnson and Golombek (2018/2020) argued for recognition of LTE pedagogy as a central domain in the knowledge base of ELTE, i.e., focusing on teacher educators and what they do in terms of their goals, intentions, expectations, quality, and impact of their pedagogy on the teachers’ understanding of their teaching. Similarly, Freeman (2018/2020, p. 9) acknowledged the influence of teacher education on teachers’ preparedness and support to teach; however, he expanded the set of concerns that the knowledge base also needs to address: the content (what is taught), the teaching force (who is teaching it), the learners (who are learning it and why), the pedagogy (how it is being taught), and the teacher education (how teachers are being prepared and supported in teaching).

Additionally, after discussing how ELT and learning have changed globally, Freeman (2018/2020) proposed a new ‘zero-based’ conceptual approach to the knowledge base, based on three recast work-driven concepts stemming from how English language teaching occurs: use, agency, and confidence. Herein Freeman posits teacher language *use* or English-for-Teaching as a concept that breaks away from the common understanding of ‘native- or near-native-like’ language proficiency; it connotes activity, the activity of teaching as a concept driven by teachers’ classroom work, leading to a different conceptualisation of teacher learning as individual *agency* in professional learning. Teachers engage themselves in learning through their actions, and the outcome of the process of managing their opportunities for professional development – designed, intended, or by chance – is their experience. In this view, teacher learning is no longer defined by teachers’ performance and assessed according to their mastery

of language and teaching skills, but by their *professional confidence* in applying these skills in classroom practice. This work-driven recast of defining the knowledge base enables questions into the 'whys and hows' of teachers' activity in relation to the socio-political contexts of their practice.

Teacher Agency. Teacher agency has been conceptualised in the literature in various ways depending on the researchers' theoretical perspective. Some researchers view agency as a variable in understanding social action and often regard agency as set against structure (Priestley et al., 2015). Researchers adopting this perspective on agency align with social cognitive approaches, defining agency as individuals' intentional acts to make things happen by relying on self-efficacy; they usually use survey instruments and statistical analysis to measure the correlation between agency, self-efficacy, and other variables (Tao & Gao, 2021). In contrast, post-structuralists understand agency as a form of discursive practice (Davies, 1990) that reveals the invisible power structures embedded in the discursive positioning of subjects. Here, individuals are part of the collective and can exhibit agency insofar as they "speak from the positions made available within those collectives" (Davies, 1990, p. 343). Thus, agency exists only in discursive social interaction as a collective agency.

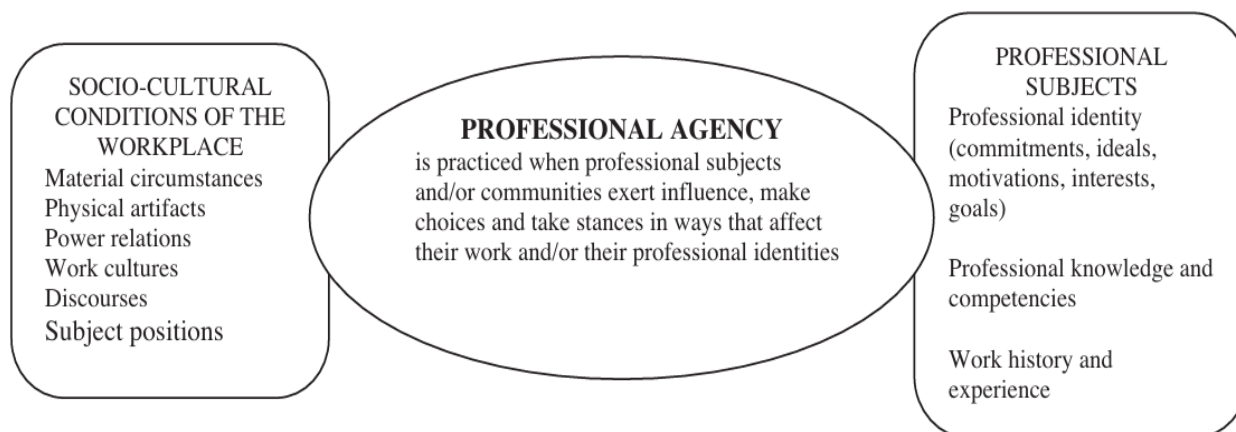
Other researchers, drawing on Vygotsky's work, conceptualise agency as deeply embedded in sociocultural contexts and mediated by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which individuals' agentic actions are situated. In this sense, teachers' agency development first occurs on the social or interpersonal level and then on the psychological or intrapersonal level (Wertsch et al., 1993). Here, the tools and rules reflect the contextual conditions or changes in teacher practice. For example, in investigating the interplay among professional identity, agency, and vulnerability in the context of large-scale secondary school reform in Canada, Lasky (2005) concluded that both teachers' early professional training and the political, social, and economic contexts mediated the development of their professional identity and agency. Moreover, the teachers' agency was found to be constrained by reform mandates;

however, it was exercised through teachers' notions of professional identity, which were inextricably linked to their beliefs about being a good teacher and the purposes of schooling.

In their critical review of the multidisciplinary concept of agency, Eteläpelto et al. (2013) argued that early, object-oriented sociocultural theories thematise the concept of agency mostly as a collective and social phenomenon, thereby rejecting individual agency and identity (e.g., Engeström, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leont'ev, 1978); however, more recent discussions acknowledge the existence of agency at the individual and subjective level, suggesting a relational interdependence between the individual and the social context. In this sense, Billett (2006) emphasised the role of individuals' prior experiences and life histories in understanding how individuals learn throughout their working lives, how they exercise their agency to learn, and for what purpose. He noted that while actions can have a social genesis, they enact individuals' subjectivity, intentionality, and identity. Furthermore, Billett and Smith (2006, p. 146) concluded that human agency operates

within and through the social practices of the workplace, yet is not necessarily subjugated by them. ... In these ways, individuals are always socially related, albeit through their idiosyncratic but socially derived subjectivities. Any action individuals' agency initiates, including action to transform society, most likely occurs from a social basis, albeit from earlier experiences – that comprised relational negotiations between social (i.e., situational and cultural) and personal (i.e., subjectivities) factors.

It is against this theoretical understanding of the subject-centred sociocultural approach and considering life-course notions of agency that Eteläpelto et al. (2013) defined professional agency “as exercised when professional subjects and/or communities influence, make choices, and take stances on their work and professional identities” (p. 61). Contextual factors in the workplace constrain and limit such agency; however, agency, in this sense, encompasses not only change but also resistance to change, where professional identity commitments and orientations strongly influence how it is practised at work (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3*Definition of Professional Agency Within a Subject-centred Sociocultural Framework*

Note. This is a visualisation of professional agency within a subject-centred sociocultural framework. From *What is Agency? Conceptualising Professional Agency at Work*, by A. Eteläpelto, K. Vähäsantanen, P. Hökkä, and S. Paloniemi, 2013, in *Educational Research Review*, 10, p. 61, Copyright 2013 by Elsevier Ltd.

Informed by a subject-oriented sociocultural development approach, Tao and Gao (2017) investigated English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' agency and identity commitment to professional development amid curricular reform at a university in Mainland China. Based on the teachers' retrospective narratives of educational reform, the results revealed that while the teachers enacted agency in three aspects of professional development (learning, teaching, and research), they did so in a highly individualised manner – “[r]esponding to similar contextual opportunities and constraints, the participants made different *choices* and took different *actions* which were mediated by their individual identity commitment” (p. 353, emphasis in original).

The relationship between language teacher agency and identity is an emerging research area (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Vähäsantanen, 2015) with significant implications for teacher education and practice. Agency has been explored as an important aspect of teachers' professional

identity development through ongoing professional learning related to the changing contexts of teachers' work. For example, Edwards (2019) explored the agency and professional identity mediation of experienced ESL teachers during and after participating in a nine-month action research (AR) program in Australia. The study's results revealed that the teachers' participation in the AR program provided various conceptual and practical tools to mediate their agency and professional identity. A key aspect here was the teachers' agency in transforming the tools for their purposes, which was found to depend on their future self-goals, their domain of tool reuse, and the restrictions within their environments. The outcome of the successfully mediated agency facilitated the emergence of new professional identities. However, the study also showed that if teacher agency cannot be resourced individually or socially, it risks being restricted, which can lead to teacher frustration.

Teacher Autonomy. ESOL teacher agentic behaviour and professional identity development have also been linked to teacher autonomy (Huang & Benson, 2013; Teng, 2018a). Teng (2018b) argued that even though these concepts are undeniably interrelated (autonomy is a precondition for agency, and well-grounded identity reinforces autonomy and enhances agency), the most important outcome of their interrelationship is that "teacher agency facilitates the development of teacher autonomy, which results in teacher identity formation" (p. 87). However, as this interrelationship remains under-researched in teacher education, there is a need for a more detailed understanding of how language teachers negotiate their professional identity, exercise their agency, and respond to the constraints on their autonomy.

As a multidimensional concept closely linked and fundamentally dependent on teacher agency, teacher autonomy has been conceptualised as teachers' professional capacity (comprised of their ability, willingness, and freedom) to control their work (Huang & Benson, 2013) and engage in self-directed teaching (Little, 1995) and self-directed professional learning within the constraints of their professional working contexts (McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2000). Nevertheless, Teng (2018b) pointed out that these conceptualisations are insufficient because

achieving teacher autonomy requires teachers' reflection on their learning and teaching practice, which leads to developing "an appropriate expertise of their own, a capacity to monitor their own work, a willingness to validate their educational development, and an awareness to foster learner autonomy" (p. 31). Moreover, Cirocki and Hallett (2024) emphasised that the actualisation of teacher autonomy is highly dependent on teacher collaboration, reinforced by social interaction in professional development activities, such as workshops, group discussions, action research, peer teaching, and blogging.

Radical changes in education systems globally over the last thirty years have challenged the traditional notion of teacher professionalism, characterised by professional knowledge, autonomy, and altruism – ideals agreed upon for professional conduct (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Sachs, 2001). Research consistently notes the negative impact of educational neoliberalism on teachers' autonomy, highlighting institutional constraints on teachers' roles and identities (Li & De Costa, 2017), teachers' constrained decision-making or freedom of choice regarding professional learning activities (Pereira & Tay, 2023), the dissonance between teachers' values and neoliberalism's tenets challenging teachers' identities (Reeves, 2018), and the profound tensions between the humanistic and technical dimensions of teaching that reduce teachers' roles, erode their autonomy, and compromise their well-being (González & Quintero-Polo, 2025).

Nonetheless, while the introduction of performance management systems and accountability measures has increased teachers' workloads and silenced their voices, Locke (2004, p. 117) argued that teacher autonomy has always been constrained – "[t]eacher option-taking has always been limited by professional knowledge, ethical demands (however defined), the discursive frames one subscribes to and a network of obligations to colleagues, institutions and systems". Teng (2018b) outlined several key constraints on ESOL teacher autonomy, including policy mandates (e.g., standardised curricula, prescribed textbooks, high-stakes testing) that limit teachers' agency in adapting their teaching to students' needs, institutional

factors (e.g., heavy workloads, limited support for teachers' unique personal growth, tension between top-down administrative control and teacher autonomy), and cultural constraints (e.g., unsupportive working environments, lack of understanding and cooperation between stakeholders). Under pressure to navigate these constraints, teachers often experience a loss of commitment and professional identity, which in turn leads to teacher stress and anxiety (Lampert et al., 2025; Skinner et al., 2019).

Teacher well-being. Teacher well-being has recently gained traction in empirical research on language teacher education. Research studies that explored the factors influencing teacher autonomy, such as teacher affect, also looked into teachers' beliefs, job satisfaction, stress, and burnout (Borg, 2009). For example, Javadi (2014) investigated the relationship between teacher autonomy and feelings of burnout among 143 Iranian EFL teachers and revealed that teachers' autonomy had a significant inverse relationship with teachers' burnout – “the more the teachers are self-directed and have concern for developing their teaching skills, the less they have feelings of helplessness, disillusion, and emotional exhaustion” (p. 772). Job dissatisfaction and a lack of authority in their teaching were identified as key contextual factors that triggered teachers' burnout. Similarly, An and Tao (2024) recruited a convenience sample of 403 Chinese EFL teachers from various universities and colleges to investigate whether teachers' self-efficacy and well-being were independently related to teacher burnout. The results indicated that teachers' efficacy and well-being significantly influence burnout, with efficacy being a stronger predictor of burnout than well-being. In other words, teachers with strong self-efficacy and awareness of their learning abilities were less likely to experience burnout.

Both studies' results indicated a robust causal correlation between aspects of teacher agency and well-being and burnout. While these results contribute to understanding the intricate dynamics among these variables, they do not provide deep insights into the developmental aspects of these phenomena; thus, they overlook nuanced aspects of the interplay between individuals and their environment and neglect the social contributions to the development of

agency. With an analytical goal in mind, Cinaglia et al. (2023) underscored the complex relationship between ESOL teachers' well-being, agency, and institutional cultures of care. Informed by an ecological perspective on teacher well-being, their comparative case study explored the agency of two TESOL practitioners in participating in cultures of care at the individual, relational, and institutional levels while working at two US universities that teach English as a second language. The results indicated that teachers' ability to exercise agency in their practices is crucial for their well-being; however, institutional cultures of care can either support or constrain teachers' capacity to enact a pedagogies aligned with their values.

Historically, the language teaching profession has been characterised by high stress levels, contributing to teachers' low levels of well-being (Abu-Rmaileh, 2020; Pentón Herrera et al., 2022). The increasing prevalence of teacher burnout, stemming from prolonged engagement in demanding and emotionally draining work situations, has raised global concerns. Teachers' recent experiences of dramatic changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic have likely added extra pressure, exacerbating their already compromised well-being (Carroll et al., 2022). Research has highlighted the emotional labour of teaching, involving social interactions with others in the workplace (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Hargreaves, 2000b; Zembylas, 2006). However, although ample research suggests that teacher emotions play an important multi-dimensional role in their day-to-day teaching practice and professional development, significant gaps exist in the conceptualisation of how teachers' negative emotional experiences develop into burnout, how their motives and commitments to professional practice change, and how they can be acknowledged and addressed systematically through effective practices and interventions (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Mercer, 2021; Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021; Pentón Herrera et al., 2022).

Quality Teaching and Professional Development. In TESOL, the notion of quality teaching is increasingly understood as grounded in teachers' capacity to make principled, reflective, and contextually appropriate decisions about their teaching practice (Richards, 2010).

Moreover, quality teaching is no longer solely defined by standardised frameworks and measurable student outcomes, but by teachers' ability to adapt, respond, and develop professionally in contexts of shifting sociopolitical and institutional demands. This broader perspective aligns with the epistemological shifts in ESOL teacher education research, which have moved away from a behaviourist focus toward a more holistic and contextualised view of teachers' roles and practice, and toward conceptualising teacher learning as a complex, lifelong enterprise (Johnson, 2009). As such, quality teaching is not static, but emerges through teachers' ongoing learning activities, which are situated, dialogic, and reflective, involving the acquisition of new knowledge and the transformation of existing beliefs, attitudes, roles, and ultimately, teachers' own identities (Johnson, 2009; Kubanyiova, 2012).

In this light, professional development (PD) is not merely about learning new techniques or acquiring formal knowledge, but rather a transformative process – a complex and dialectical process of qualitative change with personal and collective dimensions (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Nasciutti et al., 2016; Veresov, 2020a). These transformations are often catalysed by tensions between teachers' current practices and imagined or aspirational goals, mediated through meaningful social interaction and reflective activity.

This transformative perspective is rooted in Vygotsky's theorisation of child development and the principle of interaction between ideal and real forms. Referring to the context of a child's language development, Vygotsky (1994, p. 348, emphasis in original) explained:

[The] developed form, which is supposed to make its appearance at the end of the child's development, the final or ideal form ... – ideal in the sense that it acts as a model for that which should be achieved at the end of the developmental period; and final in the sense that it represents what the child is supposed to attain at the end of his development. ... this development is achieved under particular conditions of interaction with the environment, where this ideal and final form ... is not only already there in the

environment and from the very start in contact with the child, but actually interacts and exerts a real influence on the primary form. *Something which is only supposed to take shape at the very end of development, somehow influences the very first steps in this development.*

According to Vygotsky, development follows the tension between the real form (e.g., teachers' current abilities, forms of thinking, or enacted practice within their social environment) and the ideal form (e.g., the socioculturally and historically developed forms of teachers' abilities, thinking, and practice, or what good teaching could or should be, present in their environment). This tension generates the conditions for PD and represents what Vygotsky termed a zone of proximal development (ZPD) – the space where this mediated transformation unfolds.

Although research studies investigating the real-ideal form dialectic in ELT are scarce, several socioculturally grounded studies (Agustin et al., 2022; Dang, 2013; Golombek, 2015; Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Yang & Markauskaite, 2021) have provided evidence about how teachers' PD occurs in the dialectical interplay between their current pedagogical realities and their imagined teaching selves. Moreover, a vast number of studies in ESOL teacher education have reported challenging experiences of dissonance between teachers' practice and the internalised ideal of effective pedagogy, especially during the first few years of professional practice, as reviewed in previous sections of this literature review (e.g., Abednia, 2012; Beltman et al., 2015; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Marcías Villegas et al., 2020; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Teng, 2017; Wang, 2021). Often referred to in the literature as the inconvenient truth (Farrell, 2015b, 2016) and a transition shock (Corcoran, 1981), this period represents a critical phase of identity construction due to “collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life” (Veenman, 1984, p. 143). For novice teachers, this is a highly emotional experience of navigating a new environment and challenging their understanding of what it means to be an ESOL teacher and what TESOL practice involves (Tran-Thanh, 2021).

Similarly, studies that explored experienced teachers' lived realities, embodying this dialectical tension of real-ideal form, reported that these disjunctures result in professional dilemmas and identity tensions, provoking teachers to find a way to reconcile external expectations with internal commitments by reconfiguring their practice and themselves (e.g., Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2017; Sanczyk, 2020; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023; Xie & Dong, 2020).

Since navigating these tensions involves teachers' conceptual and interpretive efforts, Vygotsky's (1934/1987) distinction between everyday (practice-based understandings from our life experiences, acquired via everyday interaction with others and cultural artefacts) and scientific concepts (systematic, theoretically informed, and acquired in a formal learning context) offers a helpful lens for effective teacher education and PD (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011a, 2016; Kim, 2022; Smagorinsky et al., 2003). This distinction, however, should not be understood as types, but rather as paths of conceptual development that must converge into true concepts for a teacher to integrate theoretical knowledge meaningfully into their practice. Nonetheless, achieving this goal has proven to be a significant challenge –

a longstanding quandary in SLTE in which what teachers learn about language, second language acquisition, and language use and users in academic coursework remains separate from pedagogical concepts, procedures, and activities that constitute the activity of actual teaching. ... [resulting] in teachers ... knowing the subject matter knowledge but not having the essential procedural knowledge to confront the realities of the classroom. (Johnson & Golombek, 2011a, p. 2)

Drawing on Vygotsky's (1934/1987) theory of concept formation, Kim (2022) conducted a qualitative case study to explore the PD of a pre-service English teacher (Misong) during a 16-week teacher education course designed to facilitate the generation of true concepts by combining theory (scientific concepts) with the practices of English reading instruction (everyday concepts). The study demonstrated how the course assisted Misong in building a contextually grounded, theoretically informed true concept of extensive reading through active mediation

between everyday and scientific concepts, supported by guided reflection and field application. Moreover, the study emphasised how the true concept later helped her overcome her conflicting everyday teaching experiences. Additionally, although not drawing on this theoretical lens, other research studies (e.g., Cabaroglu, 2014; Lindahl, 2018; Whitehead & Arslan, 2025; Yin, 2019) have also shown that without intentional bridging or unification of theoretical knowledge and personal experiences, theory remains empty words, while everyday experiential knowledge remains unschooled and inapplicable to the profession's demands.

Reflective practice is vital in mediating the transformation toward ideal forms. Teacher reflection has increasingly been recognised as a tool for ESOL teacher PD (Farrell, 2018, 2025). Described by Dewey (1933/1910, p. 9, emphasis in original) as an “[a]ctive, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it lends”, reflection empowers teachers to think about their inner lives (Freeman, 2016), what they do, why they do it, and who they are as teachers in a way that involves interpreting, shaping, and reshaping their practice (Farrell, 2015a, 2025; Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021).

Johnson (2009, p. 98) argued that inquiry-based approaches to teachers' PD are “transformative processes of making sense of classroom experience (everyday concepts) through the theoretical constructs of the broader professional discourse community (scientific concepts) and vice versa”, which enable teachers to learn systematically in, from, and for practice. Drawing on Clandinin and Connelly (1987) and Clandinin (1986, 1992), Golombek (2009, p. 155) emphasised the power of storytelling as “expressions of a dynamic and complex kind of knowledge – teachers' personal practical knowledge” (PPK) – for teacher PD through narrative inquiry. With its theoretical underpinning in Dewey's (1938a) value of experiential experiences and Schön's (1983) writings on the reflective practitioner, PPK has been increasingly used in teacher education research as a theoretical concept in studies about teacher learning (e.g., M. X. N. C. Nguyen et al., 2023; Xu & Wang, 2023). Moreover, stories, as

narrative expressions of PPK embedded in socially mediated processes, such as mentoring and peer coaching, have been recognised as mediational tools for teacher PD (Golombek & Johnson, 2017; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2011b, 2016).

Acknowledging the transformative power of teachers' engagement in narrative activity, Hooley (2007) proposed a systematic and moral narrative inquiry as a teacher education curriculum for merging teacher professional identity and personal knowledge generation within discursive and authentic learning environments. In this context, reflection is a relational process that charts teachers' personal developmental pathways in relation to others. Moreover, Hooley (2007, pp. 58-59) called for a paradigm shift beyond managing and policing knowledge for teachers towards teachers as active participants in knowledge production through "cycles of investigation [undertaken] over long time frames and ... in reference to the knowledge of others [which] may enable the professional identity of teachers to strengthen in ways that current arrangements do not."

Integral to teachers' PD are also ESOL teachers' beliefs that shape their practice and philosophies of teaching (Borg, 2003, 2006). Drawing from the work of Shulman (1987), Clandinin (1985), and Jonston (1992), Richards (1996) introduced the concept of teachers' maxims. He explained that teachers' belief systems are based on their goals, values, and beliefs regarding teaching content and processes, as well as their understanding of the professional environment and their roles. Teachers' use of their belief systems leads to the development of principles of practice that help them interpret their responsibilities and make decisions during a lesson. These principles function as maxims that guide teachers' actions and are reflected in their teaching practices and the language they use.

As outcomes of teachers' evolving teaching theories and models for potential action, developing teachers' maxims is an important goal in teacher learning and PD (Richards, 1996). Razoumova and Andrew (2022) examined 33 practice teachers' reflections on practical actions during a TESOL teaching practicum in Australia and how these aligned with the core beliefs

Richards defined as maxims. Through a qualitative descriptive analysis of practice teachers' reflective, critical incident narratives, they identified nine maxims, ranging from issues related to lesson planning, grammar knowledge, and handling unexpected situations to the moral and emotional aspects of TESOL. The authors noted the value of critical reflection as a meaningful sociocultural activity that links theory and practice and highlighted the narrative power of reflecting on critical incidents. Additionally, they emphasised how teachers' subjective realities, in the form of a set of principles or maxims, may offer important perspectives for their transformative learning and development.

While often framed as an individual cognitive process, recent research on ESOL teacher reflection has shifted its focus to the transformative power of reflection in collaborative contexts, where teachers engage in joint meaning-making through dialogue (Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016; Chong & Kong, 2012; Dang, 2017; Godínez Martínez, 2018). Although at times criticised for being unbeneficial (Hargreaves, 2019) and conceptually ambiguous due to its inconsistent use in referring to informal (e.g., Smala et al., 2025) and formal teacher learning activities (e.g., Chen et al., 2018), teacher collaboration has been recognised as one of the most impactful models of PD for enhancing teachers' practice (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024; Wijarwadi et al., 2025).

Teachers' PD through social interaction has been identified in the literature as a continuous process of subjective intellectual growth with a positive influence on teachers' professional identity construction and transformation (Burner & Svendsen, 2020; Chung & Fisher, 2022; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011a, 2016, 2018/2020; Li, 2019; Shabani, 2016). In this context, Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval (2022) conducted a multiple-case study employing Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie* to investigate the identity trajectories of 7 EFL pre-service teachers over 18 months. The study's results indicated that the teacher identity transformation "was a contested and multi-layered dynamic process in interaction and conflict with and within different communities" (p. 70). Within this process, the pre-service

teachers' subjective experiences of acquiring pedagogical content knowledge and developing their teaching skills in interaction with supportive mentors played a key role in their transformation and adoption of a more active role in the classroom.

Similarly, Smirnova (2024) suggested using *perezhivanie* in language teacher PD to facilitate collaborative and peer mentoring sessions. She argued that analysing and openly discussing teachers' *perezhivanie* of their practice provides insight into contextual factors beneath the surface of rational reflection, enabling teachers to become aware of these factors and add more meaning to their experiences. Moreover, the dialogic exploration of different interpretations of professional practice may offer nuanced insights into teachers' contextual circumstances, thereby empowering them to gain new perspectives on their work.

The benefits of engaging in a dialogue with colleagues or experienced others to promote teacher learning and PD through various reflective activities are undeniable. In her conceptual analysis of dialogue as a catalyst for teacher change, Penlington (2008) argued that through inquiry dialogues, teachers reflect more deeply and go beyond the kind of routine reasoning they provide to themselves for their actions. This collaborative inquiry also has evaluative power, allowing teachers to investigate the extent to which their actions enact the professional principles they hold as descriptors of their teacher identity. Hence, “[d]ialogues with others can reveal *how* a teacher is bound to her actions ... as well as *what* binds her ... to enact a particular course of action” (p. 1314, emphasis in original).

Drawing on the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, Hooley (2021) emphasised the central role of language in social acts of communication of ideas, thoughts, and meanings as “opportunities for collaborative and personal practice-theorising that validates being human as dialectic in action” (p. 152). In this sense, teachers' joint inquiry may be conceptualised as a dialectical process of becoming, “of movement and transformation, of the new replacing the old” (p. 147). Reflecting on his own educational and teaching experiences, Hooley (2021, p. 142) explained that

action lies at the heart of human existence and takes us inevitably on a journey towards something that is better, more peaceful and more satisfying for all. Communication I think occurs both within and without, erasing the boundaries between practice and thought such that the new can emerge, to guide and inspire.

2.7. Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on ESOL teacher professional identity and the impact of the social environment on its transformation. I introduced the conversation by briefly overviewing the historical developments and epistemological shifts in human learning research relevant to the education, professional practice, and development of ESOL teachers. I then organised the discussion in three interrelated segments: the sociocultural turn, the neoliberal turn, and ESOL teachers' professionalism.

Against the epistemological backdrop of the sociocultural perspective on human learning, and after a brief discussion about the genesis and conceptualisation of identity, I reviewed ESOL teachers' professional identity in relation to its family of associated concepts – cognition, agency, and emotion – as represented in the relevant literature on LTI research from a sociocultural perspective. I organised the discussion into three sections: contextualised teacher learning, the relationship between macro-context and teaching practice, and the role of language in learning and development as a cultural and psychological tool.

In contrast to the epistemological notions of ESOL teachers' professional identity as informed by SCT perspectives and the complexities of its construction and transformation, I looked beyond teachers' immediate environment into the broader political and economic contexts of their professional worlds to discuss the influences of neoliberal market-oriented thinking and aspects of political economy within education in general and the TESOL industry in particular. The reviewed literature revealed burning questions about the purpose of education, the redefinition of significant roles and relationships within the educational landscape, and, more importantly, questions about human action, thought, knowing, and creating.

This final section of the literature review explored aspects of ESOL teacher professionalism and professionalisation, as they relate to the notions of ESOL teaching as a profession and the ESOL teacher as a professional. After a brief overview of the dominant discourses and dilemmas surrounding the terms professionalism, professionalisation, and professional, I discussed what it means to be a professional in TESOL, in light of the neoliberal and sociocultural turns that frame ESOL teachers' professional practice. I reviewed relevant literature examining the link between ESOL teachers' professionalism and professional identity, in the ongoing discussion of their knowledge base, agency, and quality of teaching, as these are interrelated with teacher autonomy, well-being, and professional development.

This chapter identified several gaps in the literature on TESOL, with a focus on how cultural-historical and political changes in their social environments challenge teachers' roles, beliefs, and practices related to their professional identity transformation:

- Population and evidence gap: Limited research on the professional identity transformation of experienced ESOL teachers.
- Methodological and empirical gap: To my knowledge, no studies have employed broader interpretative inquiry with larger, multi-country samples within the university TESOL pathway courses in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Theoretical gap: Lack of theorising about how the professional identity transformation process of ESOL teachers as subjects of the activity system is mediated by their social environment.
- Knowledge gap: While prior studies focus mainly on a key dimension of teacher identity, such as teacher agency, cognition, beliefs, and emotions, these are viewed as elements or aspects that contribute to, but do not fully constitute, the holistic nature of teacher professional identity. Drawing on Vygotsky's distinction between elements and units, it is evident that these constructs, used in isolation, lack the integrative capacity to

investigate how teachers experience, interpret, and respond to their sociocultural and political realities in ways that mediate their professional identity over time.

Taken together, these gaps indicate the need for a more holistic, developmentally oriented, and socioculturally grounded understanding of the professional identity transformation of experienced ESOL teachers. Accordingly, this study responds to the identified gaps by conceptualising professional identity as a mediated, dynamic activity situated within teachers' everyday practice and broader sociocultural, historical, and political-economic contexts, thereby contributing new conceptual, empirical, and methodological insights relevant to ESOL education, practice, and professional development. Before presenting and interpreting the study's results, the following two chapters outline the theoretical and methodological considerations underpinning this research study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the consideration of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory (CHT) and its related Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a meta-theoretical framework – identity-in-activity – and its application to this study. Although contemporary literature within language teacher identity and education research recognises teaching practice as highly responsive and context-bound (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020) and teacher expertise and ongoing professional development as socially situated (Grossman et al., 2009; Korthagen, 2010), at the level of theory, context is still “a relatively nebulous concept”, and a challenge remains to theorise context and systematically investigate its influence on teacher practice and development (Dang & Cross, 2022, p. 5). Therefore, this qualitative study employed a cultural-historical and activity theoretical lens to understand and systematically account for the impact of context on the professional identity of ESOL teachers. More specifically, the study investigated how historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors, in relation to the immediate, concrete activity of ESOL teachers' professional worlds, shape their professional identity as they navigate and confront the contradictions that emerge in their experiences teaching English within the broader contexts in which it occurs. Here, the contradictions are seen as sources of change and transformation. At the heart of the framework are Vygotsky's concepts of mediation through tools and cultural artefacts, as well as the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social environment, which are discussed below.

3.2. Identity-in-activity

The theoretical framework of 'identity-in-activity' (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007) brings together the 'identity-in-practice' and 'identity-in-discourse' dimensions (Varghese et al., 2005) – in 'identity-in-practice', teacher agency focuses on concrete action-oriented practice,

and, in 'identity-in-discourse', agency is discursively constituted by the community within which it occurs. While Cross (2006) and Cross and Gearon (2007) agree with Varghese and her colleagues' conclusion that research on language teacher identity (LTI) should conceptualise identity in terms of practice and discourse, they disagree with their understanding of practice and discourse as independent or separate lines of inquiry into LTI and therefore offer an overarching meta-theoretical framework uniting the two conceptions of practice and discourse by drawing on Vygotsky's thesis of human development based on the dialectic between activity and broader social, cultural-historic context from which the teachers' activity emerges. Cross and Gearon's (2007, p. 54) understanding of identity as "a fluid and ongoing developmental process that involves the formation of one's (individual) 'self' in relation to a broader set of social practices and shared cultural experiences" reflects the conception of identity prevalent in social and cultural theory and builds on the idea of activity as a "process of 'becoming', and not simply 'being'" within the social-individual space, from the perspective of Vygotskian cultural-historical theory and its related theory of activity.

3.2.1. Vygotsky's Cultural-Historical Theory

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory (CHT) is based on the understanding of the development of the mind through social interaction, i.e., it relies on the premise that thinking, and by that, learning is social in origin and "internalised through cultural practice" (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 85). The notion of "through others we become ourselves" comprises the essence of the process of cultural development and the process of forming the individual (Vygotsky, 1931/1997, p. 105). Here, the relation between the external and the internal mental functions, or how the social becomes the individual, is explained in the general genetic law of cultural development as follows:

every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category, then within the child as an intramental category. ... Genetically, social

relations, real relations of people, stand behind all the higher functions and their relations. (Vygotsky, 1931/1997, p. 106)

In this sense, CHT allows us to investigate identity “as a process *of obtaining* a sense of belonging within changing socio-cultural contexts and environments” (Veresov, 2020a, p. 181, emphasis in original). Here, Veresov highlights three crucial points in this process: (1) higher psychological functions appear “AS social relations” (2020a, p. 182, emphasis in original) because they were “formerly a social relation” (Vygotsky, 1931/1997, p. 105), (2) even when transformed into intra-psychological, “they remain quasi social” (Vygotsky, 1931/1997, p. 106), and (3) most importantly, the higher mental functions “can be most fully developed in the form of *drama*” (Vygotsky, 1929/1989, p. 59) as a dramatic interaction between people. These social collisions or social and cultural dramatic events challenge the individual’s identity and sense of belonging; however, by overcoming them, individuals recreate their unique identity through a qualitative reorganisation of the whole system of psychological functions and human consciousness (Veresov, 2020a, p. 184).

Although the term ‘identity’ does not appear in Vygotsky’s work, proponents of CHT have theorised its construct and provided a valuable basis for its understanding. For example, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) used an integrative sociocultural approach to researching identity. They suggested that identity must be viewed as “a dynamic dimension or moment in action, that may in fundamental ways change from activity to activity, depending on the way, in each activity, the purpose, form, cultural tools, and contexts are coordinated” (p. 84). Similarly, Roth (2003) theorised identity as a dialectical entity and defined it as “something that is continuously made and remade in activity; it is a being in continuous becoming” (p. 8). However, Penuel and Wertsch (1995), as well as Roth (2003), claim mediated action/activity as a basic unit of analysis of identity and define social environment as activity; therefore, their approach may be described as more closely aligned with the theoretical stance of CHAT, which examines identity within the social-individual space and looks at identity as a result or outcome of development

(sense of belonging). From a CHT perspective, however, the unit of analysis is the individual, the social environment is defined as social situation of development, and mediation is conceptualised as a mediating activity of a human being; here, identity is approached within the process of being and becoming (process of obtaining a sense of belonging), where the individual is actively involved in using or creating cultural tools of mediation as tools for creating or recreating his/her identity in social situations of challenge (Veresov, 2020a).

In light of these considerations, the following subsections present mediation as the fundamental concept and principle in Vygotsky's CHT, and as an approach to studying mediation from a sociocultural and, more importantly, historical perspective on the investigation of human behaviour and development: Vygotsky's genetic method.

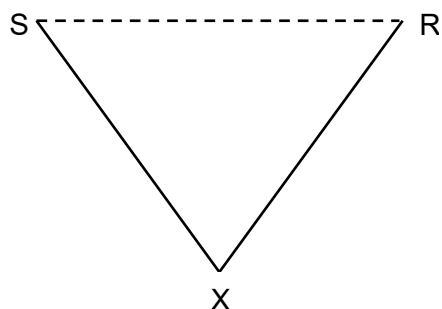
Mediation. A central dimension of Vygotsky's theory of mind is the concept of mediation. In general, it refers to the role of cultural artefacts – physical tools (e.g., computers) or symbolic tools/psychological signs (e.g., concepts, mathematical symbols, semiotic systems, such as language) – in organising and enabling human thinking and intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1978). Veresov (2020a) explains that Vygotsky understands mediation as a “unique activity consisting in creating artificial stimuli and in mastering his own processes” (Vygotsky, 1931/1997, p. 51); however, the point of the mediating activity is not creation and use of artificial stimuli but the “transition from direct, innate, natural forms and methods of behaviour to mediated, artificial mental functions” (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 168), where

cultural signs and sign mediation are essential for the qualitative reorganisation of the psychological functions in a course of development: The sign as a tool reorganises the whole structure of psychological functions. It forms a structural centre, which determines the composition of the functions and the relative importance of each separate process. The inclusion in any process of a sign remodels the whole structure of psychological operations. (Vygotsky, 1929, p. 421)

Figure 4 below is Vygotsky's (1978, p. 39, emphasis in original) diagrammatic representation of a mediated act, where the "elementary form of behaviour presupposes a *direct* reaction to the task" at hand, expressed by a simple stimulus and response formula: SR. However, the structure of sign operations requires an intermediate link between the primary stimulus and the response, which is "drawn into" the operation as an auxiliary stimulus X, or a mediating artefact, to create a new relation between S and R and replace the simple $S \rightarrow R$ process with a complex, mediated act $S \rightarrow X \rightarrow R$, which is socially constructed and which gives meaning to the response. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises here the use of the term 'drawn into' to indicate the active engagement of the individual in the creation of the link "[b]ecause this auxiliary stimulus possesses the specific function of reverse action, it transfers the psychological operation to higher and qualitatively new forms and permits humans, by the aid of extrinsic stimuli, *to control their behaviour from the outside*" (p. 40, emphasis in original). Therefore, by using signs or artefacts, people not only respond to and change the environment but also actively engage themselves in social interactions and transform their (internal) selves (Vygotsky, 1981, as cited in Dang & Cross, 2022).

Figure 4

Diagrammatic Representation of Mediation



Note. This is Vygotsky's structure of stimulus-response mediation. From *Mind in Society* (p. 39), by L. S. Vygotsky, 1978, Harvard University Press, Kindle Edition. Copyright 1978 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College

Through this experimental setup, Vygotsky observed how children of different ages used memory cards to improve their memorisation task performance and demonstrated the qualitative difference in remembering between younger and older children (Blunden, 2021). Moreover, Dang and Cross (2022, p. 7) explained that Vygotsky's psychological understanding of mediation by artefacts "breaks down the Cartesian walls that isolate the individual mind from the culture and the society" (Engeström, 1999, p. 29), thus, crystallising the dialectical relationship between mind and context. Similarly, Cross and Gearon (2007) noted: "For Vygotsky, humans do not act directly upon their world but, through the use of mediatory tools and other cultural artefacts, they interact with the world around them to regulate their environment through activity" (p. 54). By using cultural artefacts to solve problems in collaboration with others, people control their interaction with the environment in which they are situated and "[b]y appropriating elements of their culture in the course of development, people completely restructure their consciousness" (Blunden, 2021, p. 45).

In teaching and teacher learning, teachers use pedagogical artefacts, which can be conceptual (principles or guidelines that inform teachers' approach to teaching, such as learning theories or philosophical views of schooling) and practical or material (concrete classroom strategies or resources that teachers enact in their practice to address student needs, such as daily oral language exercises or textbooks) (Dang, 2017; Dang & Cross, 2022; Grossman et al., 1999). Through the process of adopting these pedagogical artefacts, known as "appropriation" (Grossman et al., 1999), teachers internalise the ways of thinking that are endemic to specific cultural practices. However, "the appropriation of pedagogical artefacts cannot be understood outside the broader socio-cultural-historical set of conditions in which they offer possibilities for mediation"; here, Vygotsky's genetic method provides a valuable approach to study mediation in relation to its socio-cultural-historical conditions for appropriation (Dang & Cross, 2022, p. 7).

The genetic method. Vygotsky (1978) understood all phenomena to be in motion and as subjects of continuous change, and therefore, should be investigated in relation to their

origins and development through a genetic-explanatory approach that highlighted the “historical point of view into the investigation of behaviour” (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 141, as cited in Dang & Cross, 2022, p. 7). Vygotsky argued that the roots of individual developmental change are in society and culture; hence, societal changes enable change in human consciousness and behaviour (Cole & Scribner, 1978, p. 7). However, because the culturally constructed artefacts that mediate human higher psychological processes are inherited from our ancestors (who inherited them from theirs and so on), they transform with the development of human society. Therefore, Vygotsky reasoned that the only approach to studying higher psychological functions is historical and, citing Pavel Blonsky, a fellow psychologist and philosopher, Vygotsky wrote: “behaviour can only be understood as the history of behaviour” (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 141). This idea is the fundamental principle of the genetic method.

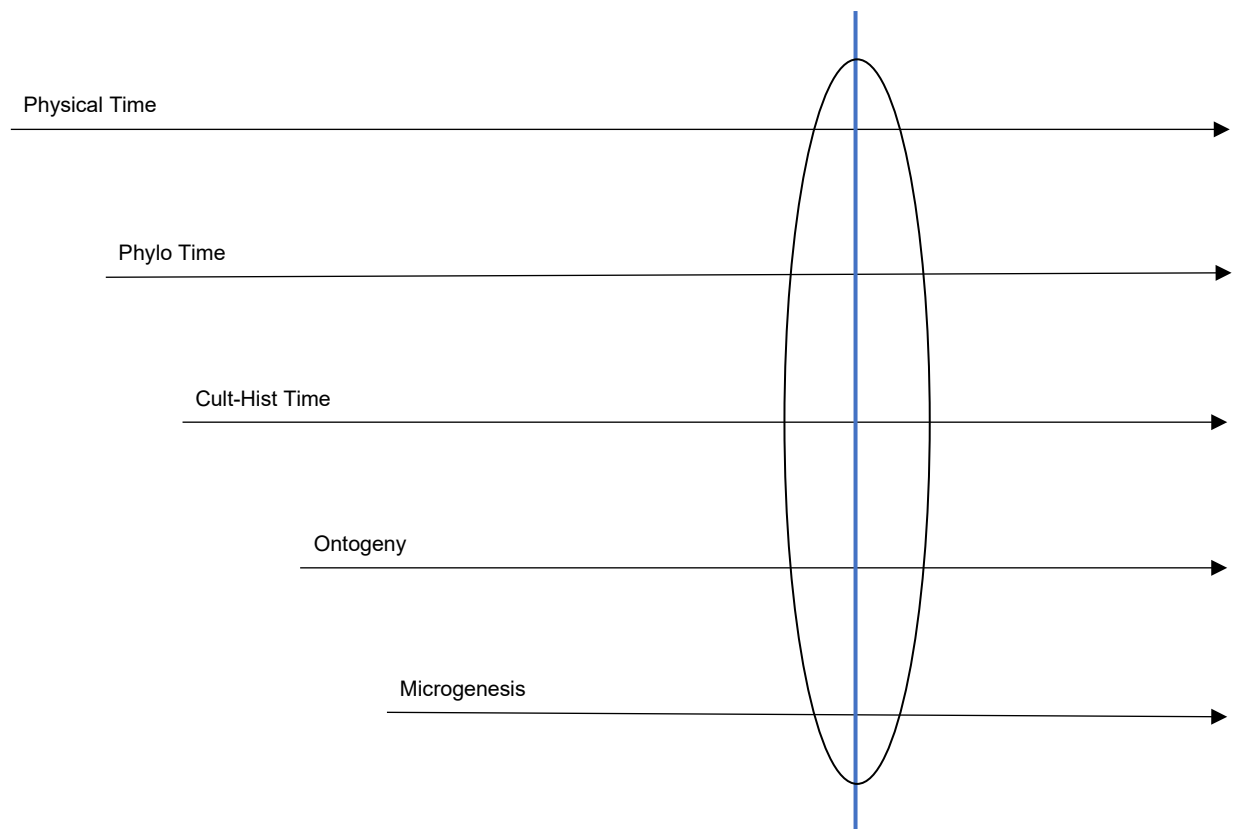
Following Blonsky, Vygotsky (1931/1997) explained that “man’s everyday behaviour may be understood only if the four basic genetic stages through which the development of behaviour always passes can be disclosed in it” (p. 102). Vygotsky uses the term “genetic method” to describe this theorisation (Cross, 2006; Marginson & Dang, 2017). The notion that human behaviour can be studied and explained only in relation to the history of the individual and the species is represented in Vygotsky’s four genetic domains: phylogenetic, cultural-historical, ontogenetic, and microgenetic. Here, the activity occurring in one domain interacts with the other domains:

Every human behaviour in the present (i.e., the *micro-genetic domain*, in terms of ongoing act of mediation) is influenced by the individuals involved (life-histories of the personal/*ontogenetic domain*), within a particular time and place (artefacts of that time and generation/*cultural-historic domain*), and the capabilities they bring as human actors (biological evolutionary time/*phylogenetic domain*). (Dang & Cross, 2022, p. 8)

Cole and Engeström (1993) illustrated the nested relationship between the domains (see Figure 5 below), where each horizontal line represents one genetic domain and the vertical ellipse is one specific event in time at the microgenetic level under investigation.

Figure 5

Genetic Method – Cultural-historical Theoretical Domains of Genetic Analysis



Note. This is a depiction of the cultural-historical theoretical domains of genetic analysis.

Adapted from *A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition* (p. 20), by M. Cole and Y. Engeström, 1993, in G. Salomon (Ed.), *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations*, Cambridge University Press. Copyright 1993 by Cambridge University Press

Cross (2006, p. 3) explained Vygotsky's genetic framework as follows:

In brief, phylogenetic analysis concerns the nature of human development over the course of evolution (i.e., the human as a natural or biological species), while the cultural-historic domain is concerned with the development of the "external" world (i.e., society and culture) within which human activity unfolds. Ontogenetic analysis shifts the focus from these two broader lines of development to that of the individual subject across the human lifespan. Ontogenesis, itself, is the culmination of the momentary instances of microgenetic activity that the subject engages in on a continual basis with the world around him or her.

Regarding Vygotskian research, Dang and Cross (2022, p. 9) noted that even though typically the focus is explicitly placed on the lower three domains incorporating "action (in the present), by the individual, within a set of cultural-historic conditions", with the phylogenetic conditions considered as given and stable in relation to the other domains, the recent COVID-19 pandemic is a good example of a sudden disruption in the phylogenetic domain, which has triggered changes in all the other domains of human activity.

In terms of investigating teacher identity, Cross (2006) highlighted that it is in the microgenetic domain where teachers' everyday activity occurs, and from a CHT perspective, this is the foundation for defining who the subject (the teacher) is in relation to the social practices (i.e., activity), which relates to Varghese et al.'s (2005) conception of 'identity-in-practice'. However, as previously determined, to properly understand the present form of the concrete activity, we must consider the broader sociocultural and historic context from which that activity has emerged (i.e., the cultural-historic domain), which may be expressed, for example, through public policies or other public discourses (i.e., 'identity-in-discourse') as mediatory tools of teachers' activity, meaning-making, and knowledge negotiation (Cross, 2010).

Marginson and Dang (2017, p. 120) argue that Vygotsky's genetic method enables investigation of "particular microgenetic moments or sites" while accounting for the broader meso- and macro-context of the phenomenon under investigation in a "holistic and integrative" manner. Therefore, it allows research "to be at one and the same time (1) empirically bound, and coherent in selective inquiries, (2) comprehensibly explanatory, and (3) partly open theoretically" (Marginson & Dang, 2017, p. 121). As such, it is instrumental in explaining why ESOL teachers act the way they do within the contexts of their professional worlds and what kinds of learning opportunities they are willing to create for their students, and in understanding who teachers are and who they wish to become within their situated environment (Johnson, 2009).

According to Cross and Gearon (2007) and Dang and Cross (2022), although Vygotsky's genetic method, predicated on the concept of mediation, offers a powerful and systematic theoretical foundation for looking into the relationship between cultural tools, mediation, and learning, and for investigating the impact of sociocultural and historical contexts on individual's development, still Vygotsky's focus was not on the conditions or contexts of the environment within which mediation happens rather than on mediation itself – the relationship between individual's use of tools and development. Later, however, Leont'ev (1981) extended the concept of mediation by shifting the unit of analysis to the mediated activity (i.e., social practice), thereby highlighting how sociocultural and historical factors shape human functioning and focusing on the activity that facilitates this process. This principle of mediated activity, as articulated in cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), is presented as follows.

3.2.2. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

As explained earlier, Vygotsky's interest was the cultural formation of the mind through the subject's use of tools in social interaction, i.e., mediating activity. This concept was later extended by Leont'ev (1981) by shifting the interest towards understanding the activity itself within which the tool was being used: mediated activity – the basis for cultural-historical activity

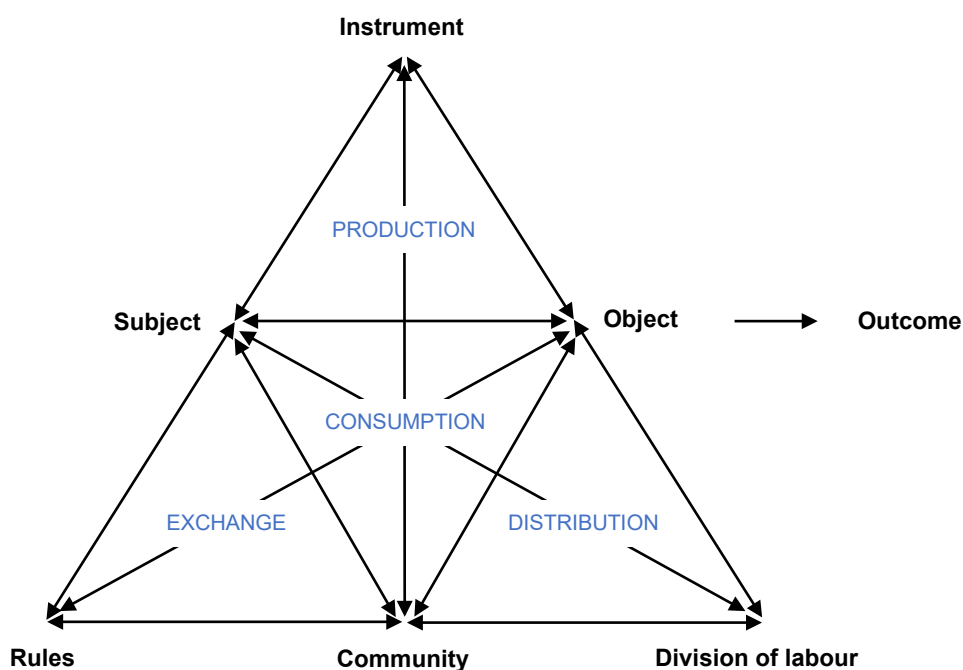
theory (Cross & Gearon, 2007). CHAT aims to explain human cognition in the wider sociocultural and historical context and as a result of interactions between the individual and the sociocultural environment through artefacts and in situations where activities occur. As an analytical framework, “it maps the social influences and relationships involved in networks of human activity” and at the same time captures the situated activity system as a whole, and thus uncovers contradictions between the individual actions and the whole activity system (Johnson, 2009, p. 77).

