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UNVEILING THE COMPLEXITY OF LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

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Abstract
In recent years, the study of language teacher identity (LTI) has gained substantial traction, reflecting a shift in the perception of language teachers from passive technicians to knowledgeable and proactive professionals. This paper conducts an in-depth review of twelve categories of theoretical frameworks used to explore LTI, including poststructuralism, positioning theory, sociocultural theory, community of practice, and others. The review indicates that teacher identity is a highly complex, dynamic, and context-specific concept, influenced by a multitude of internal and external factors such as emotions, beliefs, social interactions, and power relations. Each theoretical framework offers unique insights into different aspects of LTI. While each theory has its strengths, no single framework can fully capture the complexity of LTI. The review also identifies several overarching themes, including the importance of context, the role of power, and the dynamic nature of identity. It is evident that combining multiple theories and constructs provides a more holistic understanding of LTI. Complexity theory emerges as a potential approach to address the limitations of existing theories, given its emphasis on context, agency, and adaptation. This review contributes to the ongoing dialogue on LTI and offers valuable directions for future research and language teacher education.

Keywords: constructs, holistic review, language teacher education, language teacher identity, theoretical frameworks

Introduction
Since 1997, when Casanave and Schecter co-edited and published a collection of language educators' autoethnographic narratives on their personal, professional and political lives, the importance of language teacher identity (henceforth, LTI) has grown rapidly in the past decades. Particularly, there is an increasing focus of research on LTI (e.g., special issues in *TESOL Journal*, 2019, *The Modern Language Journal*, 2017, and *TESOL Quarterly*, 2016; books, such as Barkhuizen, 2016), and the value of discussion on LTI has also been recognized in language teacher education (Varghese et al., 2005). This attention can be attributed in part to the shift in perspective on teachers from being passive technicians who transmitted

"disciplinary and decontextualized knowledge" to knowledgeable, agentic professionals and "creators of knowledge" (Crandall & Christison, 2016, p. 3; Weng, 2024, 2025a, 2025b), in addition to the fact that the complex sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions of teaching have been widely acknowledged in the field (Varghese et al., 2005).

The importance of identity in teacher development and teacher education has been recognized in literature (Lu et al., 2024; Troyan et al., 2023; Weng, 2021, 2026), especially, as Kanno and Stuart (2011) have claimed, "the development of L2 teacher identity should be at the center of research and debate on L2 teacher education because it is the central project novice teachers engage in" (p. 250). Yet Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) put forth that, "the concept of identity is a complex one, and even a cursory examination of the literature reveals that there is much to understand if one is to appreciate the importance of identity in teacher development" (p. 175). This complexity, inherited and reified in the conceptualization of identity, has also been underscored by Varghese et al. (2005), who claimed that LTI was not well-theorized. They also argued its complexity could not be adequately captured by one single theoretical framework as "any one theory limits one's perspective on language teacher identity, its formation, and its contexts" (p. 38).

Diverse theoretical stances and perspectives have been employed to explore varying issues regarding LTI. Particularly, sociocultural perspectives (e.g. Johnson, 2006), community of practice (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991), and poststructuralism (e.g., Norton, 2000) are the three most commonly used theoretical lens employed in the study of LTI (Steadman et al., 2018, p. 39), among other perspectives like Bakhtinian perspective (e.g., Hallman, 2015), positioning (e.g., Kayi-Aydar, 2019), developmental and social psychological perspectives (e.g., Friesen & Basley, 2013), language socialization (e.g., Pastor, 2019), and others (e.g., Troyan et al., 2023). What further enriches this body of literature with respect to LTI is the investigation of different constructs, such as teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, teacher change, motivation, emotions, and agency, and their relationships with LTI (e.g., Weng et al., 2023). The fruitfulness of the theoretical framings used in the study of LTI exemplifies the increased enthusiasm for LTI and its value in language teacher education.

Based upon reviews (Cheung, 2015; Weng, 2025b), common features of identity across different theories include its multiplicity, dynamics, context-specificity, and its ongoing construction process, shaped by a range of factors. Informed by this general characteristics of identity, "teacher identity," defined in this paper, shifts over time as teachers (i.e., pre-service, novice, and in-service teachers) learn and practice their teaching at different career stages in their life and under the influence of substantive factors, consisting of internal factors, like emotion, agency, beliefs, job satisfaction, and self-esteem as well as external factors, such as interactions with other social participants (e.g., students, colleagues, administrators, policy-makers, etc.) in a particular context, personal and professional experiences, and job circumstances. Although these factors are integral components of teacher identity, they create tensions that, to a greater or lesser extent, impact teachers' sense of identity (Day et al., 2006). Therefore, teacher identity is an inherently rich concept, characterized by its intellectual, social, cultural, political, as well as emotional nature (Weng & Troyan, 2023), which cannot be holistically examined within a single theoretical approach (Varghese et al., 2005).

Further, Varghese et al. (2005) have argued for "an openness to multiple theoretical possibilities" as well as "a juxtaposition of those possibilities" in the study of LTI (p. 38). They initiated a "dialogue across paradigms" to see "how different underlying assumptions alter [researchers'] perception both of what is interesting and of what the research reveals to [researchers]" (p. 24). They juxtaposed three case studies informed by different theoretical perspectives (i.e., social identity theory, situated learning, and the concept of image-text) of LTI and drew parallels among the studies to create dialogue across theories. Although each theory has its own pros and cons, Varghese et al. (2005) emphasized that different conceptual interpretations together can contribute to a holistic depiction of LTI; however, they have also warned that "the ways different theories are defined and used need to be considered when researchers are attempting to place value on each" (p. 38). In other words, cautious attention should be paid when selecting an appropriate theory to interpret identity, which requires a good understanding of diverse theories that have been applied to study LTI. Varghese et al. (2005) also expressed their desire to explore more than the three data-driven case studies, which leaves the space for other researchers to fill the gap.

The present review responds directly to the gap and to Varghese et al.'s (2005) call, positioning itself as a critical extension of their pioneering dialogue across LTI paradigms. In doing so, this study makes three significant and novel contributions to the existing body of work in LTI research and teacher education. First, it advances the field by systematically synthesizing twelve distinct theoretical frameworks used in TESOL teacher identity research, far exceeding the narrow set of perspectives examined by Varghese et al. (2005), and providing a detailed analysis of each framework's unique contributions, core tenets, and empirical applications. This represents the most comprehensive theoretical review of LTI to date, filling a void in the literature for a holistic overview of the theoretical landscape of TESOL teacher identity research. Second, it offers a novel cross-framework analysis that identifies overarching themes, key overlaps, and critical tensions across the twelve theoretical perspectives, revealing how divergent frameworks can be integrated to develop a more holistic understanding of LTI, an analysis absent in prior LTI reviews, which have either focused on a single theoretical lens or provided only a superficial overview of multiple frameworks. Third, it translates this theoretical synthesis into evidence-based, actionable implications for identity-oriented TESOL teacher education and professional development, bridging the gap between theoretical LTI research and practical pedagogical application, and providing teacher educators with a theoretically grounded roadmap for supporting pre-service and in-service teachers' identity development. In sum, this review moves beyond the descriptive accounts of prior LTI research by offering a critical, integrative theoretical analysis that both honors Varghese et al.'s (2005) foundational call and pushes the field forward by addressing its unmet needs and emerging priorities.

