Metaphors as Proxies for Identity: A Case Study of a Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) Teacher

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ABSTRACT

Metaphor and metaphorical expressions are phenomena of interest in teacher education research and research on teacher identity. However, little attention has been given to teaching of English to young learners (TEYL) teachers' metaphorical expressions, and what these expressions might tell us about their identities and experiences. This study explores the metaphorical expression constructed by an experienced teacher to describe what it means to be a TEYL teacher in the ESL context. Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall interviews, and a metaphor elicitation prompt: 'Who do you see yourself as a teacher?' The results revealed that while the metaphorical expression of 'mother' stands out as a concept that associates teaching with being nurturing, the teacher's enactment of other roles; projected as 'knowledge provider', 'law enforcer', and 'facilitator', is more strongly oriented to the behaviourist idea of teaching. These findings shed light on the role of identity in expanding the in-service teachers' perspective of teachers and teaching using self-constructed metaphors. A major recommendation of this study is that teacher educators need to promote reflective practice in TESL teacher training to critically explore the concept of knowledge about self.

Keywords: teacher identity; metaphors; experienced teachers; teaching English language to young learners (TEYL); ESL classroom

INTRODUCTION

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in understanding identity in social science research. Identity has become an analytical tool to elucidate the relationship between schools and its outcome to the society (Gee 2001). Central to educational research on identity is the concept of teacher identity. Research on teacher identity raises awareness of what it means to be a teacher by exploring different aspects of identity (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009). Therefore, teacher identity has emerged as a powerful platform in language teaching because Varghese and her colleagues (2005) argue that "in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are" (p. 22).

The last two decades have seen a growing trend towards teacher identity among the non-English-speaking teachers. As the majority of the TESOL teachers are non-native speakers (Braine 2010, Kachru & Nelson 2006), the position of teachers in teaching has been discussed in terms of how teachers negotiate their multiple identities. Despite the increasing numbers of children learning English globally in primary schools, informed discussion of TEYL teachers has mainly focussed on literacy, effective pedagogy, integration of technology, teacher education and policy development (Copland & Garton 2014). What is known about teacher identity is largely derived from the studies conducted within the population of preservice teachers and graduate programmes (Ahmadi, Samad & Noordin 2013, Thomson 2015), secondary school teachers (Giovanelli 2015, Zhao & Poulson 2006), and university teachers (Lankveld et al. 2016, Nevgi & Löfström in press). Although teacher identity is an emergent theme in the fields of language teaching, what remains unclear is how teachers who are engaged with young learners conceptualise their identity (Butler 2015,

Copland, Garton & Burns 2014). To counterbalance the paucity of emphasis on primary ESL teachers, it is a timely effort to expand the research on ESL teacher identity by examining teachers of English to young learners (Copland & Garton 2014, James 2010). To address this gap, this study concentrates on the identity of the in-service primary school teacher with a focus on the use of metaphors in order to understand teacher identity.

Metaphor is a powerful tool to uncover identity that can provide different insights compared to other methods commonly used to investigate identity such as the use of narrative inquiry, interviews, and journal reflections. Metaphors have been defined as a tool for "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, p. 5). Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) view metaphors as a vehicle for teachers to "present their beliefs and/or experiences with teaching" (p. 763). A considerable amount of literature has been published on how teachers use metaphors to express their identities (Farrell 2006, Erickson & Pinnegar 2016, Zhao, Coombs & Zhao 2010). Given the established value of metaphors for understanding teacher identity, the research presented in this article is one response to this call. It explores how one experienced ESL teacher in a primary school constructs her identities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY

In general education, different ways to conceptualise human learning leads to different understandings of teacher professional identity (Johnson 2009, Johnson & Golombek 2011). The shift from traditional to sociocultural perspective "place[s] identity and discourse at the heart of language teaching and learning" (Miller 2009, p. 172). Despite scholars' attempt to define the concept of identity, there is no clear agreement provided to define language teacher identity (Han 2016). Identity is defined as "a construct, mental image, or model of what being a teacher means, that guides teachers' practices as they aim to enact being a teacher through specific arts of teacher identity" (Pennington 2015, p. 16). Hence, identity is a mental model used by teachers to construct their understanding of how to be a teacher, how to act as a teacher, and how to relate to others (Sachs 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to specify a definition of identity in this article to give readers a sense of what kind of identity this research focuses on.