In the past, CHAT has undergone what some refer to as three generations of research. The first generation, based on Vygotsky’s idea of ‘mediation’ (Vygotsky, 1978), as illustrated previously in Figure 4, is individually focused, and according to Engeström (2001, p. 134), therein lay its limitation. This limitation has been addressed by the second generation, developed by Vygotsky’s colleague, Leont’ev (1981) and continued by Engeström (1987). For Leont’ev (1981, p. 46), human individual’s activity is “a system with its own structure, its own internal transformations, and its own development” that exists in the system of social relations.

In this sense, the unit of analysis was expanded from individual action to a collective activity (Leont’ev, 1981) and later on into a model of a collective activity system (see Figure 6 below), which includes *subject* (an individual or a group with agency, e.g., ESOL teachers) acting towards the *object* (reflects the subjects’ motives for participating in the activity, e.g., ESOL teachers’ practice), resulting in *outcome* (e.g., ESOL teachers’ professional identity), mediating *instruments* (artefacts/tools used by the subjects to act on the object, e.g., materials and concepts), *community* (the social and cultural group that the subjects are a part of and that regulates their performance within the activity system, e.g., the other teachers, managers, students), *division of labour* (distribution of responsibilities and power among community members), and *rules* (explicit and implicit rules that regulate the activity, e.g., cultural, professional, and institutional rules) (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001, 2008).

Figure 6

The Structure of Human Activity as a System



Note. This is a model of a human activity system. From *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research* (p. 62), by Y. Engeström, 2015, Cambridge University Press (2nd ed.). Copyright 1987, 2015 by Yrjö Engeström

As the social aspects of teaching and learning gained acceptance within education research communities, CHAT has become a widely acknowledged framework and has been applied by many interested in researching language teacher education (Cross, 2006, 2010, 2020; Dang, 2012, 2017; Dang & Cross, 2022; Dang et al., 2013; Engeström, 2008) and various aspects of LTI, such as the impact of educational change (Smit et al., 2010), the relation between political and educational change and L2 teachers' motivation (Rahmati & Sadeghi, 2021), ELT's identity development (Dang, 2013; Golombek & Klager, 2015; Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Yuan & Mak, 2018), or the relation between

ESOL teachers' professional identity development and commitment (Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019). While the third generation of CHAT looks beyond a single system of human activity to how at least two interacting activity systems work together to understand dialogue, multiple perspectives, and networks with a potentially shared object, for this study's purpose the concept of activity as a single system is seen as sufficient to analytically engage with ESOL teachers' social practices within the microgenetic domain of development.

While systematically analysing the ESOL teachers' activity, CHAT offers ways to capture how the use of tools mediates the interactive relationship between the subject and the community; thus, revealing the processes of social contextualisation and the determination of LTI. Furthermore, within the activity systems, struggles or 'contradictions' (Engeström, 2001, 2015) may emerge, which can be of four types: (1) primary contradiction – within a specific component; (2) secondary – between two components; (3) tertiary – as a result of introducing a change leading to an imbalance; and (4) quaternary contradiction – when at least two activity systems operate together. CHAT addresses conflicts between individuals and the system as a whole to stimulate expansive learning and, if resolved, generate change.

Contradictions, however, are not faults to eliminate but drivers of change. They follow an early form of tension grounded in the subject's perplexity about two opposing alternatives of the same object, and the subject's inability to determine their effort direction (Engeström, 2015). This peculiar state of indeterminacy or dissatisfaction, i.e., need state, reflects a motive for change that is not accidental but historically and socioculturally determined. When the subject becomes aware and tries to act to resolve the need, they may encounter resistance, which will transform the need state into a deeper, more structured contradiction – a double bind. The double bind magnifies contradictions and forces a response; it is "a social, societally essential dilemma that cannot be resolved through separate individual actions alone – but in which joint cooperative actions can push a historically new form of activity into emergence" through the use and creation of new instruments or cultural tools (Engeström, 2015, p. 131).

A double bind sets the stage for a qualitative change, where the subject reconceptualises their entire activity to solve the problem. According to Engeström (2015, p. 138, emphasis in original), this distance “*between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in the everyday actions*” is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Here, the zone refers to the contested terrain between the present and the future. Moving within the zone entails overcoming the inner contradictions of the subject’s activity. In this sense, contradictions, as historically accumulated systemic tensions, are foundational to building the future, even though they are painful.

Furthermore, as CHAT typically analyses the object of the system – the problem attracting the subjects’ attention – Cross (2020, p. 40) suspects LTI to be an “underdeveloped construct within activity theory”. According to Cross (2020, p. 39), CHAT as an analytical lens allows for examining ESOL teachers’ professional identity through their activity in two ways: 1) teachers are the subjects of the activity system, and hence the ways they understand and engage with the system are central to the ‘activity-meaning-making’; and 2) while making sense of their roles in the system, the subjects, i.e., the teachers, engage in a continuous or fluid process of professional identity development (identity as a ‘continuous becoming’ in activity).

Conclusively, Cross and Gearon (2007, p. 55) argue that “an understanding of language teacher identity resides in an understanding of the activity the teacher is expected to perform – as the *subject* of that activity” – and thus it is the basis for defining who the subject is in relation to the social practices (i.e., activity) within the microgenetic domain of development and the broader social, cultural, historic, and political context from which it has emerged (i.e., the cultural-historic domain). Therefore, “by focusing on *activity* as the primary unit of analysis – ‘identity-in-activity’ – we have a framework to understand identity as a synthesis of practice (microgenetic development, or ‘identity-in-practice’) *with* discourse (cultural-historic development, ‘identity-in-discourse’)” (Cross & Gearon, 2007, p. 57, emphasis in original).

3.3. Summary

This chapter provided the theoretical lens for analysing the data through a meta-theoretical framework of 'identity-in-activity' that draws on Vygotsky's thesis of human development based on the dialectic between teachers' microgenetic domain, where teachers' everyday activity occurs, and the broader social, cultural, historic, and political contexts from which the teachers' activity emerges; thus, representing the foundation for defining who the teachers are in relation to the situated social practices (i.e., activity) of their professional worlds. As teacher professional identity is understood as an ongoing and complex developmental process of social interactions within changing sociocultural contexts, which may lead to sociocultural dramatic events, this framework allows insight into teachers' use of cultural artefacts to mediate their activity, meaning-making, and knowledge negotiation, and thus transform their unique professional identity through a qualitative reorganisation of the whole system of psychological functions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the interpretive logic of inquiry employed in this qualitative study. It starts with the study's contextual background, followed by a brief statement of the research aims and questions. The chapter then addresses the philosophical discussion of ontological and epistemological priors that informed the research approach. Next, building on the interpretative methodological presuppositions and argumentation, with its focus on understanding people's context-specific, situated meaning-making, the chapter describes the research approach and provides a rationale for the choices made in light of the paradigmatic orientation and the study's intended purposes and the research questions. In what follows, the chapter delves into the aspect of positionality: here, the matters of access, context, and the researcher's role are discussed in relation to the shaping of the researcher's knowledge claims. The relational dimensions of researcher access and the concepts of mapping and exposure in the research participants section follow the discussion about the study's contextual backdrop in the next section. The discussion then extends to the participants' description section, followed by this study's ethical considerations. The chapter then elaborates on the iterative-recursive processes and methods of generating and analysing the qualitative data and concludes with a discussion about the study's quality considerations.

4.2. Mapping the Landscape: The Context of TESOL in the Asia-Pacific

The current research project investigates the impact of the historical, sociocultural, and political factors on the professional identity transformation of ESOL teachers from nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region who work with adult students predominantly in a pathway program and/or at university level, e.g., English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), or General English courses. This study is situated within the Asia-Pacific TESOL context, where

the region's economic development, the changing global role of English, and the neoliberal transformation of higher education (HE) intersect to shape the nature, purposes, and professional learning and development of ESOL teachers.

4.2.1. The Spread of English and the Synergy Between the Region's Economies

In the Asia-Pacific region, the spread of English as a fundamental aspect of globalisation presents significant challenges for governments and professionals in English language teaching and teacher education, as they strive to meet national demands for graduates with proficient English skills. However, each country's unique historical legacies and sociocultural, economic, and political contexts have largely influenced how governments respond to these changes. Australia and New Zealand, for example, as major destinations for international students and providers of internationally recognised TESOL qualifications, have taken on strategic roles in shaping the TESOL profession. The countries' English language teaching practices have shifted from a domestic educational matter to a transnational industry operating at the crossroads of market forces, sociopolitical tensions, and ethical imperatives to serve culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

In former British or American colonies, such as Singapore, English has played an important role in all aspects of life as the working language in government and business, as well as the medium of instruction (MoI) in schools (Tsui, 2020). Despite the similar role of English in the Philippines, which lasted for some time after formal decolonisation, in 1974 the country adopted a bilingual education policy requiring the use of both English and Filipino as MoI in schools. This was seen as a symbol of resistance to neocolonial dominance (C. Vilches, 2020).

In countries that have not been subjected to British or American colonial rule (e.g., China, Japan, and Thailand), this growing demand for English is a recent development, prompting these countries' governments to emphasise the importance of acquiring English language skills as a national goal. In 2001, English was made mandatory in the curriculum from grade 3 in all primary schools in China (Nunan, 2003). Moreover, Japan highlighted the

importance of English in official documents, stating that English is not merely a foreign language but 'the international lingua franca' (Tsui, 2020). Despite the relatively recent official promotion of English in Thailand, the importance of English language skills has been illustrated through the Ministry of Education's proposal to change English's status from a foreign language to the country's second official language; however, this was later dropped due to concerns about giving a misleading impression of past colonisation (Todd & Darasawang, 2020).

Furthermore, improving the nation's English language skills has been considered a key national priority in some countries experiencing rapid social and economic growth. For example, in Vietnam, since the Doi Moi policy opened the doors to the market-oriented economy in 1986, English communicative competence for study and work in multicultural settings has been seen as essential for the country's prosperity (Ngo & Tran, 2024; Vu & Ha, 2020). Similarly, Indonesia began gradually integrating English as a subject into its formal education system shortly after gaining independence in 1945; however, despite recognising its importance for global competitiveness, the effectiveness of English curriculum reforms has often been hindered by factors such as limited resources, inadequately trained teachers, and socio-economic disparities, highlighting the complexity of embedding English language education within Indonesia's diverse educational landscape, especially in its underdeveloped regions (Riadi, 2019).

Although the Asia-Pacific region comprises a diverse group of countries linguistically and culturally, each with its own historical legacies and sociocultural and economic-political contexts, these nations are leading a shift in educational culture, sharing a common goal of economic prosperity and long-term sustainability. English, due to its prescribed economic value, has been positioned by many countries in the Asia-Pacific as a national mission or even national commodity, with government officials promoting English language learning as an investment for personal advancement (Tsui, 2020). To cement shared intentions for economic growth, countries in the Asia-Pacific region (APAC) have established strategies that include politically

charged decisions to promote English, with significant implications for English language teaching and teacher education.

One such strategy is the APEC Education Strategy 2030 (2016), the first blueprint since the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was established. It highlights the importance of sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to: 1) enhance and align competencies to the needs of individuals, societies, and economies through quality assurance of education, promotion of cross-border education and academic mobility, establishing qualification frameworks and skills recognition policies; 2) strengthen research and education development and accelerate innovation; and 3) improve employability through collaboration and partnerships between government, education, and the business sector. Pivotal to the strategy's success, however, is the ability to communicate effectively across language barriers. Given the dominance of English in trade and diplomacy, APEC members have emphasised the importance of high-quality English language education.

4.2.2. Changes and Challenges of the Contemporary World Englishes

Over the past few decades, various socioeconomic, sociolinguistic, cultural, and educational shifts have influenced the use and perception of English in the Asia-Pacific region. The concept of World Englishes (WE) – once framed in terms of Kachru's Circle of World Englishes (Kachru, 1985) as three concentric circles of inner (native English-speaking countries), outer (countries with historical ties to English on basis of colonisation), and expanding (countries where English is learned a foreign language) – has been reframed into a functional tool for communication reflecting the practical reality of everyday global use of English as a “lingua franca” or as an “international language” among speakers from different educational backgrounds (Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins & Leung, 2009). The controversial metamorphosis of WE into Global Englishes (GE) (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019) ignited a paradigm shift away from fixed and geographically definable varieties of English towards more flexible use of English across geographical boundaries.

This new orientation towards a more dynamic use of the English language in today's globalised world has numerous implications for TESOL. According to Galloway and Numajiri (2020), the proliferation of terms such as translanguaging (García & Wei, 2013), translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013), and plurilingualism (Canagarajah, 2009) emphasised this pluricentricity of English, referred to as the multilingual turn (May, 2013) and encouraged a move away from native English norms in TESOL. Even though many scholars, who write along these lines, use different terms to discuss these phenomena, they share a similar underlying ideology aligned with the Global Englishes paradigm and consider the current practices of teaching English as ill-fitting for the communicative and integrated views of language learning that recognise the language users' need for dynamic and creative adaptation to different speakers and contexts in today's globalised world (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

In response to calls for an epistemic break in TESOL and to better meet the evolving needs of learners and the demands of practitioners within the TESOL community, Rose and Galloway (2015; 2019) proposed a bottom-up, context-sensitive approach to curriculum innovation – the Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) framework – based on six broader proposals for reforming how English is taught and addressing questions such as “what English is, who owns it and how it should be used” (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 11). Although the call to reevaluate the beliefs underpinning English language teaching that influence all aspects of teachers' practices is clear, little has been discussed about its pedagogical implications at the classroom level (Agustin et al., 2025; Matsuda, 2017). Furthermore, successful and sustainable curriculum change based on these theoretical proposals requires exploring teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding their practical application within their specific contexts (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020).

Previous studies in EFL settings exploring teachers' experiences of implementing GELT principles in their classrooms have reported an increased awareness among teachers (Biricik Deniz et al., 2020; Prabjandee, 2020); however, they also identified different levels of gap

between teachers' positive attitudes towards the GE paradigm and their interpretation and practical application (Canilao, 2019; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2017). While teachers' attachment to the hegemony of native speakerism was one of the main factors hindering the implementation of GE (Prabjandee, 2020; Widodo & Fang, 2019), Montakantiwong's (2023) study showed that the conceptual gap between teachers' and researchers' understandings of what attributes constitute an 'ideal' English teacher might have been a key factor misaligning their current and future professional identity with the desired qualities of GELT teachers, thereby affecting their confidence in applying GELT principles in the classroom.

The changing landscape of World Englishes in the Asia-Pacific region reflects a broadening of how English is understood and used, from being associated primarily with foreign or colonial histories to also being positioned, in many contexts, as an international and practical means of communication, while its colonial legacies continue to shape its meanings and uses. This reconfiguration highlights both the opportunities and tensions associated with the global spread of English. With globalisation and developments in English language teaching methods that emphasise communicative competence and student-centred, communicative, task-based learning approaches, meeting societal and economic demands for English proficiency – often framed as an essential international literacy skill – poses a common challenge for these countries' education systems. Furthermore, the rise of English as an international language (Jenkins, 2015) has prompted renewed questioning of the dominance of traditional norms, prompting educators and policymakers to reconsider curricula, teacher training, and assessment models that prioritise intelligibility over native-speaker standards. These changes place greater demands on ESOL teachers' professional development, requiring them to stay current with TESOL pedagogical trends and to seek ongoing learning and growth opportunities.

Furthermore, aligned with the economic view of English language education as an instrument of the neoliberal market – promoting English language teaching services and products as commodities for future prosperity and employment (Block, 2018a) – a significant

discussion has emerged in the literature about the role of the English language in the economy and society in terms of its value. The ambiguous use of terms such as linguistic capital and language commodification, which involve the exchangeability of language, not only risks misrepresenting fundamental economic ideas but also exposes the mediating influence of global political-economic discourses on local knowledge claims and behaviours. Petrovic and Yazan (2021b, p. 3) rightly observed, “there is something going on with language, with the way that we think about language, and how language gets called into being in particular kinds of ways within late capitalism”.

These paradigm and policy changes in TESOL across the Asia-Pacific drive significant shifts in the professional roles and practices of ESOL teachers. Teachers are expected to be more adaptable, tech-savvy, culturally sensitive, and innovative in their approaches to teaching English. They must continually adjust to new pedagogies, technologies, and assessments while remaining mindful of their students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

4.2.3. The Neoliberal Transformation of Higher Education

Over the last three decades, the evolution of neoliberalism in the Asia-Pacific region has gradually influenced reforms in the higher education sector as part of countries' economic transformation processes. First witnessed in the early 1990s in the United States following financial reductions in government support of higher education (HE) and a rapid shift in the HE model towards one more akin to that of private corporations, the process of change in HE values and essence spread out globally (Aronowitz & Giroux, 2000). Yet, considering the general focus of education on measurements and achievements, this change, followed by processes of privatisation, deregulation, financialisation, and globalisation, rapidly became the norm and dominant global political philosophy (Radice, 2013, pp. 407-408, as cited in Tight, 2019).

The influence of market-driven forces prevailing within neoliberal thinking in HE is evident in Hadley's (2015, p. 6) description of a neoliberal university as “a self-interested,

entrepreneurial organisation offering recursive educational experiences and research services for paying clients.” This way of ‘producing’ knowledge imposes recalibration of the students’ and teachers’ roles in HE, where students are the knowledge consumers, and the teachers are “managed knowledge producers who should follow prescribed sets of organisational processes” and justify their pedagogical output through quantitative measures (Hadley, 2015, p. 6).

In this sense, the growing authority and power of standardised English language tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), as global measures of English proficiency standards, have fuelled the change in students’ English language learning purposes, with significant implications for teachers’ practice and role (Barnes, 2017). Moreover, the introduction of investment and human capital discourse in education policy recommendations, based on a view of education as an economic activity, reduced knowledge to a set of skills and competences that individuals must acquire to compete in the global market (Holborow, 2018). This repositioning of the value of education has significantly impacted the TESOL industry’s rapid growth, as well as the motives, methods, and contexts in which the English language is learned and taught.

4.2.4. The Third Space Environments

These new dynamics in the HE transformation also had significant implications for the nature and purpose of the tertiary EAP, ESP, and ELICOS sectors, challenging the roles, practices, and, consequently, the identity of ESOL teaching professionals. The previously discussed conceptual ruptures in the goal and meaning of HE, predicated on the neoliberal movements of thought, have resulted in the emergence of separate so-called *Third Space* environments (Whitchurch, 2008) positioned between the professional or non-academic (e.g., administrative and management staff) and academic domains (e.g., university teaching and research staff).

The *Third Space* is a concept used to describe HE staff groups that do not fit into the binary of academic and non-academic roles and are responsible for services such as student

support, service learning, and academic skills development. ESOL teachers' input in HE is more closely related to training students in English language skills, combined with elements of administrative and managerial roles, than to research and academia, so they are located in this space. Nevertheless, these spaces are not a fixed category; they are characterised by a fluid approach to professional roles, which can also be a source of ambiguity, dilemmas, and uncertainty for those who work in them.

4.3. Research Aims and Questions

This study's overarching aim was to contribute to the current understanding of the understudied area of professional identity of teachers of English to speakers of other languages in pathway programs or at the university level in the Asia-Pacific context. Its immediate goal was to explore and understand the impact of historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors that enable or constrain ESOL teachers' professional identity by interpreting the meanings teachers ascribed to their beliefs about teaching, their roles in, and their experiences of professional practice. In addition, this study aimed to investigate the negotiation of professional identity and agency in relation to historical, sociocultural, and political influences on their professional practice. Against this background, the proposed study sought to answer the following main research question:

- How do historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors impact Asia-Pacific ESOL teachers' professional identity?

The following sub-questions were set out as guidelines:

- What do ESOL teachers think about their pedagogical roles within the different contextual levels of their practice, and why do they think that?
- How do ESOL teachers' past professional experiences impact their current commitment to practice?

- What pedagogical practices do ESOL teachers use to manifest and promote their professional identity?

4.4. Philosophical Assumptions: Relativity, Subjectivity, and Phronesis

Guba and Lincoln (1994) emphasise the primacy of the underlying philosophical beliefs that guide the research endeavour by arguing that “[q]uestions of methods are secondary to questions of paradigm” (p. 105). Furthermore, they argue that no research study should be undertaken without a clear philosophical understanding of the worldview that informs and guides the researcher’s approach. Therefore, in this section, I reflect on the embodied philosophical thinking that informed my choice of a qualitative interpretive approach with pragmatic elements, which I used to generate and interpret the research data and answer this study’s research questions.

In his seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962), Thomas Samuel Kuhn coined the term ‘paradigms’ and defined it as “universally recognized scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions for a community of researchers” (p. X of 1996 ed.). While groundbreaking, Kuhn’s work and definition of ‘paradigm’ ignited vigorous debates, eventually leading to a clearer understanding of the set of concepts. In 1994, Guba and Lincoln put forward a less ambiguous understanding of paradigm “as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemological fundamental ways” (p. 105).

Among qualitative researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), an agreement exists on the importance of an explicit statement of the paradigm in ensuring alignment of the design choices and the study’s purpose, allowing researchers’ transparency, and enhancing the trustworthiness of the study. Furthermore, drawing on our experiences and understanding of the world, we situate ourselves within a particular philosophical orientation that informs our approach to inquiry and our interpretation of the data. Therefore, the decisions made regarding this study’s research design

were influenced by the beliefs provided in the interpretivist paradigm, which assumes a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology, and the pragmatic paradigm, where researchers seek to solve a socially situated real-world problem through an adequate action with the purpose of creating knowledge for the sake of change and improvement (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Interpretive researchers aim to understand and interpret people's individual subjective meanings of the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). However, from a philosophical perspective, qualitative and quantitative researchers may claim that fundamental or universal truth, as an external objective reality, is unknowable; if so, researchers can never know whether their understanding of the matter is true or even whether there is a truth. Acceptance of the view that fundamental truth exists does not prevent interpretive researchers, beginning with their assumptions about the nature of being, existence, and reality, from interpreting specific, local data arising from their research and providing their own understanding of the matter. Hence, reality is a result of individual cognition resulting in multiple meanings that come from people's 'lived experiences' (Ling, 2017, p. 33). This orientation of my thinking about the research problem and the ways of knowing by acknowledging the possibility of multiple realities, each equally legitimate and socially constructed, led me to approach each participant's meaning-making with the overarching aim of understanding their subjective experiences of being ESOL teachers in their contexts.

The interpretive orientation toward knowledge underscores the focus on meaning-making as actively and collaboratively constructed across various contexts, which, in turn, frame the possibilities for meaning-making in time and space. By adopting a subjectivist epistemological stance toward data interpretation, I acknowledged my interactive involvement in data generation and analysis and assumed that knowledge is socially constructed, situated, and contextual. Here, I considered the role of language in shaping understanding of the world "at the nexus of meaning, context, and action" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 46). Language, as one of the ways of worldmaking, creates the possibility for multiple interpretations of people's

meaning-making of their experiences in the world. This possibility establishes the meaning-context link, which is crucial in conducting interpretive research.

The importance of the meaning-context link in relation to my epistemological stance in thinking about the purpose of generating new knowledge in general and this study's purpose, in particular, can also be discussed from the point of view of how research and theory interact with practice. And this, I believe, remains a critical topic of discussion in the field of teacher education and the professional development of educators, within which this qualitative study takes place. In this sense, I highlight the role of *phronesis*, which is relevant not only to the ethical dimensions of this study but also to the practical dimensions of conducting the research and its purpose. Appealing to what Aristotle called practical wisdom or *phronesis*, I think of research as situated in and dependent on context, "focused on the highly variable, non-reproducible, and contingent facets of our world" (Macklin & Whiteford, 2012, p. 92).

Moreover, considering the purpose and the practical significance, the decisions made regarding this study's research design were also influenced by the beliefs provided in the pragmatic paradigm, seen as instrumental for the interpretive study (Goldkuhl, 2012). Pragmatist thinking is concerned with action and change – "humans acting in a world that is in constant state of becoming" (Goldkuhl, 2012, p. 139). However, for a desirable and controlled change to occur, actions must be directed through purpose and knowledge; hence cognitive and practical interests are intertwined.

Guided by Dewey's concept of inquiry as a "controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituents, distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of original situation into a unified whole" (Dewey, 1938b, p. 108), I sought to investigate a part of ESOL teachers' reality with the purpose to generate knowledge that could serve as an initiative for change and improvement of their practice and well-being. Furthermore, I believe that this instrumental view of knowledge represents a valid outcome of the inquiry, extending from understanding to revealing ways to improve ESOL

teacher education and practice. Additionally, considering the study's activity theoretical lens, which is a practice-based and practice-oriented theoretical framework, meaning that there is an essential connection between the interpretive lens and the collective human practices, the implications of this study's results could be aimed at employing practice-based insights in the shaping of future practices.

Therefore, acknowledging the epistemological differences between interpretivism and pragmatism, I focus on human interpretation of context in this study, with a primary emphasis on meaning-making and understanding held beliefs about TESOL practice. However, I am also concerned with recommending changes to establish new approaches to building a strong sense of professional identity, to rethink the knowledge base of ESOL teacher education, and to improve teachers' practice. In conducting this research study, I did not attempt to emulate the steps of quantitative design nor to create universal rules, but rather to interpret knowledge applied to a particular situation, which could apply to similar contexts and is hence useful. With this in mind, I drew on prior knowledge, focused my research, and adopted a flexible research design that didn't follow prescriptive methodological dictates. I present the results of this study as one of the many possible truths that can guide further practice. It is these philosophical assumptions that formed the backdrop for the study's purpose and the kind of reasoning I applied in the conduct of the research study – to understand how contexts impact ESOL teachers' professional identity by interpreting the meanings teachers made regarding their beliefs about, roles in, and experiences of professional practice through a qualitative interpretive inquiry.

4.5. Research Design: Interpreting to Understand People's Meaning-making in Context

Every research undertaking is multi-dimensional. Whether its purpose is to explore, describe, and/or explain the matter of interest, the researcher inevitably faces a series of choices to bring the research question, methodology, and methods together. These choices, in turn, are underpinned by a set of philosophical beliefs or ontological and epistemological

presuppositions as part of the researcher's tacit knowledge and, as such, require reflexivity to become explicit. In this sense, I describe and elaborate on my research design choices in this chapter of the thesis.

Qualitative methodology was chosen as the most appropriate approach for this study because it "draws strongly on direct experience and meanings" (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 287). Furthermore, since the research questions aim towards an understanding of participants' views and experiences in context, a qualitative approach seemed the most suitable to provide "an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings" and to investigate "issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviours and actions" (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 288). A more detailed explanation or a rationale for the decisions made in this study regarding the chosen logic of inquiry follows the brief outline of the meaning of 'qualitative research'.

The complexity of defining qualitative research is evident in the literature, where there are as many definitions as there are written accounts of it. This occurrence is attributable to the various philosophical and disciplinary influences that have shaped the complex historical development of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, most writers reflect on this complexity by highlighting some of its attributes. For example, some authors define qualitative research in comparison with quantitative research by saying that "it uses *words* as data, collected and analysed in all sorts of ways. Quantitative research, in contrast, uses *numbers* as data and analyses them using statistical techniques" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 3, emphasis in original). Others point out the choice of research methods and the epistemological stance in doing qualitative research by describing it as an inquiry into people's construction of meaning, which "involves interpreting interviews, observations, and documents – the data of qualitative inquiry – to find substantively meaningful patterns and themes. Doing so is an act of interpretation" (Patton, 2015, p. 5). Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasise the research purpose and focus, arguing that qualitative researchers' interest lies in "*understanding the meaning people have constructed*"; that is, how people make sense of their world and the

experiences they have in the world” (p. 15, emphasis in original). And Denzin and Lincoln (2017, p. 43), in their paragraph-long definition, focus on the practice and context of doing qualitative research:

Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

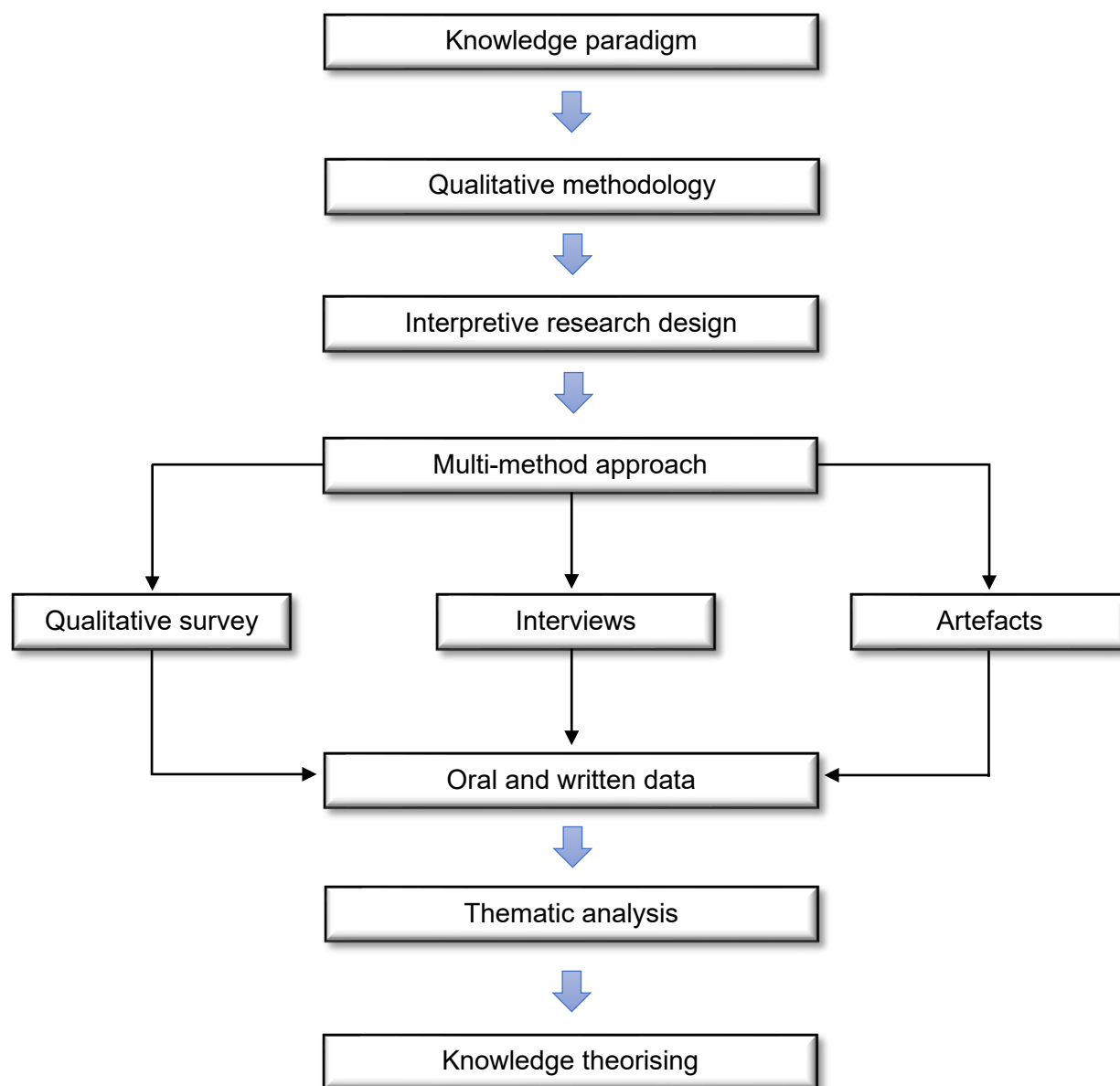
The variations in how ‘qualitative’ is defined may be contextual and depend on each author’s personal understanding and focus. Nevertheless, the centrality of the logic of inquiry unambiguously lies in the interpretation of people’s meaning-making of the world for the purpose of understanding, i.e., as Stake (2010) puts it, in studying to understand how things work by “paying attention to what people are doing and what they are saying” (p. 2). And precisely that was the essence of this research study – to understand how contexts impact teachers’ professional identity transformation by interpreting the meanings teachers made regarding their beliefs about, roles in, and experiences of professional practice.

Guided by the beliefs provided in the interpretivist and the pragmatic paradigm, this study employed a broad qualitative research design that applied an interpretive logic of inquiry or way of knowing (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Stake, 2010). It is an iterative, recursive, and flexible process focused on understanding people’s meaning-making in context through interpretation. This qualitative study employed a multimethod approach to generate data, including a qualitative survey, individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, and artefacts (media data in the form of relevant articles from online TESOL magazines). The generated data were analysed following the six phases of thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke

(2006) and articulated through the analytical lens of the meta-theoretical framework of 'identity-in-activity' (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007). Figure 7 below outlines this study's research design.

Figure 7

The Study's Methodological Structure



Rooted in the idea of *verstehen* (Weber, 1921/1968) – understanding of action and context through experience – and hermeneutics (Howard, 1982) – privileging local, situated knowledge – interpretive research seeks “to understand what a thing “is” by learning what it does, how particular people use it, in particular contexts” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 23). Moreover, through an iterative process of researcher sense-making, it seeks to understand why people act in certain ways. However, causality here is understood in terms of the participants’ views of their own contexts and the language used to do so. This understanding of context and causality creates the possibility of multiple meanings, as was briefly discussed in the previous section.

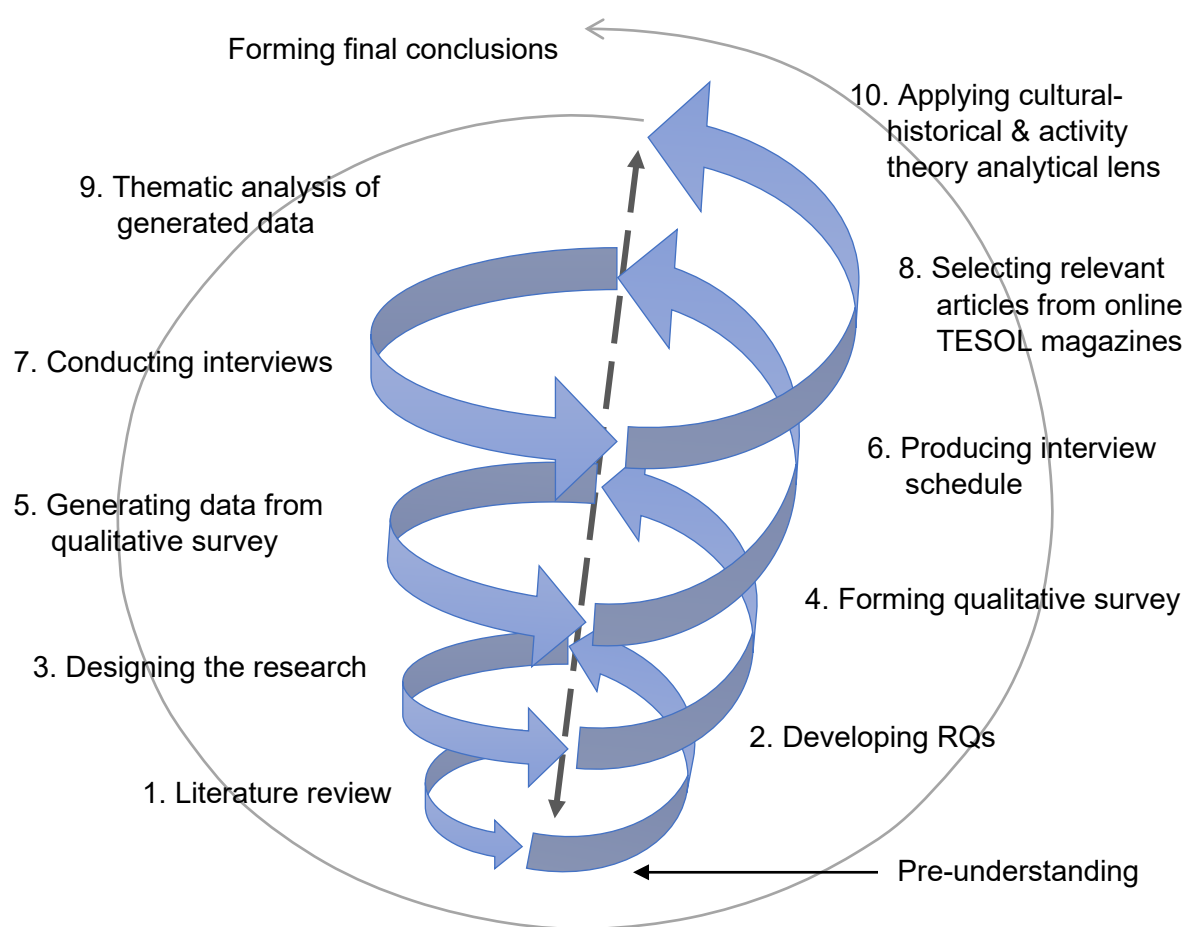
Furthermore, the focus of the qualitative interpretive research on meaning-making and contextuality provides a methodological rationale for detailed or ‘thick’ descriptions (Geertz, 1973). According to Stake (2010), a description rich in details and even cultural complexities only becomes ‘thick’ if “it offers direct connection to cultural theory and scientific knowledge” (p. 49). Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012, p. 48) explain the use of thicker descriptions for answering the “how” and “why” questions that underlie the “whats”, thus contributing to the contextual nuances relevant to the research questions. According to Stake (2010, p. 50, emphasis in original), the significance of producing detailed and thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation is that they “yield *verstehen*”. Additionally, preserving the meaning-context link through thick descriptions enables not only in-depth understanding but also speaks of the quality and trustworthiness of the research.

Another significant aspect of this study’s research design is the role of the researcher’s prior knowledge. Drawing on the Kantian view of the role of *a priori* for generating new knowledge and Charles Sanders Peirce’s understanding of abduction, an interpretive inquiry applies a circular-spiral pattern of abductive reasoning in shaping the research interest and its conduct (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). During the procedural sense-making of the research project, the inquiry can be visualised as an iterative, recursive process of engagement with

multiple pieces simultaneously that inform and, in a way, fold back on one another, as shown in Figure 8 below. In this process, initial understandings are reformulated in light of new insights and knowledge, which, in turn, generate new understandings to be subjected to further inquiry.

Figure 8

The Study's Circular-Spiral Pattern of Inquiry



The qualitative interpretive research approach and its power to illuminate people's meanings of actual-world experiences align with the study's goal – to obtain an in-depth understanding of ESOL teachers' meaning-making of their situated experiences of professional practice. As context dependence and situatedness are integral to qualitative interpretive research, this design is instrumental in studying the interrelationship between the phenomenon and its contexts. In addition, it provides an opportunity to better understand the complexities under study through multiple data sources, as discussed in the data generation section of this chapter.

Nevertheless, during preliminary reading and thinking about the research project, I explored other, more focused qualitative research approaches. Even though this study looked into the sociocultural aspects of being an ESOL teacher to understand ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation, its purpose was not to study and describe the beliefs, values, and attitudes in structuring patterns of behaviour in a particular social or cultural group of people; therefore, ethnography (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was unsuitable. Furthermore, even though the phenomenon under study may be delimited or bounded to a group to undergo a case study approach (Merriam, 1998), the study's scope may not allow detailed case studies in each country. Additionally, this study did not aim to uncover the inner essence of teachers' experiences, as a phenomenological study would (van Manen, 2014), nor did it seek to uncover a substantive theory directly from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

At one point, however, at the very beginning of thinking about the study's design, narrative inquiry was considered as an alternative research approach because of its power to uncover the meanings that participants would make from their experiences in a storytelling form with rich layers of the temporal, situated, individualistic nature of experience in the social context. However, despite it being the most commonly utilised approach to investigate teacher identity (Barkhuizen, 2016a; Golombek, 2017; Sanczyk, 2020; Yazan, 2019), after careful consideration of the research focus, goals, context, and access to data, the broad qualitative

interpretive research approach was deemed better suited for providing a more general interpretation of teachers' perceived beliefs and experiences about their practice in a social environment.

4.6. Researcher's Role: Reflexivity and Positionality

So far in this chapter, I have elaborated on this study's logic of inquiry and the philosophical assumptions that underpin the inquiry's purpose and the choices made regarding its approach. However, in qualitative interpretive research, the researcher's reflexivity and positionality are important considerations because the researcher plays an active role in generating the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Darwin Holmes, 2020; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) argue "reflexivity should be understood and treated as scientific activity at the heart of interpretive research" (p. 104). They place the researcher's presence and subjective interpretation "front and centre" and emphasise the impact of the researcher's reflexivity on the quality of interpretive inquiry as evidence of transparency that maximises the trustworthiness of the researcher's knowledge claims.

Furthermore, reflexivity in qualitative research touches on this study's area of interest – identity. According to Creswell (2003), the qualitative researcher's sensitivity to their "personal biography" and their reflexivity – an "introspection and acknowledgement of biases, values or interests" – are a benchmark of doing qualitative research, where "[t]he personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self" (p. 182). Bringing the 'self' to the research field is also evident in Guba and Lincoln's (2005) writing about the importance of reflexivity. Here, they refer to Schulamit Reinharz's (1997, as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210) view on reflexivity as a creation of self in the field and point out to the researcher's "process of *becoming*" during and after the fieldwork. They view reflexivity as "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" and define it as "a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the process of research self" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210).

Acknowledging my ethical responsibilities as a researcher, I will engage in reflexivity and provide a brief account of my positionality in relation to the participants and the phenomenon under investigation. First, I acknowledge that my worldview, prior experience, and professional background have influenced this study. My research approach is informed by the ontological assumption that multiple realities are being actively created as individuals act in the world; therefore, reality is ever-changing, based on human experience, and oriented toward understanding and solving practical problems. This research study is also informed by the belief that knowledge is grounded in experience. One's experiences influence one's perceptions of the world; thus, each person's knowledge is unique. However, as this knowledge is created from socially shared experiences, it is considered social knowledge.

In terms of my background and prior familiarity with the phenomenon under study, I would be described as a female in her late thirties from a small, historically complex, and culturally diverse country located in the south-eastern parts of Europe, in the middle of the Balkans. When I was born, my country's name was Yugoslavia. While I was growing up, it was called the Republic of Macedonia (in many political occasions also known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). It is now known as the Republic of North Macedonia. I have been an international student living in Melbourne, Australia, since July 2018. Moving to Australia to study after nine years working as a German, Spanish, and Macedonian language translator, interpreter, and teacher challenged my professional identity and prompted me to reinvent myself. Nevertheless, this journey of qualitative change, which required me to reconsider my professional identity, drove my interest in and motivation for conducting this study. Despite contextual variations, I believe that my professional experience as a foreign and second language teacher has provided me with valuable insights into the teaching profession that were instrumental in establishing a more meaningful relationship with the study's participants.

Bearing in mind the importance of reflexivity and positionality in qualitative research, I believe that, while practising my role in this research, I was moving along the continuum

between outsider and insider rather than standing on one side of the overly simplistic dichotomy. For example, Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 9) argue that researchers adopt an insider position when they share some group identity with participants and an outsider position when they do not; however, they add that most often researchers hold multiple insider and outsider positions. Similarly, Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 60) explain that for qualitative researchers, there is no possibility of disembodied research, rather merely a position “from the standpoint of being ‘with’ our participants”, where ‘with’ means ‘in relation to’ the research participants. Dwyer and Buckle conclude (2009, p. 61):

The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the costs and benefits this status affords.

By adopting the positionality of an in-between, I transcended the outsider-insider dichotomy and occupied the hyphenated third space (Crossley et al., 2016; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Table 1, based on Salmon’s (2016, p. 102) etic-emic continuum of e-research positions, depicts my research position among the nuanced options of the hyphenated third space.

Table 1*Researcher's Positioning on the Outsider-Insider Continuum*

	OUTSIDER	Member but not participant	INSIDER
Relationship to research problem	Draws from literature and/or larger context	Draws on both scholarship and experience to understand research problem and generate questions	Draws from experience or own history
Relationship to research participants or site	Outside looking in	Familiar with context and community	Researcher is the or one of the participants
Relationship to data collection	Aims to remove self and biases from data	Shares characteristics with participants, and/or has experienced the research phenomena but does not contribute data	Aims to immerse self in study and contribute data

Note. This is a representation of the researcher's positioning on the etic-emic continuum of e-research positions. Adapted from *Doing qualitative research Online* (p. 102), by J. Salmons, 2016, SAGE Publications. Copyright © Janet Salmons 2016

Here, I pragmatically utilised part of my professional experience in teaching foreign languages to adult students in a pathway program to university; I drew on the literature and on my knowledge and sociocultural sensitivity gained during seven years living in Australia. Therefore, I was aware of the complex contexts and multiple dimensions the teacher profession entails. However, not having a professional background in teaching English and being an international student in Australia, with no direct prior experience in or with the other eight Asian-Pacific countries listed in this study, endowed me with an outsider positionality.

During the interviews, I was able to connect with the participants' experiences of foreign/second language teaching, such as the rewarding feeling of making a positive difference in students' lives and the challenges of being a non-native language teacher. Nevertheless, there were times when I felt like a stranger to the research setting and its situated knowers.

While interviewing a teacher from New Zealand, for example, she told me that she ‘accidentally’ became an ESOL teacher through the practicality of teaching English while travelling around Asia. As I have never been in such a position, I could not fully connect with some of the meanings she drew from her adventurous experiences. Reflecting on such situations of perplexity made me slow down, question my interpretation and reposition myself. I found that harnessing the ‘stranger-ness’ in generating interpretive knowledge can help enhance the researcher’s understanding. It facilitates asking novel questions and challenging “what for the situated knowers is the taken-for-granted and tacitly known” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 29), thereby sparking reflective thinking and an abductive process that drives the generation of new knowledge.

During the data generation process, I sought to gain an insider’s perspective by giving voice to ESOL teachers and actively participating in data co-generation. In the interviews, some of the teachers often used the pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’, and ‘our’ to refer to the challenges they face in their professional practice and used phrases such as ‘you know [what I mean]’, ‘I’m sure you’ve been there before’, or ‘you understand’, which suggested they perceived me as an insider sharing common overlapping experiences from the teaching practice. However, this occasionally proved problematic because they assumed I already understood their context, so I had to be very quick and ask them to clarify. Therefore, the downside of being perceived as an insider is that it could create an environment of presumed and implicit understanding, with the participant failing to explain in full their experience, and the researcher not acting quickly and asking for clarification, which may result in investigative impediments (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). However, I agree with Corbin and Buckle’s (2009, p. 59) argument that it is not the status of outsider or insider that is relevant here, but the researcher’s awareness, flexibility, openness, authenticity, genuine interest in the research participants’ meaning-making, and commitment to accurately represent their experience.

4.7. Participants: Active Co-generators of Data

This study's research choices regarding participants, access negotiation, and recruitment were guided by an interpretive logic of inquiry and based on the mapping for exposure rationale (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Access to participants was negotiated primarily through publicly available institutional channels and through individual teachers' voluntary participation. Given the interpretive nature of the study and the absence of formal gatekeeping requirements, access was negotiated primarily through publicly accessible university staff directories and direct communication with potential participants.

Mapping for exposure informed a non-randomised, albeit systematic approach to participant recruitment, oriented toward gaining exposure to the variability and multiplicity of teachers' experiences. This approach rests on the premise that research participants hold diverse views and experiences regarding the phenomenon under study, and that the researcher has limited control over both participant availability and the unfolding research process. As such, research participation was understood as contingent, relational, and shaped by participants' willingness to engage. Additionally, the mapping for exposure included generating data from multiple sources – qualitative survey, interviews, and artefacts – that ensured intertextuality and supported the trustworthiness of the study's claims and data interpretation.

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) caution against rationalising participant selection through the language of 'purposive sampling', which they argue carries positivist assumptions of pre-established criteria, signalling a form of researcher control that counters the presuppositions underlying interpretive research settings and the implications of contextuality central to qualitative research designs. Consistent with this position, participant recruitment in this study was guided by the study's purpose and research questions, as well as the aim of engaging research-relevant participants whose professional experiences could illuminate the phenomenon under investigation.

This study's participants are experienced ESOL teachers from various countries in the Asia-Pacific region who work with adult students predominantly in pathway programs and at university level (e.g., English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), or General English courses). The aspect of teaching experience played a significant role in selecting research-relevant participants, as it provided insight into teachers' meaningful meaning-making of the complex educational setting, which is enabled by the extent of their time in that setting, i.e., their experience. Although the definition of 'experienced' is complex and varies across the literature, it appears to hinge mainly on the number of years of teaching experience. Therefore, this study followed the common research practice of defining experienced teachers as those with five or more years of classroom experience (Freeman, 2001; Tsui, 2005).

Another significant aspect of this study, particularly in mapping the study terrain for exposure, is that it is international, involving 44 participants from 9 countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, China, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. Of the 44 participants who completed the qualitative survey, 16 agreed to participate in an interview. The decision about which countries in the Asia-Pacific region to include was based on several considerations that were believed to meet the objectives while aligning with the research context, capacity, and time parameters of a PhD study.

The participants in this study are experienced English education professionals with diverse cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds. The participants' background information was obtained from the first part of the qualitative survey, which included five questions on gender, age, cultural background, education, and professional background, as summarised in Table 2 below. Throughout the study, they were recognised as professionals with agency over their meaning-making and the extent of their research participation. In this sense, they can be described as enthusiastic in sharing their sense-making and co-generating the data.