Against this backdrop, this review aims to: (1) examine a comprehensive range of theoretical frameworks that have been employed in the empirical study of TESOL teacher identity, spanning over two decades of research from 1997 to 2019; (2) conduct a critical cross-framework analysis of these theoretical perspectives to unpack their unique contributions, overlapping conceptualizations, and inherent tensions in understanding LTI; and (3) propose theoretically grounded, significant

implications for identity-oriented TESOL teacher education and professional development, with a focus on translating theoretical insights into practical pedagogical strategies for supporting teachers' professional identity formation.

Method

The literature search for this research synthesis spanned from 1997, when research on TESOL teacher identity first emerged, to December 2019, the period when literature collection was conducted. This review does not include LTI research from 2020 to 2025, as this period of time (2020-2025) has evolved in response to unprecedented global contexts (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic's shift to online/hybrid teaching, increased focus on decoloniality in ELT, and the rise of intersectional LTI research) and has focused on applying, rather than expanding, the theoretical frameworks synthesized in this review. For example, the post-2019 studies have leveraged translingualism and postcolonial theory to examine LTI in online multilingual classrooms; Complexity theory, identified in this review as a potential future approach for LTI research, has been operationalized in empirical studies of teacher identity adaptation; and the intersectional LTI research (e.g., gender, race, and NNEST status) has built on the poststructural and positioning theory frameworks analyzed here. These post-2019 studies are applications and extensions of the theoretical foundations synthesized in this review, not new theoretical frameworks that alter the core landscape analyzed here. A separate, dedicated review would be far more appropriate to explore how 2020–2025 LTI research has operationalized the identified frameworks, rather than integrating these studies into a review focused on the formation and evolution of those frameworks (1997–2019).

The search procedures started with multiple digital research databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Ebscohost, and Eric). A study was tentatively considered if it matched at least one of the key terms, including language teacher identity, ESL teacher identity, EFL teacher identity, TESOL teacher identity, TESOL teacher professional identity, and L2 teacher identity in their titles, key words, and abstracts. The preliminary search showed 273 studies in total. A hand search was also conducted of the following journals: *TESOL Quarterly*, *TESOL Journal*, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, and *The Modern Language Journal*. This method yielded two additional studies. After reviewing the abstracts, not all these studies aligned with the scope of the review.

In total, 139 potentially relevant studies were retrieved for this research synthesis and were subjected to the inclusion criteria: (1) main focus on TESOL teachers (preservice, novice, and in-service TESOL teachers, not including teachers from bilingual education), (2) with clear descriptions and sufficient information on theoretical frameworks or constructs and methodologies, (3) qualitative-oriented research studies, (4) peer reviewed, and (5) published in English. With the criteria in mind, the finalized inclusion of an article was based on an actual reading of the article. Despite a broad, inclusive approach (Ortega, 2015), specific attention was paid to whether a study met the aforementioned criteria. In this manner, a total of 82 journal articles satisfied all the criteria above. The selected journal articles were further grouped into twelve categories based on their theoretical frameworks. Table 1 presents the categorizations of the selected studies.

Table 1. Categorizations of selected studies

Theoretical Categorization	Selected Studies
Poststructuralism	Anjeja (2016)
	Gu & Lai (2019)
	Guo et al. (2021)
	Golombek & Jordan (2005)
	Hashemi Moghadam et al. (2019)
	Hayik & Weiner-Levy (2019)
	Lander (2018)
	Lawrence & Nagashima (2020)
	Steadman et al. (2018)
	Supasiraprapa & De Costa (2017)
Positioning theory	Avalos-Rivera (2019)
	Kayi-Aydar (2015)
	Leigh (2019)
	Raman & Yiğitoğlu (2018)
Sociocultural theory	Bukor (2015)
	Chang (2017)
	Chang (2018)
	de Laurentiis Brandão (2018)
	Duff & Uchida (1997)
	Huang& Guo (2019)
	Menard-Warwick (2008)
	Nasrollahi Shahri (2018)
	Raman & Çavuşoğlu (2019)
	Salinas (2017)
	Salinas & Ayala (2018)
	Simon-Maeda (2004)
	Smilgiene (2018)
	Song (2016)
	Tao & Gao (2017)
	Tao & Gao (2018)
	Urzúa & Vásquez (2008)
	Wolff & De Costa (2017)
	Yuan & Lee (2016)
Community of Practice: Identity-in-practice	Burri et al. (2017)
	Colliander (2019)
	Howard (2019)
	Hsiao (2018)
	Huang & Varghese (2015)
	Kasun & Saavedra (2016)
	Liu & Xu (2011)
	Mirzaee & Aliakbari (2018)
	Nagatomo (2015)
	Nguyen & Dao (2019)
	Torres-Rocha (2017)
	Tsui (2007)
	Yazan (2018)
	Yuan & Burns (2017)
Activity theory: Identity-in-activity	Feryok & Askaribigdeli (2019)
	Golombek & Klager (2015)
	Güngör (2017)

Theoretical Categorization	Selected Studies
Bakhtinian perspective	He & Lin (2013) Karimi & Mofidi (2019) Lee (2013) Huang (2014) Ilieva (2010) Zacharias (2019)
Identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse	Fan & de Jong (2019) Gu & Benson (2015) Kanno & Stuart (2011) Lee (2016) Morton & Gray (2010) Trent (2012) Trent (2014) Trent (2016a) Trent (2016b) Trent (2017) Trent (2018) Tseng (2017) Yazan (2017)
Professional role identities and possible selves	Ahmad & Samad (2018) Farrell (2011) Sallı & Osam (2018) Yuan (2016)
Social constructivism theory	Kaya-Dikilitas (2019) Safari (2020)
Postcolonial theory	Charles (2019) Yazan (2019)
Translingualism	Ishihara & Menard-Warwick (2018) Lee & Canagarajah (2019)
Multiple Theories	Ellis, 2016 Henry, 2019 Xu, 2013

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Twelve categories regarding theoretical frameworks have been identified through the literature. Each category is explained in the following sections.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism has brought profound insight into the study of (teacher) identity. Norton, who mostly focuses on the link between identity and language learners, has argued that under poststructuralism, identity is conceptualized as "multiple, changing, and a site of struggle [between various identities], frequently negotiated in the context of inequitable relations of power" (2013, p. 60). Power, as demonstrated by Norton (2013), is influential in identity construction as it affects an individual's opportunities to negotiate relationships within targeted or imagined communities. Morgan (2007) also claims that "power relations are always implicated when we formalize particular language/identity correlations" (p. 1033). This is particularly the case when TESOL teachers are scrutinized by their Non-

Native English Speaking (NNES) status. However, poststructuralism underscores alternative identities (Golombek & Jordan, 2005) and possibilities for individuals to claim legitimacy and membership in larger contexts, particularly for language teachers as illustrated in Morgan (2007), "The status of teachers is also enhanced in that the poststructural ontology of situatedness assigns teachers a decisive role in creating pedagogies of transformation" through, for instance, reflexive checks on marginalizing discourses and problematizing practices (p. 1037). Therefore, poststructuralist theory allows researchers to see the conflicting nature of teacher identity, power imbalances, and marginalization in the field of second language learning and teaching, through which to critically interrogate social relationships and practices and legitimize teacher professional identities.