Identity shifts over time and can be influenced by the school context. This means that teachers' professional identities can gradually shift from a focus on subject matter expertise to cultural and pedagogical expertise. For instance, Farrell (2006) examines three pre-service teachers' identity during practicum and concludes that the shift of roles such as a mother, a mentor, and a facilitator indicates changes in their perspective on teaching and learning. In a more recent study, it was found that mothers, artists, and trial judges are the three main features of primary school teachers' role identities enacted in a foreign language context (Nguyen 2016). What is yet to be understood in the Malaysian context, however, is the circumstances that justify how teachers exhibit different classroom practices to negotiate their multiple identities at specific teaching episodes.

From a practical perspective, teacher identity is perceived as the roles enacted by teachers. What teachers do in the class indicates that "the concept of identity reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings" (Burns & Richards 2009, p. 5). Hence, teacher identity in the field of language teaching can potentially be understood through the three essential characteristics as outlined by Varghese et al. (2005, p. 35):

i. Identity as multiple, shifting and in conflict
ii. Identity is crucially related to social, cultural and political contexts
iii. Identity as being constructed, maintained and negotiated primarily through discourse

These three themes illustrate that language teachers construct their identity from multiple shifting, context-bound and conflicting factors. Teachers are not born with a fixed list of identities. Rather, language teacher identity is the result of teachers' engagement within their social and cultural affiliations such as race, religious beliefs, gender, language background, and socioeconomic status (Gu & Benson 2014, Riyanti 2017, Simon-Maeda 2004).

METAPHORS AS PROXIES FOR UNDERSTANDING TEACHER IDENTITY

In educational research, metaphors have been used to explore various teaching aspects (Mahlios, Massengill-Shaw & Barry 2010, Oxford et al. 1998). Massengill-Shaw and Mahlios (2008) conceptualise metaphors as "analogic devices that lie beneath the service of a person's awareness and serve as a cognitive device … as a means for framing and defining experience in order to achieve meaning about one's life" (p. 35). As a device to frame experience, researchers have investigated metaphors to understand aspects such as beliefs in teaching (McGrath 2006, Seferoglu, Korkmazgil & Olçü 2009), professional knowledge (Zhao et al. 2010) and identity (Farrell 2011, Thomas & Beauchamp 2011). Metaphors structure teachers' perception, thought, and action and relate these aspects to what they do in the classroom. Personalised and institutionalised teacher identity, thus, is a catalyst for teachers to recognize that "teaching is a process to be navigated rather than inherited" (Huang & Varghese 2015, p. 73).

Metaphors are fundamental for teachers to explore the meaning and sense of self. Teachers use metaphors to narrate their personal and professional development of career paths and lives. Metaphoric images have the capacity to make implicit knowledge about teaching, multiple roles, and emotion become explicit (Fenwick 2000). Hence, metaphors not only function as proxies of professional thinking, but they have also been recognised as an archetype of teacher identity (Fenwick 2000, Saban 2006). Past studies about metaphors, apparently, provide a source of knowledge to inform teacher education in general and second language teacher education (SLTE) in particular (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009, Farrell 2006). The findings in these studies indicate that metaphors are the potential directory for both novice and pre-service teachers to gain confidence and have a clear idea of their own identity in becoming a teacher.