Table 2

Participants' Background Summary

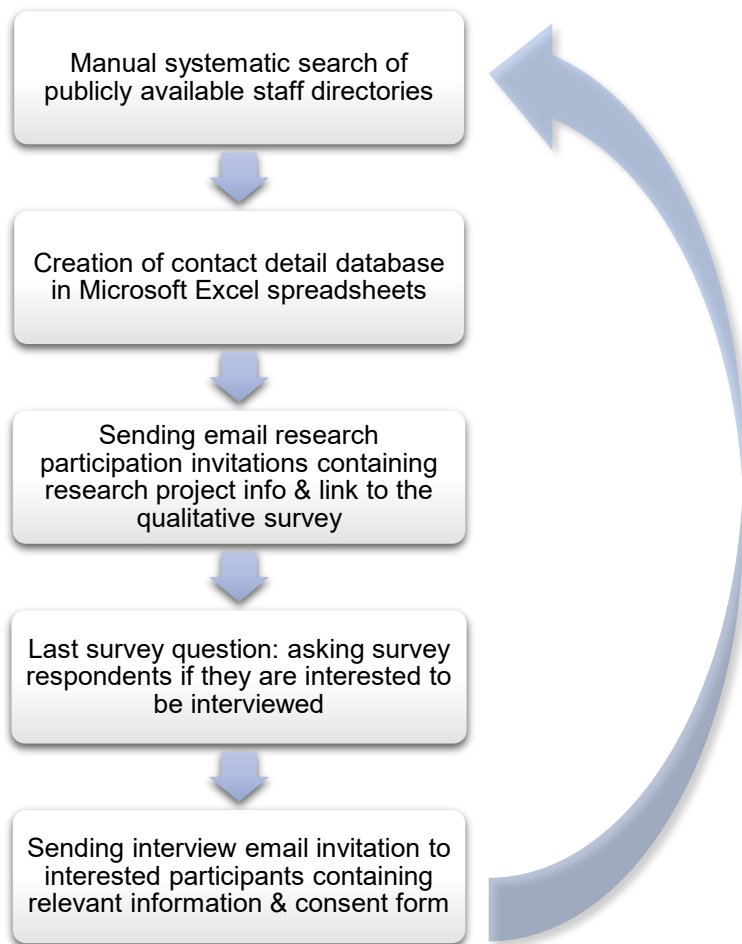
Country of employment	Cultural background	Years of experience	Gender	Age group	Qualification	
<i>Australia</i> 7	Australia	3	Male: 1 Female: 6	5-10: 1	25-34: 3	CELTA: /
	China	1		11-15: 4	35-44: 1	Grad. Cert. in TESOL: 2
	France	1		16-20: /	45-54: 2	Master of TESOL: 3
	Serbia	1		21-25: 1	55-64: 1	PhD: 1
	UK	1		26-30: 1	65+: /	Ongoing PhD: 1
				30+: /		
<i>New Zealand</i> 4	New Zealand	2	Male: 2 Female: 2	5-10: /	25-34: /	CELTA: 2
		11-15: 2		35-44: 2	Grad. Cert. in TESOL: /	
	UK	1		16-20: 1	45-54: 1	Master of TESOL: 2
	Europe	1		21-25: /	55-64: 1	PhD: /
				26-30: /	65+: /	Ongoing PhD: /
				30+: 1		
<i>China</i> 5	China	2	Male: 4 Female: 1	5-10: 2	25-34: /	CELTA: /
	Belgium	1		11-15: 1	35-44: 2	Grad. Cert. in TESOL: /
	UK	1		16-20: 1	45-54: 2	Master of TESOL: 5
	Europe	1		21-25: 1	55-64: 1	PhD: /
					26-30: /	65+: /
				30+: /		
<i>Indonesia</i> 5	Indonesia	5	Male: 3 Female: 2	5-10: 1	25-34: /	CELTA: /
		11-15: 1		35-44: 2	Grad. Cert. in TESOL: /	
		16-20: /		45-54: 2	Master of TESOL: 2	
		21-25: 2		55-64: /	PhD: 1	
		26-30: /		65+: 1	Ongoing PhD: 2	
				30+: 1		
<i>Japan</i> 4	Japan	1	Male: 4 Female: /	5-10: 1	25-34: /	CELTA: /
	Ireland	1		11-15: 1	35-44: 3	Grad. Cert. in TESOL: /
	UK	1		16-20: 1	45-54: 1	Master of TESOL: 2
	USA	1		21-25: 1	55-64: /	PhD: 2
					26-30: /	65+: /
				30+: /		
<i>Singapore</i> 2	Singapore	2	Male: / Female: 2	5-10: 1	25-34: 1	CELTA: /
		11-15: /		35-44: /	Grad. Cert. in TESOL: /	
		16-20: 1		45-54: 1	Master of TESOL: 1	
				21-25: /	55-64: /	PhD: 1

		26-30: /		65+: /		Ongoing PhD: /				
		30+: /								
<i>Thailand</i>	9	Thailand	4	5-10:	1	Male: 6 Female: 3	25-34:	/	CELTA:	/
		Australia	1	11-15:	4		35-44:	4	Grad. Cert. in TESOL:	1
		Canada	1	16-20:	2		45-54:	3	Master of TESOL:	3
		South Africa	1	21-25:	/		55-64:	2	PhD:	4
		UK	1	26-30:	1		65+:	/	Ongoing PhD:	1
		USA	1	30+:	1					
<i>The Philippines</i>	4	The Philippines	4	5-10:	1	Male: 2 Female: 2	25-34:	2	CELTA:	/
				11-15:	1		35-44:	1	Grad. Cert. in TESOL:	/
				16-20:	1		45-54:	1	Master of TESOL:	3
				21-25:	/		55-64:	/	PhD:	1
				26-30:	/		65+:	/	Ongoing PhD:	/
				30+:	1					
<i>Vietnam</i>	4	Vietnam	3	5-10:	2	Male: 2 Female: 2	25-34:	1	CELTA:	/
				11-15:	2		35-44:	2	Grad. Cert. in TESOL:	/
				16-20:	/		45-54:	/	Master of TESOL:	4
				21-25:	/		55-64:	1	PhD:	/
				26-30:	/		65+:	/	Ongoing PhD:	/
				30+:	/					
TOTAL	44	Australia	5							
		New Zealand	2							
		China	3							
		Indonesia	5							
		Japan	1							
		Singapore	2							
		Thailand	4	5-10:	10	Male: 24 Female: 20	25-34:	7	CELTA:	2
		The Philippines	4	11-15:	16		35-44:	17	Grad. Cert. in TESOL:	3
		Vietnam	3	16-20:	7		45-54:	13	Master of TESOL:	25
		USA	2	21-25:	5		55-64:	6	PhD:	10
		Canada	1	26-30:	2		65+:	1	Ongoing PhD:	4
		South Africa	1	30+:	4					
		UK	5							
		Ireland	1							
		France	1							
		Serbia	1							
		Belgium	1							
Europe	2									
		Cultural background		Years of experience			Gender	Age group		Qualification

This study's strategy in mapping for exposure is presented in Figure 9 and described as follows.

Figure 9

This Study's Mapping for Exposure Strategy



Participant recruitment proceeded through a staged process involving identification, invitation, and voluntary self-selection. Initially, to identify potential participants, I conducted a manual, systematic search of publicly available staff directories on the websites of each participating country's universities that offer English-language programs/courses. Because the study relied on publicly available contact information and voluntary individual participation, no

formal institutional permission was required. For each country, I then created an Excel database to record the potential participants' contact details obtained from the universities' staff directories. Next, I used the web-based platform Qualtrics (access provided by Victoria University) to send email invitations (see Appendix C) to potential research participants. This process of locating potential participants was time-consuming and inconsistent in effectiveness, as some universities do not provide staff contact information on their websites or provide only partial information, such as teachers' names, occasionally accompanied by relevant work experience. In such cases, I attempted to contact the departments or schools via their official email addresses listed on their websites. I asked the administrators to forward the email to the teaching staff (see Appendix D). However, the effectiveness of this approach remains unknown because the email invitations were sent in an aggregated form, and the survey was anonymous.

The email invitation included the project description, a link to the Information to Participants form (see Appendix A), and a link to the anonymous qualitative survey (see Appendix G). At this point, the initial data were to be generated through an anonymous online qualitative survey. The approximate number of participants required to complete the qualitative survey was determined based on the study's purpose and the nature of the data. Therefore, because data generated through qualitative surveys typically requires more extensive exposure, a minimum of 40 participants was deemed appropriate. Moreover, it was taken into account that this exposure would also enable a broader, multi-perspectival dimension that could offer insights into meanings not previously considered in the literature review and thus enhance the interviewing process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

On the final page of the survey, participants were asked whether they would be interested in participating in an individual, in-depth, semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes, conducted online via a videoconferencing platform (e.g., Zoom or Skype), according to their preference. Those who were interested confirmed by clicking 'yes' and adding their email address. Within 2-3 days of expressing interest in being interviewed, they

received an interview invitation email (see Appendix H) containing information about the research project and the interview, including the study's purpose, procedures, topics to be discussed, and the associated risks and benefits. Furthermore, in the invitation, I explained the voluntary nature of their participation in the research study and their right to withdraw responses or themselves from the study at any time. Additionally, I emphasised the ethical measures for ensuring their privacy and confidentiality. To the email invitation, I attached the *Information to Participants Involved in Research* form and the *Consent form* (see Appendix B). The participants did not receive any reimbursements because that practice may corrupt the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 111).

4.8. Ethical Considerations

Given this research study's focus on investigating ESOL teachers' professional identity by interpreting the meaning the teachers make regarding their experiences of professional practice, with no intention of discussing anything of a potentially sensitive and disturbing nature, the study was initially described as 'low-risk research', where "the only foreseeable risk is one of discomfort" (National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, 2007 (updated 2018), p. 13). However, because the research project involved data generation with human participants, ethics approval was required from Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC). Given the study's international scope, the ethics application was subject to a high-risk review. VUHREC granted ethics approval for this study on the 21st of April 2022 under the overarching cover of HRE22-013.

For this research to be conducted ethically, I adhered to the guidance of the ethics and integrity policies, such as the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2007 (updated 2018)) and the guide *Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2019), which include the following principles of ethical

conduct: do no harm, respect participants and their confidentiality and anonymity, be honest and fair, gain informed consent, protect the data, and allow the right to withdraw.

As “a central feature” and essential requirement in research ethics, the principle of informed consent directly relates to the principles of fairness and respect towards research participants (Oliver, 2010, p. 28). It has the role of safeguarding and protecting the participants’ autonomy, dignity, rights, safety, and well-being. Therefore, in the email invitation to participate in this research project, I included the following research documentation: ‘Information to Participants Involved in Research Form’ (see Appendix A) and the ‘Informed Consent Form’ (see Appendix B). Before the potential participants agreed to participate in the research project, they were fully informed in plain language about the research objectives, research questions, methodology, potential implications of participation, and what was required of them. They were also informed that their decision to participate is entirely voluntary and that they maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any time (HMRC, ARC, & UA, 2007 (updated 2018), p. 16). According to Oliver (2010, p. 31), as an additional safeguard and to promote a more cooperative researcher-participant relationship, the researcher may offer the participant the right to reclaim the data in the event of withdrawal from the research. Additionally, I allowed time for participants to consider their involvement in the research and ensured all their questions or concerns were addressed in a timely manner before they signed the informed consent form (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2007 (updated 2018), p. 31).

Furthermore, building on the relational character of qualitative interpretive research and its focus on the humanity of research participants, I understood access to participants as an ongoing process that relies on the trust relationship among me, the researcher, and the participants. Along with the promise of not discussing information provided by the participants to others and the procedures of anonymising and handling the data during the stages of data generation, analysis, and dissemination of the research results, I also informed the participants

that only the Chief Investigator, the Associate Investigator, as the research project supervisors, and I, the Student Researcher, are to have access to the data (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2019).

Additionally, considering the risk to the privacy and anonymity of the participants, I followed the guidelines provided in Chapter 3.1. of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2007 (updated 2018)) and the guide *Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2019) and established a data management and protection plan at the outset of the study. The plan includes the following: data is to be kept for five years post-publication in a safe, password-protected space on the researcher's hard drive and the Victoria University's central storage space (R: drive); additionally, following section 3.1.41 from the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* for reducing the risk of participants' identification, the identifiers were separated from the content information and stored separately in a safe lockable location (NHMRC, ARC, & UA, 2007 (updated 2018)).

4.9. Data generation

In qualitative interpretive research studies, empirical evidence takes many forms and depends heavily on the framing of the research question. Data do not exist prior to the research project; rather, data are created as relevant to the research focus and through the research process, emerging from the participants' meaning-making of their world in time and space. Hence, data is co-generated by the participants and the researcher. During the data generation process, this entwinement of the research world and the researcher begins with an initial understanding of the phenomena under investigation and some sense of the research questions. Here, the interpretive research design's iterative, recursive, and adaptive character is reflected in the researcher's awareness and intentionality to maintain flexibility towards the conduct of the inquiry (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

As some of my early understandings underwent iterative reformulation, the new knowledge generated upon entering the field continued to evolve throughout the inquiry

process. Data generation and analysis were ongoing and intertwined, and initial sense-making and analysis began in the field. They continued after the fieldwork, throughout the deskwork and even the textwork phase. In what follows, I will attempt to enhance the trustworthiness of my knowledge claims by practising reflexivity and reporting, as transparently as possible, on the data generation and analysis processes, as well as on how some of my prior understandings and personal characteristics contributed to them.

Building on my prior knowledge and drawing on a cultural-historical and activity-theoretical lens, this study's data generation process used multiple data sources that encompassed three of the four domains of Vygotsky's genetic method: the cultural-historical, ontogenetic, and microgenetic domains, as presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

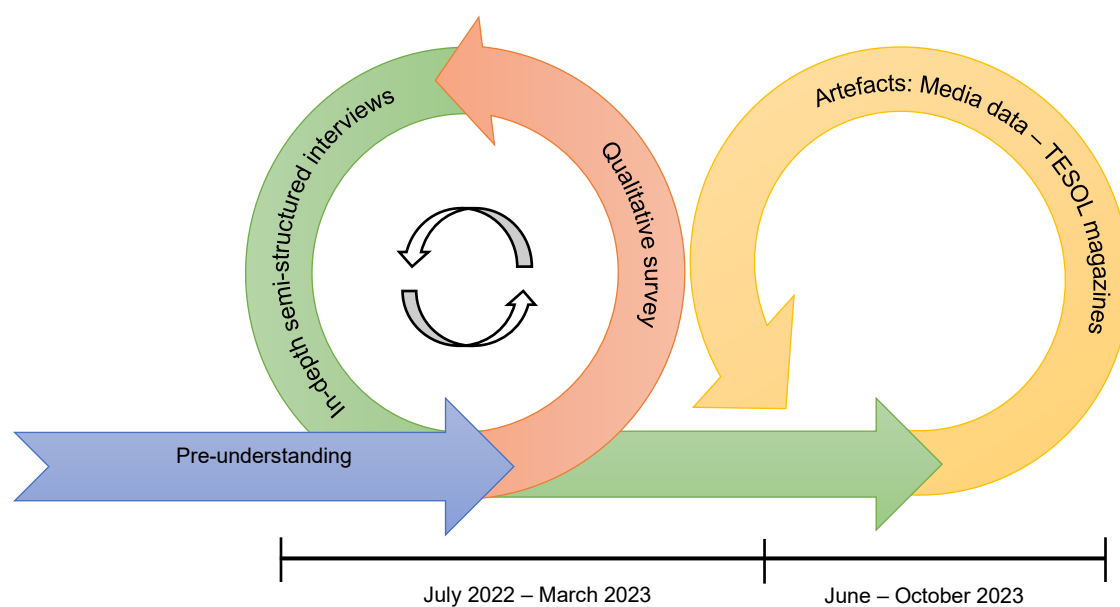
Data Sources and Data Generation Focus

Genetic domains	Data sources	Data generation focus
Cultural-historic	- Artefacts (media data: relevant articles from TESOL magazines)	Trends and discourse about global and local contexts and pedagogical practices in TESOL Local and global changes in the TESOL industry and teaching profession
Ontogenetic	- In-depth interviews - Qualitative survey	Personal background Past learning, teaching, and PD experiences Motive for choice of profession Beliefs and values about teaching Teachers' roles and motives Changes in teaching practices
Microgenetic	- In-depth interviews - Qualitative survey	Perceptions of teaching practice Social context of teaching at the workplace Use of pedagogic tools Experiences of professional development

Besides the dominant data source in studies exploring teacher identity – interviewing – the study also included a qualitative survey and media data in the form of relevant online articles from TESOL magazines or newsletters. The data generation processes, which utilised both qualitative surveys and interviews, were conducted over nine months, from July 2022 to March 2023. Media data were collected from TESOL magazines following the interviews, from June to October 2023. Figure 10 below illustrates the cyclical, iterative character of the data generation process.

Figure 10

The Data Generation Process



Given their multi-perspectival nature and rich descriptive detail, these data sources were particularly well-suited to the study's inquiry and to addressing the research question.

Furthermore, exposing myself to different kinds of research-relevant data sources maximised the variety of meanings made by participants across the Asia-Pacific and documented in the written records, thereby supporting an intertextual interpretation of the data.

Here, the concept of intertextuality in qualitative interpretive research is used metaphorically, in the sense of 'reading' across diverse forms of evidence to obtain a multi-perspectival interpretation of meaning around a particular event, idea, concept, and so forth. According to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), seeing these 'intertextual' links across data sources as part of the researcher's analytical sense-making contributes significantly to their interpretation. By looking for dimensionality and ambiguity and drawing on the temporal dimension across sources, intertextuality contextualises what the researcher sees and hears, leading to detailed descriptions and a richer understanding of the data. Furthermore, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) argue that this practice of using multiple data sources, usually found under the term 'triangulation' in the more realist-oriented research traditions, carries implications that do not align well with the methodological presuppositions of interpretive research; therefore, they see intertextuality as a long-standing interpretive practice and a quality marker in interpretive studies.

Having reflected on how the logic of inquiry was applied to selecting and combining data generation methods, I will next reflect on the data generation process and procedures.

4.9.1. Qualitative Survey

The online qualitative survey is a relatively novel and underutilised method for generating qualitative data that seeks to harness its rich potential for depth, focus, variation, and, at times, for insight into new understandings of the phenomenon under study (Braun et al., 2020). Some of the advantages of using online qualitative surveys are that they are self-administered, inexpensive, allow for a high degree of anonymity and data generated from a

large geographically dispersed population, they are topic-centred with predetermined, fixed questions for all participants to type in their responses in their own words, which allows for the generation of rich and complex meaning-making and aligns precisely with the qualitative researchers' interests (Terry & Braun, 2017). Furthermore, "qualitative surveys are an excellent tool to use if you're interested in understanding (or interrogating) people's *experiences* or their *practices*" or their "*views and perspectives*" (Terry & Braun, 2017, p. 23, emphasis in original). Data from the qualitative survey capture the meanings important to participants and enable the researcher to access their language and terminology (Braun et al., 2020).

Yet, online qualitative surveys remain methodologically underrepresented in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Wolf et al., 2016). According to Braun et al. (2020, p. 642), common misperceptions about qualitative surveys include rigidity stemming from the lack of opportunity for follow-up questions, shallowness in the data, the compulsory use of interviews, and ill-suitedness for a smaller number of participants. Moreover, emphasising the inaccuracy of these preconceptions, they stand firmly on the compatibility of qualitative surveys with research encompassing qualitative values and on their ability to provide rich, in-depth data.

This study's qualitative survey was conducted online via the Qualtrics platform, with access provided by Victoria University. It included two parts: a short demographic segment comprising five questions on gender, age, cultural and educational backgrounds, and years of work experience, followed by a topic-based segment comprising five open-ended questions about participants' beliefs and experiences regarding their teaching practice (see Appendix G). The open-ended questions drew on the study's conceptual framework and the existing literature on ESOL teachers' professional identity, agency, beliefs, and practice from a sociocultural perspective. The questions were designed to be broad, experience-oriented, and non-leading to invite participants' own sense-making, language, and interpretations of their professional experiences. Before distribution, the survey was reviewed by the researcher for content relevance, clarity, and coherence. This process supported content validity and interpretive

adequacy, ensuring that the survey questions could elicit rich qualitative data relevant to the study's research questions.

The estimated duration for completing the survey was 15-20 minutes. Additionally, on the initial survey page, participants were informed about their participation in the study, the protection of their privacy, the survey procedure, the potential benefits and risks of participating, the study's significance, data management and protection, and ethics approval. At the end of the survey, the participants were asked if they were interested in participating in an online individual in-depth interview.

The data generation through the online qualitative survey and interviews was conducted over 9 months, from July 2022 to March 2023. The participants who expressed interest in being interviewed within 2-3 days of completing the qualitative survey received an email (see Appendix H) with details regarding the interview process. Table 4 shows the number of email invitations sent to potential participants, the number of completed qualitative surveys, and the number of participants who agreed to be interviewed. The variation in the number of email invitations sent across countries reflects differences in universities' accessibility and transparency of staff contact information. The overall response rate was modest, which is not uncommon in qualitative survey research involving open-ended questions that require time and reflective engagement. In this study, the emphasis was placed on the richness, diversity, and interpretive value of the responses.

Table 4*Statistical Information about the Data Generation Process*

Country	Qualitative survey		Interviewed
	Sent e-invitations	Completed surveys	
Australia	185	7	3
New Zealand	46	4	2
Indonesia	143	5	2
Japan	31	4	0*
Vietnam	231	4	3
China	374	5	1
The Philippines	153	4	2
Singapore	128	2	0
Thailand	278	9	3
Total	1,569	44	16

* One participant was teaching in Thailand at the time of the interview; however, he had extensive work experience as an ESOL teacher in Japan.

For the purposes of this study and in answering the research questions, I found the online qualitative survey to be a practical, useful, and valuable method for generating data. It enabled me to capture the diversity of participants' perspectives and sense-making among teachers from different countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is rarely possible in student- and resource- and time-limited research. Furthermore, as a research method that can be considered as 'unobtrusive' (Braun et al., 2020) in the sense of not requiring participants to travel or meet with the researcher face-to-face, it afforded participants control over their research participation by giving them not only the option to choose the where and when, but also the amount of time they spend with the survey.

Nevertheless, completing qualitative surveys takes time and effort, and these should be recognised as potential challenges in obtaining responses. The survey was set to expire three

months after the ESOL teachers received the invitation email with the link. For greater flexibility, functions were enabled to save progress for completion at a later stage and to edit answers. Despite sending two reminders with information about the study and a polite request to complete the qualitative survey (see Appendices E and F), two common problems in qualitative surveys were observed: low response rates and non-completion.

Conclusively, it can be said that despite the difficulties with getting responses and non-completions, the online qualitative survey, on the one hand, with its openness and flexibility, enabled me to gain insights from multiple participants and learn about their sense-making, capture what is important to them, and get a better understanding of their experiences; on the other hand, it pointed out to new insights not considered before and helped me focus the interviews.

4.9.2. Individual In-depth Interviews

Interviewing is central to qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is a well-established, flexible, and versatile research method for obtaining data through a special form of conversation “that has a structure and a purpose” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 5). In terms of structure, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue in favour of keeping the interviewing format in qualitative research less structured, because each respondent has a unique worldview that requires flexibility and openness to emerge. And Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) define the purpose of in-depth interviews in “obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 6).

Building on interpretive philosophy, qualitative interviews as “extensions of ordinary conversations” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 12) provide us with a way of knowing by entering other people’s perspectives – “we interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 2015, p. 426). Here, “knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Kvale, 2007, p. 1), each involved in an interpretive practice of meaning-making through language and speech. The centrality of language in interviewing is

rooted in the interest in understanding other people's lived experiences and their meaning-making of those experiences, where language, and thought for that matter, are critical to the inquiry with human beings. When people tell us their stories, they give us access to their concrete experiences as abstractions of the most complex social and educational issues (Seidman, 2013, p. 7). This way of seeing language and language use in qualitative research methods is mainly due to the shift in the view of language use from a correspondence view as a transparent medium to reality towards a more relational view, where the use of language itself is a social action and not merely a system of symbols representing the world 'out there' (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 193).

In a similar vein, Holstein and Gubrium (1995, pp. 7-9) point out the nuances present in the methodological literature regarding the conception of respondents from epistemologically passive 'vessels of answers' to active makers of meaning. In their words:

Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 4)

Therefore, it is the active engagement of both the interviewee and the interviewer in the dialogic meaning-making process, as a form of social interaction, that creates a "productive site of reportable knowledge itself" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 3).

Guided by Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) active approach to interviewing, the interviews were conducted as a dynamic and active social interaction. During the interviews, I strived to listen carefully to the interviewees, remain open, and actively engage in their meaning-making. Moreover, I endeavoured to maintain an informal, conversational tone while focusing on the purpose of the inquiry and ensuring coverage of all topics of interest. I practised mindfulness of

my identity and role as a student-researcher to engage productively with interviewees, many of whom were in similar roles and in the midst of negotiating new identities as researchers.

I started each interview similarly, with an introduction of myself and the study. Consequently, I offered discussion topics as standpoints or points of reference for the conversation, focusing the first question on the interviewee's life in relation to their profession of choice – TESOL. During the interviews, by remaining as attentive as possible to the interviewees' stories, I prompted them to elaborate on aspects relevant to the study. Additionally, I used probes as unstructured follow-up questions to encourage further elaboration and clarification of meaning (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 513). To reaffirm attentiveness, contribute to the trust relationship between the participants and the researcher, and encourage detailed recollections, I also used the two-sentence format of a statement and a question (Morrissey, 1987, as cited in Kim, 2016).

The other topics covered during the interviews were oriented toward interviewees' past learning and teaching experiences; their views on the meaning they ascribe to their profession, professional roles and development, the workplace culture; a description of a successful day at work; and their immediate and future professional plans and goals. In the pre-interview email, which included research participant information, interview topics were offered in advance as interview questions, although only a few participants chose to use this option. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participants for their time and asked whether they would like to add anything, which often led to the production of unanticipated and important information related to the study's interest.

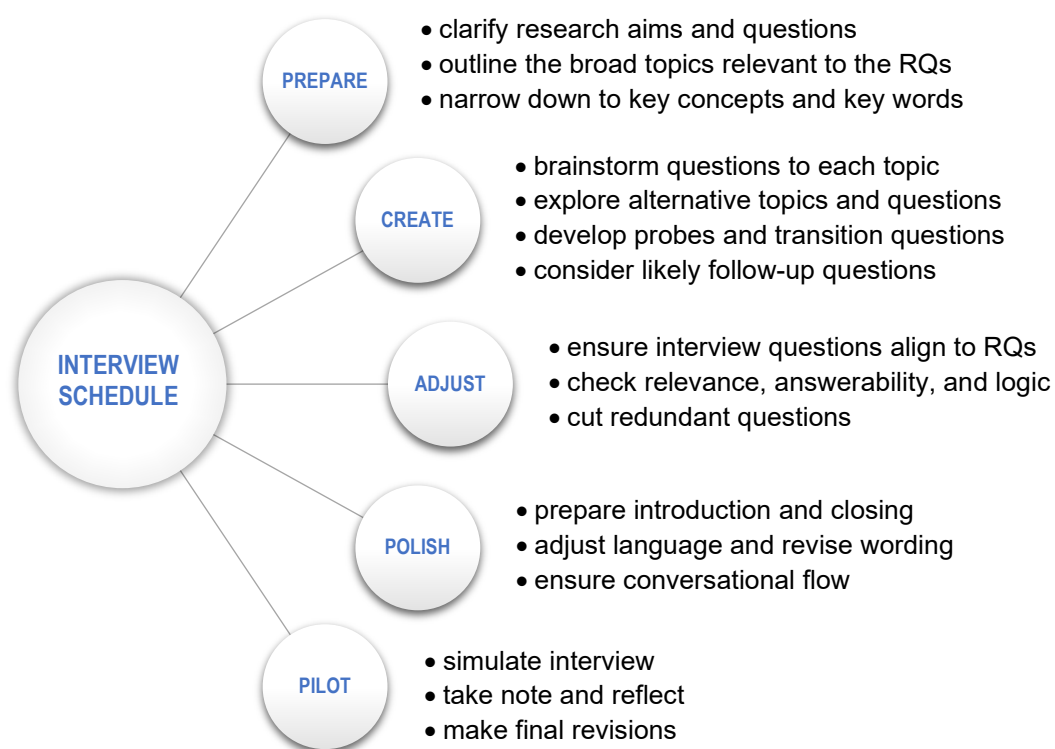
The interview protocol was designed iteratively, drawing on the theoretical framework and the literature review. Initial questions were developed to elicit participants' accounts of their professional trajectories, workplace experiences, and sense-making of change and development within TESOL contexts. The initial interview schedule comprised 14 questions exploring the topics mentioned above. After careful reconsideration, modifications were made.

Unfocused or overly specific questions were eliminated; some were reworded, and the interview schedule was narrowed to five clear, focused, yet broad enough questions to elicit interviewees' rich storytelling about their professional lives. Consistent with an interpretive qualitative approach, the interview protocol was designed to encourage narrative depth.

Figure 11 visualises the steps taken in generating the interview schedule, adapted from Punch and Oancea's (2014, p. 189) five steps in generating a guide for a (semi)structured interview.

Figure 11

Steps in Generating the Interview Schedule



Note. This is a visualisation of the five steps in generating a guide for a (semi)structured interview. Adapted from *Introduction to Research Methods in Education* (p. 189), by K. F. Punch and A. E. Oancea, 2014, SAGE Publications, 2nd edition.

The final interview schedule (see Appendix I) was designed in a flexible way that provided enough guidance to ensure the domain coverage, but also room to follow up and accommodate interesting developments during the interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Thus, the interview schedule was found useful for obtaining meaningful answers and allowing the production of rich but also unexpected data that provided valuable information or knowledge that had not been considered before (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

During the interviews, I aimed to activate the interviewees' narrative production (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) by asking specific types of questions that would encourage reflections in the unfolding of the interviewees' meaning-making. I used the interview schedule as a guide only, not a script. I tried to remain flexible, adapting the course of the conversation to the diversity of meaningful configurations. By engaging in meaningful talk about their everyday workplace worlds, such as asking them to describe a successful day, I cultivated the interviewees' narrative activity around the contexts and tensions of their professional lived experiences.

As noted previously, the data generated from the qualitative survey and the interviews were intertwined and recursive. The interviews, lasting on average approximately 60 minutes, were conducted synchronously online using the Zoom video-conferencing platform, which is the closest form of conducting interviews to face-to-face interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 115). With the pandemic-induced push towards the virtual world, online interviewing, once a marginal method in qualitative research, became mainstream and opened up many options for accessing participants and generating data (Carter et al., 2021). One of the most obvious strengths of conducting interviews online is that it eliminates geographic barriers in recruiting research participants and offers the practicality of conducting interviews without the concerns of finding and negotiating an adequate location that would suit both parties, as well as the requirements of face-to-face interviews.

Nevertheless, according to Carter et al. (2021), successful online interviewing requires adaptation, planning, and attending to potential ethical (e.g., privacy risks, difficulty building

rapport, and providing comfort to distressed participants), technical (e.g., problems with the hardware or software, an unstable internet connection that can cause voice break up or screen freeze, which can be frustrating for both the interviewer and the interviewee), and social challenges (e.g., interruptions in the flow of the conversation, unpredictability of social environment). Therefore, before commencing the data generation process, I made sure that I had a plan in place to try and mitigate these potential challenges, such as establishing a data management and protection plan, ensuring the functionality of my hardware and software, a stable and high-quality internet connection, and familiarity with the chosen platform. However, despite my great efforts in planning and preparing for the interviews, occasionally there were some audio distortions and interruptions caused by unstable internet connection and a few times by the interviewees' social environment (students entering into the classroom, family member entering the room, and on one occasion an emergency drill at the workplace that required the interviewee to leave the office for a short while). These were all highly unpredictable situations that I managed by remaining calm, friendly, and patient.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent using a personal professional audio recorder and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Recordings and transcripts were stored securely in accordance with the approved ethics protocol. In addition, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 92), during and after each interview, I made brief notes on the participant's responses, openness, and nonverbal cues, which supported the data analysis.

4.9.3. Artefacts: Media Data – TESOL Magazines and Newsletters

The third data source used in this study was the media, comprising relevant online articles from TESOL magazines and newsletters, including EFL Magazine, EL Gazette, HLT by Pilgrims, TESOL Connections, and the TESOLANZ Newsletter (see Appendix J for a complete list of the media artefacts and Appendix K for samples of TESOL magazine articles). These were pointed out by some of the participants interviewed in this study as sources of professional information and knowledge. Described in the qualitative research literature as “mass

communication materials” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 167) and “contemporary materials created for electronic access” (Salmons, 2016, p. 117), they are written by practising professionals from the target area and provide a valuable source of context and information on trends, changes, and sociocultural and political aspects of education. Hence, they represent accessible, internationally circulated media for TESOL practitioners, providing contemporary professional discourse beyond national contexts and thereby enabling analysis of the sociocultural framing of TESOL work and professional development in the Asia–Pacific region.

The advantages of using media as a source for qualitative research are that they are easily accessible and relatively resource-lite, offering valuable information and a wide range of potential data (Favaro et al., 2017). Additionally, more than ever, “we live lives that are ‘mediated’ – that is, we increasingly create and communicate meaning in and through media sites and technologies” (Favaro et al., 2017, p. 125). Hence, media analysis can be a powerful means of gaining insight into social phenomena, practices, and beliefs.

The effects of media and the relationship between audiences and texts have long been debated, shifting from passive consumption to more active participation (Hall, 1980; Jenkins, 2006; Livingstone, 2004). Media are not neutral but sites of interpretation, construction, and contestation of the social world (Favaro et al., 2017). Moreover, the interconnectedness between our personal reading experiences – our ‘literate lives’ – and our professional practice is undeniable (Bernstein, 2014; Wang, 2018). What we read impacts, challenges, and shapes who we are, what we know, value, and believe, and how we feel and behave.

In this study, the professional magazines and newsletters, akin to policies (Cross & Gearon, 2007), are seen as sociocultural tools nested within the cultural-historical domain, mediating ESOL teachers’ sense-making of their roles and activities at the classroom level (microgenetic domain). While formal policy texts represent one possible form of sociocultural mediation, this study foregrounds internationally circulated TESOL media artefacts as analytically comparable sociocultural tools through which policy-related meanings are

recontextualised, interpreted, and made relevant to teachers' everyday practice. As carriers of ideological and political notions from a particular cultural-historical context, they represent societal views of the nature and value of English language education, the validity of knowledge and practice within English language teaching, teacher education and professional development, and the role of the teacher.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that media dictates teachers' practice. The relationship between teachers' microgenetic activity (classroom practice) and the broader cultural-historic context depends on teachers' own experiences and life histories, beliefs, values, and knowledges, which further mediate their interactions with such artefacts that shape the cultural-historic domain. In other words, the media's role as a tool is ultimately contingent upon teachers' agency in making sense of and interpreting these texts.

The media data sampling was defined by participants' responses about the professional media sources they use to stay informed about their profession and by the study's research questions. The inclusion criteria were: (a) articles published between 2019–2023; (b) written in English; (c) appearing in international practitioner-oriented TESOL magazines or newsletters; (d) easily accessible online; (e) opened to a broader contribution; and (f) addressing issues related to TESOL teachers' work, roles, professional development, or the broader sociocultural and political contexts of English language teaching. Articles were excluded if they consisted of promotional material and/or event announcements.

A two-stage screening process was employed. First, all monthly issues within the five-year period were scanned to identify potential articles. Second, individual articles were read in full and selected only if they clearly met the inclusion criteria. This process resulted in a final sample of 75 articles. Table 5 below presents an overview of the number of sampled magazines and newsletters, the total number of articles selected for analysis, and the distribution of articles across the five-year period.

Table 5*Media Data Information*

		<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>
<i>EFL Magazine</i>	3	0	0	2	1	0
<i>El Gazette</i>	45	10	18	9	4	4
<i>HLT by Pilgrims</i>	13	4	4	0	3	2
<i>TESOL Connection</i>	11	2	3	1	2	3
<i>TESOLANZ Newsletter</i>	3	1	1	0	0	1
TOTAL:	75	17	26	12	10	10

The media data from TESOL magazines and newsletters, as global artefacts, were used in this study to uncover meaning and to provide a broader context on the nature of the TESOL industry and on ESOL teachers' practice and professional development. In this way, they supplemented and contextualised the study's ontogenetic and microgenetic data. Additionally, using multiple data sources as a long-standing interpretive practice is a marker of research trustworthiness because it enables intertextuality and leads to a detailed interpretation of the data (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 86).

4.10. Data Analysis: Illuminating Meaning

The data analysis employed a combined thematic, genetic, and activity system analytical approach. Following Cross (2006) and Cross and Gearon (2007) meta-theoretical framework of 'identity-in-activity', the data analysis comprised two levels: a Vygotskian genetic domain analysis (CHT) and an activity system analysis (CHAT). Initially, the data from multiple sources (qualitative survey, individual interviews, and artefacts) were categorised into the three genetic domains of cultural-historic, ontogenetic, and microgenetic analysis (as shown previously in Table 3). Consequently, each dataset was analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the microgenetic data coded and categorised using the conceptual categories provided in Engeström's (2001, 2015) model of human activity system. The thematic analysis of the

cultural-historic and ontogenetic data provided the macro-context for the contradictions that emerged in the microgenetic domain. The results showed how the ESOL teachers' professional identity is shaped and challenged by the intertwined and non-linear macro-meso-micro interactions across domains.

To analyse the data sets, I followed the six phases of thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006), as described in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing the data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and the literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Note. This is a table summarising the six phases of thematic analysis. From *Using thematic analysis in psychology*, by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2), p. 87 (<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. Here, pointing out its “theoretical freedom”, they describe it as a highly flexible method and emphasise its usefulness and analytical strengths in providing “a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). The study’s analysis aimed to transform the data, interpret it, and uncover patterns and themes relevant to answering the study’s research questions. The scope of the analysis was interpretive, aimed at achieving a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by looking “beneath the surface” and asking ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 174).

This study’s qualitative data analysis began relatively early during the data generation process and involved a “cyclical rather than linear” way of meaning development (Saldaña, 2009, p. 45). In this sense, the qualitative survey data informed the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which subsequently generated data that were cross-checked against the prior data. This process provided exposure to different forms of evidence, which were metaphorically ‘read across’ in an intertextual fashion (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012) to interpret the participants’ meaning-making of their experiences and how these experiences were mediated by the historical, sociocultural, and political contexts in their professional practice.

During and after each interview, I made notes on the participants’ responses, their openness and nonverbal cues, and the overall flow of the conversation, which can be easily forgotten. I found these notes helpful during the analysis as memory aids when reflecting on each conversation and each participant’s storytelling. The process of familiarisation with the data followed as soon as practicable after each interview. I transcribed all interviews verbatim, which enabled close engagement with the data. A sample verbatim interview transcript is provided in Appendix L.

The verbatim transcriptions of the audio-recorded interviews were intertwined with the analysis of the qualitative survey responses and, later, with the analysis of the relevant articles

from TESOL magazines and newsletters. Initial familiarisation involved multiple readings of each transcript and survey response, with annotations made in the margins. At this stage, no formal coding was undertaken. Instead, I noted trends and shifts in practice, recurring concerns, emotionally charged moments, and changes in teacher beliefs and roles. Although the first phase of data analysis may appear linear, its actual nature was rather cyclical and iterative, involving frequent back-and-forth between data sources.

The second phase involved manually generating initial codes across the dataset. Interview transcripts, survey responses, and magazine articles were printed and physically annotated. During repeated readings, relevant extracts were cut out and assigned provisional code labels, which supported ongoing comparison of similar meaning units across participants and data sources and informed later clustering in the next phase. The coding was conducted in multiple passes. Coding units comprised meaningful segments of text, ranging from short phrases to extended narrative episodes, determined by the point at which a coherent unit of meaning could be analytically identified. A sample of initial codes generated from a passage of an interview transcript is provided in Appendix M.

Given that the coding was shaped by my prior engagement with existing theory and knowledge in the literature (and by the activity system model in the microgenetic domain), the initial codes were more researcher-derived or latent (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207). In generating the codes, I engaged in interpretative work by going beyond the description of the data's explicit content; I sought to identify implicit meanings in what is said in the data and to examine its features and underlying ideas through the 'identity-in-activity' meta-theoretical lens (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007). However, I do not claim a pure researcher-derived coding of the data because, in practice, this analytic step also involves the generation of data-derived or semantic codes mirroring the participants' language and concepts that can later be interpreted by applying a theoretical lens to the patterns and their broader meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).

After coding the data, in the next phase, I used the mind-mapping technique to gather codes into potential themes that “capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represent some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82, emphasis in original). This phase involved repeatedly sorting and re-sorting codes to test different clusters and to examine which codes appeared to work together as a coherent pattern of meaning. As I trialled different thematic groupings, I kept returning to the coded extracts to assess whether the data supported the proposed cluster and whether it addressed the research questions. During this process, I created several mind maps to visualise how clustered codes might work together as a coherent analytic idea. Candidate themes were organised within the cultural-historic, ontogenetic, and microgenetic domains to preserve the genetic logic of analysis.

The candidate themes and subthemes were then revised and refined in the fourth phase. After colour-coding the coded data extracts for each candidate (sub)theme (see the sample in Appendix N), I reviewed them at two levels. The first level involved checking the coded data extracts associated with each theme and subtheme for pattern cohesion. I asked whether the extracts formed a meaningful pattern, whether any were loosely related, and whether the theme or subtheme was becoming overly broad. Where necessary, I moved extracts to a better-fitting (sub)theme, created a new subtheme when a distinct pattern was evident, split an overextended subtheme into two more coherent subthemes, or merged analytically overlapping subthemes. Subsequently, I generated a candidate thematic map of the overall analysis, which was reviewed at the second level of this phase against the whole dataset. Revisions were made iteratively through repeated review of coded extracts and the developing thematic map until the theme structure provided a sufficiently coherent representation of patterned meanings across the dataset. Samples of the initial and revised thematic maps are provided in Appendix O.

Once the thematic map was deemed satisfactory, by “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92), I wrote a brief analysis for each theme and considered how each theme’s ‘story’ fits within the overall ‘story’ of the data and in relation to the research questions. I also refined theme boundaries by revisiting coded extracts to ensure that the theme label corresponded to the data. I finalised this phase by naming the themes in a way that effectively captures their essence and holds the reader’s attention. In the sixth phase, I produced the final report, which is presented in the Results chapter. While writing up the report, I aimed to tell the story of my data in “a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93) manner.

During the data analysis process, I was mindful of the potential challenges in conducting thematic analysis, such as becoming overwhelmed with the data and not grasping its sense resulting in a complete failure to analyse it, not having coherent themes, using interview questions as themes leading to a weak analysis or ending up with a mismatch between claims and data, or not ensuring an overall coherence between research values and philosophical assumptions and analytical practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2023). To minimise the occurrence of such challenging situations, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2013, 2023) sets of guidelines – the 2013 ‘*15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis*’ (p. 287) and the updated commentary on good practice and common problems in TA research (2023), which proved useful for keeping me on track and focused during the data analysis and report writing.

4.11. Quality Considerations and Limitations of the Study

In this study, the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the data and knowledge claims advanced was ensured in several ways. In line with Schwartz-Shea and Yanow’s (2012) claims about quality criteria for evaluating interpretive research, reflexivity enacts methodological value regarding the transparency of knowledge generation. In this sense, throughout this research, I strived to offer systematic and transparent documentation of the data and a full account of the research procedures. Moreover, I was aware that my positionality

relates to the knowledge claims advanced in this thesis. Therefore, I endeavoured to practice reflexivity to the best of my abilities, actively and systematically considering and engaging with my own sense-making throughout the research process, thereby maximising the trustworthiness of this study's knowledge claims.

The researcher's personal traits, subjectivity, and bias are seen as both strengths and limitations of this qualitative study. Since my main aim was to understand the participants' situated meaning-making, I knowingly engaged in an active co-generation of the study's data. My subjective views, beliefs, and values, along with my demographic characteristics, personal and professional experiences, and disciplinary knowledge, are reflected in the data generation and sense-making processes. On the one hand, Braun and Clarke (2013) emphasise the value of subjectivity in qualitative research that should not be treated as a bias that needs to be eliminated from the study, but used to provide a contextualised analysis through a critical reflection on "the knowledge we produce, and our role in producing that knowledge" (p. 36). Consistent with their view, my active involvement in the research and subjectivity may have provided skills and perspectives that supported the research. On the other hand, researcher bias and subjectivity may lead to fixed perspectives, resulting in a failure to capture a more nuanced interpretation of the data; hence, they can easily be seen as weaknesses or assumed to be obstacles to trustworthy knowledge claims. To address this issue, I practised reflexivity to the best of my abilities. I reported the research steps I took to generate, analyse, and store the data in an explicit, transparent, and detailed way (Merriam, 2009).

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, I used multiple sources of evidence: a qualitative survey, interviews, and media data. The 'intertextual' reading across these data sources enriched the data by providing multiple perspectives on experienced ESOL teachers' conceptualisation of their professional identity and the contextual forces that affect it. This strategy for enhancing the credibility of a qualitative study is usually found under the term 'triangulation' in the more realist-oriented research traditions and described by Stake (2010, p.

37) as a process to clarify meaning, “minimise the flaws in our observations and assertions ... and increase confidence that we have correctly interpreted” the data. Nonetheless, despite communicating my commitment to transparency (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012), my subjectivity may still have shaped the interpretation in ways that potentially constrained alternative readings of the data.

In addition, although the sample of 44 qualitative survey participants and 16 interviewees yielded rich, multilayered insights, it remains relatively small given the geographical and sociocultural breadth of the Asia-Pacific region. As a result, the study cannot claim to represent the full diversity of ESOL teachers’ professional identity across all contexts. Nevertheless, the study’s insights could resonate with readers and practitioners within and outside the LTI research area and the TESOL industry, who may connect with the research context and transfer its research outcomes through their own interpretation to similar situations (Ponterotto, 2006). In qualitative research of second language teaching, Mackey and Gass (2005) support the idea of transferability as long as the research context is integral, and a detailed description of the written report is provided. This research project aimed to contribute to the understanding of professional identity transformation. This aim relies on the transferability of knowledge claims. Although the participants’ meaning-making about their professional practice may not fully capture the TESOL profession and cannot be generalised to the broader educational community without accounting for contextual variables, the key insights derived from interpreting the study’s results as theoretical principles of professional identity transformation may be valuable.

4.12. Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the global trends in English language teaching and teacher education, as well as the situatedness of ESOL teachers’ practice. I provided a detailed account of the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the current study, along with the rationale behind the choices. Furthermore, I highlighted the interpretive nature of the qualitative inquiry and briefly explained my positionality to the participants and the phenomenon under

investigation. Additionally, I described the research context and participants. Finally, I discussed the key issues related to the data generation methods used in the study – qualitative survey, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and media data in the form of relevant articles from TESOL magazines and newsletters – as well as their thematic analysis. The chapter also included a discussion of the ethical and quality considerations and limitations of the research.

The experience of conducting this research study and then reflecting on the research methodology itself ignited a qualitative change in me. It opened up new ways of thinking about qualitative research and knowledge creation, and a greater appreciation of what we actually know. This chapter sets the scene for the following two chapters, which, with the aid of the analytical framework, the study's context, and the literature review, present and then discuss and interpret the study's results.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1. Introduction

This qualitative study set out to investigate the impact of historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors on the professional identity of experienced ESOL teachers who work with adult students predominantly in a pathway program and at university level (e.g., English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), or General English courses) in nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The impact of the contextual factors was investigated by interpreting the meanings teachers made regarding their beliefs about, roles in, and experiences of professional practice, and by analysing the global discourse of TESOL practice as presented in the artefacts – relevant articles of TESOL magazines and newsletters that were mentioned by some of the study's participants as sources for staying informed about the trends and changes in their profession and as sources of professional knowledge.