Studies have shown six features of LTI, conceptualized in poststructuralism: (1) avoids preexisting identity categories (e.g., Aneja, 2016), (2) focuses on teachers' individual experiences to avoid generalization, (3) perceives teachers as agentive decision-makers, (4) interacts with race, gender, nationality, among other elements, particularly for NNES teachers whose teacher identity was a continuing site of struggle with other identity options, such as their cultural and linguistic identities (e.g., Lander, 2018; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020), (5) discursively constructs and constantly changes through language use in a specific time and space (e.g. Lander, 2018; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020), (6) negotiates with different forms of power and practices of policy (e.g., Gu & Lai, 2019; Guo et al., 2021, informed by Foucault's notions of ethics), and connects with a poststructuralist theorization of emotions (e.g., Hayik & Weiner-Levy, 2019).

Positioning theory

Positioning, as defined by Davies and Harré (1999), "is the discursive process whereby people are located in conversations" (p. 37). This socially (co)constructed positioning is manifested through discursive practice, "language in use," or narratives, produced and interpreted in concrete occasions (Kayi-Aydar, 2015, p. 94). Kayi-Aydar (2015) has pointed out that "positioning is viewed as a powerful tool to analyze identity in discourse" (p. 95), particularly positioning is relational under the concepts of "interactive positioning" and "reflexive positioning" (p. 95). The former means an individual positions others as particular kinds of persons in interactions (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, p. 7), whereas the latter refers to self-positioning (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 37; Weng, 2023). For example, in Kayi-Aydar (2015), the pre-service teachers' "positional identities were shaped mostly in relation to [English language learners] and the mentor teachers" (p. 101). In Avalos-Rivera (2019), the teacher participant displayed his positioning in relation to his upper middle-class students; whereas in Leigh (2019), foreign teachers' positionings were interacted with Others, including "Chinese colleagues, management, parents, children, schools and cultural typifications" (p. 9) and particularly on how the beliefs/attitudes of others influence foreign teachers' positionings. Although students are usually assigned "a subordinate position while teachers are elevated as authority figures," this representation can be challenged when other ideologies intervene with those positioning construction, such as linguistic backgrounds of NNES teachers and socioeconomic differences between teachers and students (Avalos-Rivera, 2019, p. 1). What's more, positioning is always situated in social contexts and therefore political. For example, in Kayi-

Aydar (2015), although one of her teacher participants desired to position herself as a caring teacher, due to the micro-politics of the internship settings, the teacher participant was unable to take up that positioning. Another example from Leigh (2019) revealed that foreign teachers in China had to negotiate between two oppositional positionings; one is catering to education businesses, and the other is for the cultivation of people. Positioning studies, however, could examine more of how wider institutional policies or economic structures constrain the discursive positions that teachers can actually take up.

Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory, according to Norton (2006), could be a broader concept than the Vygotskian framework. This theory can mean the intersection between social and cultural identities, in relation to one's "racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, religious, and national" identity (Yazan, 2019, p. 3). This definition indicates identity is socially, culturally, and historically contextualized. For instance, in the study of Duff and Uchida (1997), the researchers stated that "teachers' sociocultural identifications and displays appeared to develop along at least two dimensions: a biographical/professional basis and a more immediate contextual basis" (p. 467). The biographical and professional basis of identity in their study included "(a) past learning experiences, (b) past teaching experiences, and (c) cross-cultural experiences" (p. 468). The contextual basis included "the local classroom culture, institutional culture, and the textbook or curriculum" (p. 469). Especially, from a sociocultural perspective of L2 teacher learning, teacher candidates' "prior experiences, beliefs, values, aspirations and imaginations about teaching and learning" are significant because they "provide a dynamic basis for their initial teaching identities …or 'interpretive frame'" (Yazan, 2017, p. 39). In other words, teachers' personal and social experiences, as well as their situated teaching contexts, including both physical and social contexts, influence and shape teacher identity construction. Similarly, Salinas (2017) pointed out that "within the sociocultural process, the identities of teachers are constructed from a social and personal perspective" (p. 36). The social perspective includes "influences of the context, traditions, experiences, social interactions, and positioning," whereas the personal perspective consists of "agency, emotions, meaning systems, and the self" (p. 36). Hence, the sociocultural perspective is an inclusive framework which can be used to conceptualize different dimensions of teacher professional identity. However, sociocultural theory often centers on dominant cultural norms and mainstream social structures, making it less effective for examining identities that deviate from or resist these norms. In the following sections, the broad concept of sociocultural theory was discussed first, followed by other related sociocultural theories, including community of practice, identity-in-activity, and Bakhtin's dialogism.

Scholars who are associated with the broader conceptualization of sociocultural theory include Bakhtin, Bourdieu, Weedon, and Lave and Wenger (Norton, 2006, p. 22). Under this broad sociocultural theory, studies adopt varying focuses, presenting a diverse picture of how sociocultural theory can be applied to serve different research purposes. Those focuses are indicative of diverse factors influencing teacher identity construction or development, including personal experiences, emotions, professional knowledge, gender, and contextual factors. For

example, Chang (2017) centered on the transition of teachers from EAP to ESP or from certified teachers to qualified teachers. The changing contexts in which teachers live and work, as well as the transitions they experience, contribute to the (re)negotiation of conflicting identities. This is especially true when individuals move across countries or institutions (Norton, 2006) and are positioned in relation to those already established in the settings. Chang's (2017) study explored a teacher's transition from an EAP teacher to an ESP teacher in Taiwan. Conflicts emerged during the teacher's process of becoming an ESP teacher. One key conflict was the need to transform from being a knowledge provider to a learner, since ESP teachers must acquire content knowledge and collaborate with their English learners, who often possess greater content knowledge than the teacher. This contextual shift created uncertainty and signaled the teacher's identity transformation.

Community of practice: Identity-in-practice

Learning in and through "Communities of Practice" (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is an important process of becoming professional teachers. Hence, CoP has been used to study the construction and transformation of teacher professional identity, particularly as teachers move from non-participants or peripheral members to legitimate participants in communities through socialization. In this process, they acquire and accumulate the knowledge and discourse that characterize expert practices within the CoP, thereby developing a new professional identity. CoP is conceptualized as a group of people who have a shared repertoire, mutual engagement, and a joint enterprise (Nguyen & Dao, 2019). A few studies (e.g., Burri et al., 2017; Howard, 2019; Hsiao, 2018; Huang & Varghese, 2015; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Liu & Xu, 2011; Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2018; Nagatomo, 2015; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Tsui, 2007; Torres-Rocha, 2017; Yazan, 2018; Yuan & Burns, 2017) applied the community of practice. CoP suggests that individuals become legitimate participants of a community through daily participation in community activities, forming a shared repertoire through reifying "labels, categories, and roles that are thrust on [individuals] as [they] negotiate [their] experiences in and across communities" (Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2018, p. 25). Colliander (2019), drawing upon Wenger (1998) and Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark (2006), pointed out that "Identity [was] a matter of both participation and reification of one's participation in a community," involving "learning to understand and apply a number of concrete artefacts, such as language and tools, and to gain familiarity with the tacit conditions of the community" (p. 58). Agency is also closely interacted with identity, as Li and De Costa (2018) discussed that "identity as community members [was] manifested in an individual's personal choices and actions" (p. 88).