Studies about metaphors also reveal the different representation of the role in teaching. For instance, in his study on multiple identities, Farrell (2011) concluded that teachers played a significant role as intercultural mediator. As a teacher's role multiplies, Craig (2018) posits that metaphors serve "as proxies for teachers' experiences" (p. 300) to illuminate their state of knowing, doing and being. She highlighted the multiple roles of teachers projected through storied metaphors bridging their experience and meaning. This sense-making eventually scaffolds the process of teachers' knowledge creation. Hence, self-constructed metaphors function as a powerful tool in uncovering the embeddedness between teachers' knowledge and experience in situations they have not encountered.

In attempts to understand teacher identity in Malaysia, Zuwati Hasim and her colleagues (2014) and Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) use Oxford's et al. (1998) categories of metaphor to conceptualise pre-service and university teachers' roles. Oxford et al. propose four categories of conceptual metaphors: social order, cultural transmission, learner-centred growth, and social reform. Although both studies have investigated the conception of

teaching and the role of the language teacher, the teachers had to choose metaphors from a set of metaphors based on Oxford's et al. list of categories. None of the three studies relates to the findings to the conception of language teacher identity. Additionally, the research context does not involve practical experience in primary schools. Hence, exactly how TEYL teachers construct their identities through metaphorical role remains open for investigation.

To sustain the premise that metaphors are proxies for teacher identity, the current study explores how a teacher in a primary school understands herself and her roles through the metaphors she has constructed. This study highlights the role of identities enacted by the teacher-participant through the metaphorical expressions that she constructed.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

English emerges as a global language with its "unstoppable" (Graddol 1997, p. 2) trend of usage globally. Children in many Asia-Pacific countries, for example Malaysia, gain access to English language learning as a compulsory subject from their primary school years. As a result, teaching English to young learners (TEYL), an emergent branch of TESOL, required specialized skills and approaches in its pedagogy (Copland & Garton 2014, Ellis 2014). Up to now, previous studies about TEYL have been focusing on competence models and policies which are employed in teaching English language to children (Copland & Garton, 2014; Garton 2014). To date, research directly investigating TEYL teacher identity remains under-explored (Nguyen 2016a, Zein 2017). One overlooked fact about these teachers is that they are not only well-versed in the children's L1, but they also "have a greater repertoire of teaching skills and so can provide more language learning opportunities for language learning" (Copland & Yonetsugi 2016, p. 221).

In-depth understanding of TEYL teacher identity is important because it provides insight for the shift between personal and professional identity in the classroom practice. While challenges in teaching English to the ESL learners have been addressed in recent years (Copland, Garton & Burns 2014), there is a need to emphasize the particularity of teachers who deal directly with children. This is because not all of the findings about TESOL teachers are transferable to TEYL teachers. Moreover, some studies are inclined to focus on second language (L2) teachers' advantage to explain grammatical rules using L1 (Braine 2010, Selvi 2014). This advantage, unfortunately, is not applicable in teaching grammar to young learners because children tend to focus more on meaning rather than form of language (Lightbown & Spada 2013).

In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), a high demand for ESL teacher education in developing countries requires enhancement of the teachers' capability (Fatiha, Juliana & Saedah 2016). While TESOL teachers strive to improve the design and delivery of English as a second and foreign language context, TEYL teachers play an important role to foster positive motivational strategies and self-image to children because they are the main source of input for young learners (Pinter 2012). Because of this increasing demand and to account for a more in-depth understanding of TEYL teacher identity, the current study focuses on experienced in-service primary school teachers.

METHODOLOGY

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Selangor, a state in the central region of West Malaysia, serves as the context of the study because of the following reasons. Firstly, with 19.9% of the population, the Current Population Estimates Malaysia 2014-2016 statistics indicate that this state is recorded as the state with the highest percentage of population (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2016). Hence, Selangor represents the balance in the population of second language learners of the main ethnic groups in the most developed state in Malaysia (Muhammad et al. 2013, Yulita, Dollard & Idris 2017). Secondly, the research was conducted in one of the national primary schools in one district in this state. This school met the inclusion criteria of being a coeducational, non-religious and non-residential government primary school (Chong et al. 2017). Third, the school is also a high performing school. In a high performing school, teachers are recognized as possessing a unique and prominent identity to enact the school ethos, character, unique identity and competency in all educational aspects (Jamilah Ahmad & Yusuf Boon, 2011). Therefore, the decision to base the study only in one district in Selangor is to ensure greater rigour in examining the concept of identity within one specific context of language teaching.