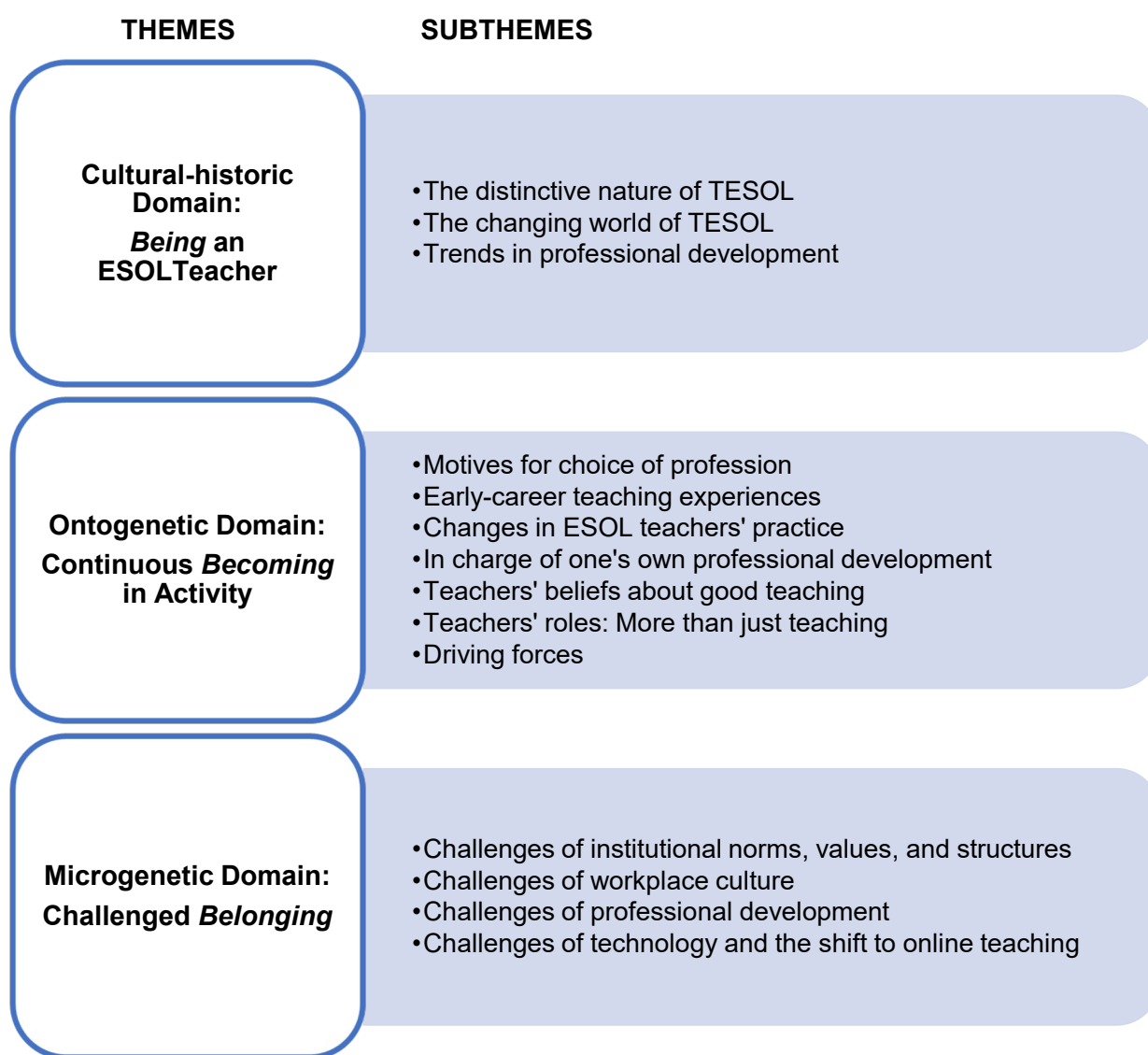
The data from the qualitative survey, the interviews, and the artefacts were analysed through the 'identity-in-activity' meta-theoretical lens (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007), which combines a Vygotskian genetic (CHT) and an activity system analysis approach (CHAT) to theorise who language teachers are (i.e., their professional identity), and by extension, what language teaching is, as grounded within and emergent from their situated teaching practice (i.e., activity). The data was first categorised into the three genetic domains of cultural-historic, ontogenetic, and microgenetic analysis, and then each data set was analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis of the cultural-historic and ontogenetic data provided the context for the contradictions emerging in the microgenetic domain.

This chapter presents the results of the investigation. Figure 12 below provides an overview of the three themes and their fourteen subthemes, as identified through the data analysis. This study found that the ESOL teachers' professional identity is being challenged by

the changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their environments as mediating sources of professional practice and learning and development. The results show how the transformation of ESOL teachers' professional identity is mediated by the intertwined and non-linear macro-meso-micro interactions across the genetic domains, which is then discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 12

Thematic Structure of Analysed Data



5.2. Cultural-Historic Domain: *Being an ESOL Teacher*

This study's cultural-historic data consist of media sources, including relevant articles from online TESOL magazines and newsletters, which some participants identified as sources of professional knowledge, information, and trends. Furthermore, the media data represent global artefacts nested in the cultural-historical domain that mediate ESOL teachers' everyday practices in the microgenetic domain. Professional mass media articles are primarily written and read by practising English language teaching professionals worldwide, with the aim of improving the profession and the work of professionals. As such, they are powerful cultural tools that the professional community uses to inform itself about trends, challenges, and potential future directions of professional practice.

The cultural-historic data analysis identified patterns of meaning-making and outlined the notion of mediating activity, underscoring the research results within the theme *Being an ESOL Teacher*, as presented in Table 7 below. *Being an ESOL Teacher* captures the patterns of meaning in the media data discourse about the working environment and conditions of ESOL teaching practice, including the distinctive nature of TESOL, the global and local changes in the TESOL industry and teachers' pedagogical practices, and the directions and future goals of ESOL teachers' professional development. Through these social and political aspects of cross-border cultural learning, ESOL teachers' imagined possibilities and actions of being a 'good' teacher are being informed within their situated practice.

Table 7*Subthemes and Codes of the Theme: Being an ESOL Teacher*

Being an ESOL Teacher		
The distinctive nature of TESOL	The changing world of TESOL	Trends in professional development
TESOL is business: Work culture of precarity and instability	Decentralisation of TESOL markets	The best teachers are lifelong learners
Internationalisation and student diversity add to pedagogical dilemmas	Change in national policies: New rules around who can teach and teacher education	Personal skills as crucial for professional success and better teaching practice
The emotional toll of the native vs non-native divide	Pedagogical shifts towards communicative and student-centred approaches	Reflective practice as a personalised engagement in PD
	COVID-19 aftermath: Change in roles and provision	Teacher well-being and emotional resilience through informal teacher collaboration
	Digital shift: Online is here to stay	

In what follows, I present the study's results of the thematic analysis of the relevant media articles (MA) from online TESOL magazines and newsletters representing the cultural-historic data. A complete list of the MAs is provided in Appendix J.

5.2.1. The Distinctive Nature of TESOL

This subtheme highlights the profession's unique structural and cultural features, which differ from those of mainstream education. It highlights the profession's systemic challenges, teachers' pedagogical dilemmas, emotional tolls, and fragmented identities. The articles reflect ESOL teachers' lived realities, which are characterised by a culture of precarity, job instability, student diversity, and teacher divide, but also by flexibility and resilience. These representations form a collective narrative that situates TESOL as a marginalised profession that is institutionally overlooked despite its global and cultural significance.

The data analysis revealed a pattern of meaning that characterises the TESOL industry as shaped by global forces in service of market demands and local needs for global engagement, which creates a precarious working environment for ESOL teachers, including inconsistent contracts and undervalued qualifications. Articles often cited teachers' experiences of the insecure and competitive job system: "There were four teachers, and I was the last to join,

so I was told that I would be the first against the wall if there weren't enough new students.” (Appendix J, MA#4, p. 36). Teachers were commonly described as working across multiple schools, having to “hop on [their] bike and pedal [their] way to another school” (Appendix J, MA#4, p. 36). The concerns of following student flow to secure teaching hours and the unpredictable workloads underpin the growing problem of prioritising profit over teacher well-being, which aligns with neoliberal market logic. These working conditions shape not only teachers' professional practices but also their emotional experiences.

Similar narrations of global issues of teacher well-being featured in other articles described working in the TESOL industry as highly stressful due to hours of unpaid work that go into planning lessons, marking students' work, and sourcing materials: “We calculated that, for every hour's classroom work, about 30 minutes of unseen work is required” (Appendix J, MA#10, p. 40). Due to personal disillusionment evident within teachers' narrations, the legitimacy of TESOL as a profession was often challenged: “I'm not sure how to fight for pay ... This is an even bigger problem, which has ties, I believe, to the phenomenon of backpacker teachers and lowest-common-denominator teaching 'methodologies' being sold as effective teacher training” (Appendix J, MA#10, p. 41).

In conjunction with the economic model that undercuts teacher stability and professional identity, the articles also discussed the effects of internationalisation and student diversity on teachers' practice, often in complex and contradictory ways. Various pedagogical dilemmas were cited, such as the need to continually modify lesson plans, assessment criteria, and classroom management strategies to meet international students' varied academic and linguistic backgrounds: “Teachers cannot assume that students know what is expected of them and often have to spend considerable time introducing activities and explicitly modelling what they expect” (Appendix J, MA#20, p. 14).

These challenges, intensified by the institutional portrayal of students as clients, created implicit pressure on teachers to ensure student satisfaction and retention, thereby undermining

educational integrity and teachers' professional roles. Moreover, positioning teachers at the intersection of pedagogical adaptation, institutional pressures, and cross-cultural complexity creates dilemmas and reflects broader historical contradictions in globalised education, where the teacher's practice is a socioculturally mediated activity, shaped by shifting institutional logics and transnational flows.

Regarding the transnational character of the profession, in which teachers navigate diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, the articles often included discussions and narratives about the native-non-native divide among teachers. Words such as "privilege", "inequality", "exclusion", and "discrimination" were often used to describe the emotion-laden social situations where native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) were preferred over their non-native English-speaking (NNESTs) counterparts. Some articles rationalised this preference as being connected to the shift from a traditional to a communicative language teaching approach and to the perceived greater ability of NESTs to teach pronunciation, culture, and speaking. Governments, employers, students and their parents' biased attitudes towards the native English speaker as the optimal English language educator were often cited as culprits of the current conditions in the TESOL industry:

It's a myth based on the premise that if most children acquire their L1 from parents who are native speakers, it logically follows that anyone can acquire an L2, but only from a native speaker. Not only is the logic dodgy, there is no empirical evidence we can find to support it – at least for children over the age of three. But you can see why parents and governments might believe it. (Appendix J, MA#14, p. 31)

A recurrent argument against this "troubling reality of inequality and discrimination" (Appendix J, MA#48, p. 26) was that it represents unfair hiring practices based not on "merit and qualifications ... [but on] passport or appearance" (Appendix J, MA#48, p. 27). Notably, some articles questioned societal perceptions of NESTs' superiority and discussed strategies to promote equal treatment and foster fair employment practices for all ESOL teachers, including

the introduction of standardised qualifications and certifications for all ESOL teachers and revisions to labour regulations.

5.2.2. The Changing World of TESOL

This subtheme captures the transformation of the TESOL industry due to the decentralisation of TESOL markets, changes in national TESOL policies, pedagogical and digital shifts, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The articles often discussed the challenging educational landscape of TESOL, marked by changes in English's linguistic realities and purposes, which affect TESOL policies, teacher education, and practice. These changes, however, are more than practical adaptations; they are socio-developmental processes in which ESOL teachers are active agents, recreating their identities, practices, and learning environments.

Articles often discussed the evolving teaching norms and practices against the background of the global TESOL market, especially the decline of traditional native-speaker hegemony and the rise of Asia-Pacific markets. The following description vividly depicts this transformation:

[T]he centre of the English language cannot hold. It has been drifting, shifting, creating new 'centres' ('centers?') for centuries. ... In recent years, increasing migration and the adoption of English as a national language in former British colonies have further distorted the concentricity of these circles [Kachru]. Today, not only do we have more speakers of English as a second language than native speakers, but the very notion of who is a native speaker of English has rightly been called into question. (Appendix J, MA#8, p. 34)

Moreover, considering the emergence of strong TESOL markets in Asia-Pacific countries, such as China, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines, many articles posed variations on the question: "Whose English is it anyway?" (Appendix J, MA#8, p. 35). In this sense, articles often cited the growing influence of these emerging markets in shaping global trends, particularly

through government-led education reforms that prioritise English for socioeconomic development. Within these contexts, English was repositioned as a global resource rather than a national property.

This shift underscores the historically contingent nature of teaching qualifications and pedagogical practices. ESOL teachers are increasingly expected to hold graduate degrees, recognised and accredited certificates, and have experience in cross-cultural teaching. In this sense, some articles highlighted the change in many Asia-Pacific countries' national teacher education and qualifications policies: "As one Chinese government official put it: a degree, some training and ideally some classroom experience is the least we can expect from someone who calls themselves a teacher" (Appendix J, MA#32, p. 5). Nonetheless, while different countries set the ESOL teacher qualification threshold at various education levels, the issue of teacher identity remains the same:

So, we have two groups of teachers, each with a crisis of identity. The non-native speakers are seen as second-class citizens by students and their parents and are under pressure from their government to get their language levels even higher. Meanwhile, native speakers are under pressure from governments to have ever higher qualifications ... form[ing] a gulf between language-anxious local teachers and qualification-anxious native speakers. (Appendix J, MA#32, p. 5)

Several articles highlighted a concurrent pedagogical shift from traditional and teacher-centred towards communicative and student-centred approaches. Cases of dilemmas in educational reform implementation were also provided. For example, in China, "[d]uring the transition to a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, the advantages of conversational English were weighed against the virtues of traditional rote memorisation" (Appendix J, MA#56, p. 2). Moreover, "the teacher-centred exam-oriented approach remained embedded within the system" (Appendix J, MA#56, p. 2), resulting in contradictions in teaching beliefs, practice, and teacher education. Additionally, access to such pedagogical advances was

described as uneven, with rural regions facing significant structural and teacher education disadvantages.

Unsurprisingly, magazines and newsletters extensively reported on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the TESOL industry in general and on teachers' practice in particular. Several articles reported dramatic situations in which schools and universities were compelled to "shed staff as students shun courses overseas" during turbulent times (Appendix J, MA#19, p. 6). Articles discussing the consequences of the pandemic also noted a broader professional shift in TESOL, moving from employability – defined by institutional job security – towards workability – characterised by flexibility, entrepreneurial thinking, and cross-disciplinary skill development. In this sense, teachers' diversification into content creation and online consultancy was deemed the "unconventional" solution for "unconventional" times (Appendix J, MA#59, p. 2). Articles also discussed how the pandemic catalysed a rapid change in teachers' practices and roles – teachers had to adapt instantly to "online classes and virtual learning environments [which] have transformed the way most traditional teacher roles were viewed" (Appendix J, MA#2, p. 4).

Moreover, articles often framed the digitalisation of English teaching, particularly in the post-pandemic period, as a cemented and normative future practice: "The boost that online learning has gotten from the pandemic is likely to continue, even after the virus recedes" (Appendix J, MA#30, p. 32). Articles arguing the dominant position of online teaching often included advice on best practice, ranging from technical requirements (e.g., stable internet connection, a cloud account for sharing teaching materials, videoconferencing and editing software) and ways of communicating (e.g., using facial expressions and seated gestures) to pedagogical strategies to keep students engaged (e.g., interactive content supported by quizzes, videos, and discussion boards). In conclusion, the recurring argument that online classrooms have become the norm signals a shifting cultural-historical space in which learning occurs and the evolution of the teacher's role within this redefined environment.

5.2.3. Trends in Professional Development

The articles also discussed how being a teacher in changing TESOL contexts means engaging in active, personalised lifelong learning through ongoing reflective practice and informal peer collaboration. Teachers' skills were often considered crucial to professional success and to improved teaching practice. Additionally, self-care was discussed as part of teachers' ongoing professional development and calls for action on teacher well-being and emotional resilience were emphasised.

Across the articles, there was a consistent reference to ESOL teachers' beliefs, practices, and philosophies that depict their teaching as an evolving process of learning and growth. In this sense, lifelong learning was repeatedly framed as a defining characteristic of effective and resilient ESOL teachers:

[A] lack of professional development can lead to mediocrity in teaching. Language schools and other institutions that employ teachers need to invest in our profession.

CELTA is only the first step on the professional ladder, and neither CELTA nor DELTA should be the end of the road. They should be part of a career-long process in professional development. (Appendix J, MA#53, p. 3)

This quote explicitly addresses the role of institutions in providing opportunities for employees' professional development (PD). Similarly, continuous PD was described as relevant to ESOL teachers because it allows them "to stay tuned with the dynamic evolution of education, make significant contributions to the field by leading or influencing others, and ... remain interested and foresee all those new possibilities for education and learning in their classrooms" (Appendix J, MA#51, p. 1). Here, the idea of lifelong learning was not solely restricted to formal PD events but extended to all life experiences and practical ways in which an individual can "attempt to develop the personal qualities which emerged as central to what it means to be an effective teacher" (Appendix J, MA#61, p. 9). Similar descriptions in the articles reinforced the idea that effective teaching hinges on the teacher's mindset and commitment to continuous

development – teachers who embrace learning as a lifelong endeavour are more likely to understand and adapt to students' needs, as well as to pedagogical and institutional shifts.

Furthermore, staying current with evolving student needs was often predicated on teachers' personal qualities and skills. Emotional intelligence, empathy, self-awareness, patience, and communication were emphasised as being as important as content knowledge and pedagogical expertise. These skills were discussed as crucial to professional success and to improved teaching practice, as they involve cultivating trust, rapport, and engagement in the classroom. "This involves us in moving from our own perspective and understanding of our beliefs and behaviours to the way we are perceived by those we are teaching" (Appendix J, MA#61, p. 3).

The articles often identified reflective practice as a meaningful and personalised engagement in PD. In this regard, reflective practice was described as a source of insight for improvement: "It can help strip away unexamined suppositions and prejudices and this can feed into changes in current practice" (Appendix J, MA#52, p. 16); in other words, it is a way to "reflect on what you have done and look at things from a different perspective" (Appendix J, MA#49, p. 4). Reflective activities, such as journaling and informal conversations, were identified as meaningful ways to make sense of teaching practice and enhance its effectiveness. Learning from experience, such as "a lesson [that] did not go well" (Appendix J, MA#55, p. 2), emphasised the importance of metacognitive awareness in teachers' daily practice.

Another form of PD often discussed in the articles, especially those published after the pandemic, included the growing importance of informal, peer collaboration for teacher well-being and emotional resilience. It was argued that teachers increasingly turn to fellow teachers, whether face-to-face or online, for ideas and support:

Most of the time, teachers work alone, prepare alone, reflect on their own and worry about things they shouldn't worry about on their own. Then revelation comes. By pure chance, they discover that others are struggling, if not with exactly the same problems,

but surely with something teaching-related. Then discussion starts, and in more fortunate cases, real professional discourse ensues, out of which comes awareness about one's strengths in teaching, which is the key to teacher growth and development.

(Appendix J, MA#58, p. 1)

This suggests that many teachers may find greater relevance and responsiveness in these informal modes of development rather than in formal PD sessions organised by their respective institutions. Considering the importance of interpersonal communication, a significant argument was put forward about “the critical role language has and will continue to have for our society to cope, balance, and seek mental and emotional well-being” (Appendix J, MA#66, p. 5).

5.3. Ontogenetic Domain: Continuous *Becoming* in Activity

Ontogenetic data involving this study's ESOL teachers revealed interconnected factors shaping their teaching practice (i.e., activity) as situated within the historical, sociocultural, and political contexts of their professional worlds. As teachers are not blank slates, when they enter the profession, they bring along their histories, their life experiences, cultural norms and values, knowledges, beliefs, and understandings of the teaching profession and the teacher's role. The analysis of teachers' life histories as TESOL professionals outlined the notion of the past leading the future, underscoring the research results within the theme of Continuous Becoming in Activity, as presented in Table 8 below.

Continuous Becoming in Activity captures ESOL teachers' sense-making regarding their motives for choosing TESOL as a profession, their teaching experiences and doubts during the early-career years, and how they later changed or adapted these motives, teaching practice, and professional development in response to the social environment. Seemingly smooth, these changes are nevertheless fraught with tensions and dilemmas that challenge teachers' professional goals and purpose. Furthermore, this theme also captures the teachers' beliefs about, roles of, and motives for teaching, all underpinned by strong moral and, in some cases, national cultural dimensions. All these aspects identified within the ontogenetic data tell a story

about the teachers' experienced realities of the ESOL teaching practice guided by their commitment to improvement as good teachers – to acting to the best of their knowledge and abilities in serving their students' needs.

Table 8*Subthemes and Codes of the Theme: Continuous Becoming in Activity*

Continuous Becoming in Activity						
Motives for choice of a profession	Early-career teaching experiences	Changes in ESOL teachers' practice	In charge of one's own professional development	Teachers' beliefs about good teaching	Teachers' roles: More than just teaching	Driving forces
From a practical/temporary thing to do to a profession	Novice teacher doubts: Being liked, content knowledge, and classroom management	Experience changes teachers' priorities: From teacher to student-centred practice	Webinars and conferences as helpful for PD	Good teacher attributes: You need more than pedagogical and content knowledge	Teachers' multiple roles are a given	'It's rewarding to my heart': Being part of students' growth
Demand and supply: Value of English as a global language for communication	Need for proving oneself as a teacher	The upsides and downsides of technology	Chats with other teachers as informal PD: Sharing experiences and resources	Student-centred and task-based approaches for engagement and autonomous learning	Being a support person for novice and relief teachers	'You do it because you like it': Genuine care for the profession
Giving back to the community	TESOL education as an eye-opening experience	Student changes: Increased doubts in own abilities and purpose as a teacher	Further study and research as PD		More than a job: Being a compassionate and caring helper	For the greater good of the nation
Positive experience of learning English			Reading professional literature as PD	Adapting teaching to students' needs and local context	Moral responsibilities: Teachers as role models for students	Professional growth and career progress through research
Inspired by others			Online professional communities as a source of PD	Making teaching practical for the real world		

This study's participants are experienced in-service ESOL teachers from 9 countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, China, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. They work with adult students, predominantly in pathway programs and/or at university level, e.g., English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), or General English courses. Most participants teach multiple courses at various levels, and many hold multiple roles in teaching units within pathway programs and at both undergraduate/graduate levels. Of the 44 participants who completed the qualitative survey, 16 agreed to be interviewed. The 16 participants interviewed in this study are mid-to-late-career English education professionals with a wide array of cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds, as summarised in Table 9 below. To protect their privacy and anonymity, the participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Interestingly, despite the participants' diverse backgrounds and learning and teaching experiences situated in various sociocultural and political contexts, the analysis of the ontogenetic data revealed that their meaning-making of their professional worlds and trajectories, as well as what being a 'good' teacher entails, converged significantly. Furthermore, the participants' ontogenesis revealed how their practice and understanding of what it means to be a teacher changed considerably since their early-career years; it also showed how these changes interacted with their engagement in professional learning and development. This later becomes evident in the ways the artefacts mediate the participants' microgenetic teaching and professional development practices. Additionally, the analysis of the ontogenetic data highlighted a strong moral dimension of the teacher's role and responsibility in relation to their students and to novice teachers, and, for some, a strong national cultural dimension in choosing and persevering with the teaching profession as a way of giving back to the local community and improving the greater good of the nation.

Table 9*Interviewed Participants' Profiles Summary*

	Gender	Age range	Country	Cultural background	Educational background & qualifications	Years of experience
<i>Chris</i>	M	45-54	Australia	British	Postgraduate Certificate in TESOL	14
<i>Anna</i>	F	25-35	Australia	Australian	Bachelor of Communication (Journalism) & Master of Applied Linguistics (TESOL)	10
<i>Susan</i>	F	35-44	Australia	Australian	Master of Teaching (Primary), CELTA, & Master of Education (TESOL)	8
<i>Kelly</i>	F	55-65	New Zealand	European	Bachelor of Horticultural Sciences, Cert TESOL, Post Grad Diploma Second Language Teaching	30
<i>Sarah</i>	F	45-54	New Zealand	New Zealand	Degree in English & Linguistics, CELTA	14
<i>Amir</i>	M	35-44	Indonesia	Indonesian Buginese	Master of English Education, Ph.D. in English Education (ongoing)	15
<i>Dewi</i>	F	35-44	Indonesia	Indonesian	Master of English Education	7
<i>Alex</i>	M	55-64	Vietnam	Australian	Immigration Law & Master of TESOL	15
<i>Dung</i>	M	35-44	Vietnam	Vietnamese	Master of TESOL	14
<i>Tuan</i>	M	55-64	Vietnam	Vietnamese	Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics	15
<i>Helen</i>	F	45-54	China + Australia	Chinese	Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics	25+
<i>Peter</i>	M	45-54	Thailand	South African	Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics	35
<i>Dara</i>	F	35-44	Thailand	Thai	M.ED. in TEFL & Ph.D. in English as an International Language (ongoing)	7,5
<i>James</i>	M	35-44	Thailand + Japan	Australian	Bachelor of International Relations, MA in Applied Linguistics (TESOL), MBA (Digital Transformation) & Diploma of TESOL	12
<i>Andrea</i>	F	25-34	The Philippines	Filipino	BA Secondary Education & Master of Education in TESOL	10
<i>John</i>	M	45-54	The Philippines	Filipino	BA English, MA English, Ph.D. Education, Grad Cert in ESP, MA Pastoral Ministry, PhD Theology, & Cert of Adult Learning	35

In the following section, I present the results of the thematic analysis of the ontogenetic data.

5.3.1. Motives for Choice of Profession

The analysis of the ontogenetic data revealed that the participants' motives for career choice were informed by various reasons arising from their life histories, interrelated with an obvious reasoning of employability: some were inspired by others, some by their positive experiences as language learners themselves, while others by a sense of responsibility to give back to the community. In varying extents, both the native and non-native English speaking teachers expressed their motives against the exchange value of the English language, determined by global economic-political discourse present in the cultural-historic domain – English as a resource or even a commodity (Silver & Bokhorst-Heng, 2020; Tsui, 2020) framed in the service of the market and in terms of economic exchange (Block, 2018a, 2018b; Gray et al., 2018; Holborow, 2018; Simpson, 2022). However, despite the shared motive of employability, a notable distinction was evident according to the participants' life histories and backgrounds, where those who were native English speakers reported main motives driven by the practicality of teaching English while moving or travelling abroad as a temporary means of financial support that later developed into a career.

For example, Chris' narration clearly depicts that practicality paved the way for his professional journey:

Well, a lot of people don't choose it; it chooses them, and I think that was probably the case with me. So, I'm English and I was working in London, I was working in the book industry, and then, my partner was Australian, we met in the UK, and we decided to move from London over to Australia, and before we moved, I was concerned about finding work easily. I had a degree in English literature, an undergraduate degree, which is not, you know, not the best degree to find work easily; so, prior to leaving the UK, I got CELTA ... and then I just built on that. It was just so practical, from practical reasons, really, you know? To make myself employable in Australia, but you know, on top of that I

found out that I was really good at teaching, and I enjoy teaching for the most parts, you know, it wasn't just practical or financial reasons.

In contrast, the non-native English-speaking participants reported a more intentional career choice based on the importance of English for global communication and driven by the perceived value of English in terms of employability. Amir, an ESOL teacher with an Indonesian cultural and professional background, attributed his motives for choosing TESOL as a profession to the importance of English as a language of global communication and to the opportunities it provides on an individual and national level in terms of employability and prosperity:

I know that English is really important for global communication, especially for academic and business activities, because Indonesia today is expanding its export activities, and these businesses need the language of communication.

He added that for many living in Indonesia, speaking English is also “a prestige” and that “for those who can speak English ... it gives a big job opportunity.”

Acknowledging the importance of English for the prosperity of Indonesia, Dewi, who currently teaches ESOL at a university in Papua, also emphasised her love for teaching and sense of responsibility to give back to the community and support younger generations living in Papua as motives for her career choice:

I chose the teaching profession as my calling because I actually love teaching ... and I really want to make some impact on the younger generations to be educated people, so I decided to be a teacher, because I want to make some improvement for our education in Indonesia, especially in Papua. This is an isolated place ... and I want to give something back.

On a similar note, Tuan, a seasoned Vietnamese ESOL teacher, explained that his connection to students and their desire to learn English motivates him to teach English. As a student, his interest lay in linguistics, and what particularly drove him to further his knowledge

and obtain a PhD in applied linguistics was his passion for contrastive analysis. He noted: “I found it interesting to make a comparison between two languages, so I like helping students, especially Vietnamese students, because we speak a non-inflectional language, and English is inflectional.”

The teachers’ experiences of entering the profession can be seen as a transitional period, during which a potential crisis arises (Farrell, 2015b, 2016; Veenman, 1984) – highly emotional experiences of navigating the new social environment and understanding the knowledge required, as well as their role as ESOL teachers (Tran-Thanh, 2021). These critical moments of small dramas occur within the social situations of their workplaces, which are, at the same time, both rooted in and emergent from historical, sociocultural, and economic-political contexts in their environment. Here, the impact of the social environment on the ESOL teachers’ decision-making about becoming English teachers is a process of mediation. When the teachers were faced with the big life decision of choosing a career path, they acted by using cultural tools from their social environment (e.g., policies, prior experiences, other people as role models, and the general discourse about the importance of English as a language for global communication, employability, and prosperity) to overcome the small drama of the transitional period and reorganise their social situation, each according to their unique self.

All the NESTs reported a similar trajectory toward becoming professionals. Sarah’s comment that “as an ESOL teacher, you don’t always necessarily go down the usual educational paths of most trained teachers” reflected the cultural-historic circumstances of the often-disputed TESOL profession on the grounds of not maintaining professional standards in terms of who can teach and what knowledge base they should possess before entering the classroom (Johnston, 1997). Considering this social situation, an interesting but unsurprising commonality was found among this study’s NESTs about holding previous degrees and qualifications not related to TESOL when they first started to teach English (e.g., Chris was working in the book publishing industry, Peter was a qualified psychologist, Alex was studying

towards a degree in immigration law, Susan had an BA in art history, Kelly in horticultural science, and Anna in journalism).

However, the turn of events in their lives led them to obtain a TESOL teaching qualification. Through the process of learning the culture of the TESOL profession (concepts) in social interaction with more knowledgeable others, they all underwent a unique qualitative change that initiated the process of ESOL teacher professional identity construction. In this example, we can see how the macro-level change in government policies regarding English education and teacher qualifications in many Asia-Pacific countries impacted teachers' development at the micro level. The politically and economically rationalised governments' decisions to change qualification requirements for teaching English affected their lives. It was a dramatic event in which they had to reorganise their social situation by reshaping their goals and motives, their future professional trajectory, and who they were to become.

Peter, for example, told the story of how he, a South African qualified psychologist, set out on a backpacking trip amid a turbulent period in his home country:

I flew to the Maldives, when I got there ... teaching came up, and I got a job as a teacher. And then I stayed there for two years. And then after that, I went to Malaysia, I stayed there for over a year. Then I went to Singapore, and I did my second master's degree in education in Singapore. So, it wasn't really that I planned to become a teacher, I just fell into it.

He then explained that upon arriving in Malaysia, he was required to have a TEFL certificate. Later, in Singapore, he decided to pursue a master's degree in education before moving to teach in Japan, then Taiwan, and then spent five years in Cambodia, where his qualifications and experience led him to a position as director of studies.

Another aspect of obtaining the formal qualifications needed for the teaching positions was the learning experiences that made Peter realise how much he still needed to learn. After completing a postgraduate certificate in education with a focus on TESOL in England, he

decided to pursue a PhD in teacher development before returning to Thailand, his current country of residence. He summarised his journey of becoming a teacher as follows:

So, when I walked into the classroom, on my first day, I didn't know what a lesson plan was, and didn't know how to structure a lesson, and I hadn't had any of that training, I just had all the observation hours of my own teachers teaching me when I was a kid ... I didn't know what the background stuff was. So, I humbled my way through those two years, and I loved it ... I loved being in the classroom ... I really enjoyed it, and I was really glad that I've fallen into it, but it was just a matter of falling into it ... It was a practical thing that I fell into.

James rationalised his motives for taking up English teaching to secure a work visa, which would allow him to return to Japan, where he had spent his formative years. He initially worked at private English conversation schools, known as Eikaiwa. A few years later, he moved back to Kagoshima, in the countryside, where he felt most comfortable in Japan. He decided to get his teaching license through a master's degree in TESOL and to formalise his profession. Currently, he teaches English at a university in Thailand.

Alex, Susan, Kelly, Sarah, and James shared similar life histories of becoming ESOL teachers. Alex's first steps into teaching came while he was studying for a degree in immigration law, and he moved from Australia to Vietnam to complete a semester there. After he decided to stay longer, he realised he needed an income. A friend of his, an English teacher, held home classes and offered him a job to talk to his students, allowing them to practice speaking. Initially hesitant, he accepted the offer, which later led to another job opportunity teaching in a language school on weekends. A couple of years later, when he moved to China, he was required to have a TEFL certificate to teach, which he marked as "the start of my journey in teaching English". The following teaching experiences in China and then back in Vietnam took his career to another level:

I was sort of forced to move up, I guess, from an unknown backpacker, you could say, into a professional teacher, because they expected a certain standard from their teachers. ... So, the Vietnamese government changed the visa laws, required people to have a qualification in the area that they're teaching; so that forced me to become qualified ... and then after that, my career has basically taken off ... I do look at it as a profession now where I never used to.

Similarly, Susan described her career path as “winding.” After getting a BA in art history, she went to Cambodia and taught English for five months – an experience she enjoyed. When she returned to Australia, she got a master’s degree in teaching (primary) and then taught in primary schools as a classroom teacher. However, it was after returning from the USA, where she went to work for about three years, that she decided to do a CELTA because she wanted to keep travelling and teaching English would be a good way to support herself:

English language teaching seemed like a good way to do that without really having to sort of commit to it as a career, I guess. I've ended up making it a career anyway. But that wasn't my intention ... I am really passionate about education ... and about English and literature ... so it kind of seemed like a good fit for me.

After finishing her degree in horticultural science, Kelly spent some time in Europe, where she worked in accounting in London. Then she wanted to experience living in a Spanish-speaking country. She completed a TESOL course and secured a job in northern Spain. Subsequently, she worked in China for a year before returning to New Zealand and settling there. Sharing a similar passion for travel, Sarah also completed a CELTA course alongside her other studies, which enabled her to teach in Korea. However, after returning to New Zealand, she realised that she had much more to learn about teaching English and therefore studied linguistics. While she was telling her story, she rightfully noted: “As an ESOL teacher, you don't always necessarily go down the usual educational paths of most trained teachers, so it can be quite different in a number of ways.”

In similar words, Anna introduced her professional journey by saying, “I guess everyone has a different story about how they got into it.” After completing her studies in journalism, Anna's initial working experience at a newspaper proved to be very different from what she had imagined. To switch careers, she enrolled in a one-year master's program in applied linguistics. Her first teaching experience was a placement at the local TAFE, where she taught the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) to adults. After teaching English at various colleges, she is now teaching at a university in Australia.

The ontogenetic data also revealed that the participants' past enjoyable experiences of learning English and their admiration for other teachers shaped their motives for a career in teaching. These social situations illustrate how the social environment shapes teachers' decision-making during a significant transitional period in their lives. This aligns with prior research, evidencing the relevance of previous learning experiences (Dang, 2017; Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Nguyen & Brown, 2016; Velez-Rendon, 2006) and cultural backgrounds (Miller, 2007; Nguyen, 2017) to ESOL teachers' motives, sense-making of their roles, and the construction of their professional identity.

Dara, a Thai ESOL teacher who enjoyed studying English in the USA, explained: “I knew that I wanted to be an English teacher because I enjoyed studying English very much ... it was so fun.” Similarly, Andrea talked about her history of learning English while growing up in the Philippines and finding the experience enjoyable and in line with her personality:

I didn't wake up or grow up thinking I wanted to be a teacher. ... I had a bunch of things I was interested in ... I started taking English and then I really enjoyed those classes. So, it was one of those things that, I guess to me ... it made sense; I enjoyed the subject matter and also it fits with my personality – I'm very talkative, and I like helping people.

Additionally, Andrea described her teacher, who later became her colleague, as an inspiration for her career choice. “I had the most amazing teacher ... it was in that classroom where I felt the most engaged and alive and ... felt bad if I had to miss a lesson for whatever

reason.” She explained her inspiration and admiration come from teachers who “encourage a really good [learning] environment ... and I know how important it is to kind of foster that space, so I try to do the same as much as possible for my students.” John, who has taught ESOL in the Philippines for over 35 years, also said that one of his biggest influences, aside from his grandparents, was a university professor who specialised in language, literature, humanities, and Shakespeare.

Susan and Dung also mentioned being inspired by others in their motivation for career choice. In this sense, Susan explained that her father, a primary school teacher, always told her that teaching is a good and reliable job. Dung described himself as the first in his family to be a teacher – his mother a tailor, father a builder, and other family members electricians. Initially, the image of him as a teacher seemed strange. However, a friend from a family of teachers changed his perspective. He explained that visits to his friend’s family helped him better understand what it means to be a teacher, and he began to feel an emotional connection to the teaching profession, which reassured him that he had made the right choice.

Furthermore, Dung explained that policy also played an important part in his decision to be an English teacher: “At the time, here [in Vietnam], there was a policy that they would freeze the school fee, which means students could study for free at the University of Education, and that was a very important factor for all families.” Hence, the changing socio-political environment in Vietnam’s higher education sector, combined with his life history and social influences, contributed to his micro-level response.

5.3.2. Early-career Teaching Experiences

The analysis of ontogenetic data also revealed that the participants’ first teaching experiences had a profound impact on their beliefs about and attitudes towards language teaching. Most participants discussed their challenges in perceiving themselves as teachers and the struggles they experienced in their classrooms, particularly regarding their students, classroom management, and content knowledge. The data analysis also indicated that early-

career teaching experiences sparked an internal struggle and a need to prove themselves as teachers to others, as well as to pursue further education, which some participants described as an 'eye-opening experience'.

Kelly described her first teaching experience – having to teach every level, beginner to advanced – as extremely stressful and energy-consuming. Similarly, Chris reported that he carried job-related stress with him. Another struggle was the desire to be liked by the students. At the time, he believed that it was a sign of good teaching practice, and he later realised that being liked does not necessarily mean you are teaching well; you can be liked because you don't push them more or because you don't give them a lot of homework, that can make you popular, but in the long term, it is not benefiting them. And then, as you become more confident and secure, you are not that interested in being liked by your students; you are more interested in developing their language skills.

Andrea, Anna, and Dewi's main struggle was their doubts about their content and pedagogical knowledge. Andrea pointed out, "When I look back, one of the more challenging experiences in my teaching has been, like being asked to teach [new] things." Some teachers found teaching grammar particularly challenging. Dewi recalled: "When for the first time I taught English, I thought it was really hard to make them understand grammar and how to make my teaching effective." Describing her initial grammar teaching struggles and learning curve, Anna explained:

[A]s an Australian, you don't really learn anything about grammar at school ... so when you have to start teaching grammar, and you don't know what any of these things are and how to explain them, I had to learn grammar by teaching it, which was a bit awkward at times.

Expanding on her teaching experience throughout the years, Andrea added:

I think teaching in general is a very challenging profession. ... I would say that the challenges don't really go away, but they change and, you know, different things become

more challenging. Like at the beginning ... it was more of a getting to know myself as a teacher, learning the basics of classroom management, and being familiar with content.

Classroom management was also found to be a struggle and a source of anxiety for novice teachers. For example, Kelly reported that she had always struggled with classroom discipline due to her “peacemaker” personality. Describing his concerns, Chris explained:

I think when you go into teaching and you are inexperienced, the thing you are concerned about is content knowledge or anxious about your knowledge of English grammar or everything around that but then when you go into the classroom it's more student and classroom management and discipline; and you realise that's a real challenge; engaging ... managing students, creating an atmosphere where students get on with each other and want to work together.

Here, he emphasised the importance of developing interpersonal skills and earning students' trust and respect as prerequisites for establishing an effective learning environment.

Helen, who has experience teaching in both Chinese and Australian contexts, described a situation in her first year of teaching when her students found her on LinkedIn and attempted to connect with her via social media. At the time, she was starting her career and didn't think much of herself as a professional. However, that situation revealed to her a new perspective that her students imposed on her as someone knowledgeable. She added, “they sort of idealised me in a way”, and gave an insightful comment aligned with her cultural background and beliefs:

So, maybe teaching is two-way. The Chinese character ‘s’ for teaching ..., there are actually two characters, so teaching is teaching and learning as a combined and compound word, so that's how we see teaching, so teaching is always two ways rather than one way. You teach students, but you also learn from the students at the same time, a mutual process, and that's how we conceptualise teaching in Chinese, while in English, I think teaching and learning are separate words.

The need to prove oneself as a 'good' teacher to others at the workplace was another significant source of struggle when starting as a teacher. Andrea linked this urge, as she explained, to the fear of not getting an extension of her contract: "It was like you have to pass the probation period, and you have to show that you're a good teacher." This struggle is linked to job insecurity, which was identified in the microgenetic data as a source of contradiction in the practice of mid- to late-career teachers.

Some participants described their engagement in further education in TESOL during the early-career years as an 'eye-opening experience' and identified it as a significant aspect of teacher development. For example, Peter described the experience of obtaining a TEFL certificate as an awakening to the vast amount that remains to be learned about TESOL. Sarah had a similar experience when returning to study linguistics. She reflected: "It broadened my knowledge base, and I felt better prepared as a teacher with a stronger understanding, but I was still learning." And Alex summarised his further education experience as follows: "I didn't realise there was such a science to teaching English to second language learners."

5.3.3. Changes in ESOL Teachers' Practice

The analysis of ontogenetic data, including the qualitative survey and interviews, revealed significant changes in participants' teaching practice histories, including shifts towards a more student-centred approach, the positive and negative impacts of digitalisation, and changes in student classroom engagement and behaviour that affect teachers' practice.

The qualitative survey data analysis revealed both positive and negative changes in teacher practice over the past five years. Increased confidence, patience, tech-savviness, reflection, knowledge of learning theories, and awareness of mental health and students' needs and learning styles were emphasised as personal improvements that shifted their teaching style and practice towards a more student-centred pedagogy.

In the interview, Chris, for example, pointed out that with experience one becomes more confident, resulting in a more student-centred approach to language teaching. In the same vein, Alex described his evolutionary experience as a teacher:

I think when I was younger and when I've just started teaching ... I worried a lot more and I planned a lot more and I thought I needed a lot more feedback from the class to know that I had done a good job, whereas, as I've moved through my career and become a bit more confident, I'm kind of like come to a place where I'm sort of like, not every class I do has to be the best class I've ever done. I will have some good days, some bad days, some great days, and then some horrible days. And, you know, I think it probably all evens out in the end, really.

Similarly, Dewi described how she adapted her teaching style to meet her students' needs when teaching grammar. She also made a connection between her inexperience with appropriate teaching strategies and digital resources, and her ability to engage students in learning grammar and the sociocultural and linguistic context of Papua, Indonesia. She explained:

It is actually difficult because it is just about rules and forms, and then when I taught for the first time grammar I just used a conventional method by asking the student to memorise the formula, the pattern and then doing the exercise in front of the classroom on the whiteboard; but now after years of experience of teaching grammar I found other strategies and also media that can make the students more ambitious to learn grammar – I use quizzes and other platforms for education purposes to teach them and make them interested to learn grammar.

The ontogenetic data also revealed how raising awareness among teachers and students helped improve practice. For example, Alex reflected on how increased awareness of students' knowledge and needs changed his teaching approach. He described himself as becoming a more reflective practitioner throughout the years, which helped him develop skills to

link his teaching strategies to the intended lesson outcomes and adapt on the spot if needed.

He said:

My lesson procedures have changed a lot over the years. My outcomes and the steps to achieving the outcomes become a big focus. I think in the past, I taught a lot of things that didn't relate to the outcome. But these days, everything that I teach has a purpose, and is directly related to what I want them to achieve, their goals or the outcomes at the end of the lesson. ... as I've become more experienced and better at teaching ... I make changes halfway through the lesson and then change the outcomes ... it's not only identifying the problem, but it's providing a solution on the spot, which I'm able to do these days and I couldn't do that in the past. I would just continue teaching because I wasn't able to adapt, or I had no solutions. ... I'm able to make more moment-to-moment adjustments, so I'm more sensitive to the students' needs, and then I might make those adjustments according to them.

In contrast, Sarah explained that raising students' awareness of the learning process, lesson goals, and outcomes changed her practice. She explained: "I think it can help them with their challenges ... if they understand what's to be gained from the approach ... it helps them to think about their own learning process." Interestingly, she also mentioned how raising student awareness about their learning has helped with raising their intercultural awareness in terms of studying in New Zealand: "Getting them to think about the educational process and thinking about how they learn and maybe having a little bit of an appreciation of why things are so different from their country and how they've learned previously." In this sense, she gave an example of international students not being accustomed to group work or unwilling to engage with fellow students: "This is a common issue for a lot of students – only the teacher can teach me good English. So, I'm getting them to understand that process of learning."

Additionally, she emphasised how her practice evolved towards first making sure students feel comfortable in her classroom: "It's more about making people feel comfortable and

laugh. Laughter, I think, is quite important. And it's just about uniting people, firstly, so that they can actually work together.”

The significant change in the participants’ practice seemed to be related to them becoming more aware and confident teachers, which led to a shift in their teaching approach from teacher-centred to student-centred. In this sense, Helen reflected that the change in her teaching practice was interrelated with her area of research, which focused on learners rather than teachers, and that this, in turn, helped shape her beliefs as well. Additionally, she compared her practice in the previous years and now: “While before ... it was more about pedagogical underpinning or pedagogical approach when you teach ... now my teaching is more compatible with developing students’ overall wellbeing.” She noted that this occurrence evolved quite naturally, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which delineates the dramatic change in the phylogenetic domain, followed by a shift in teacher cognition and practice – the microgenetic domain.

The data analysis also revealed that the increased use of technology and digital platforms in teaching practice yielded both positive and negative experiences for the ESOL teachers. Integrating technology in their teaching practice was mainly described as improving teaching effectiveness, flexibility, and student engagement. Nevertheless, adapting to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenging experience for many teachers. One survey respondent explained: “The online stuff has really confused my teaching. If students don’t turn on their cameras, it’s really hard to get feedback from them on what is working and what is not.” Another downside of digitalisation concerned students’ writing and thinking skills: “Once students ignored the pen-and-paper learning style, they lacked writing and coordination between text and their thinking.”

Some participants also noted student behaviour and disengagement as additional influences shaping their teaching practice. One respondent described how the sense of a detached teacher-student relationship impacted their role and purpose as an educator. Another

teacher's similar experience resulted in self-doubt: "They are just here for the grades. ... Seeing that students are not so eager to learn ... often distracted by other things, sometimes gives me doubts about my own ability as a teacher and the purpose of it."

5.3.4. In Charge of One's Own Professional Development

The analysis of the ontogenetic data revealed a deeply situated engagement in continuous learning through the participants' professional practice and development histories. A pattern was identified in participants' meaning-making of professional development (PD) as an ideal form in contrast to their real or enacted form of PD. The ideal form of PD was often related to the idea of a successful teacher as a professional committed to their practice and actively engaged in continuous self-improvement. There were, however, different understandings of what this ideal form looks like or entails.

On the one hand, Tuan argued that "professional development of teachers should be related to culture, understanding of culture, understanding the use of technology ... to improve oneself, develop oneself to be a successful teacher." On the other hand, John spoke of PD in terms of achieving a balance between teacher's extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, where the extrinsic motivation for PD is closely tied to institutional and national bodies regulations and measurement of teacher professional competency, and the intrinsic motivation is dependent on the teacher as individual choice for a particular professional growth path in relation to one's own sense of accomplishment and financial compensation. Similarly, Amir understood PD as closely linked to teachers' motivation to leave their comfort zones and actively engage in a zone of proximal development. He further explained:

I usually use this principle that I have to get out of my comfort zone to find something new ... you have to care about it yourself. Even though the government sometimes provides something, it is superficial and not something new ... that can bring new nuances of learning in the classroom. That requires additional training where you have to increase your skills ... you have to be the source of inquiry.

In this sense, most participants described their real or enacted form of PD as individually motivated, informal, oriented toward personal interests, largely dependent on time availability, and, on some occasions, incidental as an unexpected or unplanned learning moment. For example, Andrea described her experience with PD as follows:

When we talk about professional development, I think that a lot of it in my experience has been incidental ... it's when I have to teach something I've never taught before suddenly... this is a moment of learning for me ... sometimes the best kind of learning also happens when it's not packaged that way ... when you think about the kind of learning that is meaningful.

In the following text, I present the clusters of meanings identified in the ontogenetic data regarding participants' real or enacted PD over the years.

Formal PD, such as seminars, webinars, and conferences, was identified as helpful. Susan described a targeted PD, ranging from pedagogical support to student services support, which she participates in every 10 weeks at her workplace. Similarly, Dewi shared her positive experience of attending webinars on the latest teaching strategies; however, she added that she also finds it helpful to “search on the internet about articles, how to be a good language teacher.” Dung also described his experience of formal PD at his workplace, where they invite experts to give workshops on various topics.

Conversely, in responses to the qualitative survey, participants expressed concerns that time constraints limited their availability to participate in workplace-organised PD. During the interview, Anna explained: “I think some of these trainings are more big picture, about the direction of the industry”, and that she finds the more teacher-centric and hands-on PD workshops more useful for her everyday practice.

Chats with other teachers were also identified as useful informal PD, where teachers can share experiences and resources. Survey respondents from all nine countries included in this study agreed about the benefits of peer collaboration for their “knowledge expansion”. This

informal PD was described as “talking informally with other teachers during break time”, “sharing materials”, or “learning from other teachers ... getting little practical classroom tips”. John explained, “in an informal setting, this is also professional development in action, it’s day-to-day conversations when we have, let’s say, meetings or informal chat.” And Anna emphasised: “The best thing is to talk to other teachers, and you get good tips that way; even if you go to some training where it’s about something else, if you talk to teachers, that’s the best way to learn.”

In this sense, Chris provided an example of an outcome of chatting with fellow teachers: One thing that’s really useful, and I think all teachers would agree with this, is a fun and engaging activity or warm-up, often in the form of a game. You know, one teacher would start, and they would have success with it, and then they would share it with the other teachers, and then everyone would start using it.

He then contrasted it to a formal PD session:

Sometimes you go to a PD session, and it will be quite focused on the theories behind specific pedagogies and it can be quite academic and, ultimately, utterly useless in a classroom; when really you need a good game that can engage the students, that everyone is going to enjoy and at the same time they going to learn something by the end of it.

Kelly reflected on her experience of informal chats as PD at the workplace. She gave an example of how she and her colleagues brainstormed together: “Every Friday we used to get together for an hour, it was actually paid, and we would share ideas.” However, she added that at the current workplace, the PD is often unrelated to teaching and generic. Kelly also mentioned collaborative teaching as a practical but “almost intimidating” experience; she explained:

I did work with one of my colleagues and she was just so good with time management, and she’s also more creative than me ... and I worked with her, which was intimidating because she is such a great teacher. But I learned so much from sharing a class with

her. ... It wasn't necessarily good with some of the other teachers because ... I tended to be perhaps the more dominant one. ... So, it was mixed, but when you work with someone who's really inspiring, that is ideal, actually seeing them in action; then you learn a lot.