Five different categories of trajectories have been discussed in CoP, including peripheral, inbound, insider, outbound, and boundary trajectories (Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2018; Nagatomo, 2015). The trajectories represent different degrees of voice, membership, and participation an individual has within a community and shape different identity-in-practice, namely, learning to become a certain kind of person through concrete tasks and practices within communities (Varghese et al., 2005). Under this theoretical framework, there are also three modes of belonging, including engagement, imagination, and alignment, entangled with various power

relations, influencing "identification and negotiation in groups" (Nagatomo, 2015, p. 114). This process of identification, identifying as someone or with someone, and negotiation of meaning "shapes, mediates, and modifies identity" (Howard, 2019, p. 1481). Engagement, related to investment, helps individuals to gain access to full membership within a community. This facilitates the acquisition or enhancement of teacher knowledge, further developing teachers' competence, and enriching their identities (Yuan & Burns, 2017, p. 732). However, it might also limit community members from developing other identities beyond the community. Imagination provides the opportunity to distance oneself from engagement and explore other possibilities, including alternative identities and other approaches to doing things. In other words, it allows teachers to construct images of the world across history and space (Yazan, 2018, p. 209). Alignment, indicative of allegiance an individual gives to the community he or she belongs to, normally "involves participation (or nonparticipation), allegiance, and power" (Burri et al., 2017, p. 130) and "concerns how members act with regard to the activities and regulations of the community, for example how the members follow regulations and how they strive to reach goals" (Colliander, 2019, p. 58). However, Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2018) pointed out that CoP was criticized for not addressing power relations within and across communities, which is also stressed in Varghese et al. (2005): "limitation of this theoretical framework is its weak consideration of power relations and underlying ideologies within groups" (p. 31), reifying social labels. Li and De Costa (2018) also commented that "how the participants were accepted by their communities is not fully addressed" in CoP (p. 88).

Activity theory: Identity-in-activity

Studies (e.g., Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Golombek & Klager, 2015; Güngör, 2017; He & Lin, 2013; Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Lee, 2013) applied activity theory created by Vygotsky, which has been used in the study of teacher identity-in-activity. Activity theory—first initiated by Vygotsky as the first generation, developed by Leont'ev as the second generation, and further expanded by Engeström (1999, 2001)—establishes the core concept of mediated activity. This mediated activity refers to the use of mediational tools and various cultural artifacts such as language, within a broad context to interact with the world (Cross, 2006, p. 2). The mediated activity is also perceived as "the primary unit of analysis," embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts (Cross, 2006, p. 3). From the first to third generation, activity theory has moved away from the "tools" to the activity within which the tool was used (Cross & Gearon, 2007, p. 55). Engeström's third generation of activity theory is commonly used in studies. This theory contains five minimum required elements in an activity system, including object, subject, mediating artefacts (signs and tools), rules, community, and division of labor. For example, in Feryok and Askaribigdeli (2019), Mona, the novice teacher participant, is the subject in her own activity system which is situated in the private language institute activity system; the mediating tools are the communications with other members in the community which includes the teacher, student, parents, and the manager of the institute; rules refer to regulations and rules in the community. The rules and regulations might constrain the actions in the activity system, and the division of labor refers to responsibilities and power among community members.

Lee (2013) formed an integrated framework by combining identity-in-practice, identity-in-discourse, and identity-in-activity. Drawing upon Cross and Gearson (2007), who believed that identity-in-activity captured both identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse within a broader social, cultural, and historical context, Lee (2013) studied four in-service writing teachers who had completed an in-service professional development course on teaching writing, which exerted changes on their identity construction as writing teachers. The changes included different discourses in talking about writing, writing instruction and themselves as writing teachers; however, the in-service teachers' negotiation of identities was compromised because of the deep-seated belief and policy on comprehensive error feedback in their community. This theory focuses on "teachers, as the subject of different activity systems, experience contradictions between identities, and between identities and activity within and between those activity systems," each of which has its own objects, goals, histories and expectations (Golombek & Klager, 2015, pp. 18-19); nevertheless, due to the contradictions across different activity systems, tensions and conflicts emerge between their identities and practices, which in turn provides an opportunity for identity transformation or propels identity development (Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019). Indeed, identity-in-activity manifests the development of teacher identity that aligns with their teaching activity (Golombek & Klager, 2015, p. 19), namely, the development of a coherent identity, which can be accomplished through the mediation of pre-service teacher education programs, in-service teacher training, or interactions among community members. Many studies (i.e., Golombek & Klager, 2015; He & Lin, 2013; Lee, 2013) are indeed situated at L2 teacher education programs. Nevertheless, activity theory's tight focus on the structural elements of an activity system can underplay the moment-to-moment emotional and relational work that teachers report as central to their sense of self.

Bakhtinian perspective

Studies (e.g., Huang, 2014; Ilieva, 2010; Zacharias, 2019) utilized Bakhtin's dialogism to investigate the racialized and social aspects of teacher identity on NNES/NES. Bakhtin's dialogism emphasizes "the importance of discourses in processes of identity construction" (Illeva, 2010, p. 346). This notion is concerned with the reciprocal relationship between self and other through a dialogic approach and, therefore, "meaning-making [that is] built upon others' perspectives and stratified with social values" (Huang, 2014, p. 120). In other words, an individual's understanding of self is rooted in others' perspectives and the spatial and temporal contexts, as Zacharias (2019) states, "how others perceive the self is an important aspect of identity construction" (p. 8). For teachers, the "other" is the stakeholders in education systems, and the teachers "create reciprocity in relationships with others that allows them to continually negotiate who they are in the moment" (Hallman, 2015, p. 5). For example, Huang (2014) investigated the perceptions of administrators and students on NNES teachers, particularly their attitudes on accents and teaching abilities, as well as NNESTs' self-perception as non-native English-speaking teachers, their relations to students, and their professional practices in class. The positive attitudes from administrators and students towards NNES teachers allow the teachers to construct "a positive self-perception of being NNESs" in such a friendly and supportive environment (Huang, 2014, p. 126).

At the same time, Hallman (2015), citing Bakhtin (1986), also notes that the "authorities" which "are in the form of another individual or the larger society" create "normalizing discourses" or "persuasive discourses," which might be internalized or questioned by the teachers themselves (p. 4). Ilieva (2010), citing Bakhtin (1981), states that "authoritative discourses" require unconditional allegiance and are created by authorities like parents and teachers, and the "internally persuasive discourse" refers to an individual's own internalization of the authoritative discourse for their own purposes (p. 347). This is particularly the case for NNES teachers. In Illeva (2010), the analysis of the 20 NNES teachers reflected that the teacher education program through courses, fieldwork, and other activities provided authoritative discourses to the student teachers who had taken up those discourses without questioning, including linguistic multicompetence and sociocultural understanding of teaching and learning. Those discourses became their internally persuasive discourses and part of their professional identity. At the same time, the research found that "[the student teachers] insert[ed] their own intentions into program authoritative discourses and develop[ed] internally persuasive discourses that [made] practical sense for their own local teaching contexts" (Illeva, 2010, p. 359). With the idea of critical pedagogy, one participant doubted if it can be applied in her local teaching context, reflecting her "agency in appropriating the discourse of critical pedagogy on her own terms" (Illevia, 2010, p. 360).

Identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse

Studies (e.g., Fan & de Jong, 2019; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Lee, 2013; Trent, 2012, 2014, 2016a; 2016b; 2017, 2018; Tseng, 2017; Yazan, 2017) used identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse to investigate teacher identity. According to Varghese et al. (2005), identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse, informed by sociocultural and poststructural theories of language, respectively, should be used to understand identity. More specifically, identity-in-practice, "constituted by the practices in relation to a group and the process of individual identification or nonidentification with the group," is an observable identity manifested in concrete practices (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 39). In contrast, identity-in-discourse, "discursively constituted …through language," is a narrated identity negotiated through language and discourses (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 39). That is, identity-in-discourse, "emphasiz[ing] the diversity of identities and how identities are shaped by context and the power relations therein" (Fan & de Jong, 2019, p. 3), is "manifested through language," and "comprises beliefs, attitudes, and values" (Trent, 2016b, p. 308). In other words, language and identity are mutually constitutive (Tseng, 2017, p. 41). Identity-in-discourse has been employed to study NNEST student teachers' identities in relation to native English-speaking ideologies and raciolinguistic ideologies in the field of ELT (Fan & de Jong, 2019, p. 1). The combination of the two concepts generates a more comprehensive understanding of narrated identities, which are enacted in practices (Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

Varghese et al.'s (2005) conceptualization of identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse seems to be mutually exclusive, whereas Racelis and Matsuda (2015), drawing upon both Gee (2000) and Lave and Wenger (1991), point out that "[w]hile identity-in-discourse exists only in discourse, identity-in-practice can be

understood through direct observation of the practices or through the representation of those practices in the discourse" (p. 205), in line with what Kanno and Stuart (2011) argue, "discursively constructed identities are part of the identities-in-practice" as "discursively constructed identities are verbal expressions of the ongoing mutual relationship between the self and the practice of a teacher" (p. 240). This mutually constitutive relationship between identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse is more widely accepted and applied to the study of teacher identity.

Trent (2012, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018) further expanded the conceptual framework. Trent suggests that L2 teacher identity construction is not only discursive and experiential, but also contested and negotiated, considering the role of agency (that is, paying attention to the role of struggling) to promote a more integrated framework for understanding teacher identity. In Trent's studies, he found out that multiple discourses existed in teacher identity construction in the context of Hong Kong, and the relations among the discourses determined the negotiability. Trent's expansion of the conceptual framework was taken up and used in Yazan (2017); whereas Yazan (2017) further complemented Trent's conceptualization of teacher identity by making positioning construction of identity more explicit. Overall, among the studies, identity-in-practice was mainly informed by Wenger (1998); however, identity-in-discourse was informed by different theories, such as Fairclough's (2003) critical social theory and Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) framework on the nodal points of identity. Fairclough (2003) has been found in Trent's studies and Tseng's (2017) study as an important tool, focusing on linguistic expressions, to investigate how participants discursively construct their identities.

Professional role identities and possible selves

A strand of research has focused on teachers' role identities (e.g., Ahmad & Samad, 2018; Farrell, 2011) and their possible selves (i.e., Sallı & Osam, 2018; Yuan, 2016). Although role identities and possible selves are not the same, both concepts highlight how teachers perceive themselves as who they are, how they understand their profession, and how they enact the roles or sense of self in their teaching practices in the past, present, or future, indicating the link between identities and roles and selves. According to Farrell (2011), "teacher role identity includes how teachers recognize their roles within their world and involves their beliefs, values, and assumptions about teaching and being a teacher," and he further pointed out that "any discussion of professional role identity must also include the concept of 'self'" (p. 54). Therefore, teachers' role identities and selves are interrelated. Both Ahmad and Samad (2018) and Farrell (2011) pivoted around teacher participants' role identities and used "metaphors" to "reveal the different representation of the role in teaching" (Ahmad & Samad, 2018, p. 145). For instance, Ahmad and Samad (2018) explored "metaphors [that] structure teachers' perception, thought, and action and relate these aspects to what they do in the classroom" to make implicit knowledge of teaching explicit (p. 145). The teacher participant in their study identified herself as "mother," "knowledge provider," "law enforcer," and "facilitator."

Sallı and Osam (2018) and Yuan (2016) focused on the possible selves theory. According to Sallı and Osam (2018), possible selves include future selves which are "cognitive representations of self-relevant expectations of what the current self

may become in the future, both positive and negative, make up imagined future selves" and this theory can be used to "establish a framework for assessing how the present-self acts as a motivational element to determine future actions and aspirations" (pp. 485-486). This indicates that the emerging professional identities of the present and future goals become motivations for the expected professional teacher identity in the future. Salli and Osman (2017) identified both expected selves reflected in "interpersonal relationships, instructional strategies, and professional dispositions" (p. 491) and feared teacher selves manifested in "classroom management, instructional strategies and unprofessional dispositions" (p. 491). The potential limitation of the possible selves theory is that possible selves research risks individualizing identity work and can overlook structural barriers that prevent teachers from realizing their imagined futures.

Socio-constructivism theory

Some studies (Kaya & Dikilitas, 2019; Safari, 2020) specifically used the socio-constructivist approach to study teacher identity. Under the Socio-Constructivism theory, identity construction is a mental and psychological process, but also a social process. The former is about teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and metacognitive processes, and the latter is about "social role of teaching, the relations of a teacher, and the expectations of others" (Kaya & Dikilitas, 2019, p. 60). Safari (2020) further explained that knowledge was created through social interactions (p. 3). For example, Kaya and Dikilitas (2019) explored a teacher's identity developmental stages and analyzed the changes in the teacher's beliefs and teaching practices before and after a teacher training course. The teacher's identity construction experienced changes from pre-existing, developing, to liberating identities, in accordance with his changes in the understanding and beliefs regarding teaching practices from behaviorism, cognitivism, to social constructivism. The study indicated that professional support through classroom observations and reflections after each observation with the teacher educator was facilitative to his identity change. Similarly, Safari (2020) explored the transformation of Iranian student teacher identities from traditional roles, like knowledge transmitters, to alternative roles, like "as friend, mediator, co-partner, helper, facilitator, supporter, and a guide" (p. 8) by the end of pre-service teacher education courses. A potential critique of the theory is that socio-constructivist studies often rely on self-reported data, so they may under-capture tacit, unconscious aspects of identity that teachers cannot articulate.

Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial approach to the study of teacher identity is also represented in this body of literature, particularly Charles (2019) and Yazan (2019). For instance, Charles (2019) adopted critical race theory, which "honors experiential knowledge of people of color as truth and recognizes individuals who have been historically marginalized because of their race" to study two black teachers of English in South Korea to challenge the association of NES with Whiteness (p. 4). In other words, this study explored how race influenced identity and experience in a particular context, where White privilege in ELT was underscored. Although the two Black teachers of English in South Korea enjoyed privilege as NES teachers, the misunderstanding of their race and blackness propelled them to become cultural

ambassadors and use their experiential knowledge to design courses to enlighten students about African American culture. Yazan (2019) focused on the macro and micro influences of language ideologies on the teacher participants' identity construction and teaching practices. Particularly, focusing on the colonial history and current role of English in globalization, Yazan (2019) studied one teacher participant's hierarchical views on accents, who associated accents with community membership; however, at the same time, she destabilized the native/nonnative and correct/incorrect binaries and emphasized diversity in her teaching.

Translingualism

Ishihara and Menard-Warwick (2018) drew upon Canagarajah's (2013a, 2013b) translingual practice, which is "an emerging theoretical framework that connects language use explicitly to identity, ideology, and power" (Ishihara & Menard-Warwick, 2018, p. 257). Within this theoretical framework, monolingual normativity is replaced by "pluralistic understanding of how language users create meaning in social interaction" in which competent communicators utilize available semiotic resources from one or more than one language (Ishihara & Menard-Warwick, 2018, p. 258); therefore, "languages are viewed as complementing each other rather than competing or interfering with one another" (Ishihara & Menard-Warwick, 2018, p. 258). In Ishihara and Menard-Warwick's (2018) study, they depicted the translingual identity development and intercultural experiences of two teacher participants who were competent users of multiple languages. To theorize LTI, Lee and Canagarajah (2019) used both translingual practice and disposition, which was a cognitive and affective "filter" influencing teachers' way of thinking and acting (p. 354). Canagarajah has divided dispositions into three categories, including language awareness, social values, and learning strategies (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019, p. 354). In their study, Lee and Canagarajah (2019) explored one teacher participant's translingual dispositions and her aligned enactment of practice, which shows that she rejected "the normative discourses about what language should be legitimate and what kinds of language practices should be valued in her ESL class" (p. 360) to encourage diversity in literacy and creativity among her students even though she was a monolingual NES. However, the caution regarding the use of the theory in the study of teacher identity is that unless the framework is coupled with close analyses of policy, labour conditions, racialisation and institutional power, it risks becoming a celebratory discourse that describes teachers' desired selves more accurately than their material realities.

Multiple theories

There are also studies combining different theories to study language teachers' varied and complex linguistic identity on professional teacher identity construction (e.g., Ellis, 2016; Henry, 2019; Xu, 2013). For example, Henry (2019) used the dialogical self-informed by Hermans (1996). Under this theory, identity construction is an individual and social construction through interactions with others. Furthermore, Henry (2019) drew upon complexity theory to explore developmental processes of "why, when and how identities emerge" to conceptualize the "integrative nature of teacher identity" (p. 266). The combination of the two theories indicated that "the dialogical self can be understood as a bounded

yet open system where, in the ongoing drama of self-definition, interactions between I-positions are situationally influenced" (p. 266).

In summary, the theories discussed above each offer unique insights into language teacher identity. Table 2 synthesizes these frameworks, showing what each contributes and where they overlap or conflict.

Table 2. Frameworks syntheses

Theoretical Framework	Unique Contributions	Key Overlaps with Other Frameworks	Tensions with Other Frameworks
Poststructuralism	Centering power dynamics in identity struggles; Highlighting discursively constructed, fluid identity; Emphasizing agentic resistance to dominant norms	Viewing identity as dynamic/context-dependent; Stressing agency in identity negotiation	Neglecting biographical/professional roots of identity; Overlooking micro-interactional details of identity formation
Positioning Theory	Analyzing identity via relational interactive/reflexive positioning; Linking positioning to context-specific political dynamics	Focusing on social construction through interactions; Framing tensions as core drivers of identity development	Ignoring macro-sociopolitical structures in positioning; Disconnecting positioning from long-term community membership
Sociocultural Theory	Linking identity to biographical/professional experiences and layered contexts; Integrating personal (agency/emotions) and social (traditions/interactions) identity dimensions	Viewing identity as context-dependent; Highlighting the social construction of identity; Acknowledging the biographical roots of identity	Downplaying agentic resistance to structural constraints; Lacking explicit focus on power relations in identity formation
Community of Practice (CoP)	Centering membership trajectories as identity shapers; Introducing engagement/imagination/ali	Focusing on practice-driven identity formation; Viewing identity as	Underplaying power relations within/across communities;

Theoretical Framework	Unique Contributions	Key Overlaps with Other Frameworks	Tensions with Other Frameworks
	gnment as modes of belonging	socially constructed	Ignoring global sociocultural/political contexts
Activity Theory (Identity-in-Activity)	Examining identity through systemic activity system analysis; Framing cross-system contradictions as identity transformation catalysts	Highlighting structural constraints on identity; Framing tensions as developmental drivers of identity	Overlooking power dynamics within activity systems; Neglecting individual discursive narration of identity
Bakhtinian Perspective	Focusing on dialogism and authoritative/internally persuasive discourses; Linking identity to others' perceptions of the self	Emphasizing social construction through interactions; Acknowledging the biographical roots of identity	Neglecting macro-sociopolitical structures (e.g., colonial legacies); Rarely addressing practice-based identity enactment
Identity-in-Practice & Identity-in-Discourse	Bridging enacted behavioural identity and narrated discursive identity; Conceptualizing the two constructs as mutually constitutive	Viewing identity as practice-driven; Emphasizing language's role in identity construction	Initial framing as mutually exclusive constructs; Overlooking global/colonial contexts in identity analysis
Professional Role Identities & Possible Selves	Exploring role perception via metaphorical framing of teaching; Linking present identity to future aspirational/fear-based possible selves	Viewing identity as dynamic and evolving; Emphasizing agency in shaping professional identity	Neglecting power dynamics in institutional role assignment; Disconnecting role identities from community membership
Socio-Constructivism	Integrating psychological (beliefs/metacognition) and	Focusing on the social	Overlooking macro-

Theoretical Framework	Unique Contributions	Key Overlaps with Other Frameworks	Tensions with Other Frameworks
	social (interactions/expectations) identity processes; Highlighting identity change via professional development interventions	construction of identity; Viewing identity as adaptable to contextual shifts	sociopolitical influences on identity; Downplaying discursive resistance to dominant norms
Postcolonial Theory	Addressing colonial legacies/globalization/White privilege in ELT; Centering racial/ethnic identity in LTI negotiation	Emphasizing power dynamics in identity formation; Viewing identity as context-dependent	Focusing on macro structures over micro-interactional dynamics; Disconnecting colonial legacies from classroom practice
Translingualism	Rejecting monolingual norms; framing identity as multilingual resource integration; Focusing on translingual dispositions for inclusive teaching	Emphasizing agency in resisting dominant linguistic norms; Viewing identity as adaptable to linguistic diversity	Neglecting the biographical roots of multilingual identity; Rarely addressing power imbalances in multilingual classrooms
Multiple Theories	Integrating complementary frameworks to capture LTI's multidimensionality; Addressing single-theory limitations via synthetic analysis; Analyzing intersecting individual/structural/contextual identity influences	Viewing identity as complex and dynamic; Emphasizing social-individual interaction in identity formation; Framing tension/resolution as identity drivers	Risking theoretical overload without clear integration logic; Obscuring the unique contributions of individual frameworks; Requiring rigorous methodological alignment to avoid contradictory lenses