THE PARTICIPANT AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

The participant of this study is a teacher in an affluent industrial area situated in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. To maintain confidentiality of this participant, Azra is used as her pseudonym. The participant has been teaching English for 15 years. She obtained her bachelor's degree in TESL. Three criteria for choosing this participant were made clear to the school head: (1) minimum of five years of teaching experience, (2) qualified to teach English as a second language, and (3) willing to cooperate throughout the duration of the study. Then, the school head nominated one English language teacher who was teaching Year 5. In the context of the current study, identity is explored using a combination of self-constructed metaphors and the role she plays in language teaching. Although Jerome and Samuel (2017) found that their participant's role as a facilitator converges with her classroom practices, their finding lacks clarity regarding TEYL teacher identity. Hence, it is valuable to discover teacher's experience and understand the voice of those who are directly involved in teaching English to young learners.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A single-case study provides the researchers with opportunity to "study the complex phenomena within their contexts" (Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 544). It involves the up-close discovery of the particularities of a subject (Yin 2014). In this single-case design, data was collected using semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall interviews with the participant. Prior to the interviews, the researchers developed two separate interview protocols which included guided questions, and stimulated recall teaching episodes (see appendix). Each teaching episode was extracted from the observation data for the researchers to situate and probe further questions pertaining to constraints or influences on the teacher's classroom practice. The research focus is to examine the role the participant plays in her teaching through the metaphors that she constructs. Prior to data collection, the interview questions were piloted with this teacher. She also agreed to participate in the actual data collection. The pilot interview uncovered one problem. The participant requested to speak in

English and Malay simultaneously as she felt comfortable speaking in both languages. Therefore, the interviewing language was in English, but the participant was free to switch from English to Malay whenever it was necessary. Since the interviewer and the participant are fluent in both languages, using participant's L1 can be an effective strategy to collect the data (Zhao et al. 2010).

The venue at which the interviews were conducted was at the participants' school. With the teacher's consent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Extra attention was given on every part of the transcription that contains the participant's description of enactment of teacher identity. For this analysis, all selected utterances from the interviews used as quotes in this paper were translated from Malay into English by the researchers who are fluent in both languages. Rather than asking the participants to choose metaphors from a set of metaphors, the teacher in this study was asked to think of her own metaphor. The advantage of using this way is both the researcher and participant could "examine the difficult concept of identity development in vivid and insightful ways" (Thomas & Beauchamp 2011, p. 764).

In line with other qualitative studies on teaching metaphors, this study employs an inductive approach and thematic analysis for the data analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014). The interviews were conducted over a period of five months, each of which lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The analysis involved careful reading of the transcribed texts. This was done to identify the metaphors and metaphorical expressions that were anchored in the transcriptions. To code them for further examination, the coding system was to cluster metaphors and metaphorical expressions together into significant themes based on the descriptions of teaching. The coding process was not accompanied by any software package for qualitative data analysis. This is because any small-scale and manageable data from a single participant can be managed using manual coding (Saldana 2016). Although the initial codes generated 94 codes, the codes were reduced to 46 metaphorical expressions, which were further arranged into four clusters.