Reflecting on his experiences of learning from other teachers, Peter noted:

I've got a blog on a website here in Thailand and one of the blogs that I wrote was about when you're looking for a job, and one of the things that you need to look for in the school that you're applying for a job at is if there's a staff room because if there's no staff room then there is no opportunity for that kind of interaction, and then you don't learn ... learning stuff from staff is crucial for development.

Further study and research were also identified as ways in which the participants engaged with PD. In the survey, pursuing master's and doctoral degrees was often cited as beneficial for professional growth. Dung, Tuan, and John explained that their institutions encourage ESOL teachers to pursue further study and research. Similarly, Amir explained that research and publication for ESOL teachers in Indonesia is not only an obligation but also a platform to share one's work with others: "It means that what we do in our context can also be valuable to other people."

Kelly, John, and Peter described how their postgraduate studies enhanced their practice by deepening their expertise and increasing their confidence as ESOL teachers. Peter also reflected on the creative side of doing research and how it helps PD:

[E]very time you do a piece of research, you'll end up learning. ... You write it up, and it goes into an article, and you have one paragraph with six citations, but in developing that paragraph, you've had to read those six articles, and maybe another six as well. And you've learned a whole bunch of things. And yeah, so it's a great way to push yourself forward.

The survey respondents also reported benefits from engaging with online communities and digital resources, such as TESOL magazines and journal articles, online courses, videos, and podcasts. In this sense, Peter described how he developed the habit of reading professional literature during his PhD. He said: “That [reading] informs how I think about texts that I give to students, what kind of texts are appropriate and inappropriate.” Similarly, Amir said that he finds the knowledge he gains from reading educational journal articles applicable to his practice: “the goal is to improve my professional skills, what I can learn from them, what ... I can apply in my practice, and I can bring benefit to my students’ learning.” He added that taking time to read educational journals can be helpful as a source of inspiration and innovation in one’s teaching practice:

[Y]ou can inspire yourself by reading journals, you can also learn some things, how you’re situating your learning in the context ... and then I link their findings with my own work, and I make some adjustments for innovation – we innovate upon what people have done.

Amir also noted that his engagement in online professional communities has helped enhance his PD and practice: “Teachers from around the world, we come together in an [online] community of practice ... we share our work, we ask questions ... anything that will lead to professional development.”

5.3.5. Teachers’ Beliefs about Good Teaching

The analysis of the ontogenetic data revealed patterns in participants’ professional histories that demonstrated how their core beliefs about what they perceived as ‘good’ teachers and teaching influenced their practice. In this sense, content and pedagogical knowledge were deemed necessary, but not sufficient, to be a good teacher.

Andrea related the importance of having a good grasp of concepts to the ability of fostering a good learning environment by saying:

I think I'm a good teacher, I have a good grasp of concepts, I can explain difficult materials to my students and make them understand complex things ... [and] I can foster that sort of good learning environment.

Furthermore, in explaining the difference between institutional and personal understandings of what being a good teacher means, she added that it also involves nurturing an attitude of care towards the students:

[Y]ou can look at what you think is a good teacher based on the department standards or your personal standards. Like, for the department standards, for example, you have to meet like a minimum of ... some sort of objective descriptor [about] how you're performing ... but to me personally, though, I feel like my idea of a good teacher is more than just doing what you're supposed to do, kind of standards, I think that a good teacher, it's more of an attitude thing, rather than a skill or content knowledge thing ... sometimes, you can have the most advanced degrees from the most prestigious universities, you can be the most published scholar out there, but you can still be a terrible teacher.

Similarly, building on the importance of being “a fountain of knowledge”, Helen explained how her teaching evolved; however, her core beliefs based on being a conscientious teacher remained the same:

I think ... my beliefs evolved naturally, as I do, as I teach in different roles or in different jobs ... but I don't think my core beliefs have really changed that much over the years ... I think it's always about how to be a conscientious teacher, whether I have been responsible enough to cater for students' needs, whether I'm the kind of teacher that students would perceive me to be, that's always at the centre of my concern, to be a good teacher. So, it's not just knowing about the subject matter.

Chris also noted expertise as significant but insufficient for getting the students to engage in the lesson:

[Teaching] it's very much of a performance and it's relying on a certain amount of charisma of the teacher; if you, as a teacher, are charismatic or have a good sense of humour ... it's more likely students are going to go along with you and engage in the learning. ... To a certain extent, you do need to be an expert in what you are teaching [but] there are things that are perhaps more important than that.

Despite acknowledging the importance of expertise and knowledge, the survey respondents emphasised student enjoyment and engagement during the classes as “the first step to long-term success with language learning”; in other words, “[s]tudents need to enjoy using the language to learn and to practice doing this in realistic situations.” Moreover, among the key beliefs reported in the survey were supporting students' needs and backgrounds “without a one-size-fits-all approach” and creating a positive learning environment through authentic learning materials, practising awareness, empathy, and care.

Similarly, in the interviews, adapting instruction to students' needs and the local context was a critical factor informing participants' teaching practice. As Dung explained: “No method is the best ... the main thing is to help students develop and learn and use language effectively.” Many participants reflected on adapting their teaching approaches to suit the students' backgrounds and needs. Alex, for example, expressed his strong beliefs in adapting his lessons to student needs and the local context of Vietnam. Dewi commented that she utilised group work to manage her students' diverse levels of English proficiency and to promote intercultural awareness in her classes.

Moreover, Amir and John provided examples of how they adapted their teaching by incorporating project-based learning and authentic materials to meet their students' needs. Amir explained:

We are in professional higher education, and they learn from projects ... so I find it successful ... because when they do a project, they have to work together, not only

inside but also outside the classroom ... it empowers the student to practice their English, especially in reporting their work.

In the same vein, John reflected: "So, I look at the class that I teach, if they were nursing students, I would choose materials that are science-based or related to hospitals dealing with patients."

Helen described a similar experience, where she had to respond and adjust to her students' needs in the given situation, outlining her strong belief in being a flexible and understanding practitioner:

Sometimes you plan a lesson really well and have been putting a lot of effort ... but it doesn't necessarily work out in class, because students were busy with other assignments ... so, you walk into the class, and you just respond to the students' needs, you make adjustments as you go. ... So, you might want to change even on the spot, you make changes, and then it actually works out quite well.

The ontogenetic data also revealed participants' belief that teaching should be made practical for real-world contexts, with English as the primary language for communication and employability. The analysis of survey data found that preparing students to use English and helping them become "more independent and self-reliant ... able to monitor their progress and learning ... use their knowledge to solve real-world problems ... and take part in ever-challenging situations" were key priorities guiding teachers' practice.

During the interview, Helen explained that, according to her core beliefs, rooted in bilingual education, she positions students as multi/translingual users and considers it crucial to set realistic expectations for their English language learning. In this sense, Amir noted: "I'm not teaching my students to be native-like speakers, [they] just need to pronounce it correctly, use the correct grammar so that people can understand what you are talking about." Similarly, John also reflected on his priority of enhancing his students' ability to express themselves and become effective communicators for practical reasons:

As an educator in the area of language teaching, my ultimate priority is to be able to enable my students to express themselves more freely and confidently, and as much as possible, in a very comprehensive manner. ... And then I'm also driven by the fact that they would need this for practical reasons ... and especially for their future employability.

5.3.6. Teachers' Roles: More than Just Teaching

The ontogenetic data analysis revealed a pattern in which participants made sense of their multiple roles as ESOL teachers along a continuum from professional (embodying pedagogical and content knowledge) to personal (carrying an ethical and moral dimension of being compassionate and caring helpers and role models for students). The terms "facilitator," "motivator," and "educator" were frequently mentioned in the survey data. Moreover, some of the survey respondents described themselves as enablers – supporting students in their “self-becoming through language and education” and providing them with “tools and direction to help them select and cultivate the skills most helpful to their own goals”. These role descriptions reflect their core beliefs about what it means to be a teacher.

Most of the interviewed teachers also described their roles as teachers in multiplicitous terms. Susan, for example, described her professional role as all-encompassing, which may mean different things to different people. Moreover, Amir described himself as not only a teacher but also a facilitator, a mediator, and a friend; Tuan commented that his role and primary duty lie in making language learning a positive experience for students, whereas Helen pointed out that being an active researcher is embedded in her role and practice as a teacher. Additionally, Chris and Sarah shared their sensitivity towards novice and relief teachers and how being a support person makes a real difference.

Some participants viewed their professional role as extending beyond just teaching English. Anna, for example, noted:

Well, on the surface, I just teach English to international students ... but we also prepare them for university and teach them about some skills they need for university ...

sometimes you help students with things unrelated to things we're supposed to be studying ... cultural things or just things from daily life.

Andrea perceived her role as being someone who cares for her students based on her beliefs about what being a good teacher does and on her experiences of being a student herself:

I would say that you're a good teacher, if you care about your students ... take time to talk to them ... [be] compassionate towards them ... understand where they're coming from. ... I think students know when their teacher cares about them, and as somebody who's been a student myself, I definitely know the difference when I feel that the teacher cares about me ... and so that's something I try to practice in my own teaching.

Similarly, Helen said that "it is not just about academic study, it's all about how they develop and then how they feel about themselves." She also reflected how she has become more aware of students' well-being and noted that "even though I'm a subject teacher on English for Academic Purposes, we actually have that pastoral role to play as well." Interestingly, she referred to her Chinese cultural background to explain her understanding of the teacher's role through the metaphor of a good teacher as a role model:

The expectation of teachers' sacrifices is different ... teachers are supposed to devote and even sacrifice for their profession ... in the Chinese context. ... So, a teacher is seen as a candle; you need to burn this candle to light up the room. So, teachers are seen not just as authoritative figures, teachers are seen as someone, a moral figure, a role model for students.

The moral dimension was also evident in how Tuan and John described their teacher responsibilities. Tuan explained that awareness of how one leads by example is significant because teachers' actions in the classroom influence students' development. Similarly, John expressed his gratitude for being a language teacher, for being human, and for leading a meaningful life. He said:

I'm happy that I'm in language teaching because I'm able to provoke my students in speaking, writing about what makes sense in life ... to read, to understand ourselves, our development in relation to other people, in relation to our culture, and also have our own way of understanding it, that helps us become better persons able to relate to one another. So, that is also playing in my mind as I continue my responsibility as a teacher.

5.3.7. Driving Forces

The ontogenetic data also revealed insights into participants' thoughts about their future as ESOL teachers, including the motivations that drive professional roles and practice. The data showed that the participants shared similar motives of persistence in overcoming the inevitable challenges they had encountered throughout their careers. The main motives driving their practice were the sustainability and personal gratification of participating in students' growth and development, as well as the nurturing of genuine care for the profession. Additionally, some participants' responses highlighted the connection between their practice as an ESOL teacher and their sense of national pride and moral responsibility to give back to the nation by doing their best in educating their citizens. In contrast, others reflected on the relationship between undertaking research and their professional development, with the aim of improving practice and becoming better teachers.

Chris described being a part of students' development as "far and away the most, and to be honest, really a lot of the time, the only rewarding thing about working in ESL. And that's really what sustains you." Andrea shared a similar experience. Reflecting on the times she questioned her career choice, she said:

If I think about the times that [I ask myself] 'why do I stay in this career when it's, you know, not the easiest?' When you're on the brink of burnout, when you're trying to balance so many things, I think it's definitely the students for me ... it's really something else when you see your students succeed ... and you had a role in that.

She added that she also sees it as a privilege to be able to “contribute to the growth and learning of these young people” and concluded that precisely that is “probably one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.” On a similar note, John spoke about the gratification he feels when he sees his students’ progress in English communication. Dara also commented on how the days she considers good in terms of student enjoyment and attention in class are gratifying; she concluded the thought, however, by hinting at the downsides of the profession: “it was those moments ... it is rewarding to my heart, but not for my teaching situation.”

Student recognition of the teacher’s effort was another aspect emphasised by some participants as rewarding. Dung, for example, explained that students’ success and their acknowledgement of his efforts as their teacher, which play a part in that success, drive him forward. In the same vein, Kelly commented: “I just love it when they thank me at the end of the class, and I know they've learned something, they've been engaged in not just language, they've learned different perspectives on life ... it's so satisfying.” Similarly, Alex described what a successful day in his teaching practice looks like:

[It] is when the students leave at the end of my class, they’re smiling, they’re laughing, they've enjoyed the lesson. ... At the end of the day, I feel good about my teaching and the students’ learning. That would be a successful day for me, and I'm looking forward to going back the next day.

Sarah reflected that she always finds it motivating when her students are engaged in learning and how that mirrors on her perception of herself as a good teacher: “It’s a real buzz when you got everybody in great zone working well together ... and they’re feeling that they have grown in their ability ... and that’s my goal; that means, as a teacher ... I’ve succeeded.” Reflecting on his professional journey and career development, Amir explained that he has been driven by student achievement and his own professional development as interrelated aspects of his practice.

Pedagogical innovation, in the form of finding new ways to foster student interaction in class, was noted by Peter and Dewi as another motivating aspect. Peter said, “The reason why I've never got tired of teaching is because there are always new ways of getting students involved in interacting with one another, and every class has its little peculiarities in terms of how they interact.” Dewi made a similar point, but from a different angle. She spoke about finding new teaching strategies to give marginalised students an equal chance for English education, so they can interact with the other students from different cultures. She concluded: “I cannot say that it is always successful, but if I see the students' achievement, even a bit of success by using this kind of teaching, I'm happy.”

The ontogenetic data indicated that the participants' sense-making of their professional experiences is deeply connected to their personal emotions. In this sense, Amir emphasised: “You do this profession because you like it, not because you want it.” The genuine care for the profession was also evident in Dara's comment:

Since my first job as a tutor at a private tutoring school in 2010, it has been the same goal – that I want to be an English teacher. I don't see myself working in other professions at all ... I work because I love this profession.

Anna expressed a similar sentiment when she spoke of herself and other ESOL teachers she worked with throughout her career. She said: “In almost every place I've worked at ... I think most people really care about the students and making the lesson, because if you didn't care about the students, I don't think people would stay in the industry.”

Another aspect identified in the analysis of the ontogenetic data concerned participants' sense of moral responsibility to give back to the nation. Amir, for example, expressed his moral sense of responsibility by saying, “It's all about responsibility. Everyone must be responsible for what they do ... [and] bring benefit to the community.” Similarly, John reflected on the importance of providing students with relevant education for the future, based on principles rooted in the idea of working for the nation's greater good and fostering a sense of national

belonging. He explained: “So, if we are driven to quality, then we must stand in principle and practice ... because we are doing service to the nation, how we develop our people to become better citizens.” He also spoke of his role as attached to his sense of responsibility for national prosperity. In this sense, he saw himself as an agitator of change for improvement, which was also a source of challenge and excitement for his practice:

I'm conscious of ... how small my contribution is, but this is part of Philippine nation building, it's an ongoing responsibility that we have to build our nation ... It's slowly getting into our consciousness, that ... we build our nation through education, social services, health, and things like that.

At the individual level, participants cited their professional growth and research-driven career progress as a driving force for their practice. In this sense, Amir noted: “The one thing you can do is to improve your professional skills because that will make a change. If you change yourself, if you improve your skill, that will bring big change to your classroom, to your students.” Sarah also expressed a positive attitude towards change in terms of “trying to do better and trying to provide an excellent service ... that's kind of what you work towards.”

In a similar vein, Andrea and Helen mentioned their passion for and the importance of professional skills development through research. As Helen reflected: “If I look at my career development, it's inseparable [from research]; I have a passion for research, and that's what keeps me going.”

5.4. Microgenetic Domain: Challenged *Belonging*

The microgenetic data from this study's ESOL teachers revealed sociocultural and political factors shaping their teaching practice (i.e., activity) within the context of their immediate professional worlds. *Challenged Belonging* captures the ESOL teachers' sense-making of their challenges within the sociocultural and political contexts of their practice, contradicting their beliefs about, roles in, and motives and driving forces for professional

practice, which extend beyond the professional into the moral and national cultural dimensions (as revealed in the analysis of ontogenetic data).

The analysis of the teachers' sense-making of their professional experiences followed the principles of historicity and contradictions (Engeström, 2001, 2015; Sannino & Engeström, 2018), underscoring the research results within the theme *Challenged Belonging*, as represented in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Subthemes and Codes of the Theme: Challenged Belonging

Challenged Belonging			
Challenges of institutional norms, values, and structures	Challenges of workplace culture	Challenges of professional development	Challenges of technology and the shift to online teaching
TESOL is business	Teacher collaboration tensions	Lack of professional growth	Technology in the classroom: Issues of time and support
Job insecurity	Students-teacher tensions	Issues with institutional PD provision	Emotional struggles of online teaching adaptation
Feeling undervalued: Disconnect with management			
Workload intensity			

In the following section of this chapter, I present the study's results of the thematic analysis of the microgenetic data and the identified primary (need state) and secondary contradictions (dilemmas, conflicts, critical conflicts, and double binds) within the ESOL teachers' everyday practice, i.e., within their activity system.

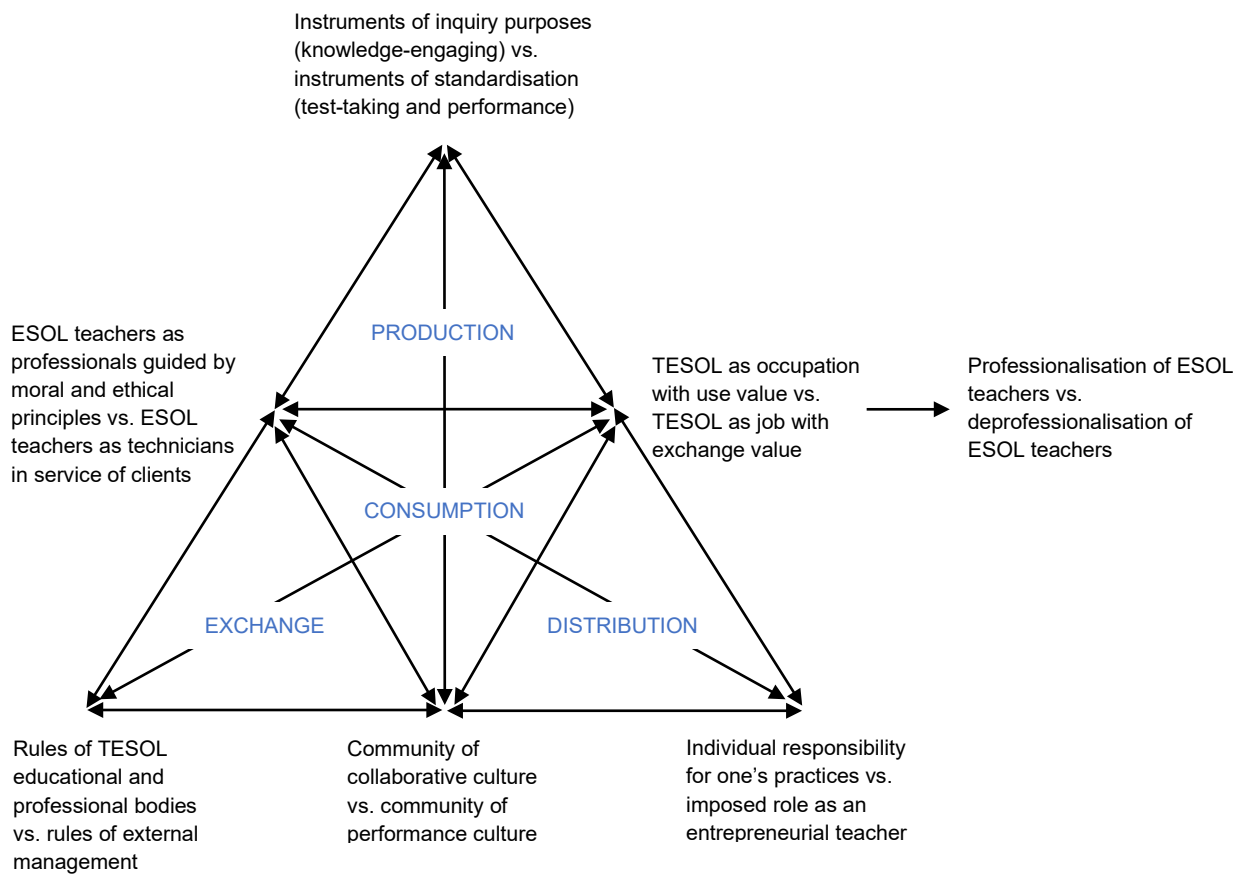
5.4.1. Challenges of Institutional Norms, Values, and Structures

The analysis of the microgenetic data revealed that beneath the surface of the challenges, struggles, tensions, and uncertainties experienced by the ESOL teachers lies their perplexity about the peculiar state of indeterminacy (need state) surrounding their professional practice, as embedded in the socioeconomic and political context of the purpose of education.

Figure 13 below gives preliminary insight into the need state and diagrammatically represents the identified primary contradictions inherent within every component of the ESOL teachers' activity system.

Figure 13

The Primary Contradictions of ESOL Teachers' Activity



The essential characteristics of the need state are that it is grounded in the subject's perplexity about the presence of two opposing alternatives of the same object and the subject's inability to determine the direction of their effort (Engeström, 2015). These competing views or objects in the need state are, in no case, accidental but rather historically and socioculturally determined. The primary inner contradictions of ESOL teachers' activity are situated within each component of the activity structure and stem from the dual commodity character or double nature of exchange and use value of TESOL as a profession. The two poles of the contradiction within each component of the ESOL teachers' activity system suggest two competing alternative views of TESOL education – democratic and managerial. Here, the latter threatens the ESOL teachers' autonomous professional practice and their desire for collegial and collaborative professional cultures, reflecting the notion of working towards deprofessionalising teaching (Alexander et al., 2019; Hargreaves, 2000a; Sachs, 2001).

The need state is manifested in the participants' sense-making of their professional practice. It is closely related to, if not dependent on, their experiences and understanding of the values, regulations, circumstances, and situations within their workplace sociocultural and political environment. The uncertainty inherent in a need state is evident in the ESOL teachers' responses to questions about their beliefs, roles, motives, and responsibilities as teachers and how these fit with the perceived institutional norms, values, and structures and in their expressions of doubts about their future as ESOL teachers and the direction and purpose of education.

In contrast to their beliefs and values about what the teaching profession entails or should entail (as represented previously through the ontogenetic data), the ESOL teachers broadly understood their practice as situated within a business-like model of operation guided by economic incentives and product placement. In this sense, Chris described the very nature and format of the English language courses as a segue into that world of market-oriented values:

I've always, well, not always, but almost always worked on ELICOS courses, and as we know, that 'I' in ELICOS is intensive, very intensive courses, and that plays such a big part in it, you know, you're churning the student through ... they are only studying for 10 weeks, and then they are moving on to higher studies, and it's that intensity or intensiveness that really feeds into the ..., it's really more of a business.

In a similar vein, Susan referred to the increased dominance of the client service model as "something that has kind of crept in insidiously over the last 10 years ... especially in English language education and ... in tertiary education for sure." She reflected on the pressure of the changing circumstances in terms of the institutional response to students' expectations as clients paying for a product:

It's a much different landscape than it was when I did my undergraduate degree ... it is getting harder and harder every year to really make sure that students are actually learning what they're supposed to be learning ... it's because they get so much kickback from students when they fail a paper, or they fail a subject ... because it's all client service kind of model; it's like, 'well, I paid for this, so, you know, you need to pass me', and I think it's the same with English language teaching ... because they pay because international students come here and they pay a lot of money for a product, and it's become a product and a business rather than becoming an education.

Dara explained her understanding of the changing landscape of tertiary education in relation to Thailand's broader socioeconomic context. She said:

The policy changes so fast. We are an aging society. And right now, universities do a lot of marketing to get students in. They even accept ..., you know, some faculties accept students with just a portfolio, without a minimum grade, without testing.

She then noted that the competitive-based client service model, which once had been an occurrence solely in the private tertiary education sector, has crept into the public universities as well: "Even the public university right now treat students as clients, that's why they accept

students without minimum grades, because they want money; and we have less and less students.” Additionally, even though she firmly positioned herself as an educator in service of the greater good of society in contrast to the broader movement in tertiary education institutions in service of the market, she did emphasise that her current situation allows for it, which may not be the case in the future:

I don't see myself as placing them as clients because I do believe in discipline and making them be good citizens, you know, but I don't know because I'm not affected by that policy much; I'm just a small university lecturer in a small campus, far away, you know, one day my perception may have to change ... but it hasn't happened to me yet.

On a grim note of the possibility of having to change her beliefs and purpose as a teacher, Dara concluded: “I don't know how many more years I'd want to teach. Yeah. I don't know ... I don't know how many years I would want to be an English teacher.”

Anna shared a similar workplace experience, where students are regarded as clients by universities but not by teachers. She then questioned the change in students' role in terms of power ownership and how it challenges the teachers' role: “I don't think of the students as clients, because then they have all the power here, but then what ... then I don't know what that makes us.”

Additionally, Kelly spoke of her institution's budget-oriented rationality. Expressing her fear of her English department meeting the same fate as many others in New Zealand that got privatised as part of universities' economic efficiency manoeuvres, she noted that there is “a real threat of potentially being privatised; that's happened to one of the universities just maybe two years ago, they completely canned their English department, and they contracted out to a private language school. It's just a cost-cutting exercise.” Her following example depicts a vivid picture of how deeply personal impact global market-oriented decisions may have:

I'm an IELTS examiner and examiner trainer as well. And IELTS..., what was it like four years ago? They just canned writing here in New Zealand; they took away the writing

marking and sent it off to Australia. I lost half my job overnight, not just as an examiner but also as a trainer, without even a separate email to say thank you for your work over the years. Yeah, globalisation's unbelievable, and I never imagined that it would affect me in that really personal way.

Moreover, Kelly underscored her view of the damaging effect of market mentality within universities and how it contradicts their purpose as educational institutions:

I think it's very budget-oriented. When there's a way that something can be outsourced at a cheaper cost, that's what they're going to choose, whoever they are, whoever it is, university, polytechnic, private institute. There's something very wrong with this system ... when institutes or universities have their job description ... it just looks like an accounting job, then you're going to get an accounting mentality, and you're going to get anyone who can be replaced with something cheaper.

It was apparent from participants' accounts that they are deeply concerned and conflicted, both as professionals whose roles as educators are being challenged and as individuals whose livelihoods are being threatened by the changing landscape of the political economy of tertiary education in general and the TESOL industry in particular. The following response by Chris, when asked about the impact of institutions' economically rationalised behaviour on teacher well-being and the possibility of teachers taking action and accountability for their well-being, clearly shows the implications of the political forces in play:

I think that would be difficult to implement at the institutional level because in that, you're inferring that organisations aren't looking after the well-being of the teachers, and therefore, if you start implementing policies where it becomes outsourced, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to look after their well-being; there's going to be a conflict there because universities especially like to be seen as very progressive and in how they look after their staff, and they would like to say that they are very concerned with the well-being, even though because of certain constraints they are not really.

Concerning the participants' perceptions of the business-like operational model of university functioning in general and TESOL in particular, the microgenetic data analysis revealed a pattern in participants' sense-making of the TESOL profession's (in)stability. In this vein, some ESOL teachers discussed perceptions and experiences of job insecurity as an outcome of the industry's unpredictable nature, characterised by variations in demand, reliance on casual staff, and short-term contracts.

The emotional experiences of job insecurity and uncertainty were heightened among ESOL teachers working in English-speaking countries (Australia and New Zealand), where the internationalisation of the higher education sector emphasises the TESOL industry's unpredictable nature. All five participants working in this context – Chris, Anna, Susan, Kelly, and Sarah – discussed the TESOL industry's sensitivity to global socioeconomic and political conditions and how these conditions affect student numbers and shape teacher demand and the availability of teaching positions. In this vein, Anna described the casualisation of the TESOL workforce as “notorious”, and Chris explained:

The industry is so sensitive to certain things going on in the world ... student numbers can go up and down based on so many things, and that creates more uncertainty and makes a lot of the institutions sensitive and hyper-focused on the business of ELICOS. Similarly, Susan explained the difficulty of the situation, especially for the English language centres: “Because we are doing that like a pathway into university, we can't maintain the same level of enrolments for the whole year; ...it's kind of this weird sort of Catch 22 situation that we're in.”

Furthermore, Chris spoke about the difficulties of securing a permanent position and the industry's reliance on sessional or casual staff:

I worked for [institution name] for 5 years, maybe a bit over 5 years, before I got a..., first I got a 12-month contract that got renewed, and then eventually, after being there for

ages, I got a long-term contract. But depending on how many students the school has, it's heavily reliant on sessional or casual staff, who come and go.

The participants also expressed significant concerns about the industry's instability and unpredictability, which affect their future professional goals. In this sense, Susan noted her intention of leaving the profession due to her being disillusioned with the industry and frustrated with the client model; she further explained:

It feels like you can't put a foot wrong otherwise, students are going to complain, and then you're out of a job or, like there seems to be less and less respect for teachers, especially English language teachers, across the industry, and just the casualisation ... it's such an up and down.

She added: "I think the way the industry is set up, it's just not set up to be stable ... So, it's something that I'll continue doing, but I don't think I'll work on a career as an English language teacher." Similarly, reflecting on their recent experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kelly and Sarah also spoke about their consideration of leaving the profession. Kelly noted: "...in the last few years with those two years of redundancies, losing a lot of people around me, that insecurity, I thought 'why did I stick with this work?'"

Referring to the effects of long-term insecurity on teachers' mental health and well-being, Chris pointed out that the "job insecurity and gig economy" are creating a sense of unfairness and competitiveness in the workplace that bleeds into the workplace culture:

So, there's a lot of job insecurity ... and I think that really feeds into the workplace culture ... If sessional teachers are competing for limited work ... it makes it a little bit cut-throat and unpleasant and there's a lack of transparency because perhaps the next semester one teacher who was expecting to keep teaching, there's no work for them, whereas maybe someone who has been working alongside them, there will be work, so it's a difficult situation to manage.

Additionally, Susan concluded that due to the “seasonal nature of the work and the kind of market focus that there is on the work ... it’s a really tricky thing to feel like you can’t pin down a sense of your professional identity.”

Another dilemma in which the need state is manifested is the perceived disconnect between ESOL teachers and management. In this context, they discussed the importance of empathy and workplace support for teachers' well-being. Moreover, the data also revealed that the participants feel undervalued, which impacts their sense of belonging to a profession.

Reflecting on his experiences of working in teaching and management positions, Chris described the paradoxical situation of disconnect imbued with a lack of empathy for teachers:

Something that I’m aware of when I’m not working in the classroom, if there’s been a month or a couple of months where I’ve been in a management position, I think people very quickly start to lose empathy with the stresses the teachers are under. I’m not sure why that is exactly, but ... I do see a disconnect in my managers and myself when I’ve been managing; as I said, you quickly forget what a stressful job teaching can be.

He then emphasised the need for change – creating a better connection and empathy between management and teaching staff – because:

At the end of the day, our whole business is the service we provide, which is teaching, and I think the welfare of the teachers and the students should be the absolute priority, and a lot of the time it isn’t ... often it’s one of the last things that they [management] are focused on.

Similarly, Kelly underlined the importance of acknowledging ESOL teachers as professionals. Talking about her disappointing experience of not being recognised and accepted as part of the university’s research community, she said: “Just because I’m not teaching at degree level, a content course, does not mean that what I have to say, or my background, my experiences are irrelevant.” Additionally, she noted that those experiences left her feeling undervalued, and she concluded, “I don’t feel like I have a profession.”

Sarah and Susan, too, explained that securing management support and understanding is crucial for nurturing a respectful and healthy work environment. Furthermore, Sarah argued that this situation is partly due to management and teachers' opposed views on the purpose of education: "The management side of things ... they're looking at it as a client and a product, ... I think it does detract from the actual sort of goal, the meaning, the approach, the outlook of how it should be."

Helen also acknowledged the importance of leadership support and awareness if positive change is to happen; however, she pointed out that following the COVID-19 pandemic, "[t]here's a bit more awareness at the professional and also at the institutional level." Nevertheless, she questioned the availability of funding for establishing policies in support of teaching staff and students.

The microgenetic data analysis also revealed that the existing conflict situation is exacerbated by ESOL teachers' everyday experiences, which are characterised by the intensity of their practice workload. Most participants argued that their non-teaching responsibilities are a significant source of struggle. In this sense, Susan noted: "I find that the things that teachers struggle with the most are not necessarily like the teaching; it's more everything else around that." Moreover, she questioned the role and importance of knowledge within her everyday teaching practice:

You've got to do all that extra stuff, but there's no extra hours in a day to do that ... it's hard to know what is actually important ... it's all given to you as if it's equally important, but ... I don't know where knowledge fits into that, and if it's equally important, or less important, or more important, and I don't think other teachers know either.

In a similar vein, Kelly expressed her frustration with dealing either with "massive classes" or "being thrown into a level with very little preparation time and no support", and Andrea talked about her struggles of "being pulled in different directions" and how the constant shift of the workload boundaries that comes with experience affected her well-being:

So, I think maybe a couple of years ago was the first time that I started to feel burnt out ... there was a part of me that felt like I wanted to focus more on my teaching, I wanted to be more involved in my teaching, like I was before, versus like all this admin work that never ends.

Andrea noted that this struggle left her feeling defeated and demotivated as a teacher.

Nevertheless, she did not give up but learned from that experience:

There have been several instances where I have really felt like I was on the brink of burnout, and it was like when you don't have motivation anymore, you feel like 'what's the point', right? So, I feel like I went through several cycles of burnout, and I think now that I'm more aware of what that looks like for me, I can try to avoid it and take better care of myself. Hopefully, I still do these things that contribute to being a good teacher.

Furthermore, Chris, Dewi, Anna, Sarah, and Dara discussed the intensity of the courses and how administrative tasks and limited time for achieving their teaching goals contribute to stress for both teachers and students. In this sense, Chris explained:

You've got to get a lot done in a short amount of time, and that's what the definition of intensive is; so, it affects the teaching because you're cramming an awful lot of content into a short time, which is stressful for the teachers and it's stressful for the students.

In addition, Dewi expressed a sense of insurmountability for the raised issues and added that the constant policy change in Indonesia made the situation even harder for teachers. Similarly, Dara discussed the challenges Thai ESOL teachers face in administrative duties related to institutional quality assurance policies, highlighting the contradictions between her beliefs about teaching, formed during her teacher education, and her real-life teaching experiences. Here, she expressed a sense of guilt for not being able to be an ideal teacher, because she felt forced to compromise her teaching practice:

In my master's degree is the belief that we have to prepare a lot of activities, to let the student learn by themselves, and be active as much as possible, but, you know, in

reality when I was too tired, I didn't prepare those, I just taught following the books, used the contents in the books ... I wasn't the person to choose, there were course coordinators in campus in Bangkok, who decided it and I follow it ... so it was like, what I was taught in my Master of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, to be like ideal teacher, in reality, I couldn't be, I was too tired to do so.

The analysis of the microgenetic data relating to the participants' sense-making of their teaching practice also indicated contradictions between the components of the activity system (secondary contradictions), signalling the subject's mobilisation toward qualitative change. Here, the transformation of the need state into a double bind represents a transformation of a state of indeterminacy "into a contradiction that uncompromisingly demands *qualitatively new instruments* for its resolution" (Engeström, 2015, p. 139, emphasis in original). Nevertheless, although the resolution of a need state is inevitable, its duration (short- or long-term) and the manner of its resolution (regression or expansion) (Engeström, 2015) determine the subjects' future actions or commitments to their practice and well-being.

Through the analysis of the microgenetic data, secondary contradictions were identified between:

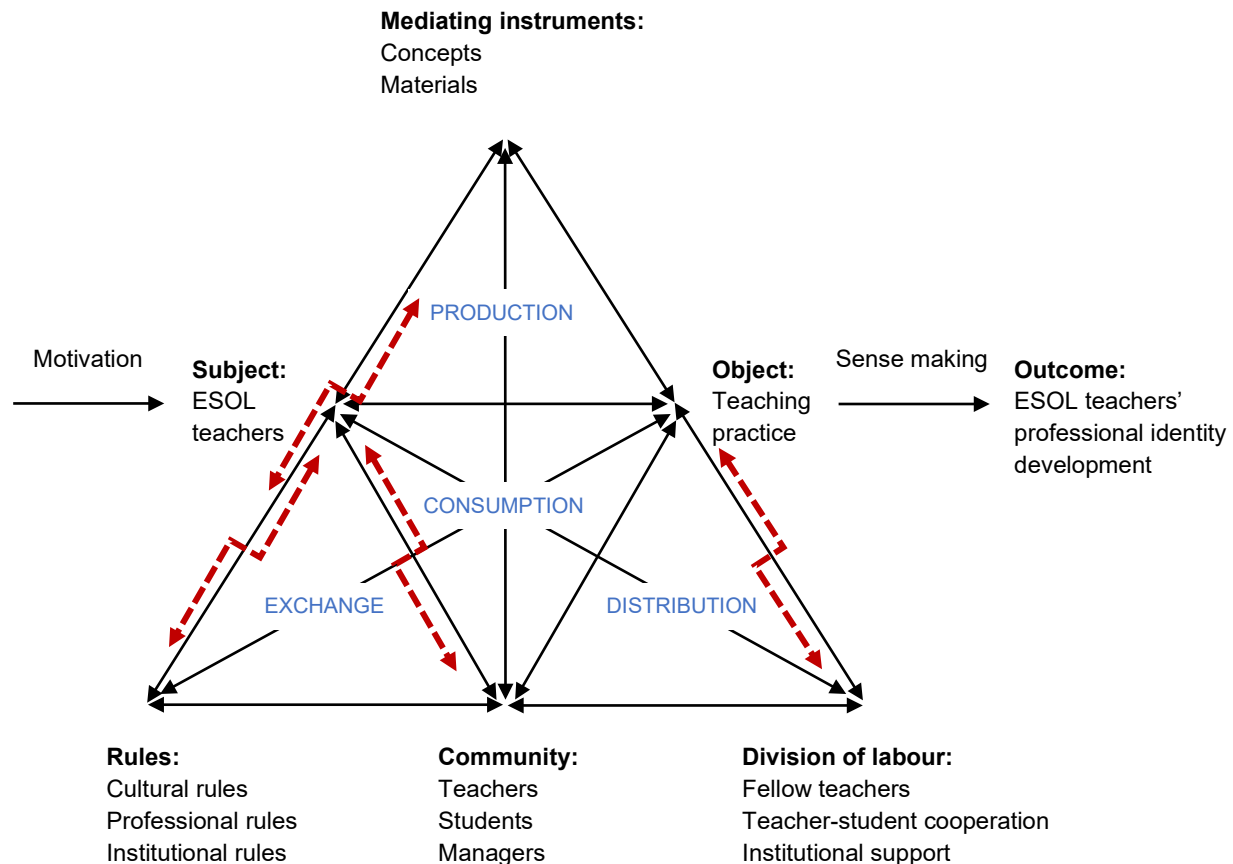
1. The subject (ESOL teachers) and the community (other teachers), arising from the divide between native and non-native English-speaking teachers.
2. The subject and the community (the students), rooted in their opposing beliefs about and expectations of English language education.
3. The object (teaching practice) and the division of labour (teacher-student cooperation), where teachers are actively engaged in providing engaging learning experiences for the students; however, the students refuse to engage and take responsibility for their learning.
4. The subject and the rules (institutional rules) concerning the notion of professional development and career growth.

5. The object (teaching practice, i.e., improvement of teaching practice through PD) and the division of labour, where teachers are expected to engage continuously in professional learning and development; however, institutions do not support this in a meaningful way.
6. The mediating instruments (PD opportunities) and institutional rules mandating teachers to engage regularly in PD activities that do not meet their needs.
7. The mediating instruments (use of technology as a pedagogical tool) and the rules (institutional), where the institution, contrary to its rules about technology integration in teaching, provides inadequate access to technology.

Figure 14 below represents the delineation of the ESOL teachers' activity system and the identified secondary contradictions.

Figure 14

Secondary Contradictions Within the ESOL Teachers' Activity System



The CHAT analysis revealed that the contradictions in the ESOL teachers' activity system occur within the triangles of exchange, distribution, and consumption (the bottom part of their activity system). It also revealed that the participants' teaching practice and professional development actions are mainly concentrated within the subtriangle of production (the upper part of their activity system), running low on energetic and material resources. The mediated relationship between subject and object ideally occurs within a sociocultural and political context compromised of the community, rules, and division of labour; however, the data analysis showed that the participants' workplace activity has not created its own social infrastructure and

thus has not become their life activity – “a truly *societal* activity system for the neighbour activities” (Engeström, 2015, p. 151, emphasis in original).

The analysis in this section has highlighted that the participants’ sense of *Belonging* to a workplace is being challenged, resulting in a dispersed activity of continuous *Becoming* a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner, as well as teacher dilemmas about what *Being* a good ESOL teacher means and entails.

5.4.2. Challenges of Workplace Culture

The thematic analysis of the microgenetic data also revealed that, although all participants described their everyday teaching practice as largely autonomous, they acknowledged the crucial importance and benefits of a supportive and collaborative workplace culture. For example, Sarah stated that she perceives collaborating with other teachers as an “incredible learning curve and learning opportunity”. Similarly, Helen noted that the benefit of teacher collaboration lies in “see[ing] other, different perspectives” for practice, and Kelly commented on her enjoyment of exchanging ideas on best teaching practices with other teachers. Moreover, Andrea, Dewi, Dung, Susan, and Chris emphasised the usefulness of collegiality in practical problem-solving through resource sharing, and Anna highlighted its value as a bonding experience in the workplace.

Nevertheless, most participants reported that everyday workplace tensions influenced their practice and well-being. These tensions, identified as secondary contradictions between the subject (ESOL teachers) and the community (other teachers and students), were experienced by the subject as double binds. The sociocultural tensions among the teachers were evident primarily in the participants’ narratives about their experiences of the teacher divide in the workplace between native English-speaking teachers (NEST) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNEST).

Two main camps appeared here. On the one hand, some of the NNEST participants discussed their experiences as NNESTs in the context of teaching English as an international

lingua franca. Nevertheless, they still felt compelled to prove their legitimacy and worth as ESOL teachers because, as Amir noted, the prevailing opinion in the broader community was that “the ideal teacher must be a native English speaker”. This social situation influenced Amir significantly; in moments of professional self-doubt, he had to repeatedly convince himself by saying: “I’m legitimate as an English teacher because I studied English for many years, I took a professional degree, joined many professional development courses on how to be an English teacher; so, I am legitimate, I am an English teacher.”

On the other hand, some NEST participants discussed the existing divide between local (NNESTs) and foreign ESOL teachers (NESTs), particularly affecting the practice of ESOL teachers in Thailand. Peter explained:

All the teachers are language teachers, but there's a separation between foreign language teachers and Thai ... there's not a lot of collaboration really.

Expressing his frustration with similar experiences of teacher division and a lack of collaboration at his current workplace, James attributed these tensions to the high-context culture and playful nature of the Thai people, in contrast to his Australian teacher education background and early career experiences in Japan. Similarly, Dara concluded that the tensions that cause the teacher divide or segregation in the workplace, in which NESTs and NNESTs refuse to collaborate, stem from their contradictory viewpoints on teaching English.

As previously mentioned, the microgenetic data also revealed a secondary contradiction (double bind) between the ESOL teachers, as subjects, and the students, as community members, stemming from opposing beliefs about and expectations of English language education shaped by global and local cultural influences. When James spoke about his English teaching experience in Thailand, he commented on the difference between the students’ behaviour and expectations at public and private universities. He explained that private university students are more likely to take on a client service attitude embodied in the idea of ‘paying to pass’ because “[t]hey weren't able to make it to the good public university, so they

have to buy their way into a good private university.” John described similar professional experiences where he felt the pressure of students’ expectations, much like that of paying clients. He noted that “some students feel it just because they can pay, then they can pass. No, no, it shouldn't be like that.”

Furthermore, Dewi, Amir, Peter, Dara, James, Tuan, Kelly, and John discussed their challenging experiences teaching students who are not engaged in their own learning. From an activity theoretical perspective, this was identified as a secondary contradiction between the object (the intended joint activity of teaching and learning English effectively) and the division of labour (the expected roles and responsibilities of teacher and students), in which students are expected to engage and take responsibility for their learning.

Peter and James attributed student-teacher tensions in the classroom to their different cultural backgrounds, which conditioned their behaviour and teaching/learning attitudes and expectations. In a similar vein, Amir, Dewi, and Kelly highlighted the importance of teachers’ multicultural or intercultural communication skills for navigating challenging social situations in multicultural English language classrooms and “negotiating the teaching” (Amir). Kelly, for example, described her conflict as follows:

I expect my students to have the same attitude as me, but they don't ... I've got students from all sorts of places in that class, all kinds of countries; they've all got their own kind of ideas, and some of them are a little bit shocking to me.

Similarly, Dewi noted:

The challenge we face in Papua is about the culture; the multicultural students because they are from different cultural backgrounds, and of course, they have a different motivation, it [culture] can affect their motivation, it can affect the way they learn, their perspective on teaching.

Additionally, Dara expressed her frustration with the deeply concerning state of education in Thailand, where students enter university despite significant knowledge gaps,

contributing to their disengagement in the classroom. Dewi noted that her students are often more concerned with achieving high scores than with learning through active engagement during class. Conversely, Peter explained from his experience working with Thai students, “is not about getting scores or collecting proficiency ratings; ... they're just not going to learn unless you excite them about what it is that's going on.”

To address the challenging situation, Peter introduced a relatable topic for the students to engage with, such as their hobbies. In a similar vein, discussing the challenges of student engagement in his classes, John and Amir emphasised the importance of using authentic materials in the classroom that situate learning in specific contexts and enable local students to relate to the teaching content. Along the same lines, Amir emphasised the link between student motivation, the pedagogical approach, and the psychological aspect of learning English within a situated social environment. He argued:

It is not only about the pedagogical method that you use in your classroom but also about the psychological aspect of learning; ... you may have an effective pedagogical approach that has been tested everywhere, and it works, but in some cases, in some contexts, in my experience, it didn't work at all because students were not interested. So, I guess the problem was in motivation; intrinsic motivation should be built. They must be engaged before you teach them content.

5.4.3. Challenges of Professional Development

The microgenetic data analysis involving this study's ESOL teachers' sense-making of their everyday experiences of professional practice revealed tensions within their professional development (PD) at the workplace that were identified as a secondary contradiction between the mediating instruments (PD) and the rules (institutional rules) and experienced by the subjects (ESOL teachers) as double binds. Concerning the patterns identified in the ontogenetic data, where most of the participants' described their PD throughout their careers as individually motivated, informal, oriented towards personal interests, largely dependent on time availability

or even incidental, the microgenetic data analysis revealed that the participants perceive their professional growth as lacking and the PD mandatorily provided by their respective institutions as infrequent or irrelevant to their practice. This also implies secondary contradictions between the subject and the institutional rules (concerning teachers' and institutional differing interpretations of PD and career growth) and the object (teaching practice, i.e., improvement of teaching practice through PD) and the division of labour, where teachers are expected to engage continuously in professional learning and development; however, institutions do not provide meaningful support.

For example, Anna and Kelly described their career progress and professional growth as limited. Ana explained: "I feel like you sort of reach the ceiling after maybe 10 years in the industry, you probably are going to be as good a teacher as you ever be." Moreover, Kelly mentioned that she questioned her professional role several times because: "I sort of felt like, there was a ceiling ... that was it, really, there wasn't much scope for where to go."

Similarly, Chris and James said they feel like they are being "pigeon-holed" in teaching certain English language levels or skills, such as speaking and listening. Chris explained: "Once you've taught a course a few times, it becomes quite natural for you, and ... teachers tend to be pigeon-holed into one curriculum ... there is definitely that instinct from the management to put certain teachers with certain classes." Moreover, talking about his experiences of teaching English at various schools in Taiwan, Japan, and Cambodia, Peter pointed out that precisely those experiences of teaching the same things and the feeling of no professional growth made him realise that he is solely responsible for his PD and career progress. In line with this, Amir concluded: "If you improve your skill, that will bring a big change to your classroom, to your students. If you hope the government or your institution will provide everything for your future development, don't rely on that."

Another aspect identified in the microgenetic data analysis concerns participants' perceptions of issues related to the mandatory provision of institutional PD. The PD was

described as infrequent, too generic, and unrelated to their teaching practices. For example, on the one hand, Chris explained:

I think management does have an awareness that they should be providing personal development, and if there's a teacher who has an expertise in a particular area, they might be asked to run a session where they train other staff, but that has happened in a very infrequent manner over the years.

On the other hand, Kelly said: "We are forced to do professional development, which is unrelated to our field ... it's very generic." Additionally, Sarah noted that due to the busy schedule and the intensity of the teaching profession, she doesn't have time for PD, which impacts her career progress.

5.4.4. Challenges of Technology and the Shift to Online Teaching

The microgenetic data analysis, which involved the participants' sense-making of their teaching practice, also revealed tensions surrounding their use of technology in the classroom. Some participants discussed tensions regarding the availability of resources and institutional support, including access to reliable internet, professional databases, and professional training in classroom technology use. In contrast, others focused on their emotional struggles in adapting to the sudden transition to online instruction brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. From an activity theoretical perspective, the subjects (ESOL teachers) experienced these contradictions as critical conflicts. Nevertheless, the former represents a secondary contradiction between the instruments (the use of technology as a pedagogical tool) and the rules (institutional rules), whereby the institution provides inadequate access to and support for the subject, contrary to institutional rules governing its teaching practice. In contrast, the latter represents a tertiary contradiction that arose between the (temporarily) newly established online teaching activity and the traditional face-to-face teaching.