Discussion

Through the analysis, teacher identity has been conceptualized and explored in relation to (1) their linguistic, racial, and gender identities (through, e.g., translingualism, postcolonial theory, sociocultural theory), (2) their increased or decreased membership in their communities of practice (through, e.g., CoP, Identity-in-Practice and Identity-in-Discourse), (3) their sociocultural and sociopolitical micro and macro contexts (through, e.g., sociocultural theory), (4) the negotiation of power relating to the binary/dichotomy of NNES/NES teachers as well as the deconstruction between Western and White (through, e.g., poststructuralism, critical race theory), (5) the interactions with other stakeholders, like students, parents, and administrators (through, e.g., Positioning Theory and Socio-Constructivism Theory), (6) the development of beliefs and emotions in situated contexts (through, e.g., CoP, Socio-Constructivism Theory), (7) the negotiation of meaning and the resolution of conflicts across different activity systems (through, e.g., Identity-in-Activity), (8) their personal and professional experiences and knowledge (through, e.g., sociocultural theory), and (9) the use of language (through, e.g., Positioning Theory). Indeed, any of the factors can play a significant role in shaping teacher identity, and this review further supports the idea that teacher identity is a complex and dynamic concept. The complexity of the concept can be demonstrated in Figure 1.

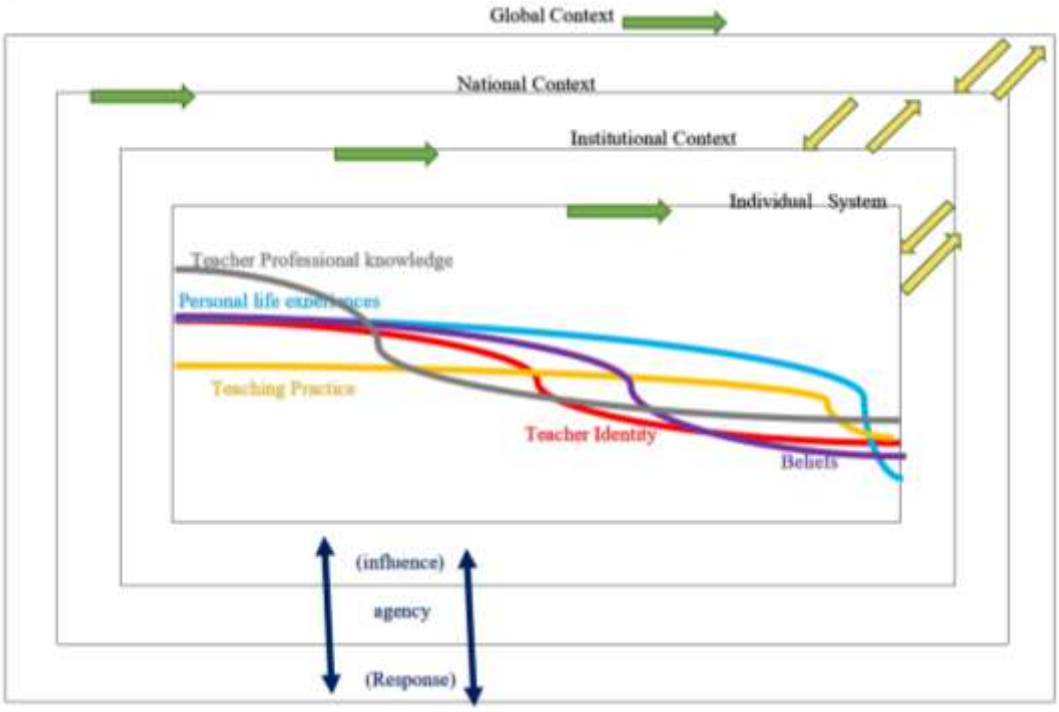

Figure 1. A holistic understanding of teacher identity

The review has demonstrated that teacher identity development is non-linear, contradictory, and dynamic, embedded in layered contexts (Block, 2015), and the developing process is both social and individual. Building upon the three levels of contexts that Barkhuizen (2016) has identified, including the context of individuals (personal emotions, thoughts, etc.), inter-personal contexts of teachers (referring to institutional context), and sociopolitical contexts (national policies in particular),

another larger context should also be included, namely, global context which means global political, economic, social, and cultural context. This global context should be considered, particularly when Western ideologies intervene with English language teaching and learning in the EFL context. Therefore, Figure 1 captures the complexity of contexts in which teacher identity is constructed and evolving.

Across these theoretical frameworks, several overarching themes emerge. First, teacher identity is a highly complex and dynamic concept. It is influenced by a multitude of factors, including internal factors such as emotions, beliefs, and agency, and external factors such as social interactions, institutional contexts, and broader sociopolitical forces. The review has demonstrated that teacher identity is not static but rather evolving as teachers navigate different stages of their careers and interact with various contexts. Second, the importance of context in shaping teacher identity cannot be overstated. Whether it is the micro-level context of the classroom, the meso-level context of the school or institution, or the macro-level context of society and culture, each context plays a significant role in identity construction. Different theoretical frameworks have emphasized different dimensions of context, but all have shown that context provides the backdrop against which teacher identity is formed and negotiated. Third, the role of power in teacher identity is a recurring theme. Power relations, both within educational institutions and in society at large, influence how teachers are perceived, how they position themselves, and how they construct their identities. For example, the power imbalance between native and non-native English-speaking teachers has a profound impact on the identity construction of NNES teachers. Understanding and addressing these power relations is crucial for promoting more equitable and inclusive teacher identities.

Further, based upon the review results, it becomes apparent that each theoretical perspective tends to favor one or certain aspects of teacher identity, which might not be sufficient to capture its complexity; therefore, the development of theories and the combination of theories and constructs are noticeable approaches in this review. For example, Lee and Canagaraja (2019) adapted Varghese et al.'s (2005) identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse to dispositions-in-practice and dispositions-in-discourse. This theory development is also observed in Trent's study. He developed Varghese et al.'s (2005) identity as discursive and experiential by considering the role of "agency" and also explored the "contested" and "negotiated" features of identity. As teacher identity cannot be fully examined under one theoretical framework, the studies under the category of "multiple theories" demonstrate the significance of analyzing teacher identity through multiple lenses. This combination of theories partially reveals that diverse theories should be perceived as complementary to the study of teacher identity, and common grounds can be found across several theories in this review. One example is positioning theory and Bakhtin's dialogism, both of which emphasize the self and other relationship in interactions, whereas the former emphasizes power relations between interlocutors and the latter highlights discourses in identity construction. Therefore, the results of the review are consistent with what Varghese et al. (2005) have found: "The view of identity outlined above does not in itself form a single, coherent theoretical approach. Rather, it constitutes a set of features that may be common to various theoretical frameworks" (p. 23).