As the focus of the study is primary school teachers' multiple metaphors as proxies for teacher identity, each of the themes was named after a key conceptual metaphor. The process of naming these metaphors adopted Nguyen's (2016) and Zhao's et al. (2010) features of umbrella metaphor. Two criteria were employed for choosing the four key conceptual metaphors: (1) the name of the metaphor reflects the distinctive character of a TEYL teacher and (2) the key conceptual metaphor entails the meaning of the metaphors and its subsumed metaphorical expressions. Aimed at broadening the means through which a teacher explores her own self-constructed metaphors, the current study focuses on the following research question: *What metaphors does the participant construct and relate to her understanding of teacher and teaching?*

FINDINGS

The four main clusters of metaphors used by the participant to describe herself and her work is summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Summary of the metaphors used by Azra

Metaphors/metaphorical expressions	Key conceptual metaphors
teacher teaches but mothers educate, motherhood, motherly, approach in a very gentle way, teaching them how to behave,	Mother
Smartphone, I have to know everything, quick, spontaneously, calculator, dictionary, YouTube, connectivity, Facebook, video call	Knowledge provider

Scanner, duplicate, exactly hundred percent what we give they give me back, I want to correct him that he's not correct all the time, respect others, respect your teacher, I have to explain to them one by one	Law enforcer
Colour of the day, achieve what I wanted them to achieve, sparkles, flowers, cheerful, energetic, my responsibility, show their weakness, remind their strengths	Facilitator

It is important to note that not all the metaphorical expressions were included in the table. A more detailed account of each category of metaphors is presented and analysed in the following section.

TEACHER AS A MOTHER

Primary school children are at the stage where they need to develop. Second language learning in school, therefore, should be viewed as closely intertwined with cognitive development, learning about the world, and developing as a person (Pinter, 2011, p.7). To describe her work and identities, the participating teacher used the metaphor of 'mother', in association with expressions such as 'If my child is in this pupil's place, what would I do?', 'approach in a very gentle way', and 'teaching them how to behave'. Motherly care, apparently, is regarded as a desirable and distinctive quality of teaching English to the second language children (Bekleyen 2011, Moosa & Bhana 2017).

To maintain rapport and encourage low proficiency learners to participate in her lesson, this teacher accepts the reality that children need assurance and compliments. She treats her pupils like her own children. The following excerpt illustrates how Azra explained to the researchers when trying to sustain a rapport with her pupils:

> "You are so good. Sometimes we give them compliments. Look at their face. It looks different. Perhaps the compliment is not from a teacher's perspective. It's from a mother. There'll be times when you need to relate your self to teaching. We cannot just be a teacher. We have to be a mother during class".   (SRI 2, pp. 177-179)

As a mother, she does not aim for her pupils to score good grades. Instead, the best reward for her is when her pupils understand, apply and can recall what she has taught in a lesson or the previous year. In her class of lower proficiency, Azra compares herself with 'a loudspeaker' to explain how she gives similar attention to the way a mother assures her child at home:

> "I have to remind them every time for what they have learnt, not only what content I teach them, we motivate them, we encourage them, to show their weakness, to remind their strength. Ah, that is weakness, we have to remind them. It's not only loudspeaker. Loudspeaker is like we have to speak as if you are shouting".   (MCI, pp. 146-149)

Azra expects her class to be intermittently interrupted when pupils need her attention. She believes that many critical incidents in the primary English classes need to be handled with a caregiver's touch. Azra recounts her experience in dealing with a pupil who suddenly corrected her English pronunciation. She showed the pupil the International Phonetics Alphabet (IPA) transcription in the dictionary. The pupil finally realised his pronunciation was incorrect. Azra elaborated that it was not her intention to humiliate her pupil. Rather, "I want to correct him that he's not always correct all the time. You have to respect others. You have to respect your teacher. You have to learn something that you admit your mistake and I'm not saying that you are hundred percent wrong" (SRI 4, pp. 151-153). In this way, children will feel they receive maternal care that aims to establish a healthy, safe, and loving environment for them to appreciate English.