For example, while discussing the ongoing pressing issues of access to a stable internet connection and electronic resources for achieving the learning outcomes, Dewi described a

common occurrence in her teaching practice, emotionally charged with feelings of guilt for wasting time accessing the quiz (warm-up teaching activity) and not meeting the teaching goals:

When I face this problem, I feel really ... 'oh no, I just used my time to access the quizzes, and then what I had planned to teach in this meeting is not achieved', and then in the next meeting, how can I move to the other part? And then we are limited by the time ... and I need to deliver all the materials.

Additionally, Dewi explained that institutional access to electronic libraries containing the most recent resources necessary to keep pace with global developments in ESOL teaching practice is also difficult.

Similarly, Sarah discussed the overwhelming and time-consuming aspect of integrating technology into teaching practice. She noted that it can be a big learning curve for teachers, a "challenging step of coming to terms with some of the platforms", especially when the busy work schedule does not allow professional training.

Another significant challenge identified in participants' sense-making of their teaching practice was their emotional struggle to adapt to sudden changes in online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbated by job-security concerns stemming from border closures and the decline in international student numbers. The participants described teaching online during the pandemic as tiring, exhausting, time-consuming, draining, frustrating, and an area of teaching that is often underinformed.

In that sense, Sarah noted that "face-to-face is easy by comparison; online is a huge challenge in lots of ways", especially "managing to try and keep an online class communicative and get people speaking is a real challenge." Accordingly, Susan, Andrea, and Peter expressed their worries and struggles with student engagement in an online teaching environment; as Susan pointed out: "You've just got this little sea of tiles, and you can't see what they're doing, like you can't see if they're listening; you don't know what's going on in their little kind of world and in their rooms." In line with the above, Helen added that these changes, along with the

focus on technological issues and online classroom management, have harmed her teaching quality and have recently led her to doubt her own teaching capabilities.

Like other participants' experiences, Chris described his experience of the shift from the old way of teaching (face-to-face) to the new (online) as "absolute torture". He, however, emphasised that it was at the point when things started to return to normal that he felt most drained and confused due to the lack of recognition of the turbulent times and dramatic changes over the past two years and their impact on teachers' well-being:

The borders opened, the students came back, we went back onto campus, all of us, burned out, frazzled and afraid, and you know, it was business as usual, there was absolutely no sort of recognition or well-being interventions, it was just as if nothing had happened.

This sentiment was also recognisable in John's concluding remark: "There is this confusion and fear about what the future will be like for us [ESOL teachers] ... but we are confident, we are hopeful that some things can be done better."

5.5. Summary

In this chapter, I presented the qualitative study results through three themes – *Being an ESOL Teacher*, *Continuous Becoming in Activity*, and *Challenged Belonging* – organised respectively under the three domains of Vygotsky's genetic method – the cultural-historic, ontogenetic, and microgenetic domains. This study found that the professional identity of ESOL teachers is being challenged by changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts within their micro-meso-macro social environments, which act as mediating sources of professional practice, learning, and development. Specifically, the results revealed that ESOL teachers' everyday practice is complex and fraught with tensions stemming from the increasingly business-like nature of TESOL, which, along with the lack of collegial social infrastructure in the workplace, constrains ESOL teachers' professional practice and development and challenges their sense of *Belonging* to the workplace. Moreover, the ESOL teachers reported a dispersed

activity of professional development (PD), contradicting their ideal form of PD, which involves professionals actively engaging in continuous self-improvement in both formal and informal settings. These tensions were found to be underpinned by a perplexity stemming from the peculiar state of indeterminacy surrounding the purpose of education, which challenges teachers' core beliefs and professional roles.

The results in the ontogenetic domain showed how the ESOL teachers' roles, knowledges, beliefs, motives, and commitment in relation to their teaching practice were challenged on multiple occasions throughout their careers, igniting an internal struggle that prompted them to reconsider their actions and change themselves. Here, through teachers' mediating activity, the tensions were turned into processes of continuous *Becoming* reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioners. The teachers made sense of their multiple roles on a continuum between the professional (embodying content and pedagogical knowledge) and the personal (drawing heavily on moral and national cultural dimensions). Over the years, their motives for professional practice shifted from practical to more ethical reasoning about their professional goals and commitments. As their professional experience increased, so did their confidence and awareness of students' needs, resulting in a shift in their pedagogical beliefs and teaching approach from teacher-centred to student-centred.

The media data analysis representing the cultural-historic domain revealed contradictory notions of *Being* a good teacher, grounded in the TESOL industry's distinct socio-economic and political nature, its challenging landscape marked by changes in English's linguistic realities and purposes, and the shifting trends in teacher professional transformation. These cultural-historical contexts of the TESOL profession were found to influence ESOL teacher education, knowledge base, teachers' roles, practice, and professional development, and to create a precarious working environment for ESOL teachers.

Overall, the chapter underscored the mediation of ESOL teachers' professional identity, resulting in a socioculturally situated and historically informed activity of their teaching practice.

It also illustrated the immediate tensions and dilemmas in the ESOL teachers' everyday practice, revealing the interplay between the structural (social environment) and agentive (individual) aspects of professional identity transformation. In the next chapter, these insights set the stage for a more in-depth interpretation, discussion, and theorisation of the study's results.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter brings together the results and discusses teacher professional identity using Vygotsky's theoretical concepts of development and identification of language as a cultural and psychological tool of mediation. First, based on the study's results, it proposes a model of interrelated units for theorising professional identity transformation, focusing on the teachers as subjects of the TESOL activity system through Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*. This section of the discussion aims to address the study's main research question. The following two sub-sections focus on *the social drama of contemporary change in TESOL* inherent in the dialectical relationship between the ESOL teachers and their environment (*perezhivanie* as a process of experiencing), and *the 'anchor' of ideal* inherent in the appropriation of cultural artefacts that orient ESOL teachers' practice and professional development (*perezhivanie* as a content). By examining the dialectical relationship between this study's ESOL teachers and their social environment, these two parts of the discussion seek to answer the study's sub-questions and extend the theorisation of ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation. In addition, this chapter suggests how the proposed model may be applied in *Dialogic Partnerships of Learning for Development* to support the professional identity transformation of ESOL teachers through reflective inquiry and concept mediation. The chapter concludes with recommendations for teachers, teacher educators, leaders, and researchers.

6.1.1. Revisiting the Research Aims and Questions

This qualitative study sought to contribute to the current understanding of ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation, situated within the changing macro-, meso-, and micro-contexts of their practice. More specifically, it investigated the impact of historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors on the professional identity of experienced ESOL teachers who work with adult students predominantly in pathway programs and at university

level (e.g., English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), or General English courses) in nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, China, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines.

This study sought to answer the following main research question:

- How do historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors impact Asia-Pacific ESOL teachers' professional identity?

The following sub-questions were set out as guidelines:

- What do ESOL teachers think about their pedagogical roles within the different contextual levels of their practice, and why do they think that?
- How do ESOL teachers' past professional experiences impact their current commitment to practice?
- What pedagogical practices do ESOL teachers use to manifest and promote their professional identity?

This qualitative study employed an interpretive logic of inquiry that guided the iterative and recursive processes and methods of generating and analysing the qualitative data. The study's participants are mid- to late-career English education professionals with diverse cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds. Most of them teach multiple courses at various levels, and many hold multiple roles within teaching units in pathway programs, as well as at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Forty-four participants completed the qualitative survey, and 16 of them were interviewed.

The data from the qualitative survey, the interviews, and the artefacts (relevant articles from TESOL magazines and newsletters) were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and through the 'identity-in-activity' meta-theoretical lens (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007). The dialectical relationship between the social environment and the ESOL teachers was

investigated by interpreting the meanings teachers attributed to their beliefs about, roles in, and experiences of professional practice and by analysing the global discourse about TESOL nature and practice represented in the artefacts.

6.1.2. Summary of key results

This study's results revealed that the ESOL teachers' professional identity is being challenged by the changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their environments as mediating sources of professional practice, learning, and development. A summary of the key results is presented below (Table 11). The table aims to illustrate how the ESOL teachers' professional identity is mediated by the intertwined and non-linear macro-meso-micro interactions across the genetic domains and to draw the reader's attention to the key results, which are discussed in the remainder of this Chapter, under the subheadings of *Theorising Professional Identity Transformation Through Perezhivanie*, *The Social Drama of Contemporary Change in TESOL*, *The 'Anchor' of Ideal*, *Consolidating Theorised Considerations of the Study*, and *Social Acts of Language*.

Table 11*Summary of Key Results*

Key results	Microgenetic domain: Challenged <i>Belonging</i>	Ontogenetic domain: Continuous <i>Becoming</i> in activity	Cultural-historical domain: <i>Being a good teacher</i>
<p>ESOL teachers' professional identity is being challenged by the changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their micro-, meso-, and macro-environments as mediating sources of professional practice, learning, and development.</p>	<p>The increasingly business-like nature of TESOL and the lack of collegial social infrastructure in the workplace challenge ESOL teachers' sense of belonging and constrain their professional practice and development.</p> <p>The ESOL teachers' enacted practices (activity) within the realities of their teaching contexts differ from their core beliefs (concepts) about what 'good' teaching is.</p> <p>ESOL teachers' professional learning and development, mainly enacted through dispersed individual activity outside their institutions, as a real form of PD, stands in contrast to their concept of an ideal form of PD, as professionals actively engaged in continuous self-improvement in formal and informal settings.</p>	<p>The ESOL teachers make sense of their multiple roles on a continuum between the professional – embodying pedagogical and content knowledge – and the personal – drawing heavily on moral and national cultural dimensions.</p> <p>The ESOL teachers perceive themselves as committed to being good teachers – acting to the best of their knowledge and abilities to serve their students' needs.</p> <p>The ESOL teachers' past professional experiences, which ignited an internal struggle, impacted their knowledge, beliefs, and commitment to their teaching practice, which in turn conditioned their current activity.</p> <p>Throughout their careers, the ESOL teachers' motives for professional practice shifted from practical to more ethical reasoning about their professional goals and commitments.</p> <p>Over the years, the ESOL teachers' professional experience increased their confidence and awareness of students' needs, resulting in a shift in their pedagogical beliefs and teaching approach from teacher-centred to student-centred.</p>	<p>The TESOL industry is shaped by global forces that serve the market and local needs for global engagement, creating a precarious working environment for ESOL teachers.</p> <p>The challenging landscape of TESOL is marked by changes in English's linguistic realities and purposes, which influence TESOL policies, teacher education, roles, and provisions.</p> <p>Being a good teacher within changing TESOL contexts means being actively engaged in personalised lifelong learning, informal collaboration with others, and ongoing reflective practice.</p>

6.2. Discussion

This section of the chapter theorises the study's results that revealed the intertwined and non-linear interactions across the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural-historic domains of ESOL teachers' practice as mediating sources of their professional identity transformation. Accordingly, the interpretation of the results (shown in Table 11 above) led to the following claims as key insights arising from the study:

- The ESOL teachers' professional identity is a dialectical unity of *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a workplace culture); it is deeply embedded and cumulatively reconstructed through the professionals' life-histories and the historical context of the TESOL profession and its culture.
- The transformation of teachers' professional identity is a dialectical process, where the social becomes the individual through a dynamic and unique sociocultural-historical process of continuous becoming in a language-mediating activity of use and creation of concepts in or following dramatic social interactions.
- Teachers' professional identity transformation follows teachers' experiences of professional practice and learning, in which the *ideal form* of the profession is a key component that also goes through a transformative process in interaction with the real *form* of the profession (e.g., the shift in teachers' roles, pedagogical beliefs, and motives throughout their careers).
- The context of teachers' professional world is expanding; it determines teachers' practice and impacts their professional identity through teachers' experiences, sense-making, and use of tools (e.g., implementation of national and institutional policy mandates, influenced by global flow of capital and the place and role of English

language education, but also, changes in the workplace culture in terms of *who* the main stakeholders are, *what* are their goals and roles, and *how* they interact with each other).

- The problem with these expanding or changing TESOL contexts arises when the various stakeholders' (teachers, students, leaders, etc.) *whys* (motives) behind their *whats* (goals and roles) and *hows* (actions) contradict and lead to the creation of dramatic social collisions (e.g., teacher collaboration and students-teacher tensions).
- The contradictions that arise in the teachers' practice drive the development of new forms of practice through the process of interaction between ideal and real forms of being a teacher; however, if left unresolved, these contradictions may have a detrimental impact on teachers' activity of continuous becoming, resulting in a challenged sense of belonging (e.g., the nature of the TESOL industry embedded in political-economic reasoning contradicts teachers' beliefs about, roles in, and motives for practice).
- Only through teachers' active (conscious), emotion-laden, and intellectual social engagement in using and creating concepts as mediating tools can teachers reorganise the dramatic social situation and overcome challenges (e.g., faced with the common challenge of student engagement, some teachers emphasised the importance of teacher awareness about the link between students' motivation and their ability to relate to the teaching content and the benefits of using authentic materials in the classroom).

This study's claims may generate further research and discussion around the following three points: (a) professional identity as a dialectical unity of *Being*, *Becoming*, and *Belonging*, and *perezhivanie* as its unit of analysis, where only those aspects of the social environment that are refracted by the teacher's *perezhivanie* achieve developmental significance for teacher's unique professional identity; (b) the impact of the social environment as a source of professional identity transformation; and (c) the central role of language as a mediating tool in the dialectical relationship between the ESOL teachers' social environment and their individual development.

6.2.1. Towards Responding to the Research Questions

This study offers a novel theorised approach to professional identity, focusing on the teachers as subjects of the TESOL activity system through *perezhivanie*. As a generalised model, *Being* a professional involves transforming one's professional identity through a continuous process of *Becoming* and nurturing a sense of *Belonging* within a professional community, situated within constantly shifting sociocultural and political-economic contexts (regardless of a geographical location). This process, however, is not to be understood in terms of only applying theoretical knowledge (acquired during teacher education) to teaching practice, but rather as a nonlinear, dialectical movement – an ongoing qualitative transformation of the whole person in relation to the ever-changing social environment.

The literature review indicated that to understand ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation, we need to examine the relationship between the evolving sociocultural and political contexts that shape teachers' professional practice and teachers' agency in navigating those contexts. However, despite the growing interest in teacher professional identity within English language teaching and teacher education research, theorising this relationship with a focus on understanding the transformation of professional identity as a *mediating activity* remains a relatively underdeveloped research area. Moreover, while prior studies highlight key dimensions in relation to teacher identity, such as teacher agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016), cognition (Borg, 2003), and emotions (Amory & Johnson, 2023; Golombek & Doran, 2014), these are viewed as elements or aspects that contribute to, but do not fully constitute, the holistic nature of professional identity. Based on Vygotsky's distinction between elements and units, it becomes evident that these constructs used in isolation lack the integrative capacity to investigate how teachers experience, interpret, and react to their sociocultural and political realities in ways that transform their professional identity over time.

Drawing on Vygotsky's theory of mind, the discussion of considerations and key insights arising from this study's results can be conceptualised as a model for theorising professional

identity transformation, as presented in Figure 15 below. The model of interrelated units – *professional identity, activity, concept, and perezhivanie* within and in relation to a *social situation* – helps answer the main research question by visualising the mediation of ESOL teachers' practice, learning, and development through the lens of changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their social environment. By placing the focus on the ESOL teachers as subjects within the activity system and their mediating activity in navigating the complexities of TESOL profession as situated within their workplaces, the model enables a situated, dynamic conceptualisation and interpretation of how their professional identity transforms in response to the teachers' meaning-making of the contradictions within their evolving sociocultural and politico-economic contexts of professional practice, drawing on their social environment as a source of transformation through language-mediating activity of use and creation of concepts.

In response to the call for greater attention on the subject (ESOL teachers) within the activity system of TESOL, and the impact of the sociocultural and political contexts on who ESOL teachers are as professionals (Cross, 2006, 2010, 2020; Dang & Cross, 2022), I employ Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie* to theorise the transformation of their professional identity as a unity of *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a workplace culture). Through an interpretation of the non-linear and intertwined interactions across the genetic domains that mediate ESOL teachers' roles, beliefs, motives, and commitment to practice, I answer the study's sub-questions by highlighting *the social drama of contemporary change in TESOL* inherent in the dialectical relationship between the ESOL teachers and their social environment (*perezhivanie* as a process of experiencing). The discussion about *the 'anchor' of ideal* inherent in the appropriation of cultural artefacts or concepts that orient the ESOL teachers' practice and professional development (*perezhivanie* as a content) extends the theorisation of ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation.

In addition to answering the research questions, it is suggested that the proposed model for theorising professional identity transformation may be applied in ESOL teachers' professional development activities, here termed *Dialogic Partnerships of Learning for Development*. Through social acts of language, teachers can share their *perezhvaniya* (plural form of *perezhivanie*) related to the challenges they encounter in their practice within a non-hierarchical and somewhat informal structure (peer-mentoring), providing them with a space to explore their workplace experiences and derive more meaning from them. These dialogic, reflective inquiries can lead to a deeper understanding not only of their contextual circumstances and the complex interaction between these and their social environment but also of themselves as professionals.

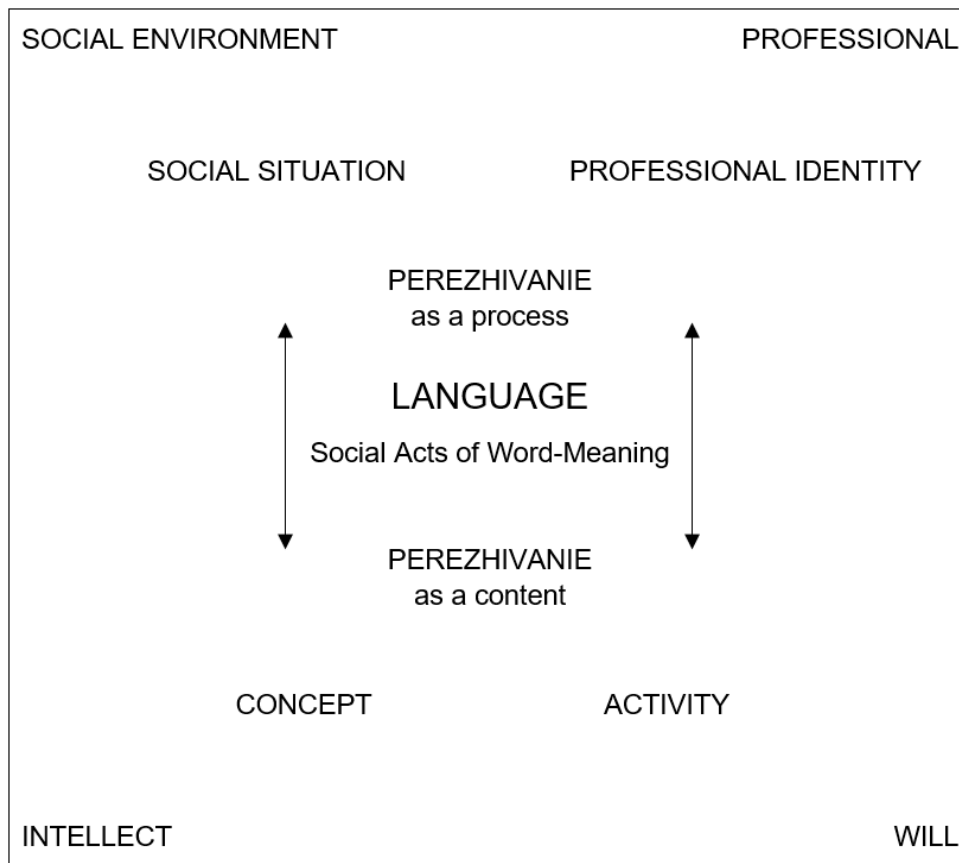
Given the above broad outline, the following section will discuss the aspects of the model of interrelated units in detail.

6.2.2. Theorising Professional Identity Transformation Through *Perezhivanie*

This study's results revealed the dialectics between *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a workplace culture) as a unity of ESOL teachers' professional identity. Drawing on Vygotsky's legacy and his identification of language as a cultural and psychological tool of mediation, this research proposes a novel model for theorising professional identity transformation by using interrelated units of analysis (*professional identity, activity, concept, and perezhivanie* within and in relation to a *social situation*), as presented in Figure 15 below. The transformation of professional identity is theorised through *perezhivanie* as another key theoretical concept.

Figure 15

Model for Theorising Professional Identity Transformation



The model's transformative perspective is rooted in Vygotsky's theorisation of development as a mediated process, driven by interaction between ideal (e.g., the socioculturally and historically developed forms of knowledge about what good teaching is or should be, present in their social environment) and real forms (e.g., teachers' current knowledge and enacted practice within their social environment) – “[s]omething which is only supposed to take shape at the very end of development [ideal form], somehow influences the very first steps in this development [real form]” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 348, emphasis in original). Here, the dialectical relationship between the teachers as professionals and their sociocultural environment is highlighted in

- teachers' *perezhivanie* as a process: the tensions and contradictions arising from the dramatic events in teachers' social situations of professional practice, and
- teachers' *perezhivanie* as a content: teachers' mediating activity of use and creation of cultural tools or concepts to resolve those tensions and contradictions.

The Central Role of Language. Central to this model of interrelated units is *language* because it is through language that social interaction, concept formation, motive articulation, and *perezhivanie* occur. Language is understood as a cultural and psychological tool or sign (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, 1978) essential for communication (social interaction) and intellectual development (concept formation); it mediates all relations between the units of *professional identity, activity, and concept*, emerging from and acting upon the *social situation*.

Word-meaning, as a basic unit of intellect (verbal thinking), is understood as a sign-mediated action (Vygotsky, 1934/1987) – to speak, to say and mean something, is to act with a word. In this sense, word-meaning is “the action in which an intention is carried out by means of a meaningful word” (Blunden, 2021, p. 46). Aggregates of such actions form our activity, which includes our intention in doing something – the shared meaning (concept) that binds our actions together.

By using sign-mediated actions, Vygotsky (1934/1987) studied the emergence of concepts as molar units of intellect. However, concepts as mental entities of the individual are seen here as formations of word-mediated activity that constitute the culture of the given community.

[T]hese concepts, which make up the minds of people participating in a community, did not generally *originate* in the minds of its present-day citizens. People are born into a community in which these concepts/activities already exist, and as they grow up and participate in the general life of the community, the individuals acquire the concepts as they learn to do things according to, or in mindful violation of, the norms of the community embodied in its activities. (Blunden, 2023, p. 37, emphasis in original)

The professional identity is deeply embedded and cumulatively reconstructed in professionals' life-histories and the historical context of the profession and its culture. A teacher's professional identity is shaped not only by their expertise and prior experiences, but also by the historical development of the teaching profession in terms of what being a good teacher entails. For example, this study's cultural-historical data of *Being* a good teacher, represented in the sub-theme 'The changing world of TESOL', captured the transformation of the TESOL industry due to the decentralisation of TESOL markets, changes in national TESOL policies, pedagogical and digital shifts, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes, however, are more than practical adaptations; they are cultural-historical transformative processes that mediate ESOL teachers' agency in reconstructing their practices and identity.

As new theories and teaching methods emerge, teachers' understanding of what it means to be a teacher changes, as shown in this study's ontogenetic domain, where we can trace the significant changes in teachers' beliefs, roles, motives, and practice throughout their careers, including their shift towards a more student-centred teaching approach. Similar shifts can be noticed in the evolution of ESOL teacher education research and teaching practice, influenced by shifts in the broader intellectual traditions accumulated around the fundamental questions of knowledge – what knowledge is and how we acquire it. Hence, these historical contextual factors, present in the profession's culture, mediate teachers' ways of being, thinking, and acting as professionals in the social situations of their workplaces. In this sense, an ESOL teacher is simultaneously part of the TESOL collective and its holistic equivalent.

Therefore, becoming a teacher involves reflecting on and controlling one's actions to align with one's own and the teaching profession's standards, that is, committing to the profession by consciously acquiring its culture. According to Vygotsky (1934/1987, p. 284), consciousness emerges through cultural tools:

If language is as ancient as consciousness itself, if language is consciousness that exists in practice for other people and therefore for myself, then it is not only the development of thought but the development of consciousness as a whole that is connected with the development of the word. ... Consciousness is reflected in the word like the sun is reflected in a droplet of water. The word is a microcosm of consciousness, related to consciousness like a living cell is related to an organism, like an atom is related to the cosmos. The meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness.

Through their active use or creation of tools, i.e., *concepts*, in dialogic collaboration with others, teachers reconceptualise their entire *activity* to solve the problem, and, thus, completely restructure their consciousness (Blunden, 2021). According to Vygotsky (1931/1997), *will* is mastery of oneself, of one's own behaviour, where, through acquiring a *concept* by participating "in the relevant practice, the person makes a commitment. To acquire a concept is to determine the will", because concepts carry motives (Blunden, 2021, p. 106). Hence, by using cultural tools, teachers mediate their course of action based on their interpretation of the social situation.

In a nutshell, the transformation of teachers' professional identity is *a dialectical process, where the social becomes the individual through a dynamic and unique sociocultural-historical process of continuous becoming in a language-mediating activity of use and creation of concepts in or following dramatic social interactions*. In other words, the transformation of professional identity is a socioculturally mediated process that involves internalising knowledge, skills, and values in interaction with the professional social environment over time. A person does not just 'become' a doctor or an engineer by memorising facts from a textbook; they use language to acquire the *ideals* of the profession and to engage and make meaning in collaborative practices with other members of their professional community.

These collaborative practices, however, are not always smooth because they are socioculturally, politically, and historically determined. As the international context of ESOL teachers' profession expands (Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020), it shapes teachers' practice

and impacts their professional identity through teachers' experiences of social interaction, sense-making, and tool use. Teachers' awareness of the changes in the social environment affecting their activities may reveal contradictions in their social situations of practice, challenging their professional identity. This emphasises the central role of language as a mediating tool in the dialectical relationship between the ESOL teachers' social environment and their individual development, evident in teachers' *perezhivanie*, where "*we are always dealing with an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics, which are represented in the perezhivanie*" (Vygotsky, 1934, p. 343, emphasis in original).

The present study's results revealed that the teachers made sense about their motives for choosing TESOL as a profession, their teaching experiences and doubts during the early-career years, and how they have later changed or adapted their roles, beliefs, motives, teaching practice, and professional development in response to their social environment. This aligns with previous research underscoring the social co-construction of pre-service and novice ESOL teachers' identity (e.g., Marcías Villegas et al., 2020; Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Nguyen & Dao, 2019). Over time, the social lived-through experiences shape ESOL teachers' understanding of themselves as professionals and the TESOL profession (Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

Essentially, teachers discursively negotiate their professional identity with other community members. However, as evident from the reviewed studies and this study's results, being part of a community does not solely define a person's professional identity; teachers construct and transform their professional identity through their agentic social experiences of understanding and negotiating knowledge within their communities. While such social interactions may seem smooth, they can be experienced as social drama, leading to significant qualitative changes in teachers, often following contradictions that challenge their goals and motives as professionals.

The Method of Analysis by Units. As the transformation of ESOL teachers' professional identity is theorised through a model of interrelated units that transform dialectically, the method of analysis by units allows for systematic tracing of this dialectical movement, that is, how “the more developed unit emerges out of the action of the fundamental units which can be grasped viscerally” (Blunden, 2021, p. 50). In this sense, the transformation of ESOL teachers as professionals across their careers can be interpreted through the *action* of the interrelated macro units (*professional identity, activity, and concept*) evident in the micro unit of analysis – their *perezhvaniya* (plural form of *perezhivanie*). By overcoming their *perezhvaniya* in and through social interaction with others, the teachers reconstruct their commitments to practice and transform their professional identity. Additionally, as “the ‘unit of analysis’ expresses the results of analysis in terms of a relation between the whole and the part [where] [t]he whole is *nothing but* millions and millions of the same unit of analysis” (Blunden, 2021, p. 51, emphasis in original), we look at their professional identity transformation as an aggregate of their *perezhvaniya*.

The model does not suggest a static, linear, or hierarchical sequence. Instead, it illustrates a non-linear process where the transformation of professional identity happens through dynamic interaction between units and in relation to the whole. Each unit within the model interacts with others; for example, a new concept emerging can influence teachers' activities, reinterpret their social environment, and lead to changes in their professional identity. Contradictions within or between units create social tension that may prompt new meaning-making processes through *perezhivanie*, allowing for the emergence of new concepts. In this context, through their *perezhvaniya*, we can see how ESOL teachers' professional identity, activities, and concepts interact within their social contexts of professional practice over time.

Perezhivanie as the Unit of Analysis of Professional Identity Transformation.

Based on this study's results, professional identity is seen as a dialectical unity of *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a

workplace culture). In the model, teachers' professional identity is positioned in a dialectical relationship with their social situation. However, the social situation, and by that the social environment, is viewed as an external background and a source of transformation when it is subjectively and meaningfully experienced and acted upon – “only when the individual actively participates in this environment, by acting, interacting, interpreting, understanding, recreating, and redesigning it” (Veresov, 2020b, p. 53). In this sense, teachers' professional identity transformation is an aggregate of subjective and meaningful experiences of the social environment – *perezhivaniya* – seen as processes of experiencing with content.

As a phenomenon, *perezhivanie* can be explained as “a person's active *relation to the world*” (Blunden, 2023, p. 55, emphasis in original) – an active, emotionally and intellectually meaningful experience following a dramatic event in the social situation. A person's identity is an aggregate of all their *perezhivaniya* – they stand out from the background of their experiences, “have a beginning, a middle and an end throughout the course of the experience, have a unity and a certain emotional colour” (Blunden, 2021, p. 52). Hence, each *perezhivanie* has an objective as well as a subjective side. Going through a *perezhivanie* is a process of experiencing and an act of being conscious of something (Veresov, 2020b). The social becomes the individual through a person's unique lived-through experience, or *process of perezhivanie*, which includes *social acts of word-meaning* (language use), i.e., *the content of perezhivanie*. If there is no content that is meaningful for the individual, there is no *perezhivanie*, and the social situation is merely a backdrop or a surrounding.

Based on this study's results, Figure 16 below visualises the phenomenon of *perezhivanie* as a unit of analysis of professional identity and a cognitively demanding and emotionally driven (coloured) process of living through change into five stages of *perezhivanie*. This visualisation attempts to operationalise *perezhivanie* as a transformative process, emphasising the dialectical movement from the onset of the sociocultural dramatic event in the workplace to the transformation of teachers' professional identity. The emotional tension,

heightened at the onset of the social collision in the environment, is visually represented in dramatic red, which gradually changes through teachers' active engagement in collaborative sense-making. Teachers' sense-making of the social situation ideally provokes teacher learning. Here, the new knowledge emerges through the unification of scientific and everyday concepts, resolving the tension through transformation, symbolically visualised in blue.

Figure 16

Visualisation of Perekhivanie as a Process



First, the transformation begins with a dramatic event – a socioculturally and historically situated disruption in the teacher's practice. This event becomes developmentally significant only when it is consciously experienced as a contradiction that challenges the teacher's identity. The third stage involves sense-making, during which the teacher tries to interpret the personal meaning of the contradiction, often through reflective inquiry and social interaction. The level of awareness at this stage depends on the teacher's conceptual resources and the sociocultural tools available to them. This leads to the fourth stage, unification, where the teacher consolidates everyday understandings with more abstract or scientific concepts. This process, mediated through language (social acts of word-meaning and artefact-mediated action), enables the reconstruction of teachers' knowledge and the rearticulation of teachers' motives and commitment to practice. Ultimately, the fifth stage results in a qualitative transformation in the teacher's consciousness – manifested through new motives, reoriented activities, and a reconstructed professional identity. This developmental sequence illustrates how teachers' professional identity evolves not through accumulation, but through dialectical synthesis driven

by contradictions and mediated by personally meaningful inquiry through reflective action and concept use in social interaction.

Examples of teachers' *perezhivaniya* are discussed in the following two sub-sections, where I elaborate on the aspects of the proposed model (shown in Figure 15) by looking into the intertwined and non-linear interactions across the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural-historic domains of the ESOL teachers' practice (presented in the results chapter) as mediating sources of their professional identity transformation. To demonstrate the dialectics between the social and the individual, present in the unity of *Being*, *Becoming*, and *Belonging*, first, I focus on *the social drama of contemporary change in TESOL* as a form of contradiction and a moving force for professional identity transformation, and then I focus on *the 'anchor' of ideal* to discuss the teachers' identity dilemmas arising from the dual commodity character of TESOL as a profession. Following these sub-sections, I consolidate the conceptual and analytical strands to form a coherent explanation of how teachers' professional identity transforms. In the final sub-section, I suggest how the operationalisation of *perezhivanie* (as shown in Figure 16), linked to the proposed model for theorising professional identity transformation (as shown in Figure 15), can be applied to promote collaborative dialogue among ESOL teachers as a catalyst for reflective practice and ongoing professional growth through *social acts of language*, here termed *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development*.

6.2.3. The Social Drama of Contemporary Change in TESOL

The study's results show that the tensions arising from teachers' workplace sociocultural interactions – within the broader contexts of globalisation of English language education and market-driven rationality in TESOL – challenge their professional identity by affecting their sense of *Belonging* to the workplace. As sites of struggle impacting the ESOL teachers' practice, professional development, and well-being, these sociocultural tensions were also found to influence the teachers' activity of continuous *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner) through professional growth, as well as their beliefs and confidence in

Being good teachers. If left unaddressed, such tensions may lead to deviations from teachers' core beliefs about their practice (Nguyen, 2018; Wang & Zhang, 2021; Wang, 2021) and could result in teacher burnout (Carroll et al., 2022) or attrition (Trent, 2017).

The ESOL teachers' identity and practice do not exist in isolation but are deeply embedded in and mediated by the broader historically determined sociocultural and political-economic contextual changes within their TESOL workplace environments. These changes include not only the implementation of national and institutional policy mandates, influenced by the global flow of capital and the place and role of English language education, but also changes in the workplace culture in terms of *who* the main stakeholders are, *what* their goals and roles are, and *how* they interact with each other. The results show that the problem with these expanding and changing contexts in the ESOL teachers' social environment arises when the various stakeholders' (teachers, students, leaders etc.) *whys* (motives) behind their *whats* (goals and roles) and *hows* (actions) contradict and lead to the creation of difficult social situations or dramatic events in the workplace, challenging teachers' professional identity.

By examining the dialectical relationship between this study's ESOL teachers and their social environment, the following discussion addresses the study's sub-questions by demonstrating how the social environment influences teachers' practice and challenges their professional identity. To achieve this goal, the discussion is divided into three parts. The first two parts focus on the teachers' multiple *perezhivaniya* that constitute teachers' dilemmas about their pedagogical roles, beliefs, motives, and commitment to practice; here, I interpret the ESOL teachers' workplace social drama as a form of contradiction and a moving force for identity transformation in relation to the teachers' histories as professionals and the contemporary cultural-historical changes in the TESOL profession. The third part of this discussion focuses on the enactments of teachers' professional identity through their teaching and professional development activities.

Teachers' Dilemmas About Their Pedagogical Roles. The study's results revealed that the ESOL teachers' understandings of their roles are shaped by the contradictions between their understandings of themselves as committed educators and the micro- and macro-level sociocultural situations at their workplaces. Their everyday practice was found to be constrained by the marketisation of TESOL, the casualisation of the teachers, and the client-service approach, which positions them as providers of a commodified product. In this context, the concept of professionalism in TESOL is seen as a site of struggle between various stakeholders pulling in different directions – some aiming to de-professionalise teachers and teaching (Alexander et al., 2019), while others seek to redefine teacher professionalism in a more democratically inclusive manner (Hargreaves, 2000a; Sachs, 2003).

The teachers' understanding of their roles is deeply rooted in their ontogenetic histories, where their practices and responsibilities as educators are conceived not only as transmitting language skills but also as ethical, moral, and relational agency. The teachers described their professional role as extending beyond pedagogy to include moral responsibility for supporting students' holistic development and well-being. These understandings highlight their altruistic and humanistic commitments, often shaped by their cultural backgrounds, as Helen illustrated through the metaphor of the teacher as a candle, where "you need to burn this candle to light up the room". These accounts resonate with literature that links teacher professionalism with knowledge, autonomy, and altruism (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Sachs, 2001), yet they also reveal how teachers' motives for practice evolved – from practical concerns to more ethical and moral reasoning – highlighting the ontogenetic trajectory of their identity transformation.

However, the teachers' perceived roles and commitments were repeatedly disrupted by contradictions embedded in the microgenetic and cultural-historic contexts of their everyday practice. Teachers found themselves caught in a workplace social drama as a site of their *perezhivanie*, where students are positioned simultaneously as learners and as clients, and teachers as educators and as service providers. These dilemmas reflect the literature on

neoliberal performativity and accountability in education (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2010, 2020a, 2020b), where teachers' professional judgement is undermined by the demand for measurable outcomes and the dominance of economic rationalities, reconfiguring teaching as a technical and economic act, diminishing teacher autonomy, and challenging their professional identity.

For example, the tensions between students and teachers' roles were found to stem from their opposing beliefs about and expectations of foundational courses towards university education. The dramatic social situations occur when the teachers' activity is aimed at providing engaging learning experiences for the students; however, the students refuse to engage and take responsibility for their learning. Here, we see the social-individual dialectic in how both global and local sociocultural-political contexts mediate both teachers' and students' behaviour. This social drama, which provokes teachers' dilemma about their roles, can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, some of the ESOL teachers see the pressure of their students' expectations as paying clients, who are often more concerned with achieving good scores than being actively engaged in learning, as a threat to their occupational identity (Evetts, 2014) and to their enactment of professional knowledge and judgement (Sachs, 2016). On the other hand, others attribute it to students' cultural backgrounds, which condition their behaviour, learning attitudes, and expectations.

Interestingly, the results showed that in the former situation, some teachers were aware of the root causes of the tension; however, this did not lead to their transformation but rather to frustration. Their motive to engage the students was present; however, it was not objectified or externalised in specific pedagogical practices, meaning that their *perezhivanie* was not completed – it did not result in the emergence of a new concept that could bring about a change in their teaching practice, followed by a reconstruction of their commitment to practice and a transformation of their professional identity. In contrast, in the latter situation, the teachers managed to resolve and transform themselves by adapting their teaching to the students' needs. They described how using authentic materials and intercultural pedagogical practices

helped them navigate the dramatic social situation, where they highlighted the importance of their communication skills in negotiating their teaching within the situated sociocultural environment of their multicultural English language classrooms.

Viewed through Vygotsky's genetic method, such social dramas as a form of contradictions are dialectical tensions that mediate teacher identity transformation across domains – microgenetically, in teachers' experiences of workload intensification, job insecurity, and client pressures; ontogenetically, in their ongoing renegotiation of values and commitments over time; and culturally-historically, in the globalised, marketised TESOL industry that frames their work. Thus, teachers' conflicted understandings of their roles reflect historically situated contradictions that serve as moving forces for qualitative change in professional identity, reshaping what it means to be an ESOL teacher in the contemporary world.

Although these results show that teachers' understanding of their roles was influenced by conflicts between their professional values and the neoliberal principles of TESOL, they also indicate that such conflicts go beyond role perception and impact changes in teachers' commitments to practice. This raises questions about how their past professional experiences have mediated these shifts.

Shifts in Teachers' Commitment to Practice. The study's results revealed significant shifts in the teachers' understandings about their teaching practice – moving from concerns about content knowledge and being liked by students towards ethical dilemmas about their pedagogical roles and commitments. In this process of becoming more confident educators, the ESOL teachers changed their pedagogical beliefs, motives, and commitments to practice. These changes include a shift from teacher-centred towards more student-centred approaches to language teaching, becoming more sensitive to students' needs and more reflective, reflexive, proactive practitioners. In this developmental process, they developed skills to connect teaching strategies with desired lesson outcomes, offer on-the-spot solutions as adaptations,

apply intercultural pedagogies, better employ digital tools to engage students, and make English language teaching more practical for real-world applications.

Billet and Smith (2006, p. 146) argue that any action initiated by individuals' agency most often "occurs from a social basis, albeit from earlier experiences – that comprises relational negotiations between social (i.e., situational and cultural) and personal (i.e., subjectivities) factors". The results indicated that the teachers' past professional experiences acted as significant resources for their current commitments. The teachers described carrying forward strong values of altruism, service, and ethical responsibility, grounded in formative experiences of professional recognition and student appreciation. Such perspectives reflect what Hargreaves (2000a) identifies as the moral purpose of teaching, where commitment is tied to care, compassion, and responsibility and Sachs' (2001) conceptualisation of democratic professional identity, which emphasises relational and collective responsibility. In this regard, teachers' commitments can also be understood in line with Bowman's (2013) view of professionalism as less about technical action and more about who professionals are as human beings. Bowman explains that professionals operate in a language of ideals, such as integrity, justice, humility, and service to others, and sustain an inner, deeply personal commitment to these ideals. The teachers' narratives illustrate how such ideals, embedded in their past experiences, became enduring motives that continued to guide their practice.

Nevertheless, the teachers' historically sedimented commitments were continually disrupted by the contradictions embedded in the contemporary TESOL profession. The teachers described being caught between their commitments to education as a moral practice and the institutional demands of a market-driven system. In this context, their past experiences related to job security, workload, sense of appreciation, collaboration, and growth opportunities were found to be crucial for their current commitment to practice and well-being. Dara, for example, worried that institutional pressures might eventually force her to abandon her belief in teaching as a service to society. At the same time, Kelly and Susan raised concerns about job security

related to her institution's budget-oriented rationality and how it contradicts its very purpose as an educational institution. Moreover, the teachers expressed their frustration about their heavy workloads, unsupportive working environments, and lack of stakeholders' cooperation, impacting their commitment and purpose as educators. These social dramas align with Teng's (2018b) account of the multiple constraints on ESOL teacher autonomy that limit teachers' agency and contribute to the erosion of teacher commitment and identity. In addition, they highlight the teachers' perceived responsibility and the role of institutions in supporting teachers' well-being. However, as Cinaglia et al. (2023) noted, this role may vary depending on the institution's capacity to support a culture of care and the "reciprocal dialogue between individuals at the caring-for level and individuals at the caring-about level" (p. 209).

In line with Sachs' (2001) argument that managerialism produces identity struggles, the teachers' narratives reveal how such contradictions unsettle their commitments, compelling them to renegotiate what it means to remain committed under changing conditions. In Vygotskian terms, these moments of conflict can be seen as *perezhivaniya* – subjectively meaningful experiences in which motives and commitments are destabilised but also reconfigured in response to the social environment. Thus, teachers' past professional experiences impacted their current commitments not as fixed legacies but as dynamic, historically mediated sociocultural resources, continually challenged and transformed through contradictions with the cultural-historic conditions of contemporary TESOL, and serving as moving forces in their ongoing professional identity transformation.

While this sub-section demonstrated how teachers' past professional experiences shaped their current commitments in ways that were continually challenged by contemporary contradictions, the results also indicate that such commitments did not remain abstract but were sought to be enacted in practice, both in teachers' pedagogical work and in their efforts to construct spaces for professional development.

Enactments of Teachers' Commitments. The study's results showed that the ESOL teachers sought to enact their commitments through their pedagogical practices focused on relational and student-centred approaches, while also exercising agency in grassroots professional development (PD) activities in response to the limited PD opportunities offered by their institutions that they perceived as meaningful to them and their practice. These enactments, however, were continually mediated by contradictions across the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural-historic domains. One may claim that the manner of enactment of teachers' commitments by acting on their own knowledge and volition resonates with Leung's (2021) description of independent language teacher professionalism, which has the potential to empower teachers to critically engage with the institutionally promoted views about their practice in a productive way, leading to sustainable practice. However, the results revealed that the teachers experienced these situations as emotional struggles, challenging their professional growth and sense of belonging to the workplace; thus, confirming the significance of having and participating in a workplace social infrastructure as a dynamic exercise that involves "teachers shaping their professional careers through systematic interaction with others" (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024, p. 31).

The ESOL teachers, now in their mid-to-late-career stages, acknowledged their awareness of the importance and benefits of a supportive and collaborative workplace culture. In line with the global pedagogical shifts towards communicative and student-centred approaches in TESOL and PD trends for ESOL teachers (as represented in the cultural-historic domain of the results), they described striving to encourage student voice and engagement and to take part in workplace PD activities as integral to their professional identity (as represented in the ontogenetic domain of the results). Nevertheless, they felt frustrated due to the lack of collegial social infrastructure and opportunities for what they consider meaningful PD, the workload intensity, and the increasingly business-like institutional environment (as represented

in the microgenetic domain of the results), leaving them unable to realise their pedagogical ideals fully.

As a result, their enacted pedagogical practices within the realities of the teaching contexts sometimes diverged from their core beliefs about what 'good' teaching entails (as presented in the ontogenetic domain of the results chapter). Moreover, their real form of PD, enacted through dispersed individual activity often outside their institutions (grassroots PD) – engaging in informal collegial chats and reflecting collaboratively on practice (face-to-face and online) – stood in contrast to their concept of an ideal form of PD – professionals actively engaged in continuous collaborative self-improvement in formal and informal settings. Here, the dialectical interplay between their current pedagogical realities and their imagined teaching selves drove their professional growth - an interplay, which has been evidenced in several other socioculturally grounded studies (e.g., Agustin et al., 2022; Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Yang & Markauskaite, 2021). In this process of mediation, the teachers' actions towards transforming themselves in response to the social environment highlighted their agency and augmented subjectivity.

Teachers' social dramas within their microgenetic contexts of teaching practice represent the onset of their *perezhivaniya*, involving reconsiderations of their beliefs, roles, motives, and practices as professionals against the realities of their workplaces. Here, the pressures of context compel teachers to make choices and take stances on their work – change or resist change (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). They illustrate a contradiction between *concepts* (teachers' core beliefs about good teaching and PD) and *activity* (teachers' enacted practices within institutional realities and dispersed individual PD), echoing Beijaard et al.'s (2004) argument that teacher identity is grounded not only in beliefs and values but in the ways such beliefs and values are enacted in practice.

In summary, the results show that the ESOL teachers struggle to *Belong* to the workplace culture. However, this struggle is not seen in isolation, but rather as emerging from

their social experiences of professional practice and continuous learning as a process of *Becoming* a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner that is intertwined with socioculturally and historically informed notions or ideals of *Being* a good teacher. The discussion demonstrated how social dramas as forms of contradictions within the teachers' workplace social environment challenge teachers' professional identity but also drive the development of new forms of professional practice. It is through these little *perezhivaniya*, which contribute to changes in teachers' roles, beliefs, motives, and commitments to practice, that the ESOL teachers' professional identity is continuously reconstructed. Recognising and theorising these contradictions provides insight into how the expanding contexts of ESOL teachers' professional worlds mediate the transformation of their professional identity over time.

Although the discussion in this and the previous sub-section provides answers to the study's research questions, there is a further complicated discussion to be had about the contradictions challenging the ESOL teachers' professional identity, with implications for future research and teacher education. Hence, the following sub-section extends the theorisation of ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation by highlighting *the 'anchor' of ideal* inherent in the appropriation and creation of cultural tools that orient ESOL teachers' practice.

6.2.4. The 'Anchor' of Ideal

As discussed before, the study's results revealed several contradictions that are challenging the ESOL teachers' perceptions of the ideal form of *Being* a good teacher, including their ongoing processes of *Becoming* reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioners, and their sense of *Belonging* to the workplace. The teachers' perception of the ideal form was often related to the idea of a successful teacher as a professional committed to their practice and actively engaged in continuous self-improvement. Moreover, the teachers' core beliefs about what *Being* a good teacher means (as presented in the ontogenetic domain of the results chapter) – extending beyond content and pedagogical knowledge to include an attitude of care for their students as multi/translingual learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds

– reflect broader discussions in the literature that highlight the moral dimensions of teachers' practice (as presented in the cultural-historic domain of the results chapter). Here, teachers' roles and practices are seen as dependent on their character, intellect, and care, because teaching is not just about transferring knowledge but also about helping to develop students as human beings (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024; Crookes, 2003).

The CHAT analysis (Engeström, 1987, 2001, 2015), however, presented in the microgenetic domain of the results chapter, provided insight into the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of the ESOL teachers and highlighted profound contradictions (i.e., the need state) beneath the surface of the social drama experienced by the ESOL teachers. These competing objects in the need state are historically and socioculturally accumulated. They stem from the dual commodity character or double nature of TESOL as a profession, which is characterised by both exchange and use value; thus, suggest two competing alternative views of TESOL education – democratic and managerial, where the latter challenges the ESOL teachers' autonomous professional practice and their desire for collegial and collaborative professional cultures, reflecting the notions of working towards deprofessionalising teaching (Alexander et al., 2019; Hargreaves, 2000a; Sachs, 2001) and reconfiguring the purpose of education (Ball, 2012b; Biesta, 2010, 2013, 2020b, 2020c, 2023; Hooley, 2018).

These contradictions are not individual or incidental but are structural and systemic. They are rooted within the TESOL profession itself – on one side, in the TESOL profession's standards and knowledge base concerning good teaching (the use value of TESOL), and on the other side, in the TESOL enacted practice shaped by the neoliberal priorities of institutions, including measured outcomes, performance metrics, and the commodification of education (the exchange value of TESOL). This contradiction becomes a source of teachers' struggle and potentially a dynamic process of professional identity transformation, an aggregate of multitudes of little *perezhivaniya*, in which teachers negotiate the divide between the ideals of the TESOL profession and the realities of the TESOL industry.

This issue has been reported in the literature as a significant dissonance between the knowledge base of language teacher education and the nature of language teachers' activity in practice (Cross, 2006; Freeman et al., 2019), which means that teacher education must be reconsidered in terms of the workspaces in which teachers will be situated. Furthermore, Cross (2020, p. 46, emphasis in original) rightfully concluded that it is a future-oriented understanding of teacher education, where the question of teacher identity is central and answerable by "attending to not only the teacher-learner before us in the here-and-now, but by understanding *their* future, and who they *will be*." However, this study's results also show that the future-oriented perspective of teachers' professional learning and development does not and should not end with teachers' transitioning from pre-service to in-service. The imperative of attending to *who* teachers *are* and *who* they *continuously become* in interaction with their social environment should be *ongoing* throughout teachers' careers.

