

## English Teacher Identity Development in Borderland Discourse: Delving into Negotiating Personal and Professional Selves การศึกษาอัตลักษณ์ความเป็นครูภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวาทกรรมพรมแดน: ย้อนพินิจการต่อรองอัตลักษณ์ส่วนตัวและอัตลักษณ์วิชาชีพ

Sakorn Kung\* Denchai Prabjandee\*\* Punwalai Kewara\*\*\*

Corresponding Author, E-mail: sakorn\_kung@yahoo.com

### Abstract

This study was an exploration on Thai non-Christian English language teachers in a Catholic school of their teacher identity development by looking into their conflicting personal and professional selves which created tensions. An inquiry into how they negotiated these conflicting selves was conducted to detect any borderland discourses. Life story interviews, shadowing observations, and triangulation procedures were conducted to obtain necessary data for this study. The gathered data was analyzed by coding and thematic methods to form categories of dominant teacher identities which were context dependent. The findings revealed the journey of English teacher identity development of two non-Christian informants who worked in a Catholic school. They illustrated several tensions at the workplace resulted from their conflicting personal and professional selves. By negotiation of these selves which they expressed through borderland discourses, they allowed their professional selves to be dominant in certain contexts. Their teacher identity was influenced by their feelings, personal backgrounds, and socio-cultural factors. Therefore, there is a necessity to enhance teacher identity, aspects of negotiation of personal and professional selves, the understanding of cultural diversity in teachers' training programs as well as to form supporting groups to assist novice English teachers who have just joined their teaching profession in schools.

---

\* Master degree student of Education in Teaching English as a Global Language, Department of International Graduate Studies Human Resource Development, Faculty of Education, Burapha University.

\*\* Dr., Department of International Graduate Studies Human Resource Development, Faculty of Education, Burapha University.

\*\*\* Assistant Professor, Dr., Department of International Graduate Studies Human Resource Development, Faculty of Education, Burapha University.

**Keywords:** Teacher Identity, identity development, personal self, professional self, tension, negotiation, religions, borderland discourse

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการศึกษาครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยที่ไม่ใช่คริสเตียนในโรงเรียนคาทอลิกเกี่ยวกับพัฒนาการอัตลักษณ์ความเป็นครูโดยดูจากความขัดแย้งส่วนตัวและวิชาชีพที่สร้างความตึงเครียด มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาวิธีการต่อรององค์ประกอบที่ขัดแย้งเหล่านี้เพื่อตรวจสอบวาทกรรมพรมแดน การสัมภาษณ์เรื่องราวในชีวิต การติดตามอย่างใกล้ชิดเสมือนเงา และขั้นตอนการหาสมการเพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลที่จำเป็นสำหรับการศึกษานี้ ข้อมูลที่รวบรวมได้วิเคราะห์โดยการเขียนโปรแกรมและวิธีการใจความในรูปแบบหมวดหมู่ของตัวตนของครูที่โดดเด่นซึ่งขึ้นอยู่กับบริบท ผลการวิจัยพบว่าเส้นทางของการพัฒนาตัวตนของครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษของผู้ให้ข้อมูลที่ไม่ใช่คริสเตียนสองคนที่ทำงานในโรงเรียนคาทอลิก พวกเขาแสดงให้เห็นถึงความตึงเครียดหลายอย่างในที่ทำงานอันเป็นผลมาจากความขัดแย้งส่วนตัวและอาชีพของพวกเขา ด้วยการเจรจาต่อรองของสิ่งเหล่านี้ที่พวกเขาแสดงออกผ่านวาทกรรมของพรมแดนพวกเขาอนุญาตให้องค์ประกอบทางอาชีพของพวกเขาโดดเด่นในบางบริบท ตัวตนของครูได้รับอิทธิพลจากความรู้สึกล้นหลามหลังส่วนตัวและปัจจัยทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรม ดังนั้นจึงมีความจำเป็นที่จะต้องเสริมสร้างอัตลักษณ์ของครูด้านการเจรจาต่อรองตัวตนและวิชาชีพการทำความเข้าใจความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมในโปรแกรมการฝึกอบรมของครูรวมทั้งจัดตั้งกลุ่มสนับสนุนเพื่อช่วยเหลือครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษมือใหม่ที่เพิ่งเข้าร่วมวิชาชีพครูโรงเรียน

**คำสำคัญ:** อัตลักษณ์ของครู, การพัฒนาอัตลักษณ์, ตนเองส่วนบุคคล, ตนเองวิชาชีพ, ความตึงเครียด, การเจรจาต่อรอง, ศาสนา, วาทกรรมชายแดน

## Introduction

New English teachers, mostly fresh graduates choose to join the English teaching profession every year. Regardless of their teaching experiences, English teachers are perceived by the society as an ideal teacher, being assumed that they are capable to deal with every issue in the classrooms. There are different schools in Thailand that include Christian schools, mostly the Catholic schools. Teachers of a diversity background work in these Christian schools where the majority of them are Buddhists. This study delved into life experiences of these Buddhist English teachers at a Catholic school in order

to explore personal and professional tensions as parts of their *teacher identity development*.