The way Azra fulfilled her role as a mother depends on the age group, language proficiency, and language background of her pupils. Azra teaches in a high performing

school. Thus, her caregiver's policy is to give equal opportunity for language learning. Her motherly instinct is noticeable when she spoke about a quiet learner after the third lesson observation. According to Azra, Qistina is a loner and she does not have friends. This girl is not passive but her family background moulds her personality. Even though Qistina is a frequent absentee in school, "She's very good in English. Just now, she …willing to take part in the conversation, in giving the answer. That's why I call her just now. Melancholy, remember?" (SRI 3, pp. 144-146). She does not want to disappoint a quiet learner who raises her hand to answer a question. Azra seems to advocate her motherly instinct; to nurture the affective growth of her pupil. This event exhibits Azra's tenderness that "A teacher teaches but mothers educate" (MCI, p. 205) because this expression unifies her experience of what it means to be a teacher.

TEACHER AS A KNOWLEDGE PROVIDER

Teacher, why Malays fast, why non-Malays do not fast?	(SSI 1,304)
Teacher, why Malaysia doesn't want hudud?	(SSI 1,307)
Teacher, how many legs does a prawn have?	(SRI 4,146)

The statements above typify numerous classroom incidents regularly encountered by this participant and perhaps other primary school teachers. On one hand, young learners' inquisitive mind and innocence bring humour and happiness to teachers. On the other hand, their curiosity also causes problems for classroom management and even challenges the participant's credibility as a teacher. A major challenge faced Azra in this study is that she must be well-equipped with possible answers. Even if she could not immediately provide the answer, she usually promises to attend to the question in the following lesson. Surprisingly, Azra never gets annoyed by the questions because that is the way she strengthens her relationship with her pupils. Occasionally, she spontaneously sings or acts.

Azra is considered as a knowledge provider due to her conception of 'teachers are like a smartphone'. As a teacher, Azra knows that "Children will ask you anything anywhere. And then you have to know everything" (SSI 1, pp. 286-287). This explains why Azra believes that she must be equipped with the necessary 'Application' in order to know everything within seconds. Azra said, "I have to be the smartphone because I have to know how to react spontaneously" (SSI 1, pp. 360-361). The notion of caring within teaching apparently influences this teacher not to take lightly any questions posed by her pupils.

An English class becomes a platform to access knowledge when the pupils are exposed to a real-life situation. Azra optimizes her 'connectivity' using a smartphone. At the end of the topic 'Real Life Heroes' for Year 5, Azra contacts her former pupil who is a cadet at the Malaysian Maritime Academy (ALAM) via Facebook. The next morning, in her English class, her pupils are free to ask any questions to the cadet via a video call. "He said boys and girls listen to teacher. Obey what the teacher asked you to do" (MCI, pp. 83-84), Azra reiterated the dialogue. As a teacher, her intention to provide knowledge and guidance is evident. She offers a pleasant learning experience to the pupils in a formal atmosphere.

TEACHER AS A LAW ENFORCER

The participant in this study is seen as a law enforcer because her interest is to firmly lead the pupils to adherence of the grammar rules, grammar uses, and moral values. Azra enacts her role as 'a scanner', providing insights into her teaching through images such as 'produce it in very good quality just like a scanner did' (SRI 4, p. 252), 'Like a scanner, I try the best to be the best' (MCI, p. 469) and 'duplicate but with colour' (MCI, p. 500). She concludes that it is

her duty to exactly duplicate the syllabus and textbook contents as stipulated by the Ministry of Education.

The enactment of 'duplicate but with colour' for this teacher is not necessarily limited to introducing grammatical rules to the pupils. In one observation, Azra uses herself as an example to explain the differences between the words 'lazy' and 'tired'. To quote Azra, "Just like me. I am not lazy, but I am tired after going back from work. I had to explain that way. I had to. I have to explain to them one by one" (SRI 4, pp. 206-207). Her in-depth understanding of children developmental characteristics raises her awareness that it is her responsibility to enforce the rules and concurrently respond to a pupil's statement 'Dad is always lazy after work':

> "So, we have, in another way around to say, we are not only teaching them academic, but we are also teaching them how to behave. How to respect. How to say good word. How to tell everything positive".   (SRI 4, pp. 209-211)

As shown by the excerpt above, rather than merely explaining to her pupils the meaning of 'lazy' and 'tired', Azra enforces values as her immediate feedback to young learners. The way she responds to her pupil demonstrates that Azra's priority is not about grammatical accuracy and meaning. It was a strategy to train children to positively describe their father. Thus, pupils not only become aware of the meaning, but they also get the chance to practice positive value as one of the ways to respect their parents.