Another important consideration is that the ideal forms are concepts, and concepts have motives because they are forms of activity "organised around a word or other meaningful artefact" (Blunden, 2021, p. 49). The TESOL profession, as a social formation, is an aggregate of forms of activity, "which have normative validity within the culture. Activities are not merely forms of *behaviour*, in which the consciousness of the actors is irrelevant, but forms of *activity*, that is, aggregates of actions which are done *for* a reason (Blunden, 2023, p. 124, emphasis in original). Therefore, to support ESOL teachers' practice, the knowledge base needs to be critically re-examined in terms of what constitutes useful and actionable professional knowledge to respond more fully to the realities of teachers' lived experiences in institutional and political-economic contexts and to support ESOL teachers' agency and subjectivity in the face of deprofessionalising forces.

The previous sub-section about the social drama of contemporary change in TESOL discussed the study's results that revealed the contradictions between the teachers' roles and core beliefs about their practice and PD (the ideal form of the profession that they have

committed themselves to) and their enacted practice in their TESOL workplace contexts (the real form). In this contexts, the ESOL teachers' perceptions of their institutions' neoliberal priorities align with Biesta's (2020a) view of the distortions to democratic professionalism, such as turning students into customers, transforming a democratic sense of accountability into a technical-managerial approach, and reinterpreting professional knowledge as 'evidence', thus reinforcing the erosive influence of the modern measurement culture on the democratic potential of education professionals.

Extending on this discussion, the teachers' perplexity about the peculiar state of indeterminacy (need state) around their professional practice as embedded in the socioeconomic and political formation of the purpose of education may be interpreted through Biesta's (2010, 2020a, 2020b) concept of subjectification – the process through which individuals become autonomous, responsible subjects capable of acting or not acting at their own free will in and with the world around them. In this context, the ESOL teachers' resistance to their respective institutions' managerial norms and their efforts to teach and develop professionally based on their core beliefs and values can be seen as expressions of subjectification. These acts represent their inner struggle to maintain professional agency, and by doing so, to continually transform their professional identity amid institutional pressures in the quest for efficiency and profits, reducing teaching to measurable performance and teachers to deliverers of predefined outputs.

The contradictions, therefore, go beyond the complexities of workplace conditions and reflect a deeper ontological conflict – between *being an acted-upon subject* in a managerial activity system of education and *be(com)ing a self-acting subject* of one's own life. The ESOL teachers in this study are experiencing these contradictions as *perezhivaniya*. As discussed, in contrast to their core beliefs and values about what the TESOL profession entails or should entail (as represented in the ontogenetic and cultural-historic domains), they interpret their enacted practice as being highly influenced by the business-like model of operation, guided by

economic incentives and product placement, which means that their activity in practice is conflicted by the TESOL profession's dual nature. Hence, the teachers' creation of commitments to various aspects of that profession is challenged, leading to a lack of ideal-real form interaction and a constrained process of becoming.

This discussion also extends on the renewed interest in the context-practice relationship (Cross, 2010; Dang & Cross, 2022; Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020), where the complexity of the expansive contexts creates a teaching practice riddled with contradictions, prompting new forms of thinking and orienting teachers' professional learning and development (Johnson & Golombek, 2011a). Moreover, it contributes to the current understanding of this complex relationship by highlighting teachers' ZPD as a critical area of concern, where teachers' professional identity transformation, following tensions between their real and ideal forms, is also situated within a context of ideological conflict between competing ideal forms. From this perspective, the present study's results suggest that ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation involves not only the interaction between teachers' real and ideal forms, but also the dialectical negotiation between ideal forms – teachers' ideal form, grounded in use value, and the institutional ideal form, grounded in exchange value of TESOL. This dialectical negotiation is uneven and emotionally charged, involving a complex process of mediation among competing demands. In these contexts, teachers try to make sense of their professional lives and determine their future actions or commitments to their practice and well-being.

The following sub-section consolidates the conceptual and analytical strands to form a coherent explanation of how the teachers' professional identity transforms.

6.2.5. Consolidating Theorised Considerations of the Study

This study's results revealed the dialectics between *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a workplace culture) as a unity of ESOL teachers' professional identity. Based on the key insights arising from the results and drawing on Vygotsky's legacy, with emphasis on the concept of *perezhivanie* and

identification of language as a cultural and psychological tool of mediation, this study proposed a generalised model for theorising the transformation of professional identity (as shown in Figure 15). This sub-section now consolidates the elaborated aspects of the model in the previous sub-sections and leads to the study's suggestion on how the proposed model may be applied in what is here termed *Dialogic Partnerships of Learning for Development* to support the professional development and identity transformation of ESOL teachers through social acts of language in reflective inquiry and concept mediation.

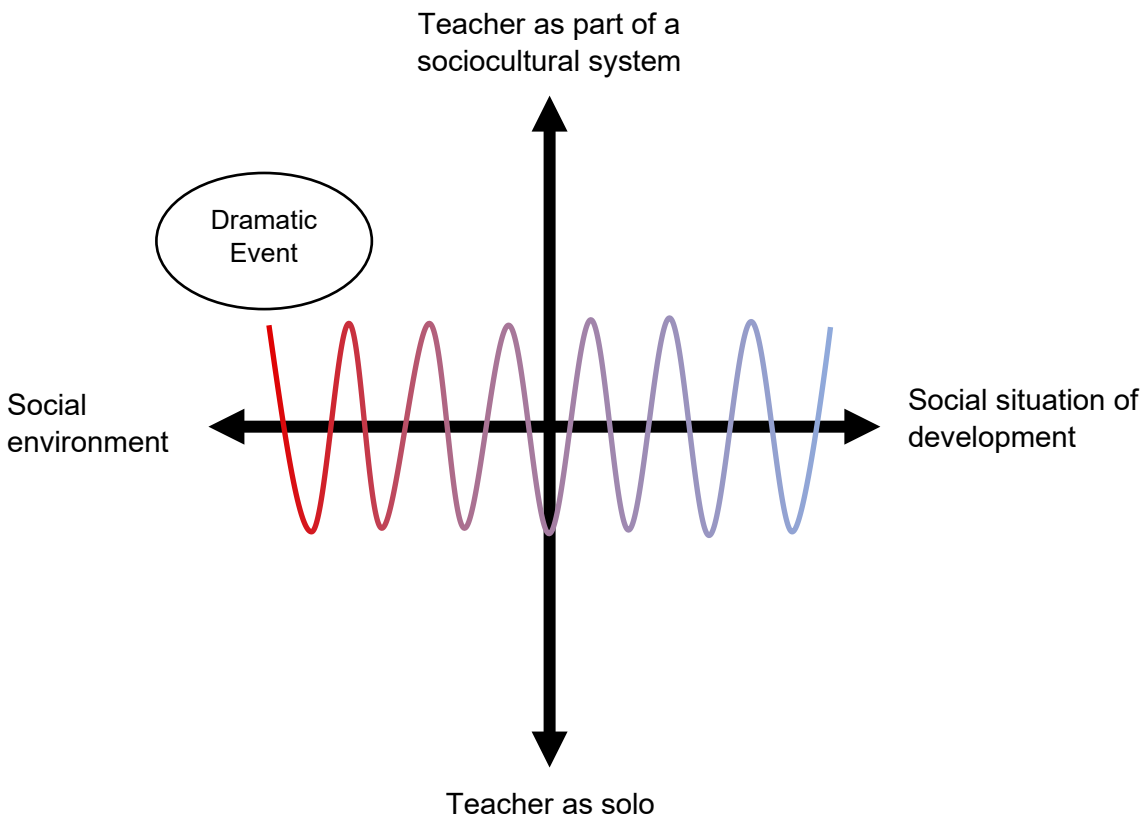
As previously discussed, this study's results revealed that the professional identity of the ESOL teachers is being challenged by the changing sociocultural and political-economic contexts in their social environment as mediating sources of their professional practice, learning, and development. There is consensus among researchers that the ESOL teachers' practice is filled with tensions and contradictions that challenge who they are as professionals, and that if resolved, these tensions and contradictions drive professional growth (e.g., Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2017; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023). However, the process of such professional growth involves identity transformation, a qualitative reorganisation within the teacher, contingent upon the teacher's agency (conscious and voluntary) in response to their social environment and the contradictions arising from the dramatic situations within their practice's sociocultural and political contexts.

By focusing on the ESOL teachers as subjects of the TESOL activity system, this study examined teachers' workplace tensions or social drama as a form of contradiction to interpret the mediated process of professional identity transformation – their *perezhivanie* as a process. The study found that the shifts in teachers' practice and who they are as professionals in their professional ontogenesis reflect the shifts in the cultural-historic domain, representing the profession's culture and knowledge base as a global cultural artefact that also mediates ESOL teachers' everyday practices within their microgenetic domain. Moreover, the teachers did not

experience the changes in their practice passively; instead, their *perezhivaniya* show the complexity of internalising new professional demands.

The results show that the impact of contemporary changes in TESOL does not lead directly to shifts in teachers' practice and identity. Instead, they produce social dramas that prompt a dialectical movement in teachers' mediating activities to resolve their dilemmas through the use and creation of concepts as cultural tools. Following Vygotsky's principle of interaction between ideal and real forms (Vygotsky, 1994), where the *ideal form* of the profession is a key part of teachers' professional identity that also develops through interaction with the *real form*, the previous discussion sheds light on the dynamics of teachers' identity transformation. It demonstrates how, in some instances, when the ESOL teachers found ways to resolve their dilemmas through sign-mediated actions, it led to changes in their roles, beliefs, motives, and commitments to practice. Here, the social environment of tertiary education in general, and TESOL in particular, ceased to be just a social environment when it began to serve as a source of their professional development and identity transformation through the teachers' awareness of the challenging social situations within their professional practice and, more importantly, their mediating activity in using and creating concepts to resolve the tensions.

In this sense, Figure 17 below visualises the ESOL teachers' *perezhivanie* as a process within their ZPD of activity.

Figure 17*Perezhivanie Within the ESOL Teachers' ZPD of Activity*

The ESOL teachers engaged with the tensions in their practice throughout their careers; however, their trajectories of professional becoming were not shaped by the outright resolution of the contradictions but often through a reflective struggle to realign their ideals with the realities of their enacted practice. For some, this led to inner turmoil, emotional labour, and a sense of professional marginalisation (being “pigeon-holed”). Others reported even a loss of professional role and purpose, most evident in Kelly’s alarming conclusion: “I don’t feel like I have a profession”. Similar responses to internalising external events, such as policy changes, were noted among teachers in Liu and Xi’s (2011), Salinas’ (2017), and Xie and Dong’s (2020) studies. In these studies, teachers’ perceptions of unrecognition had a detrimental impact on their practice and professional identity, which resulted in a sense of frustration and even

resignation. Nonetheless, this study's results show that such tensions may also be sites of transformation, facilitating reflection and enhancing teachers' awareness of the professionals they are and want to be(come).

To become a professional, one must enact the profession's culture in social interaction with others. When ESOL pre-service or novice teachers enter the classroom, they rely on mentors and more experienced practitioners to help them navigate the complexities of the profession, which often leads to a qualitative change (e.g., Barahona & Toledo-Sandoval, 2022; Dang, 2017; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Marcías Villegas et al., 2020; Nguyen & Yang, 2018; Teng, 2017). In this dynamic process of enculturation, merely mastering pedagogical knowledge is insufficient. During this period, they transition from being outsiders to internalising professional practices and norms, thereby co-constructing their unique professional identity.

This process of internalising and enacting the profession's culture, however, does not end once a pre-service teacher transitions into in-service. Teachers must continuously change themselves in the process of interaction with the culturally organised workplace social environment, which also changes. Examples of such processes of ideal-real form interaction are evident in the teachers' *perezhivaniya*, leading to the shifts in their professional roles, beliefs, motives, and commitments to practice, as represented in the results chapter and discussed in the previous sub-sections of this chapter.

In response to the workplace social dramas during their careers, the ESOL teachers, by appropriating elements of the TESOL profession's culture, mediated their interactions with the social environment in which they are situated, thereby changing themselves. In other words, as their professional identity strived to align with the ideal of the profession by internalising the profession's culture, their real form of practice evolved and deepened. When the teachers developed a new motive for their practice – an abstraction of a potential professional identity –

the manner of its externalisation resulted in the creation of a new professional commitment, which led to a transformation of their professional identity.

In this process, the ESOL teachers' agency in uniting the conceptual and practical tools for their purposes was identified as a key aspect in transforming themselves. This result aligns with prior research (e.g., Cabaroglu, 2014; Lindahl, 2018; Whitehead & Arslan, 2025; Yin, 2019), evidencing that without intentional bridging or unification of theoretical knowledge and personal experiences, meaningful professional growth is not possible. The teachers' activity in reflecting, making sense, and using conceptual resources to respond to the workplace social drama – their *perezhivanie* as content – was found to be vital in mediating the ideal-real forms interaction. Consistent with Razoumova and Andrew's (2022) study, the results revealed that teachers' system of beliefs or maxims (Richards, 1996) about good teaching, when challenged, become a source of dilemmas that facilitate future professional growth through a process of reflection upon practice. Similarly, studies exploring teachers' experiences of change (e.g., Dang & Cross, 2022; Kayi-Aydar, 2017; Sanczyk, 2020; Tran-Thanh et al., 2023; Xie & Dong, 2020) have also reported that the dissonance between teachers' previously enacted practice and the new approaches adopted leads to professional dilemmas, prompting teachers to find ways to reconcile external expectations with internal commitments by reconfiguring their practice and themselves.

Furthermore, teachers' ongoing acquisition of both everyday and scientific concepts (as elements of the profession's culture) in informal social interactions with other teachers played a significant role in this dialectical process of transformation. Although formal professional development (PD) activities, such as seminars, webinars, and conferences, were identified as helpful, the undisputed benefits of informal peer collaboration (face-to-face or online) among the ESOL teachers were attributed to meaningfulness and personalisation. This aligns with the understanding of teachers' PD through social interaction with others as a continuous process of subjective intellectual growth that positively influences teachers' professional identity

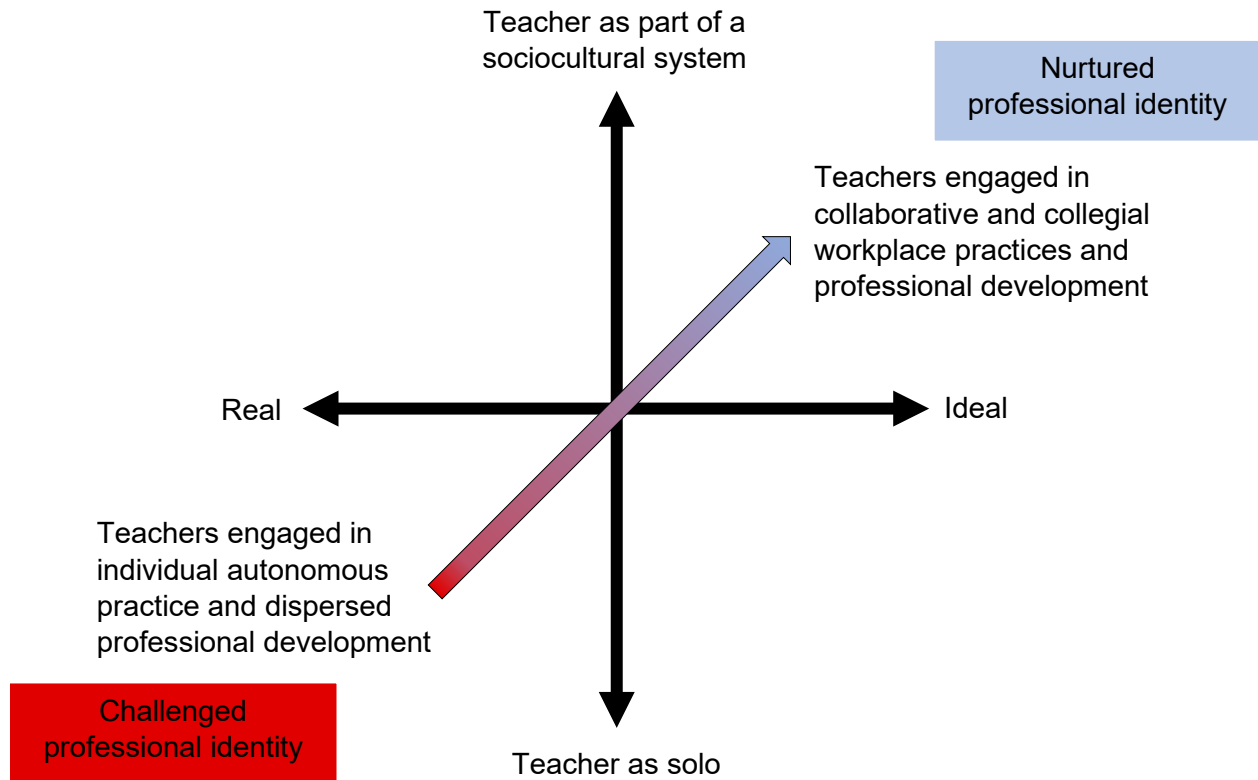
transformation (Chung & Fisher, 2022; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011a, 2016, 2018/2020; Li, 2019; Shabani, 2016). Hence, the results confirm recent claims about teacher collaboration as the most impactful model of professional development for enhancing teachers' practice (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024; Wijarwadi et al., 2025), where teachers' joint inquiry is seen as a dialectical process of becoming (Hooley, 2021; Penlington, 2008; Smirnova, 2024).

Vygotsky's concept of ZPD may be redeployed here to address the ESOL teachers' current needs for PD at their workplaces and beyond. Vygotsky (1978) showed that learning leads to development if suitable support is provided; here, "[t]he actual developmental level characterises mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterises mental development prospectively" (p. 86). Similarly, the entire process of *becoming* throughout the ESOL teachers' careers may be interpreted as a zone of this kind, a zone of qualitative professional transformation.

Figure 18 below illustrates a CHAT model of this study's ESOL teachers' ZPD in terms of their sense-making about their real or enacted form (lower left corner) and their ideal or imagined form of practice and professional development (upper right corner). Here, the transformation of teachers' professional identity is an aggregate of many *perezhivaniya*, in which teachers, through social interaction with others, transform their professional identity by reconstructing their commitments to practice. The interaction or dynamic tension between these forms generates the conditions for teachers' professional development, encompassing the teachers' *Being*, *Becoming*, and *Belonging* as a unity of their professional identity, within which the mediated transformation unfolds. Seen in this way, teachers' professional identity transformation is *a dialectical process, where the social becomes the individual through a dynamic and unique sociocultural-historical process of becoming in a language mediating activity of use and creation of concepts in or following dramatic social interactions.*

Figure 18

CHAT Model of the ZPD of ESOL Teachers' Activity and Professional Identity



Although this CHAT model of the present study's ESOL teachers' ZPD represents the most desirable developmental movement from their current enacted (real) form towards their imagined (ideal) form of practice and professional development, the teachers' ZPD may also move in different directions, varying the outcome of their transformation. For example, if teachers' ZPD occurs in a horizontal direction across the lower part of the diagram, they might *Become* good professionals, but their *Belonging* might be compromised; if it proceeds vertically, their sense of *Belonging* may be enhanced – they might feel very comfortable at the workplace – but not necessarily improve.

Building on the theorisation and elaboration on the aspects of the model along with the study's implications for teachers' well-being and professional development, the following subsection shows how the model of interrelated units of analysis for theorising professional identity transformation, introduced at the beginning of this chapter (Figure 15), may be used to drive the real-ideal form interaction presented in the CHAT model of the ZPD of this study's ESOL teachers' activity and professional identity (Figure 18) through its practical application in *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development* (DPLD). For this purpose, I underline the importance of supportive and democratically inclusive professional spaces (Biesta, 2017), driven by "conscious social movement of committed people – teachers and others – who work together for its realisation" (Hargreaves, 2000a, p. 167). Moreover, Sachs (2003) describes this movement as an activist form of teacher professionalism, where trust, respect, and reciprocity empower stakeholders to unite for improving teachers' working conditions and status. In such environments, teachers can engage in collaborative inquiry through *social acts of language* conceptualised as dialectical processes of *Being*, *Becoming*, and *Belonging*, where the new replaces the old (Hooley, 2021).

6.2.6. Social Acts of Language: Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development

The model of interrelated units proposed in this study (as shown in Figure 15) can serve as a practical framework for supporting the professional development of ESOL teachers through reflective inquiry and concept mediation, here termed *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development* (DPLD). Drawing on Vygotsky's (1994) understanding of personal development as a result of the dialectical interplay between real and ideal forms, the proposed model provides the means for supporting the specific social conditions of real-ideal form interaction and creating the space (ZPD) for mediated transformation to unfold through teachers' reflective inquiry into their *perezhivaniya*. The operationalisation of *perezhivanie* as a transformative process (as shown in Figure 16) may serve as a procedural scaffolding for teachers' professional development. Here, teachers' ZPD focuses on their sense-making of the contradictions and the

unification of everyday and scientific concepts in the learning process, aimed at resolving the contradictions and leading to a qualitative transformation of the whole (Vygotsky, 1934/1987).

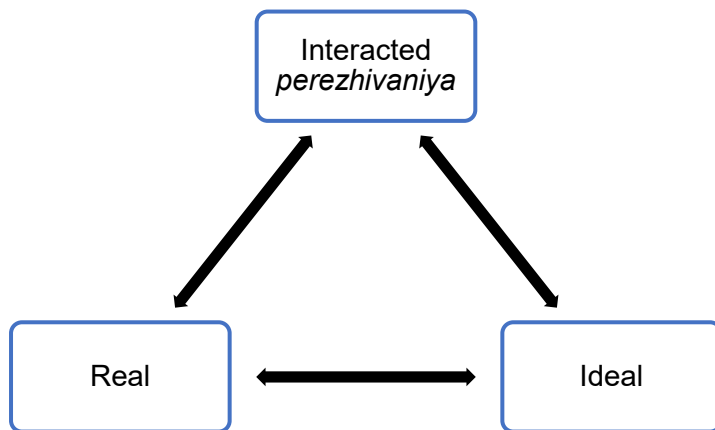
The practical application of the model in *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development (DPLD)* emphasises the role of language as a mediating instrument in teacher learning, enhancing their collegiality and democratic professionalism by engaging in social acts of language. In this process, a person's *perezhivanie* is a tool (theoretical concept) that can be used as a springboard for engaging in language-mediated reflective inquiry. As Johnson and Golombek (2016) argue, teacher learning is a process of true concept formation through the interaction of everyday and scientific concepts in goal-oriented activities that help bridge the theory/practice divide and promote praxis (Freire, 1970). In this process, language is a social act of word-meaning that charts teachers' subjective intellectual growth and unique transformative pathways in relation to others. Here, communicating ideas, thoughts, and meaning are "opportunities for collaborative and personal practice-theorising that validates being human as dialectic in action" (Hooley, 2021, p. 152).

Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval's (2022) and Smirnova's (2024) work similarly highlight how reflective engagement with *perezhivanie* enables teachers' fragmented experiences to transform into developmental insights. Moreover, they suggested using *perezhivanie* in language teacher PD activities to facilitate collaborative and peer mentoring sessions. Teacher collaboration has been recognised as one of the most impactful models of PD for enhancing teachers' practice (Cirocki & Hallet, 2024; Wijarwadi et al., 2025). The benefits of engaging in a joint meaning-making lie in the transformative power of reflection through dialogue. As a catalyst for teacher awareness and change, "[d]ialogues with others can reveal *how* a teacher is bound to her actions ... as well as *what* binds her ... to enact a particular course of action" (Penlington, 2008, p. 1314, emphasis in original). In addition, exploring the ideas and points of view of others enables us to accept new meanings in our relationship with others, which means transforming a life of Being into a life of Becoming (Agar, 1994).

Figure 19 below visualises teachers' collaborative reflective inquiry into their *perezhivaniya*. By sharing *perezhivaniya* through open discussions related to the challenges they face in their practice, in a non-hierarchical and somewhat informal structure (peer-mentoring), this strategy may provide teachers with a space to explore their workplace experiences and give them more meaning.

Figure 19

Mediated Interaction Between ESOL Teachers' Real and Ideal Forms



The educational value of such professional development extends beyond acquiring scientific concepts; it is more about developing personal skills and understanding who one is and intends to become in relation to their social environment. As teachers explore nuanced interpretations of their workplace experiences, these dialogic inquiries into their *perezhivaniya* may allow for a more profound understanding of teachers' contextual circumstances and the complex interplay between them and their social environment. Moreover, as a safe space for a personally meaningful engagement with new knowledge, which centres on teachers' scrutiny of their practices within the ever-changing sociocultural and political contexts of their professional

worlds, its benefits lie in cultivating a more nuanced understanding not only of their work within those contexts but, above all, of themselves as agents of change.

The proposed operationalisation of *perezhivanie* (as shown in Figure 16), emphasising the dialectical movement from the onset of the sociocultural dramatic event in the workplace to the transformation of teachers' professional identity, may serve as a procedural scaffolding or framework for the mediated real-ideal form interaction (as shown in Figure 19), linked with the practical application of the model of interrelated units (as shown in Figure 15). An example of an objective for teachers' PD, arising from the results of the present study, is presented in the CHAT model of their ZPD (as shown in Figure 18). In other words, the CHAT model represents the intended outcome (*the why*) of the *DPLD* through interacted *perezhivaniya* (*the what*), and the model of interrelated units is the theoretical understanding of the dialectical process of professional identity transformation (*the how*); here, the framework (as shown in Table 12 below) is a theoretically informed mediational tool to guide the learning process through teachers' collaborative reflective inquiry into their *perezhivaniya*.

Table 12 below summarises the five-stage collaborative reflective inquiry process, grounded in teachers' *perezhivanie*. By guiding teachers through the inquiry stages – dramatic event, contradiction, sense-making, unification, and transformation – the framework for *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development* provides structured and systematic support for teachers' meaning-making of their situated practice and teachers' agency through their use and creation of concepts in social interactions with peers.

Table 12*Framework for Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development (DPLD)*

Stage 1: Dramatic Event	
Identifying a socioculturally-historically situated and emotionally charged disruption in practice.	
DPLD application:	Teachers narrate a dramatic event in their practice.
Prompt:	<i>What happened?</i>
Model link:	Focus on Social Situation ↔ Professional Identity
Stage 2: Contradiction	
Surfacing of the contradiction through awareness of opposing beliefs, expectations, activities, or goals.	
DPLD application:	Teachers attempt to pinpoint the tension or dilemma.
Prompt:	<i>Why did it happen?</i>
Model link:	Focus on all units in the system, but separately.
Stage 3: Sense-making	
Interpreting the personal meaning of the contradiction by using prior scientific and everyday concepts.	
DPLD application:	Teachers use prior knowledge to make sense of the contradiction.
Prompt:	<i>How does it affect me?</i>
Model link:	Focus on Concept ↔ Activity
Stage 4. Unification	
Introducing new scientific concepts and unifying them with everyday concepts to potentially resolve the contradiction.	
DPLD application:	Teachers engage with new knowledge and explore ways to solve the problem in interaction with others.
Prompt:	<i>What new ideas help me understand this differently?</i>
Model link:	Focus on Social Situation ↔ Concept ↔ Activity
Stage 5: Transformation	
Manifested through enacting new pedagogical practices, reshaped commitments, and a transformed professional identity.	
DPLD application:	Teachers narrate a change in their ways of doing and being in their professional world.
Prompt:	<i>What do I do differently now, and why?</i>
Model link:	Focus on all units in the model in an integrated and interactive manner.

The DPLD framework conceptualises how teachers' *perezhivaniya* could be mediated through structured, collaborative, and dialogic reflective inquiry and concept formation. Furthermore, it highlights the kinds of professional environments and relationships necessary for such collaborative professional development to occur. What emerges from this study is that the responsibility for constructing and nurturing a strong professional identity cannot rest solely with individual teachers; it requires systematic and intentional support from others. In this sense, the results of this study carry practical significance that extends beyond theoretical contribution. The following recommendations are therefore directed at teachers, teacher educators, leaders, and researchers with the aim of translating the study's conceptual insights into tangible actions that can sustain collaborative, dialogic, and agentic professional development centred on teachers' subjective meaning-making of their professional contexts.

6.3. Recommendations

This study's results highlight the importance of adopting more sustained, dialogic, and reflective approaches to ESOL teacher learning and development that genuinely consider professional identity as both a personal and collective pursuit. The following recommendations also expand on broader debates surrounding ESOL teacher professionalism, acknowledging that such professionalism is contested among democratic, occupational, and managerial discourses in the literature (Alexander et al., 2019). They also affirm that quality teaching arises through teachers' ongoing PD activities – situated, dialogic, and reflective – focused on acquiring new knowledge and transforming existing beliefs, values, attitudes, roles, and ultimately, teachers' identities (Johnson, 2009; Kubanyiova, 2012). Accordingly, seven recommendations are offered for four groups of stakeholders – teachers, teacher educators, leaders, and researchers. Each plays a unique role in shaping the conditions necessary for ESOL teachers' professional identity transformation, with their contributions being interconnected and mutually supportive of one another.

6.3.1. For Teachers

Recommendation 1. *That ESOL teachers actively (consciously and voluntarily) engage in collaborative reflective inquiries with colleagues with the intent to articulate and examine the contradictions and tensions that arise in their practice.* In doing so, teachers can move beyond perceiving them as isolated struggles and instead use these moments of dissonance as opportunities for professional growth. Such inquiries may be supported through reflection-in-action approaches (Schön, 1983), where teachers notice and respond to contradictions as they emerge in practice and later revisit these critical moments collectively, and through structured reflective frameworks, such as Brookfield's Four Lenses Model of reflection (1995), which encourages critical interrogation of practice from multiple perspectives. Practical strategies for collaborative reflection might include dialogic journals (where teachers share written reflections and responses) or *perezhivanie*-focused circles (in the form of a digital or face-to-face reflective community). Hence, teachers are encouraged to establish reciprocal peer partnerships where expertise is shared and co-constructed, shifting professional learning away from individualised, evaluative models towards collaborative, identity-affirming practices.

Recommendation 2. *That ESOL teachers actively work on unifying everyday and scientific concepts through reflective action and dialogic inquiry.* The results of this study demonstrate how everyday concepts derived from teachers' lived classroom practice gain explanatory power when linked to pedagogical theories, while scientific concepts become more meaningful when applied to practice. This dynamic interaction fosters teachers' deeper understanding of their workplace contexts. Moreover, as the interplay of these two paths of concept formation is a central mechanism through which the movement from the real to ideal form takes place, it also nurtures their ongoing professional identity transformation. Thus, practising teachers may benefit from adopting small cycles of inquiry, focusing on one dilemma or contradiction at a time by reflecting on it dialogically and trialling new approaches in their

classrooms. In doing so, they will progressively operationalise the developmental potential of *perezhivanie* as a conceptual tool.

6.3.2. For Teacher Educators

Recommendation 3. *That teacher educators should prioritise the creation of collegial spaces where pre-service teachers can engage in joint reflective inquiry, resisting the reduction of collaboration to managerial compliance.* Such spaces foster agency by enabling teachers to make informed decisions about their practice in relation to both theoretical knowledge and their lived experiences. They also support well-being by affirming teachers' voices and legitimising the affective and moral dimensions of professional identity. A compelling example of this approach is the Praxis Inquiry Model, developed by teacher educators at the College of Education at Victoria University in Melbourne (Burridge et al., 2010). This model draws on the work of Dewey, Freire, and Vygotsky, and embeds eight signature pedagogies that act as tools for inquiry, connecting professional practice with theoretical understanding. At its heart is the role of dialogue in describing, explaining, theorising, and changing practice, thereby encouraging pre-service teachers to critically examine their own beliefs and practices to create more authentic and professionally enriching learning spaces.

Recommendation 4. *That teacher educators help pre-service teachers bridge theoretical knowledge with personal practical knowledge by making this movement explicit through scaffolding teachers' reflection.* In line with Vygotsky's emphasis on the interrelationship between scientific and everyday concepts, teacher educators can design learning experiences where theory is not abstracted from practice but integrated into it. Through guided dialogue, reflective writing, and storytelling, teacher educators can provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to use language as a tool to mediate their *perezhivaniya* and promote praxis (Freire, 1970). Hence, by knowing how to bridge their lived experiences with theoretical concepts, pre-service teachers can form true concepts that would underpin their agency, enabling them to establish their own ways of continuously becoming the professionals they

aspire to be. This bridging of theory with practice is especially important in TESOL, where research highlights persistent dissonances between teacher education knowledge base and classroom realities (Cross, 2006, 2020; Freeman, 2018/2020; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman et al., 2019; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2018/2020).

6.3.3. For Leaders

Recommendation 5. *That social infrastructure for professional growth be developed, in which professional learning is not to be conceptualised narrowly in terms of competencies or standards, but as a dynamic process centred on teachers' activity in meaning-making of their experiences of and through social interactions.* Institutional leaders and policymakers have a pivotal role in determining whether ESOL teachers experience professionalism as empowerment or constraint. This study's results, alongside the existing literature on teacher professionalism, highlight the dangers of managerial frameworks that reduce teachers to implementers of standardised curricula, thereby undermining their autonomy and well-being. ESOL teachers' professionalism must reflect the teachers' enacted realities, not only the officially accepted shared norms of the TESOL industry, because such cultural norms often "represent insubstantiality ranging from articulated ideology to wishful thinking" (Evans, 2008, p. 29). Leaders are therefore urged to move towards systemic support for democratic professionalism, recognising teachers as reflective professionals whose expertise lies not only in technical delivery but also in navigating uncertainty and exercising ethical judgement (Hoyle, 2008), and allow for dialogic, identity-focused professional development to be possible. This includes allocating protected time, space, and resources for collaborative reflection, establishing cultures of care that support teachers' well-being, and recognising such engagement as integral to professional work.

Recommendation 6. *That in addition to strengthening access to research-based knowledge, leaders should encourage bottom-up initiatives that emerge from teachers' lived experiences or perezhivaniya, ideally in the form of long-term cycles of reflection, inquiry, and*

concept formation through collaboration. In this way, teachers' voices and experiences become the foundation for professional reform, ensuring that change is meaningful and sustainable. Investment in such initiatives may also counteract the de-professionalising effects of marketisation and accountability cultures, while enabling teachers to enact their identity, agency, autonomy, and well-being as foundational aspects of their professionalism.

6.3.4. For Vygotskian Researchers

Recommendation 7. *That Vygotskian researchers should move beyond a reductive framing of perezhivanie as a unity of affect and intellect and instead conceptualise perezhivanie as the indivisible, unique experience of the whole person within context.* This study's results confirm Johnson and Golombek's (2016) description of the English language teaching profession, highlighting the deeply personal and oftentimes not officially acknowledged, emotionally charged nature of teachers' practice and professional development. However, in contrast to previous research (e.g., Golombek & Doran, 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2016), this study suggests a more holistic understanding of teachers' *perezhivaniya* – not separable into emotional or cognitive components but an integrated activity of the teachers in relation to their social environment. Blunden (2021, p. 80) called upon Dewey to explain that an experience is a whole, not a combination:

The existence of this unity is constituted by a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. This unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make within it. (Dewey, 1939, p. 556)

This study aligns with this view; indeed, the ESOL teachers' *perezhivaniya*, upon reflection, contained significant emotional and cognitive dimensions; however, these were abstractions from their experiences as wholes. Therefore, Vygotskian researchers should embrace the holistic nature of *perezhivanie* and recognise that professional identity is not an assemblage of elements but an ongoing, situated activity of *Being, Becoming, and Belonging*. By doing so, they

can provide a more comprehensive account of the complexity of teachers' lived-through experiences and the dynamic ways in which their professional identity transforms.

In summary, this study's recommendations span practice, policy, education, and theory, targeting teachers, teacher educators, leaders, policymakers, and researchers from a Vygotskian perspective. They reaffirm the importance of *perezhivanie* and dialogic mediation in understanding and supporting the ESOL teachers' learning and transformation of their professional identity. Reflecting briefly on my experience in conducting this research, the following conclusion synthesises these insights, highlighting the study's contributions and suggesting future research directions.

Chapter 7: Concluding Thoughts

As I approach the end of this research study, I find myself reflecting on my journey in pursuit of not-yet-answered questions. Looking back, I had expected this research to yield clear answers through patterns and interpretations that could be easily summarised. Instead, what emerged was a more complex understanding of subjectively meaningful experiences of enacting a profession, a human story – one of teachers navigating changes and dramatic social situations, drawing on personal histories, and striving to reconcile their ideals with their everyday realities. What started as an investigation into how historical, sociocultural, and political contexts mediate ESOL teachers' professional identity has developed into a much deeper inquiry into the dialectical processes of teachers' *Being, Becoming, and Belonging*. Along the way, I have come to recognise that professional identity is not a fixed state but a dynamic, evolving unity, continually reconstructed through teachers' *perezhivaniya* as they engage with the challenges and contradictions in their professional worlds. I have come to see that the social dramas arising from their workplace contexts are not just surroundings or obstacles but powerful sources for growth when teachers reflect on, collaboratively learn from, and act upon them.

This study contributes in three interconnected ways. Conceptually, it advances our understanding of ESOL teacher professional identity as a dialectical unity of *Being* (a good teacher), *Becoming* (a reflective, reflexive, and proactive practitioner), and *Belonging* (to a workplace culture), theorised through the proposed model of professional identity transformation through interrelated units – *professional identity, activity, concept, and perezhivanie* within and in relation to a *social situation* – that illuminates the dialectical movements underpinning teachers' growth. By moving beyond treating teacher agency, cognition, beliefs, and emotions as isolated elements that interact, the study offers a holistic account of professional identity, where its transformation is seen not only as a socioculturally mediated process but as a

mediating activity, where the social becomes the individual through the individual's agentic (conscious and voluntary) and subjective (personally meaningful) lived-through experiences. Methodologically, it is an international study that brings together Vygotsky's genetic method with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, demonstrating how thematic patterns can be understood not as static categories but as transformative movements across the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural-historical domains of ESOL teachers' practice. This integration provides a dynamic approach to tracing the professional identity transformation over time and across contexts. Practically, in connection to the model for theorising professional identity transformation, this study proposes the framework of *Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development*, which positions teachers' social acts of language-interacted *perezhivaniya* as springboards for collaborative inquiry, concept formation, and professional growth by way of mediating the real–ideal tensions in their practice. Taken together, these contributions highlight not only teachers' agency and subjectivity in terms of who they are and who they wish to become as professionals, but also how their professional learning might be supported through democratic and dialogic forms of collegiality throughout their careers.

Yet, nearing the completion of this study has also led me to think about all the questions surrounding the contexts of ESOL teachers' practice and who they are as professionals that remain unanswered. Teachers' struggles with belonging, their negotiation of institutional and professional ideals, and their ongoing search for meaningful collaboration are not problems with simple solutions. They highlight instead open questions – threads for future inquiry – that extend beyond this thesis. How can we create professional cultures that genuinely support activist and democratic forms of teacher professionalism, where trust, respect, and reciprocity empower stakeholders to unite in improving teachers' working conditions and status? What are the roles, beliefs, and motives of other stakeholders, such as managers and leaders? How can teachers' grassroots practices of informal collaboration be nurtured and recognised within institutional structures? And how might the model proposed here interact with practice? How might it be

refined or challenged in these or different professional and educational contexts? Does it apply to professionals moving across fields or to tradespeople? These questions remain alive for me, and I hope they will guide further inquiry.

Reflecting on my journey of doing this research, I can undoubtedly say that it has been a transformative experience. At the outset, I imagined that I would only interpret the ESOL teachers' meaning-making about their experiences of practice. What I did not anticipate was how deeply I would be drawn into my own *perezhivaniya* as a researcher and educator. Listening to the teachers' stories, tracing their dilemmas and shifts in their roles, beliefs, motives, and commitments, trying to make sense of their negotiations with contemporary change in TESOL, compelled me to re-examine my own roles, beliefs, motives, and commitments. In doing so, I came to see myself not only as an interpreter of teachers' meaning-making and identity transformation but also as an active participant in an ongoing process of *Becoming*, theirs and mine.

I have learned that theorising teachers' professional identity is not only an academic exercise but also a personal act of meaning-making of the historically determined, sociocultural, and political world around me. It has required me to grapple with similar contradictions as the teachers in this study – the tension between ideals and realities, the desire for collegiality in an environment that often fragments and isolates, and the pursuit of meaningful professional development. In line with how I have come to understand teachers' identity through their activity in a Vygotskian sense, I have come to understand myself; my activity of researching these issues has become, for me, a process of concept formation through unification – a bringing together of scientific and everyday concepts, of intellectual inquiries and lived-through experiences.

Perhaps the most important lesson I take from this journey is a renewed sense of humility. This study has offered a generalised way of understanding professional identity transformation, but it has also revealed how subjective and situated any such account must be.

Each teacher's identity is unique, refracted through their *perezhivaniya*; it is an aggregate of their *perezhivaniya* – the completed, the ongoing, and the uncompleted ones. Teachers are, at the same time, part of the teaching profession collective and its holistic equivalent; the collective story of a profession remains alive as long as there are professionals who live it. My work is only one small contribution to an ongoing dialogue, and much more remains to be explored, questioned, reflected upon, and discussed.

In closing, I return to the idea of dialogic partnerships. Just as teachers' professional identities are transformed through their social dramas of dialogic encounters with others, so too has my scholarly identity been shaped through dialogic encounters with Vygotskian theory of mind, qualitative methodology and data, with the teachers who shared their experiences, and with the broader community of scholarship. This thesis, in a sense, is an artefact of those encounters. But it is also an invitation – to myself and to others – to continue engaging in dialogic partnerships of learning, for it is through these social acts of language, inquiry, and reflection that we, as educators and researchers, truly *Become*.

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Appendix A: Information to Participants Involved in Research

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *A Qualitative Study on Factors of Change impacting the Professional Identity of ESOL Teachers in the Asia-Pacific Context*.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Biljana Ivanova Miloshevaska as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Dr Oksana Razoumova and Dr Neil Hooley from the College of Arts and Education.

PROJECT EXPLANATION

The aims of this PhD research project are threefold as follows:

- to investigate the current understanding of professional identity of Asia-Pacific teachers teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) by exploring the teachers' perceptions of their roles in the teaching practice and in their own professional development,
- to contribute to the current understanding of TESOL teachers' professional identity by exploring how the teachers act within and engage with their sociocultural environment at the workplace, and
- to explore and describe the impact of the contextual factors, situated within that social environment, on the professional identity and agency development of the TESOL teachers.

This study's findings may provide new perspectives on establishing a strong sense of teacher professional identity; they may also have important implications for curriculum design and classroom practice and a practical significance for informing and rethinking the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

Firstly, you will be asked to complete an online survey with an estimated duration of 15 minutes. The survey will include a series of questions about your gender, age, nationality, education, and years of work experience, which will be followed by five questions about your beliefs and practice as a teacher.

Followingly, you will be invited to take part in an individual in-depth semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes, which will be conducted online using a video-conferencing platform, such as Zoom or Skype, according to your preference. The interview will be audio-recorded and additional notes will be taken by the researcher. If required, interview questions and additional information can be provided in advance. You will be provided with your interview transcription to check for accuracy, if necessary.

WHAT WILL I GAIN FROM PARTICIPATING?

Participants involved in this study will have the opportunity to contribute to the industry and the community of practice, and the current conceptual and theoretical understanding of teacher professional identity with emphasis on the professional identity of TESOL teachers from the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the benefits include professional exchange of ideas, access to the study's content and findings, and reflection on own professional experience.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE USED?

The information will be used for the purpose of:

- completion of the PhD Thesis, and
- dissemination of the findings through conference presentations and publications in academic journals.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT?

The potential risks of participating in this project are minimal. Considering that the research project focuses on investigating teachers' experiences and perspectives regarding their professional identity, with no intention of discussing anything sensitive or disturbing, the only foreseeable risk can be a natural level of discomfort discussing professional issues. If assistance is required, please refer to contact details below.

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT BE CONDUCTED?

This project adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design. Data will be gathered with the following methods of data collection:

- an online survey with an estimated duration of 15 minutes,
- an approximately 45-60 minutes long semi-structured individual online interview, and
- document analysis of online TESOL teaching magazines or newsletters.

All research data will be encrypted and stored safely (password-protected) on the Victoria University's central storage space (R: drive) and will be used only for the purpose of this research.

WHO IS CONDUCTING THE STUDY?

Student researcher:

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska

Contact details:

e-mail: biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au

phone: +61 434 977453

Under the supervision of:

Chief Investigator:

Dr Oksana Razoumova

Contact details:

e-mail: oksana.razoumova@vu.edu.au

phone: +61 406 781526

Associate Investigator:

Dr Neil Hooley

Contact details:

e-mail: neil.hooley@vu.edu.au

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix B: Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into the current understanding of professional identity of Asia-Pacific teachers teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) by exploring the factors that impact the teachers' professional identity.

Data are to be gathered with the following methods of data collection:

- an online survey with an estimated duration of 15 minutes, and
- an approximately 45-60 minutes long in-depth semi-structured individual online interview.

This aspect of the research is providing consent to be interviewed. The interview will be audio-recorded and additional notes will be taken by the researcher.

The data collected in this research project will be used for the purpose of completing the PhD Thesis. The findings will be disseminated through conference presentations and publication in academic journals. The data will be stored safely (password-protected) on Victoria University's central storage space (R: drive).

The potential risks of participating in this project are minimal and there is no intention of discussing anything of potentially sensitive and/or disturbing nature.

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT:

I, _____
(Participant's name)

of _____
(Participant's country and suburb/province)

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: *A Qualitative Study on Factors of Change impacting the Professional Identity of TESOL Teachers in the Asia-Pacific Context* being conducted at Victoria University by Biljana Ivanova Miloshevska, supervised by Dr Oksana Razoumova and Dr Neil Hooley.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedure:

- participation in a semi-structured individual online interview (approximately 45 minutes)

I certify that I freely consent the interview to be audio-recorded.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the student-researcher:

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska
e-mail: biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au
phone: +61 434 977 453

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email Researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix C: Email Invitation for Completing an Online Survey



Let's talk about your practice and experiences of being a TESOL teacher.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska, and I'm a doctoral candidate at Victoria University in Melbourne. For my PhD studies, I'm researching the contextual factors that impact the professional identity of **ESOL teachers teaching adult students in a pathway program or at university level (e.g., General English, Academic English) in the Asia-Pacific region**. To get an understanding of what teachers with **five years and more experience** in teaching English may think, I'm inviting you to complete an **anonymous online survey**.

If you don't think you meet the above-mentioned criteria for participating in the study, we would greatly appreciate it if you could please **forward/promote the survey** to anyone who may be interested in participating and are eligible to take part in the research.

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and can be accessed following the link below.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[Survey URL]

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Opt Out Link = Click here to unsubscribe]

This study's findings will be used to (1) contribute to the conceptual and practical understanding of the teachers' experiences, pedagogical roles, and practices in the Asia-Pacific TESOL industry and community of practice, (2) provide new perspectives on establishing a strong sense of teacher professional identity, and (3) inform and potentially rethink the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education.

Please follow the link and read the "Information to participants involved in research" carefully. If there is anything you do not understand or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au or via phone at +61 434 977 453.

Your contact details were found by conducting a search on publicly available staff directories of universities offering English language programs/courses in your country.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary, confidential, and immensely appreciated.

Thank you for considering our research study. 😊

Kind regards

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska

PhD Candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne

Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities (ISILC)

Appendix D: Email Invitation to Departments/Schools for the Online Survey



Dear staff member of the,

My name is Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska, and I'm a doctoral candidate at Victoria University in Melbourne. I am contacting you today with a humble request: **I need your help to reach out to the English language teachers/lecturers at the** and kindly ask them to participate in my PhD study by completing an anonymous online survey.

For my PhD studies, I'm researching the contextual factors that impact the professional identity of English language teachers teaching adult students in a pathway program or at university level in the Asia-Pacific region. This study's goals are to (1) contribute to the current understanding of the teachers' roles and practices, (2) provide new perspectives on establishing a strong sense of teacher professional identity, and (3) improve the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education.

I'd be immensely grateful if you could please forward this email to fellow staff members with five or more years of experience teaching English to speakers of other languages.

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and can be accessed following the link below.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[Survey URL]

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Opt Out Link = Click here to unsubscribe]

Please follow the link and read the "Information to participants involved in research" carefully. If there is anything you do not understand or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au or via phone at +61 434 977 453.

Your help and participation in this project are entirely voluntary, confidential, and highly appreciated.

Thank you for considering our research study. :-)

Kind regards

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska

PhD Candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne

Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities (ISILC)

Appendix E: First Qualitative Survey Reminder

Let's talk about your practice and experiences of being a TESOL teacher.

You were recently invited to participate in my PhD study by completing an **anonymous online survey**.

I know things can get busy, and I don't want to be a bother; however, I'd be immensely grateful if you could please take the survey (if you haven't already) and share your opinion about your English language teaching practice.

If you don't think you meet the below-mentioned criteria for participating in the study, we would greatly appreciate it if you could **please forward/promote the survey** to anyone who may be interested in participating and are eligible to take part in the research.

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and can be accessed following the link below.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[Survey URL]

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Opt Out Link = Click here to unsubscribe]

As a reminder, for my PhD studies, I'm researching the contextual factors that impact the professional identity of **English language teachers teaching adult students in a pathway program or at university level (e.g., General English, Academic English etc.) in the Asia-Pacific region**. This study's goals are to (1) contribute to the current understanding of the teachers' roles and practices, (2) provide new perspectives on establishing a strong sense of teacher professional identity, and (3) improve the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education.

Please follow the link and read the "Information to participants involved in research" carefully. If there is anything you do not understand or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au or via phone at +61 434 977 453.