To avoid a reductionist view of understanding LTI, complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2011) might be a potential theory to address the issues. Larsen-Freeman (2011) initiated complexity theory in the study of second language acquisition (SLA) because of a very similar situation in research on SLA. She argues that "SLA processes were complex, situated, and likely multivariate" (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 49), but current (cognitive) theories were just multiplying factors on SLA. Furthermore, she points out that "aggregating findings across studies seemed impossible, given differences in how and where data were collected" (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 49), which is also a problem in the study of teacher identity. She came to understand language as a complex adaptive system, which emphasizes context, agency, and adaptation, and complexity "underscores the importance of contingent factors, of considering the specific conditions in a specific context at a specific time" (p. 63). In a word, the conceptualization of language and SLA under complexity theory resonates with the dynamic and complex nature of identity, particularly Tseng (2017) pinpoints that "language and identity are mutually constitutive" (p. 41). Therefore, the potential use of complexity theory in the study of teacher identity is reasonable.

Further, Larsen-Freeman (2011) comments that using complexity theory in research is challenging because it is difficult to draw boundaries to define a focal point of interest, as she says, "clearly specifying the boundaries of a complex system is by no means intuitive" (p. 60). She suggests three methods, but the most viable one is ethnography with its attention on "dynamical descriptions" which "describe the interconnected web of factors influencing change" (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 63). Therefore, complexity theory can be used to study how individual teacher identity changes, adapts, or transforms in concrete situations or how teacher identity emerges through the interactions with the environment through ethnography. Especially, in the review, Henry (2019) has applied the theory in his study, whereas he used modeling method which has been criticized for its distortion of real-life situations (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p. 61).

Implications for identity-oriented language teacher education

The findings of this review have significant implications for language teacher education. First, since no single theory can fully capture the complexity of LTI, teacher education programs can incorporate a diverse range of theoretical perspectives on LTI into their curricula. By exposing pre-service and in-service teachers to different theories, they can develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes of identity construction and how it relates to their teaching practice. For example, poststructuralism can help teachers recognize the fluid and power-laden nature of identity, while sociocultural theory can emphasize the role of personal and social experiences in shaping identity. This exposure can enable teachers to view their own identities and those of their colleagues and students from multiple angles, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic approach to teaching.

Second, given that teacher identity is highly context-specific, the curriculum should be designed to help teachers understand how different contexts (micro-classroom, meso-school, macro-society, and global) influence identity. For instance, through the study of sociocultural theory, teachers can explore how their past learning experiences, cultural backgrounds, and the institutional culture of their schools shape their identities. Case studies and real-life examples from diverse

contexts can be used to illustrate these concepts, allowing language teachers to better adapt their teaching strategies to the unique identities and needs of their students.

Third, teacher education can focus on promoting critical awareness of power relations and their impact on teacher identity. Language teachers need to be able to recognize and challenge dominant discourses that may marginalize certain groups of students. Poststructuralist and critical race theory can be used as tools to facilitate this critical awareness. Once teachers are aware of these power relations, they can be guided to develop teaching practices that challenge and subvert dominant discourses. This could involve creating inclusive classroom environments where all students, regardless of their language background or identity, feel valued and empowered. For instance, teachers can use materials and teaching methods that represent diverse cultures and identities, and encourage students to share their own experiences, thus promoting a more equitable and democratic learning space.

Further, teachers need to be trained to recognize and celebrate the diversity of identities among their students. By understanding theories related to linguistic, racial, gender, and other identities (such as translingualism and postcolonial theory), teachers can develop teaching approaches that are sensitive to the unique needs and experiences of each student. For example, in a multilingual classroom, a translingual approach can be adopted to encourage students to draw on their full linguistic repertoires, rather than adhering to monolingual norms. Also, identity-oriented language teacher education can emphasize the importance of self-reflection. Language teachers can be encouraged to engage in activities such as reflective journaling, group discussions, and case studies (e.g., Weng & McGuire, 2021) to explore their own identities, beliefs, values, and assumptions about teaching. For example, by reflecting on their past teaching experiences and how these have influenced their identities, teachers can identify areas for growth and development.

Additionally, the concept of possible selves can be used as a tool for professional development. Teachers can be guided to envision their future professional identities and set goals accordingly. For instance, if a language teacher aspires to become a more culturally responsive educator, they can develop a plan to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and reflect on their progress over time. This process of envisioning and working towards possible selves can enhance motivation and professional growth. Last, given that teacher identity is often characterized by tensions and conflicts (such as those between different role identities or between personal and professional identities), teacher education can help teachers develop strategies for managing these tensions. Through the study of theories that highlight the dynamic and contested nature of identity (such as positioning theory and identity-in-discourse), teachers can learn to navigate these conflicts and develop resilience. For example, if a teacher experiences a conflict between their role as a knowledge provider and a facilitator of student-centered learning, they can use reflective practice and theoretical insights to find a balance that aligns with their professional identity.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, identity-oriented language teacher education can encourage teachers to engage in research on LTI. By exploring different theoretical frameworks and conducting their own studies, teachers can deepen their understanding of identity construction and contribute to

the existing body of knowledge in the field. For example, a teacher could conduct a small-scale study in their classroom to investigate how students' identities influence their language learning motivation, using theories such as sociocultural theory and possible selves as a framework. Action research can be a powerful tool for teachers to explore and improve their teaching practices in relation to identity. Teachers can identify a problem related to identity in their classroom (such as issues of student engagement among students from diverse backgrounds), develop a plan to address it, implement the plan, and then reflect on the results. This iterative process of research and action can lead to practical improvements in teaching and a better understanding of how identity factors into the teaching-learning process.

Further, building on the concept of communities of practice, teacher education can foster collaborative learning environments where teachers can share their experiences, ideas, and research findings related to LTI. By participating in professional communities, teachers can learn from their peers, gain new perspectives, and develop a sense of professional identity as part of a larger community. For example, teachers can form study groups to discuss and analyze different theoretical frameworks related to identity or collaborate on research projects to explore identity-related issues in their schools or districts. Last, given the complexity of LTI, interdisciplinary collaboration can also be beneficial. Teachers can collaborate with researchers and educators from other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of identity and its implications for language teaching. This interdisciplinary approach can lead to innovative teaching strategies and a more holistic view of teacher and student identities.

Implications for future research

Building on the review's insights into LTI's complexity, dynamism, and contextuality, future research can advance in three key directions. First, empirical investigations adopting integrated theoretical frameworks (e.g., combining poststructuralism's focus on power with activity theory's systemic analysis) to capture the multi-faceted nature of LTI, particularly for marginalized groups such as NNES teachers, translingual educators, and teachers navigating intersecting identities. Second, longitudinal studies leveraging complexity theory and ethnographic methods to trace how teacher identity adapts to layered contextual shifts and how tensions across activity systems drive identity transformation. Third, research exploring the practical enactment of theoretical insights in teacher education, such as designing interventions that foster critical awareness of power dynamics, informed by postcolonial and poststructuralist lenses, and reflexive engagement with role identities, guided by possible selves theory, to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and classroom practice. These directions will deepen the field's holistic grasp of LTI while enhancing the relevance of identity-oriented research for teacher professional development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, language teacher identity is a complex, dynamic construct shaped by numerous internal and external factors. Diverse theoretical frameworks each offer unique insights, yet no single one fully captures its complexity. Integrating these theories, promoting critical awareness, fostering self-reflection,

and encouraging research and collaboration are essential for identity-oriented language teacher education to support teachers in developing authentic, resilient professional identities.

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