TEACHER AS A FACILITATOR

The last metaphor of 'facilitator' originated from Azra's commentary "So, I give her the opportunity to her to take the thesaurus and find the meaning of the word. So, that's the one way I don't want to ignore one of my pupils in class" (SRI 3, pp. 113-115). In her role as a facilitator, Azra acknowledges her pupils' attempt to participate in the class. To facilitate learning, she encourages her pupils to use formal and informal English word in her lesson. As a result, the children are free to say which ever words that come across their mind.

As an English teacher, Azra advocated a child-friendly atmosphere within the classroom and had her own reasons for enacting fairness as part of her teaching practice. She added, if she accidentally ignored them, "They are going to be very disappointed. They don't want to answer me. They always keep silent, pull a long face and ignore me" (SRI 3, pp. 106-107). In this sense, she knows that children connect new information and language to their personal perspective (Shin & Crandall 2014). Gaining the trust to provide answer to their teacher facilitates learning because it helps learners to practice new vocabulary by relating it to themselves.

Azra enacts her role as a facilitator based on her personal experience and context. While checking the answer on grammar practice, a boy told her there was no answer for the ninth sentence in Worksheet 2. While Azra was referring to the online dictionary, she immediately assigned two pupils to check a dictionary and a thesaurus. Finally, she acknowledged her mistake and changed the spelling for the word 'teeny' to 'tiny'. Azra reflected, "It's quite okay with this class. They can accept but in my different class they cannot accept" (SRI 4, pp. 114-115). Azra is not embarrassed to admit her mistake. This incident indicates that Azra is not self-conscious although she is concerned about how pupils from the other classes judge her credibility.

DISCUSSION

Azra's four metaphor clusters are important proxies for understanding a teacher's work and identity. The metaphors provide insight into how a TEYL teacher expresses her identity. While other researchers, for example Oxford et al. (1998), confined the taxonomy of a teacher's role, the teacher in this study used novel utterances and constructed her identity through the roles that she enacted. Her identities enactment echoes the viewpoint of Burns and Richards (2009), who posit that "the concept of identity reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles" (p. 5). As a teacher who feels responsible of children's learning, Azra may have conceptualised language learning as the result of experience provided by her.

Three of the metaphor clusters formulated by Azra represent a notion of learning that could be attributed to what Martinez, Sauleda and Huber (2001) categorised as the behaviourist ideas. The metaphor clusters projected as 'knowledge provider', 'law enforcer', and 'facilitator' provide insight into the special features of TEYL. Although the notion of teacher-centred is obvious, this approach works as the overarching base for Azra to understand what it takes to be a TEYL teacher. The shift of identities indicates that she is concerned about issues such as moral, classroom management, discipline and child development. The enactment of a 'law enforcer' means that Azra undertakes the mission of infusing children with the value of respect and being sensitive to the use of positive words in expressing accurate meaning at the sentence level. Thus, she has fulfilled the role of an enforcer. This metaphor also indicates what Johnson and Golombek (2011) and Nguyen (2016) describe as situated teaching. Azra recognises the sociocultural expectation in Malaysia and attempts to inculcate politeness as one of the important virtues that she assumes to be appropriate for young learners' social development.

Azra's shifts in identity occur during a single lesson according to different teaching learning episodes and contexts she finds herself in. Such shifts in identity is acknowledged by Henry (2016) and Thomas and Beauchamp (2011). In their study, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) believe that the identity that they observed is indicative of a survival mode adopted by the novice teachers. The data obtained in this study, however, provide a different reason for the shift in identity. For example, the metaphor 'facilitator' indicates Azra's ascending professional track in the form of gradual reconstruction in her beliefs and practice. Hence, it can be concluded that her strength in teaching is built from the interplay between the elements of experience and narration. These core aspects of teacher identity guide her to enact her role and assist her in facilitating language learning.