Again, your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and highly appreciated. :-)

Kind regards

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska

PhD Candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne

Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities (ISILC)

Appendix F: Second Qualitative Survey Reminder

Dear English language teacher/lecturer,

Please consider completing the **anonymous online survey** if you haven't already. I would be immensely grateful for your help. :-)

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and can be accessed following the link below.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[Survey URL]

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Opt Out Link = Click here to unsubscribe]

As a reminder, for my PhD studies, I'm researching the contextual factors that impact the professional identity of **English language teachers teaching adult students in a pathway program or at university level (e.g., General English, EAP etc.) in the Asia-Pacific region**. This study's goals are to (1) contribute to the current understanding of the teachers' roles and practices, (2) provide new perspectives on establishing a strong sense of teacher professional identity, and (3) potentially improve the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education.

Please follow the link and read the "Information to participants involved in research" carefully. If there is anything you do not understand or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au or via phone at +61 434 977 453.

If you don't think you meet the above-mentioned criteria for participating in the study, we would greatly appreciate it if you could **please forward/promote the survey** to anyone who may be interested in participating and is eligible to take part in the research.

Again, your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and highly appreciated.

Kind regards

Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska

PhD Candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne

Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities (ISILC)

Appendix G: Qualitative Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project.

For this stage of the data collection process, you are required to complete this survey, which includes a short series of questions about your gender, age, nationality, education, and years of work experience, followed by five open-ended questions about your beliefs and practices as a teacher. The estimated duration for completing the survey is 15 minutes.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to omit any question of the survey.

Participant privacy and confidentiality will be protected throughout this study.

Your IP Address and location data will not be recorded.

You can complete this survey only once. If, for any reason, you cannot complete the survey in one go, your answers will be saved, and you can continue completing it at a later stage.

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you're interested in participating in the interviewing stage of this research study. If you answer 'yes/maybe', you will be asked to provide your email address. If you choose to provide contact information, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher within the consortium. However, this information will remain confidential. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

The potential risks of participating in this project are minimal, and there is no intention of discussing anything of a potentially sensitive and/or disturbing nature.

This study will provide an opportunity for you to share and talk through your professional experiences as an English teacher/lecturer. Furthermore, this study will advance our knowledge of the contextual impact on the sense of professional identity, practice, and role. The results may help shape recommendations for improving the English teaching practice and potentially rethink the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education. The findings will be disseminated through conference presentations and publication in academic journals. The data will be stored safely (password-protected) on Victoria University's central storage space (R: drive).

This study has been approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee under the overarching cover of HRE22-013. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

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ELECTRONIC CONSENT:

Please select your choice below. Selecting "I agree" indicates that

- You have read the provided information about the PhD research project,
- You voluntarily agree to participate, and
- You are 18 years of age or older.

- I agree.
- I disagree.

----- page break -----

SECTION 1:

1. Gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other (please specify) _____
- I prefer not to say

2. What is your age in years?

- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

3. What is your cultural background and which country are you working in at the moment?

4. What is your educational background and qualifications?

5. How long have you been a TESOL teacher and what education sector have you worked for (primary, secondary etc.)?

----- page break -----

SECTION 2:

1. What would you say, what makes the TESOL industry distinct in your country?

2. How do you think the TESOL industry has changed over the last five years locally and internationally?

3. What does it mean to you to be a good TESOL teacher? What are your key beliefs about teaching?

4. Reflecting on your experience as a teacher, please describe how your teaching might have changed over the last five years? Do you find these changes positive?

5. What professional development helps you to grow as a teacher and what media resources do you find useful to stay informed about your profession?

----- page break -----

Would you consider taking part in the interviewing stage of this research project?

The individual interview will be in duration of approximately 45-60 minutes and conducted online using a video-conferencing platform, such as Zoom or Skype, according to your preference. (If required, the interview questions can be provided in advance).

* Please note: Responding YES / MAYBE does not mean you are giving consent; it only means you are interested in participating. If interested, further information about the interviewing process will be provided to you per email in the following 2-3 days.

- Yes/Maybe
- No

If **YES / MAYBE**, please

provide your email address _____

----- page break -----

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

Appendix H: Email Invitation for Participating in an Online Interview

Subject: Online interview for a PhD research study on the professional identity of TESOL teachers

Dear [*name of potential participant*],

My name is Biljana Ivanova - Miloshevska and I am a doctoral candidate at Victoria University in Melbourne. You previously completed an online survey for a research study project entitled *A Qualitative Study on Factors of Change impacting the Professional Identity of ESOL Teachers in the Asia-Pacific Context*. After completing the survey, you agreed I could contact you for follow-up research. I'd now like to invite you to participate in an individual online interview to discuss your experiences as a TESOL teacher.

If you agree to take part, during the interview I will ask you about your professional role, your past professional experience, and its influence on your current roles and practice as a TESOL teacher. Additionally, I would like us to discuss a little bit about your view on and experience of professional development and how has it been achieved over the years and now.

The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted online using a video-conferencing platform, such as Zoom or Skype, according to your preference. With your explicit permission, the interview will be audio-recorded, and I will also be taking notes during our conversation. You will have an opportunity to review the accuracy of the interview transcript.

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated; however, it is completely voluntary and anonymous. There are no consequences for choosing not to participate or for withdrawing oneself or answers from the study at any time, for any reason. Confidentiality and privacy of all participants are of the highest priority, and the greatest care will be taken to ensure that no participant is identified or identifiable in this project. The data will be kept secure and protected.

Please read carefully the "Information to Participants Form" attached to this e-mail invitation. If there is anything you do not understand or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at biljana.ivanovamiloshevska@live.vu.edu.au or via phone at +61 434 977 453.

Would you be willing to be interviewed? If **yes**, please reply to this e-mail with your preference of video-conferencing platform, and we can work on setting up the date and time for the interview.

In attachment to this e-mail invitation, I've included the "Informed Consent Form", which I invite you to read carefully. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the consent form and send it back to me.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Kind regards

Biljana

PhD Candidate, Victoria University, Melbourne

Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities

Appendix I: Interview Schedule

Introduction for the interview: *The purpose of this interview is to explore teachers' experiences in-depth about the extent to which and how the professional identity is being mediated by various factors from within the contextual spaces. Therefore, I would like to hear your opinion about your professional role, your past professional experience, and its influence on your current roles and practice as an ESOL teacher. Additionally, I would like us to discuss a little bit about your views on and experience of professional development and how it has been achieved over the years and now.*

Interview Questions:

1. *Why did you choose teaching as a profession?*
2. *What does it mean to you to be an ESOL teacher (in ___)?*
3. *How would you describe the workplace culture?*
4. *Can you please describe a day that you consider to be successful?*
5. *What are your immediate and future professional goals?*

The interview will be closed with the following question: *Thank you for all that valuable information. Is there anything else you would like to add before we close this interview?*

Appendix J: List of Media Artefacts Included in the Study

This appendix contains the complete list of media artefacts used in the study. Media artefacts were selected from 5 online practitioner-oriented TESOL magazines and newsletters (EFL Magazine, EL Gazette, HLT by Pilgrims, TESOL Connections, and the TESOLANZ Newsletter) between June and October 2023 and met the inclusion criteria outlined in Section 4.9.3. (Artefacts: Media Data). All artefacts were publicly accessible at the time of data collection. Since data collection, access conditions for some artefacts may have changed, and a small number of articles may no longer be freely available or may require subscription access.

EFL Magazine (<https://eflmagazine.com/>)

1. Beltrame, D. (2021, March). A moral dilemma in my teaching career. *EFL Magazine*.
<https://eflmagazine.com/a-moral-dilemma-in-my-teaching-career/>
2. Jiménez Aguilar, T. (2021, May). Teacher roles before and after the pandemic. *EFL Magazine*. <https://eflmagazine.com/teacher-roles-before-and-after-the-pandemic>
3. Hall, H. (2022, June). The need for cultural training for remote EFL teachers. *EFL Magazine*.
<https://eflmagazine.com/the-need-for-cultural-training-for-remote-efl-teachers/>

EL Gazette (<https://www.elgazette.com/>)

4. Ryan, D. (2019, January/February). 'We've run out of students: on your bike, mate.' *EL Gazette*, 463, 36-37. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1902/mobile/index.html
5. Butler, M., & Ragsdale, R. (2019, March/April). A rising tide of change. *EL Gazette*, 464, 5.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1903/mobile/index.html
6. Ragsdale, G. (2019, March/April). Say that again? Translanguaging in Chinese Universities. *EL Gazette*, 464, 15. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1903/mobile/index.html
7. Krzanowski, M. (2019, March/April). Teach in China. *EL Gazette*, 464, 30-31.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1903/mobile/index.html

8. Bhanot, R. (2019, March/April). 'The English language has been creating new centres for centuries.' *EL Gazette*, 464, 34-35.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1903/mobile/index.html
9. Magloff, L. (2019, September). Teach Uni in East Asia. *EL Gazette*, 466, 38-39.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1909/mobile/index.html
10. Carter, R. (2019, September). "In the last year I earned £16,756. It's an insult." *EL Gazette*, 466, 40-41. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1909/mobile/index.html
11. Pavlacic, P. (2019, November). English language travel – a maturing market?. *EL Gazette*, 467, 18-19. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1911/mobile/index.html
12. Butler, M. (2019, November). Will China Hoover up the native speakers?. *EL Gazette*, 467, 23. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1911/mobile/index.html
13. Teach in International Schools in Asia. (2019, November). *EL Gazette*, 467, 30-31.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG1911/mobile/index.html
14. Butler, M. (2020, January). Where are all the native speakers? *EL Gazette*, 468, 31.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2001/mobile/index.html
15. Macaro, E. (2020, January). These are the drivers propelling the EMI train forward. *EL Gazette*, 468, 36-37. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2001/mobile/index.html
16. Poulter, M., & Butler, M. (2020, January). Chalkface Champion. *EL Gazette*, 468, 42.
https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2001/mobile/index.html
17. Butler, M., & Ragsdale, R. (2020, March). The sun sets on two ELT empires. *EL Gazette*, 469, 5. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2003/mobile/index.html

18. Statham, L. (2020, March). "We should start by putting ourselves first, not our students." *EL Gazette*, 469, 34-35. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2003/mobile/index.html
19. Salsbury, M., & Butler, M. (2020, May). Schools and universities shed staff as students shun courses overseas; Australia's ELT industry "on the edge of a cliff". *EL Gazette*, 470, 6-7. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2005/mobile/index.html
20. Schmitt, D. (2020, May). Effective EAP. *EL Gazette*, 470, 14. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2005/mobile/index.html
21. Butler, M. (2020, May). Zooming in on teacher training. *EL Gazette*, 470, 23. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2005/mobile/index.html
22. Williams, A. (2020, May). Bridge to the future? *EL Gazette*, 470, 26. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2005/mobile/index.html
23. Stanley, P. (2020, May). Teach in Australia. *EL Gazette*, 470, 28-29. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2005/mobile/index.html
24. Howlett, S. (2020, July). Taking a holistic approach to teacher education. *EL Gazette*, 471, 24-25. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2007/mobile/index.html
25. Davies, I. (2020, July). In at the deep end. *EL Gazette*, 471, 28-29. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2007/mobile/index.html
26. Trotman, W. (2020, July). Helping teachers stay positive. *EL Gazette*, 471, 36. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2007/mobile/index.html
27. Butler, M. (2020, September). Should we put teaching first? *EL Gazette*, 472, 30. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2009/mobile/index.html

28. Phillipson, R. (2020, September). A focus on monolingualism short-changes the needs of students. *EL Gazette*, 472, 36-37.

https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2009/mobile/index.html

29. Butler, M., & Ragsdale, R. (2020, November). Time to go back to the school room. *EL Gazette*, 473, 5. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2011/mobile/index.html

30. Teach in teaching online. (2020, November). *EL Gazette*, 473, 32-33.

https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2011/mobile/index.html

31. Rebolledo, P. (2020, November). Guruism can be detrimental to your professional health. *EL Gazette*, 473, 34-35. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2011/mobile/index.html

32. Butler, M. (2021, February). Sharing stories out of school. *EL Gazette*, 474, 5.

https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2102/mobile/index.html

33. Evison, J. (2021, February). Digging into the question of identity. *EL Gazette*, 474, 44.

https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2102/mobile/index.html

34. Hearrell, A. (2021, February). Bridge any gaps. *EL Gazette*, 474, 50.

https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2102/mobile/index.html

35. 10 tips to become a successful teacher. (2021, July). *EL Gazette*, 476, 21.

https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2107/mobile/index.html

36. Butler, M. (2021, September). Filipino teachers feel impact of China's new rules. *EL Gazette*, 477, 7. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2109/mobile/index.html

37. Rodgers, A. (2021, September). Can we disentangle TEFL from its colonial past? *EL Gazette*, 477, 30-31. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2109/mobile/index.html

38. Smith, G. (2021, September). Global trends in online ESL opportunities. *EL Gazette*, 477, 32-33. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2109/mobile/index.html
39. Zhu, G. (2021, November). Chinese language students: where are they headed? *EL Gazette*, 478, 12-13. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2111/mobile/index.html
40. Lethaby, C., & Mayne, R. (2021, November). Exploring the evidence. *EL Gazette*, 478, 26-27. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2111/mobile/index.html
41. Smith, G. (2022, February). Teacher sues over native-speakerism. *EL Gazette*, 479, 6. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2202/mobile/index.html
42. Butler, M. (2022, February). Non-native speakerism has had its day. *EL Gazette*, 479, 7. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2202/mobile/index.html
43. Okaz, A. (2022, July). Professional development. *EL Gazette*, 481, 22-23. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2207/mobile/index.html
44. Nolan, C. (2022, October). "EFL students want native-English-speaker teachers!": Is this fact or fallacy? *EL Gazette*, 482, 14-15. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2210/mobile/index.html
45. Harvey, B. S. (2023, January). The changing world of English teaching. *EL Gazette*, 483, 26-27. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2301/mobile/index.html
46. Maroutian, M. (2023, January). Native speakerism: hiding behind privilege. *EL Gazette*, 483, 28-29. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2301/mobile/index.html
47. Robertson, P. (2023, July). TESOL in the Philippines. *EL Gazette*, 485, 12-13. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2307/mobile/index.html

48. Grice, W. (2023, July). Inequality and discrimination in Vietnam's private sector. *EL Gazette*, 485, 26-27. https://www.elgazette.com/elg_archive/ELG2307/mobile/index.html

Humanising Language Teaching (HLT) by Pilgrims (<https://www.hltmag.co.uk/>)

49. Sciamarelli, M. (2019, February). How do we embrace change? *Humanising Language Teaching*, 21(1). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/feb19/how-do-we-embrace-change>

50. Price, B. (2019, April). Sailing to success: The motivational seascape of English language teachers' Associations. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 21(2). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/apr19/sailing-to-success>

51. Mendoza, G. M. (2019, April). Continuous professional development: The dos and don'ts. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 21(2). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/apr19/continuous-professional-development>

52. Maley, A. (2019, June). The power of personal experience. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 21(3). <https://hltmag.ng3.devwebsite.co.uk/june19/power-of-personal-experience>

53. Heron, M., Maley, A., & Bolitho, R. (2020, February). Rethinking language teacher training and professional development. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 22(1). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/feb2020/rethinking-language-teacher-training>

54. Santoso, S. (2020, August). The irreplaceable teachers' roles. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 22(4). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/aug20/irreplaceable-teachers-roles>

55. Slaybaugh, B. (2020 December). Twelve important traits of an ideal EFL teacher. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 22(6). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/dec20/twelve-important-traits>

56. Usher, R. (2020, December). English language teaching in China. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 22(6). <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/dec20/english-language-teaching-in-china>

57. Griffiths, C. (2022, April). Eacher burnout: The elephant in the room. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 24(2). <https://www.hlomag.co.uk/apr22/teacher-burnout>
58. Price, B. (2022, April). Together we stand: Collaboration within and across teachers' associations. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 24(2). <https://www.hlomag.co.uk/apr22/together-we-stand>
59. Galvao, K. H. (2022, April). Employability vs. workability in ELT: What comes after the pandemic. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 24(2).
<https://www.hlomag.co.uk/apr22/employability-vs-workability>
60. Rodgers, C. (2023, August). Mediation in the ELT classroom. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 25(4). <https://www.hlomag.co.uk/aug23/mediation-in-the-elt-classroom>
61. Bolitho, R., & Maley, A. (2023, October). Connecting what we do as teachers with what we believe and who we are. *Humanising Language Teaching*, 25(5).
<https://www.hlomag.co.uk/oct23/connecting-what-we-do>
- TESOL Connections** (<https://www.tesol.org/tesol-connections/>)
62. Winokur, I. (2019, July). Professional learning and social media 101. *TESOL Connections*.
63. Oreto, R. (2019, July). Understanding small talk for professional development. *TESOL Connections*.
64. Benegas, M., & Stolpestad, A. (2020, June). ESL teacher leadership: Delivering professional development. *TESOL Connections*.
65. Renn, J., Morita-Mullaney, T., & Wright, W. E. (2020, June). Communities of practice in online learning. *TESOL Connections*.

66. Herrera, L. J. P. (2020, August). Back to school after COVID-19: Considering emotional well-being. *TESOL Connections*.
67. Dzieciolowski, L. (2021, July). 9 ways new ELT teachers can succeed. *TESOL Connections*.
68. Baecher, L. (2022, July). Exploring creativity in TESOL professional learning. *TESOL Connections*.
69. Johnson, N. K., & Brun-Mercer, N. (2022, November). Placing identity at the epicentre of socially just classrooms. *TESOL Connections*.
70. Bradley, N., & Walter, J. R. (2023, June). Ongoing professional development for busy teacher teams. *TESOL Connections*.
71. Rocca, S. (2023, June). Teacher research: Empowering teachers to empower students. *TESOL Connections*.
72. Baecher, L. (2023, June). 10 trending professional development topics in ELT. *TESOL Connections*.
- TESOLANZ Newsletter** (<https://www.tesolanz.org.nz/publications/newsletter/>)
73. Spoonley, P. (2019, Autumn). China challenges. *TESOLANZ Newsletter*, 31(1), 3. https://www.tesolanz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/TESOLANZ_Newsletter_Vol31_2019.pdf
74. Feryok, A., & Askaribigdeli, R. (2020, Winter). Professional development of a novice TESOL teacher. *TESOLANZ Newsletter*, 35(2), 17. https://www.tesolanz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/TESOLANZ_Newsletter_Vol35-2_2020.pdf

75. Spoonley, P. (2023, Autumn). A new age in international education. *TESOLANZ Newsletter*, 43(1), 1. https://www.tesolanz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/TESOLANZ_Newsletter_Vol43-1_2023.pdf

Humanising Language Teaching

Twelve Important Traits of an Ideal EFL Teacher

- Brooks Slaybaugh, Japan

Brooks Slaybaugh is a university teacher in Japan, in the Tokyo area. He also works as a speaking examiner and TOEFL instructor. He is interested in assessment. Email: bslybaugh05446@yahoo.com

In my opinion, teachers need to be mindful of traits such as these in order to be better at teaching. These are traits I have considered in the time I have been teaching for over twenty years, mostly in Japan. My goal has been to realize these traits in my teaching. But sometimes I need to be reminded of them.

- Patience
- Empathy
- Rapport
- Being serious about teaching the subject matter
- Taking care of oneself
- High expectations
- Sense of duty
- Global awareness
- Drawing out the potential of students
- Being able to work well with other teachers
- Being humble
- Ability to reflect

Patience – Lesson plans do not always work. Not all students learn the same way. Some students do well and some do poorly. Adolescents are not always easy to teach, nor are they always polite. Patience and the teacher's composure may be the most important traits in teaching, as things do not always go to plan, and the better teachers learn to expect the unexpected and make adjustments to their lesson plans during the lesson. Teachers need to focus on the goal of teaching and should not become distracted by other things.

Empathy – The teenage years can be challenging as the young can be plagued by self-doubt. Adolescence is a challenging time as students have much to learn and it can be overwhelming for them. Good teachers remember what it was like to be young, even as they continue to age. Good teachers try to think how their students are feeling and what they may be going through. Instead of disliking a bad attitude, teachers should consider why a student is behaving in a certain way. Maybe what students need to learn most is time management, and about balancing their schedule when they may have other things on their minds. Some students try to do more than they are able to do, since they may be trying to please others.

Rapport – Teachers should get to know their students as individuals and to get to know their hobbies and interests, as teaching is about people. Some students have long commutes or are busy in their clubs, and so their minds can be distracted by different things. That is why it is important to get to know one's students, in order to identify any potential issues the students may have, in case they have any academic difficulties. Small talk is important.

Being serious about teaching the subject matter – There is not just one way to teach and good teachers try to be creative and try to search for different ways to teach and to assess. Some ways of teaching are not effective in getting some students to learn. Sometimes teachers need to adjust their way of teaching and need to spend more time on review, or need to expand on the subject matter.

Taking care of oneself – Teaching is not an easy profession. It takes a lot of energy and teachers must make sure to take care of themselves in order to be productive. Working six days a week is not uncommon, so teachers should make

sure they can get enough rest and find positive ways to relieve any stress. I do this by getting exercise and by walking my dogs. Walking clears my mind.

Sense of duty – Teachers that are in charge of something like clubs or homerooms have to work extra and need to consider the well-being of their students. This goes beyond what they do in a normal class. Running a club will challenge a teacher to be more flexible and more patient. Teachers must listen more to their students and need to have good rapport in order to have a club which goes well. Some clubs can be busy and teachers must share clubs with other teachers, and so they need to be flexible about scheduling.

Global awareness – Good EFL teachers know more about the world since they have traveled. I learned other languages, and have seen firsthand how people in different cultures have lived. One can gain a different perspective on life by living in a different culture. Teachers gain a lot by living and learning the languages of different countries. This cannot be learned just by reading books. Teachers who travel also learn a different way of perceiving life. Teachers who have lived in other countries can serve as a model and as a guide for their students. They can encourage them to travel and study abroad. I have worked in Japan, Morocco, Poland, and Russia. I can share what I learned with my students. I know what it is like to be a member of a minority.

Drawing out the potential of students – Some students do well and some do not. Standards are needed to ensure that all students reach a basic level of competence. Teachers should not be satisfied with students who merely have an adequate performance. Teachers need to push their students to be the best they can be. Failure is simple but success does not always come easy. Teachers can identify students that have potential to do better while maintaining standards for all students regardless of their perceived ability.

Being able to work well with other teachers – Teaching is more than just teaching in a classroom. In order to run a school, teachers must collaborate when it comes to meetings, clubs and school events. Students come and go, but it is the teachers who will be there year after year.

Being humble – Classes can be different depending on the groups of students. Teachers can be challenged by teaching different levels, multilevel classes or students with different levels of motivation. Not all lessons are a success but teachers have to stay positive and think about tomorrow. Good teachers realize that it is not about them, but it is all about finding new or effective ways for students to learn.

Being able to reflect – Teachers can always improve and can learn new things. Some teachers do the same thing again and again, but if they become bored, they can lose their students. In addition, teachers need to think about what aspects of a lesson did not go well, but must not be too hard on themselves, either. Teachers need to stay positive and need to know that half of teaching is learning.

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TESOL Connections
Keeping English language professionals connected

9 Ways New ELT Teachers Can Succeed

by [Laura Dzieciolowski](#)

Much like language production itself, teaching is a complex cognitive process that requires mastery of both practice and theory. All teachers experience some failures throughout their career and reevaluate to learn better methods. This is a natural part of the process, and, just like everything else in life, the learning never stops. I present to you the teaching hacks that I would tell myself if I could go back in time to the beginning of my career and speak to early 20s Laura, trembling in front of her teaching practicum students.

1. Value Your Time off Work

Having a social life and interests outside of work allows you to be healthy and happy, which in turn enables you to approach your work with a better mindset. You do not need to make yourself available to your boss, coworkers, and students 24/7 to be a great teacher. If you are not someone who is able to ignore work emails during evenings and weekends, consider having a separate email for work where you can pause your inbox. Gmail users can download Google's free extension [Boomerang](#) to accomplish this.

Also, remember to consider your time off when you decide what contact information to share with your students. For example, if you share a messaging app contact, you could very well end up receiving messages at all hours of the night or during your vacations. Valuing and protecting your free time is an important part of setting boundaries for your work-life balance, which is an important part of self-care.

2. Spend Less Time Lesson Planning

New teachers will often craft the most perfect and meticulous lesson plans for each class to feel safe and prepared. Often, these teachers stay in the office later than any of their coworkers. There is nothing wrong with being prepared, but there is a point where the amount of time invested in adding nitpicky details to a lesson plan stops correlating to a better lesson. Learn what that amount of time is because you will burn out if you spend hours and hours lesson planning every day.

3. Talk to Senior Coworkers

One of the most productive ways to save time lesson planning is to talk to your coworkers. Why reinvent the wheel? Make friends with senior and experienced coworkers and ask to share materials and insights on what lessons have worked before for students in this context.

Most people will be happy to help you and pass on their experience and knowledge. Your coworkers are the only ones who understand exactly what it is like to teach and work in your context.

4. Use Textbooks Mindfully

Textbooks are meant to be a resource to help the teacher facilitate learning and practice in class, not determine the semester curriculum. Because there is no one standardized textbook that can be adapted to every teaching context and proficiency level, it is the teacher's job to evaluate which content from the book best suits the class's needs and adapt it as necessary. A few important adaptations you should consider:

- Personalize examples to students' home languages and interests.
- Omit irrelevant exercises.
- Supplement important lessons that were not fully grasped from the exercises provided with other sources.

5. Research What Your Students Need

To best help students achieve their professional goals, a teacher needs to understand what students want to accomplish after the class and what skills they need to do so. Here are a few ways to figure this out:

- Talk to your senior coworkers about what students in the past have needed, and to students about their goals.
- Give your students a needs analysis survey at the beginning of class.
- Check the job adverts or university requirements for studying abroad that your students are interested in.

Use the information you find to inform your teaching. If your students need to improve their speaking, scaffold them into having discussions and give them lots of time to speak in class. If the reality is that your students need to have a certain TOEIC, TOEFL, Cambridge or IELTS score to achieve their professional goals, set aside time in class to practice test-taking exercises. Focus on the most important skills that your students need to acquire to achieve their academic and professional goals.

6. Create a Student-Centered Classroom

Effective teachers know that communicating in another language is not simply amassing a collection of information, but rather developing a complex cognitive skill that requires a lot of practice. You can ensure that you are providing your students enough space to practice production by analyzing your lecturing time.

One way to reflect is to record your teaching. A general guideline accepted by the language teaching community is that a teacher's talking time should not exceed 30% of a lesson. Of course, the appropriate amount of time a teacher should talk depends on the objectives of a lesson and where it fits into the overall course (Nunan, 1991). In general, though, if you find yourself lecturing more than 30% of the time in most of your classes, it is probably time to

Appendix L: Sample of Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska (PhD Candidate)

Interviewee: Helen (ESOL Teacher, Higher Education, Australia & China)

Interview setting: Zoom, December 2022, Friday, at 10 am (Melbourne, AEST)

Interview time duration: 50 min.

Excerpt of verbatim transcription:

- B How do you see your role as an ESOL teacher?**
- 10:10 H So, maybe teaching is two-way. The Chinese characters for teaching..., there are actually two characters, so teaching is teaching and learning as a combined and compound word, so that's how we see teaching, so teaching is always two ways rather than one way. You teach students, but you also learn from the students at the same time, a mutual process, and that's how we conceptualise teaching in Chinese, while in English, I think teaching and learning are separate words. Yeah, and also in terms of identity-wise, you know, I'm thinking... The expectation of teachers' sacrifices is different, and teachers are supposed to devote, and even sacrifice for their profession, which is not seen as, it may not be seen as in English or western, Australian context, but in the Chinese context. If I used a metaphor to describe a good teacher, so, a teacher is seen as a candle; you need to burn this candle or yourself in order to light up the room. So, teachers are seen not just as authoritative figures, teachers are seen as someone, a moral figure, a role model for students.
- 14:00 **B Very interesting, I'd like to hear more about this; maybe we can go through the timeline, maybe we can first talk about your early-career teaching in China, the concept of teaching and learning, the value-driven force of teaching that you mentioned and what being a teacher means to you. How has this impacted your belief about a teacher's role? How has that impacted your career choice? Did it have any influence at all?**
- 14:48 H I would say, actually in my life long impact on me because so far I still feel that... when I compare myself to other colleagues who have been teaching here the colleagues who have been teaching or who have taught Asian context or European context very experienced EAL teacher anyway, but I still think we come from very different backgrounds they also see boundary between teachers and students and that there should be a boundary kept, whether teachers need to be very caring and we have that pastoral role to play or mentoring role to play but they are very, and don't know how to say, they know how to keep that under it, keep work separate, keep their life separate from their work like some of them may never check student email or they may never reply but I always do, I always, you know, I feel, how to put it [laughs], I don't necessarily do that, I know I should but I don't and also I feel that I have that kind of role as, you know, sometimes I feel I'm mothering the students, in a way I'm not just the teacher, I also act as a parent, because that's part of my job, to be, you know, caring, not just about their study, but also other aspects, mental health, their social life for example, so that's how I ahm [thinking] , how I behave as a teacher maybe, so I actually I'm quite

different, I'm more immersed in this kind of teaching role which goes beyond my job description and sometimes it... from the point of view of keeping my own well-being because it interferes with my personal life. Or maybe that's just me, but I don't know how big the cultural influence is.

- 17:56 **B** **Yeah, I was thinking about the metaphor of a teacher as a candle: I come from Macedonia and we have a similar metaphor for what teaching is... we do divide teaching and learning, but we have this idea of illumination and a word for it that basically what a teacher is, someone who illuminates. So, it's very interesting and...**
- 18:36 **H** Similar.
- 18:37 **B** **Yes, similar to the candle metaphor, like the path of the students. Yes.**
- 18:43 **H** That's right. That's right. Yeah. So, when I sort of said this to other colleagues, especially Australian colleagues, they find me..., they say, that's crazy. You don't sacrifice. Yeah, they say you never sacrifice yourself for, you know, a job like this, right. You know, teaching is still a job, but you don't sacrifice yourself. Yeah, but that's how we are; maybe these days is different because that was like 20 years ago. Yeah. So that's kind of maybe these days the training is very different and maybe it's a bit more westernised, I'm not sure, yeah, I'm not quite sure about that.
- 19:28 **B** **And talking about the values, the ideas, and beliefs you have about your teaching, how do you think they... in my experience, they change a bit over time, and how do you think they changed over time for you?**
- 19:44 **H** The idea of teaching, right?
- 19:46 **B** **Yes, these beliefs about what teaching is and the values and beliefs that go with it.**
- 19:57 **H** Changes... I'm yeah, I see the changes as..., you know, it's a bit hard to think about it; I think maybe it's sort of evolved, right, my beliefs evolved naturally, as I do, as I teach in different, you know, in different roles or in different jobs, it kind of evolved but I don't think my core beliefs have really changed that much over the years. So it's always about, I think it's always about how to be a conscientious teacher, you know, whether we're, whether I have been responsible enough, right, to cater for students' needs, you know, whether I have been able to, you know, I just put it, whether I'm the kind of teacher that students would perceive me to be, you know, that's always at the centre of my concern, you know, to be a good teacher. So, it's not just knowing about the subject matter; you need to know about writing, you need to have sterile knowledge about your subject matter. So, that's one of the key things that's still there. I need to be the knowledge, the fountain of knowledge in a way because I still impact knowledge. Okay. And then, but it's very much, I think it's sort of changed, at the start, I was a bit more teacher-centred, okay, I did not... and later, I moved on to more... and also, it's related to my area of research, it is on second language learning or acquisition. So, my focus is on learners rather than on teachers, so that sort of helped shape my beliefs as well. Yeah. Okay. So, that's where my research experience comes in, right. Yeah, and now it's a bit more about oh, now, yeah, because we've been through pandemic and in this posting of shifting from face-to-face, and then online, and then to hybrid classes and then back to face-to-face teaching again, so, I do question about my..., you know, yeah, I remember when I... because I've been teaching on campus for, you know, for half a year already and then I did hybrid, and then now, complete face-to-face but moving back to the campus and the start of that I did actually have questions about my, you know, do I still have the adequate skill set to actually be in the classroom? So, that was the question I

had, and then I wasn't sure. And I feel I might, I might not be, maybe I'm not good enough for this profession. So, that's how I felt because moving back into class from online, teaching online for three years, I was comfortable, you know, with online teaching, and then moving back and to interact with students in person and also, we had these technological issues, you know, we moved, we're using Windows now, so it's all brand-new technology in the classroom. So, trying to handle that, and then trying to handle hybrid classes, which is more about technological issues or classroom management, right, so, all of those issues had a negative impact on my teaching quality, yeah, so I actually had a bit of doubt a few months ago, yeah, but now it's fine. Yeah.

23:44 **B** **And how did you manage to go over these doubts about this, by yourself or did you engage the problem with others?**

23:58 H Hmm. Okay, that's a good comment, good question actually. I think the first few weeks were very, very stressful. Yeah, I was even thinking, "*Should I leave this job?*" right, I guess I don't feel... I don't... it's too stressful; it's not just me, because other colleagues had similar feelings, and then I think the support from the management, you know, my manager, my subject leaders, they were very supportive and also support from other colleagues because they actually shared their experience of, you know, all this negative experience with technology, back to face-to-face teaching or hybrid classes, they actually share their experience with you and you don't necessarily feel alone, you're not alone and then, you know, it's very similar for everyone. I think that kind of helped. And there was some PD available, so it's more tailored, you know, individualised kind of PD, to help us set up hybrid classes, you know, how to teach; that kind of PD was available at the college level in a way. Yeah.

25:18 **B** **Yeah. And thinking about teaching English in general, what would you say, do you think to be a more individual or collaborative practice?**

25:33 H Individual or collaborative? Maybe a bit of both? Yeah, a bit of both. I can work in either mode, but I still think I need to..., I mean, how to say I have my own teaching philosophy, right, so, this is my approach, and I believe in bilingual education, okay, so I believe in that and I don't see, for example, I don't see like some teachers might say, students, you know, when they when they hear students using their first language in class, they don't like it, okay, I don't see it that way, I do... and I tell my students, I say, *don't see yourself as a language or English learner*, yeah, so, *don't put yourself in that position* because it's..., from a language acquisition point of view, it's, you know, *as an adult learner, it's impossible for you to achieve, you know, native-like proficiency*, and that's for sure, right. So, don't fit that kind of benchmark, you know, or a realistic goal for yourself, yeah, because it's not actually going to help you. So, I say, *see yourself as a competent, bilingual, multilingual or even translingual users or speakers*, right. So, this is how you would frame yourself. Where Am I Now? I'm talking about... yeah, because I have my... that's my teaching philosophy and also approach, which might be different from other teachers, and I don't want to compromise, yeah, because the school policy is English-only policy, and I don't necessarily agree with that. I think, well, it's their language right to be able to use their mother tongue or other languages, it's their language right; although we need to make sure it's an English-rich classroom, you know, we need to help them find that balance. But still, yeah, that's my stance, and I don't want to compromise in my teaching. So, when my, you know, beliefs contradict with others, you know, even at an institutional level, you know, contradict with the institutional kind of policy, I would still stick to my belief, because I know, that's

right. Yeah, because there's a large body of research from bilingual, multilingual education to show the benefits, right. So, I think, for me, it is individual, I know what to do, but I also like to collaborate with other teachers, you know, to see other different perspectives. That's the main thing, or to see, we exchanged materials, and we see, you know, to experiment with other approaches, you need to be open to that. So, I think it's been about maybe 70% for individual, or 60% individual and 30-40% of collaborative.

28:34 **B** **Yes. Yes, I find this idea of not compromising very interesting, and I see it again, driven by your values and core, about what teaching is. But can you maybe... because you've mentioned how you have changed environments and the context from where you started off as a teacher, then through..., you've been doing your research and your PhD and coming to Australia and it's a completely different context; so, I was thinking, maybe, did you ever find yourself in a situation where your beliefs contradicted what you were asked to do in your classroom?**

29:12 **H** Always, always, especially, yeah, I'm trying to think because even my research, you know, I when I did my, my PhD, I did it in second language acquisition. So, the whole SLA field was kind of built on a deficiency model of research; the students are usually seen as learners and then we try to help students by correcting errors, right, so, it's about error correction, and how to achieve, you know, native speaker or native-like proficiency, right. So, you see, it's kind of subordinate in a way and that's, that was actually in my research background that I started with and then that was the area I published in, and then I..., and what I found in the Australian context as a different workplace where I taught especially foundational ELICOS courses at different places, I do find their English only policy and also, their approach to teaching is consistent with what's advocated in a traditional second language acquisition field, okay, they do match up, but I actually had doubts, because I, you know, I shifted... kind of shifted way to a bit more like bilingual or multilingual education, right, and then maybe a little bit towards that critical, you know, critical approach to looking at the..., even language education area of..., I think, the whole thing about decolonization in language education, right, so the whole thing about..., what's that called, linguistic imperialism, you know, that sort of thing in social linguistics, so that was..., I found..., that was when I was at ... University, I was teaching in their English as an international language program. So, I found there's a bit more theoretical underpinning of that, you know, a different approach, or a different perspective. So, I started to shift away from SLA to looking at English language education, as... in a more critical light, yeah. So that's sort of shaped my belief in a way to give it a bit of a theoretical underpinning but I do find at pretty much the majority of workplaces, especially ELICOS and foundation level, English teaching is always seen as a supplementary, right, so you actually help students to achieve that unachievable goal: Why would just set that kind of goal if students are unlikely to get there? And why do you use native speakers as the benchmark? And also, there are variations in native speaking proficiency, right. So, how do you define a native speaker's proficiency? But unfortunately, that's still the mainstream kind of, you know, institutional policies, pretty much every place where I've worked, but depending on which place I'm in, at some schools, they... You have to teach what's there, even though sometimes you don't believe, you know, you have a different belief, but you still have to deliver the materials in a way that's more aligned to their institutional goals. Well, I would say that at our current place, we have a lot of flexibility. We have teaching materials, but we are also

encouraged to use our own, as long as we can achieve the same aims or outcomes. So, I need a place where I can breathe, yeah, I need a place where I feel comfortable, it should be..., how to call it, a professional space, right, where I should feel comfortable.

- 33:28 **B** **Thinking about your teaching now, what would you consider to be a successful day? It may sound a bit naive, but I'm really intrigued to know what you consider a successful day in the workplace?**
- 33:44 H A successful day? Um, maybe I wouldn't call it successful, I might call it satisfactory, yeah, maybe a day when I feel that, you know, what I've done in the classroom, and then how students responded to the materials and how they responded to the tasks and how they responded to me as a whole, if they..., if it's about average, I would call it satisfactory, you know, so if I feel okay, I can walk out of the classroom, and then I can see the smiles on the student faces and then if they feel relaxed, they feel that they have achieved something, so, I would call that a successful day. No matter what I teach, but I wouldn't call it successful.
- 34:43 **B** **Yes, maybe it's the wrong term...**
- 34:45 H No, no, not necessarily because... Maybe a good day, yeah, a good day. Yeah.
- 34:57 **B** **Yeah. And in terms of establishing the connection with students, when you maybe think to yourself, "Okay, today was a good day", would you say that is the most rewarding thing about your career?**
- 35:20 K I think so, yeah, I think so because sometimes you plan a lesson really, really well, right, and have been putting a lot of effort and trying to think about, *Okay, what I'm going to do tomorrow*, and then *how am I going to organise my materials?* and *what should I do first and next?* and then you know, and you feel you've done a lot of preparation, and then the lesson is planned really well but it doesn't necessarily work out in class, because students were busy with other assignments, or they, they didn't actually sleep because they had to finish their, you know, history or literature or even drama assignments and then they had no time for you know, your subject. So, it couldn't work out. And then, so that's not necessarily good but sometimes, you feel your lessons are prepared, you know what you do, and you walk into the class, and you just respond to students' needs, okay, so you make adjustments as you go and you feel okay, they're not ready, or they are not up to it or they are not motivated, right, or maybe the, you know, the topic, the topics aren't, it's not interesting for the students, right. So, you might want to change even on the spot, you make changes, and then it actually works out quite well, yeah. So, I see that as a good lesson.
- 36:46 **B** **Yes. This style..., approaching students in a more holistic, nurturing way, has it always been like that for you, or is that something you've developed with experience?**
- 37:01 K I think... Yeah. Good question! I actually really liked the questions you asked throughout the interview. You are very, I would say you're very perceptive. Yeah. So, you're very observant. So, I think I kind of developed that, especially in the last few years, where, I think, at the college level, there was really a focus on students' mental wellbeing, where I work, because we work with young students, some are underage students. So, we also had a lot of training, we had some Mental Health First Aid training as teachers as well; while before, right, before previous... in previous years, it was more about pedagogical, you know, pedagogical underpinning or pedagogical approach when you teach but now I moved a bit more to looking at especially how... I think about teaching as in how my teaching is compatible with developing students' overall well-being, okay, including mental well-being; besides mental well-being, there's also their social

well-being because they're inseparable, right. So, it's not just academic study, it's all about how they develop and then how they feel about themselves, right. I think I would think about this change actually occurred maybe naturally, quite naturally, yeah, in the last few years, especially during the pandemic, and also post-pandemic and now I'm even looking at, you know, I'm even looking at... because there are some courses on also about trauma, you know, trauma response kind of education, so, I think I'm kind of a bit more interested in that, rather than only focusing on pedagogical values of teaching. So, that's a new change for me, which is also positive. And I also think about, you know, teachers, we need to also look at our well-being right, how we develop with students, and another point I want to add in is I'm a bit more aware of special needs students and the needs of special outside students; special needs students or students who need extra support, because I'm a bit better with picking up the signs of, you know, students might be you know, with learning disabilities, for example, or maybe on the autism spectrum, for example, okay, or if they have dyslexia or dyspraxia, like reading writing difficulties. So, I'm actually a lot better now picking up those signs, because I know some students struggle, it's not because they are linguistically weak, it may be... there may be something more there, right, yeah, or maybe students come from dysfunctional families, right. So, we actually need to..., even though I'm a subject teacher on English for Academic Purposes, but we actually have that pastoral role to play as well.

Appendix M: Sample of Generating Initial Codes

This appendix provides an illustrative example of how initial codes were generated from a short passage of a verbatim interview transcript during Phase 2 of thematic analysis. The excerpt is presented with the researcher's provisional code labels applied to meaningful segments of text.

Interviewer: Biljana Ivanova-Miloshevska (PhD Candidate)

Interviewee: Helen (ESOL Teacher, Higher Education, Australia & China)

Interview setting: Zoom, December 2022, Friday, at 10 am (Melbourne, AEST)

Interview time duration: 50 min.

	B	How do you see your role as an ESOL teacher?	
10:10	H	So, maybe teaching is two-way. The Chinese characters for teaching..., there are actually two characters, so teaching is teaching and learning as a combined and compound word, so that's how we see teaching, so teaching is always two ways rather than one way. You teach students, but you also learn from the students at the same time, a mutual process, and that's how we conceptualise teaching in Chinese, while in English, I think teaching and learning are separate words. Yeah, and also in terms of identity-wise, you know, I'm thinking... The expectation of teachers' sacrifices is different, and teachers are supposed to devote, and even sacrifice for their profession, which is not seen as, it may not be seen as in English or western, Australian context, but in the Chinese context. If I used a metaphor to describe a good teacher, so, a teacher is seen as a candle; you need to burn this candle or yourself in order to light up the room. So, teachers are seen not just as authoritative figures, teachers are seen as someone, a moral figure, a role model for students.	<p>Culture and the concept of teaching</p> <p>Teaching as a mutual process of growth for students and teachers</p> <p>Cultural differences in professional expectations and roles</p> <p>Understanding of the teacher's role as a candle</p> <p>Teachers as moral figures (role models)</p>
14:00	B	Very interesting, I'd like to hear more about this; maybe we can go through the timeline, maybe we can first talk about your early-career teaching in China, the concept of teaching and learning, the value-driven force of teaching that you mentioned and what being a teacher means to you. How has this impacted your belief about a teacher's role? How has that impacted your career choice? Did it have any influence at all?	
14:48	H	I would say, actually in my life long impact on me because so far I still feel that... when I compare myself to other colleagues who have been teaching here the colleagues who have been teaching or who have taught Asian context or European context very experienced EAL teacher anyway, but I still think we come from very different	Cultural background influences teacher beliefs about teaching and teachers' roles

		backgrounds they also see boundary between teachers and students and that there should be a boundary kept, whether teachers need to be very caring and we have that pastoral role to play or mentoring role to play but they are very, and don't know how to say, they know how to keep that under it, keep work separate, keep their life separate from their work like some of them may never check student email or they may never reply but I always do, I always, you know, I feel, how to put it [laughs], I don't necessarily do that, I know I should but I don't and also I feel that I have that kind of role as, you know, sometimes I feel I'm mothering the students, in a way I'm not just the teacher, I also act as a parent, because that's part of my job, to be, you know, caring, not just about their study, but also other aspects, mental health, their social life for example, so that's how I ahm [thinking] , how I behave as a teacher maybe, so I actually I'm quite different, I'm more immersed in this kind of teaching role which goes beyond my job description and sometimes it... from the point of view of keeping my own well-being because it interferes with my personal life. Or maybe that's just me, but I don't know how big the cultural influence is.	Teacher's role beyond the job description Caring for students' mental health/social life as an additional role beyond job requirements Being a caring teacher Questioning cultural influence on the teacher role
17:56	B	Yeah, I was thinking about the metaphor of a teacher as a candle: I come from Macedonia and we have a similar metaphor for what teaching is... we do divide teaching and learning, but we have this idea of illumination and a word for it that basically what a teacher is, someone who illuminates. So, it's very interesting and...	
18:36	H	Similar.	
18:37	B	Yes, similar to the candle metaphor, like the path of the students. Yes.	
18:43	H	That's right. That's right. Yeah. So, when I sort of said this to other colleagues, especially Australian colleagues, they find me..., they say, that's crazy. You don't sacrifice. Yeah, they say you never sacrifice yourself for, you know, a job like this, right. You know, teaching is still a job, but you don't sacrifice yourself. Yeah, but that's how we are; maybe these days is different because that was like 20 years ago. Yeah. So that's kind of maybe these days the training is very different and maybe it's a bit more westernised, I'm not sure, yeah, I'm not quite sure about that.	Sacrifice perceived as part of the teacher's role Changes in teacher education as an influence on teachers' perception of their roles
19:28	B	And talking about the values, the ideas, and beliefs you have about your teaching, how do you think they... in my experience, they change a bit over time, and how do you think they changed over time for you?	
19:44	H	The idea of teaching, right?	
19:46	B	Yes, these beliefs about what teaching is and the values and beliefs that go with it.	
19:57	H	Changes... I'm yeah, I see the changes as..., you know, it's a bit hard to think about it; I think maybe it's sort of evolved, right, my beliefs evolved naturally, as I do, as I teach in	Evolution of teaching beliefs in relation to work contexts

	<p>different, you know, in different roles or in different jobs, it kind of evolved but I don't think my core beliefs have really changed that much over the years. So it's always about, I think it's always about how to be a conscientious teacher, you know, whether we're, whether I have been responsible enough, right, to cater for students' needs, you know, whether I have been able to, you know, I just put it, whether I'm the kind of teacher that students would perceive me to be, you know, that's always at the centre of my concern, you know, to be a good teacher. So, it's not just knowing about the subject matter; you need to know about writing, you need to have sterile knowledge about your subject matter. So, that's one of the key things that's still there. I need to be the knowledge, the fountain of knowledge in a way because I still impact knowledge. Okay. And then, but it's very much, I think it's sort of changed, at the start, I was a bit more teacher-centred, okay, I did not... and later, I moved on to more... and also, it's related to my area of research, it is on second language learning or acquisition. So, my focus is on learners rather than on teachers, so that sort of helped shape my beliefs as well. Yeah. Okay. So, that's where my research experience comes in, right. Yeah, and now it's a bit more about oh, now, yeah, because we've been through pandemic and in this posting of shifting from face-to-face, and then online, and then to hybrid classes and then back to face-to-face teaching again, so, I do question about my..., you know, yeah, I remember when I... because I've been teaching on campus for, you know, for half a year already and then I did hybrid, and then now, complete face-to-face but moving back to the campus and the start of that I did actually have questions about my, you know, do I still have the adequate skill set to actually be in the classroom? So, that was the question I had, and then I wasn't sure. And I feel I might, I might not be, maybe I'm not good enough for this profession. So, that's how I felt because moving back into class from online, teaching online for three years, I was comfortable, you know, with online teaching, and then moving back and to interact with students in person and also, we had these technological issues, you know, we moved, we're using Windows now, so it's all brand-new technology in the classroom. So, trying to handle that, and then trying to handle hybrid classes, which is more about technological issues or classroom management, right, so, all of those issues had a negative impact on my teaching quality, yeah, so I actually had a bit of doubt a few months ago, yeah, but now it's fine. Yeah.</p>	<p>Core beliefs about teaching as unchanged</p> <p>Catering to students' needs</p> <p>Being a 'good teacher'</p> <p>Not just about teaching the content</p> <p>Evolving teaching beliefs: from teacher- to student-centred practice</p> <p>Influence of research practice on the evolution of teaching beliefs</p> <p>Post-pandemic challenges: questioning F2F teaching skills</p> <p>Emotions of self-doubt and insecurity (change of teaching context – back to F2F) Perezhivanie?</p> <p>Technological and classroom management challenges</p>
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Appendix N: Sample of Colour-coded Data Extracts

This appendix provides a visual record of manual clustering of coded extracts during Phases 3 and 4 of thematic analysis. The image shows colour-coded data extracts grouped into candidate (sub)themes during theme review and refinement.



Appendix O: Samples of the Initial and Revised Thematic Maps

This appendix presents examples of thematic map development during Phases 4 and 5 of thematic analysis. The first map illustrates early candidate themes and tentative relationships across themes/subthemes. The second is a revised map that shows the refined thematic structure.

