

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**TEACHING ENGLISH IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
SARAWAK, MALAYSIA: ESL
TEACHER COGNITION
PERSPECTIVES**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis/dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to explore teacher cognition in the context of instructional practice among English teachers in secondary schools in Samarahan division, Sarawak, Malaysia. Teacher cognition by Borg's definition includes 'what they know, believe, think and do'. In Borg's schematic conceptualization of teacher cognition, it is illustrated that teacher cognition developed and is shaped by schooling and the professional education of the teacher. In the context of pedagogic practice, it is influenced and affected by contextual factors such as school environment, curricular, resources and students so much that it is not static but dynamic. Shulman outlined seven knowledge types to represent teacher cognition, but in this study only three knowledge domains/types namely, Knowledge of Students (KS), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and General Pedagogical Knowledge (GPK) were deemed relevant to pedagogic practice. To address the main aim of the study, three research questions were posited namely, what are ESL teacher cognition perspectives?, what are the existing and new features of each knowledge domain?, and what are the similarities of KS, PCK and GPK of the four teacher participants? To answer the research questions, a mixed-method approach was employed: (i) self-constructed teacher inventory questionnaire was administered to 89 ESL teachers to gauge their beliefs and actual practice, (ii) observations, stimulated recall protocols and semi-structured interviews were administered to four individual cases, selected from 89 teachers, to generate qualitative data on their KS, PCK and GPK. The quantitative data from teacher inventory indicated a *Very High* range between 4.1 to 4.52 mean scores for KS, PCK and GPK out of 5-point Likert scale. This shows some positive congruence between the teachers' stated beliefs and actual practice. The qualitative data captured evidence of existing categorical features of KS, PCK and GPK as outlined in the theoretical framework, and also some new emergent categorical features utilized by the four teacher participants such as taking into consideration students' proficiency level and preferred learning styles in their lesson planning, also empowering their students via more opportunities to participate, and assuming more of a facilitator-cum-motivator role. While the study had shown some evidence of teacher cognition in actual classroom practice, a longitudinal study that spans a long duration of data collection is highly recommended for future research to understand ESL teacher cognition better in Malaysia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	3
1.3 Statement of the Problem	7
1.3.1 Personal Experience	8
1.3.2 Teacher Factor	9
1.3.3 Perspective on Teacher Cognition	11
1.4 Objectives of the Study	14
1.5 Research Questions	14
1.6 Scope of the Study	15
1.7 Conceptual Framework	16
1.8 Delimitations of the Study	18
1.9 Significance of the Study	19
1.10 Definitions of Terms	19
1.11 Conclusion	20
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	21
2.2 Study of Teaching	21
2.3 Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching	25
2.4 Teaching English in the Context of World Englishes	28