The success and failure of identity construction from teaching experiences is not a unidirectional process. Her role as a 'knowledge provider' requires Azra to be quick and spontaneous in decision making. Enacting this role explains why Azra used her 'smartphone Apps' to get instant answer. Identity, inevitably, develops over time because meanings of metaphors are neither universally constructed nor understood. In enacting her role as a 'mother', Azra arrives at an in-depth understanding of the peculiarity of teaching young learners. Initially, Azra enacted her role as a 'knowledge provider', but the role shifts to nurture good values. To embrace her motherly instinct, she gently inculcated moral values and simultaneously admonished her pupils whom she thought as misbehaved. This metaphor uncovers the fact that teaching as nurturing is a conception that has been related to the caring profession (James 2010). As a distinctive feature in TEYL, individual's metaphorical roles like 'knowledge provider' and 'mother' are essential to demystify how the intuitive knowledge transfers into professional practice. To conclude, the four metaphor clusters articulated by Azra illustrate that the construction of identity does not happen in a linear fashion and the multiplicity of identities influences her practice.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The current study focused on the role of identities enacted by a teacher throughout the analysis of the four clusters of metaphorical expressions used by this teacher. All metaphors provide insight into distinctive features of TEYL teacher in the Malaysian educational context. Teaching English to the young learners is not a new ESL strand in Malaysia. However, the information on the multiple identities projected by Azra through the metaphor clusters could serve as a professional development resource for ESL practitioners within a similar context.

In this study, the findings have implications for teacher educators who seek to promote reflective practice and expand in-service teachers' perspective of teachers and teaching using self-constructed metaphors. The role of identities assumed by the experienced teacher has the potential to assist the pre-service and novice teachers in visualising who they perceive themselves in becoming a teacher. The expressions uttered by the participant are categorised as novel metaphors which not only instantiate the teachers' experience but also scaffold the process of knowledge creation (Craig 2018). Hence, the metaphor clusters analysed in this study can serve as a reference point to promote reflection in second language teacher education programmes. The particularity of the TEYL context which is manifested in the identities constructed by the participant should be added in the curricula of teacher education.

LIMITATIONS

This study has two limitations that need to be addressed in future research. Firstly, the teacher selected as the participant shared her thoughts and beliefs only through interviews. Existing research, nevertheless, recognizes the critical role played by analysing interviews of one teacher-participant (Barkhuizen 2016, Kayi-Aydar 2017). Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this study to cross-examine the data from her subject matter knowledge or lesson implementation. To overcome this limitation, future research should include data from observation. Secondly, rather than looking at different school categories, this study addressed identity from the perspective of the professional self as a primary school teacher at one national school. Therefore, future research may explore teacher identity by cross-examining the teachers' perspectives of two categories of primary schools: the national schools and national-type schools.

As evidenced in this study, metaphors offer insightful expressions of a teacher's interaction between her personal and professional identities (Craig 2018, Zhao et al. 2010). Thus, it is important for English language teachers to be encouraged to reflect on their practices using metaphor. This method can assist teachers to "reach in-depth understanding of themselves and their teaching" (Nguyen 2016, p.75) by making their tacit knowledge explicit.

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APPENDIX

1. What is the aim for your lesson today?
2. What are the key features of the dialogue in the textbook that you want the pupils to understand?
3. How does using online dictionary help you to explain the meaning?
4. Why did you assign the male pupils to explain the meaning of 'teeny'?
5. What makes you delay explaining the word 'teeny'?
6. Where did you get this idea from?
7. What did you notice about the ninth sentence in worksheet 2?
8. If you could do something about this before you proceed with those activities, what would you do?
9. Using one metaphor, who do you see yourself today in teaching grammar?
10. What makes you feel that you have fulfilled your role?