## Statement of Problems

Teacher identity has extensively been studied across several countries, such as in the United States context (Alsup, 2006) and in Hong Kong (Trent, 2010; Tsui, 2007). Most of these studies examined the development in pre-service teacher identity. It is currently understood that pre-service teachers experienced tensions in learning to teach during their practicum. They may experience the dilemma on what sort of teacher identity they should have: either their personal identity or professional identity

prevails. Besides, limited research have been conducted to understand teacher identity development in Thailand (e.g., Tantranont, 2009; Wangsatorntanakhun, 2014), especially for English language teachers in Christian schools. Varghese and Johnston (2007) argued that these teachers are very important to focus because their “voices” have been underrepresented and unheard in the global research communities.

In addition, research on the negotiation of conflicting personal and professional selves and ways to ease tensions resulting from these conflicting selves through discourses is relatively less in Thai educational context. There is yet a study to determine any possible inner tensions due to personal belief with religious school context such as a Christian school. Besides, there is a little attention into investigating how religious aspects and activities as well as personal negotiation with foreign teachers in Christian schools would affect Thai non-Christian English language teachers’ identity development. Inner voices of non-Christian teachers who are teaching in a religious educational institution that represent their feelings in the paths of teacher identity development are often unheard. This has been a research gap in the studies of teacher identity development when other factors such as tensions within differences of teaching

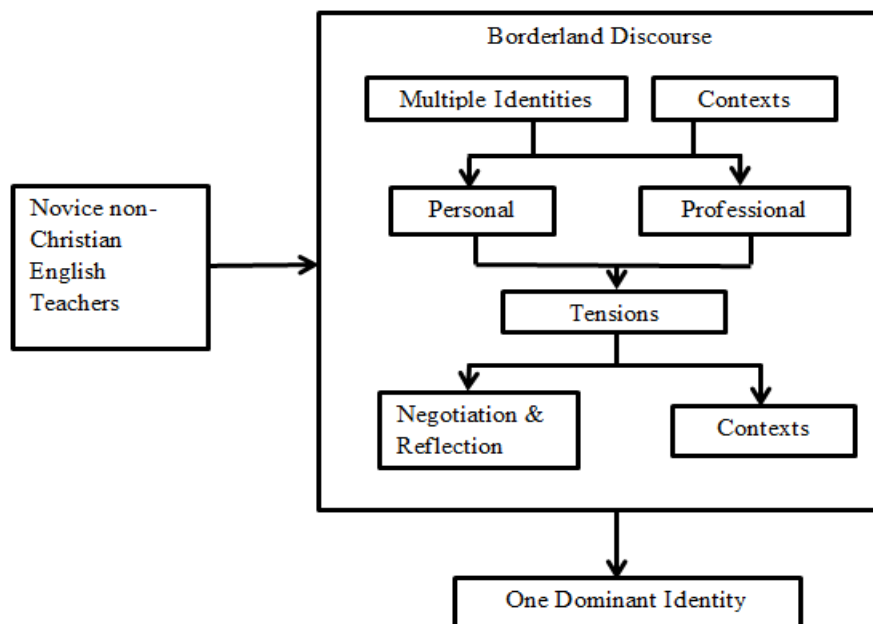
pedagogies between teachers’ education programs and general identity development in real school contexts are much focused.

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the negotiation and development of teacher identity within novice group of non-Christian English language teachers in a Christian school.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research was guided by the theoretical framework of borderland discourse, developed by Alsup (2006), which illustrates the connection between teacher’s personal selves and professional selves. From this perspective, identity is defined as the characteristics, feeling or belief of a person that distinguish someone from the others. It is also a combination of multiple selves that constantly changes according to different contexts. A dominant teacher identity which may change according to contexts is developed through multiple subjectivities / selves. Whenever there are tensions in these selves, negotiation of the selves leads to the borderland discourse as a medium for teachers to express their path of this negotiation process as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of borderland discourse

A teacher's personal and professional selves are often negotiable by positioning subjectivities between personal self and professional self as one of the main factors to retain the teacher in teaching profession. Alsup (2006) illustrated the pre-service teachers who expanded their identities, both personal and professional by engaging in a discourse that provoked transformation in their thoughts. This 'borderland discourse' enabled them to confront their existing notions of their identity in formative ways. It is also considered as 'affect related' discourse in which these teachers engaged in the form of 'language, actions, feelings, emotions, ideas, and appearances'. The impact of borderland discourse is powerful in shaping a teacher's identity with enhancement of consciousness, a meta-awareness of thought and action that can incorporate personal and

professional as well as multifaceted, contextual, and at times contradictory ideologies and situated identities (Alsup, 2006, p. 125).

Critical thinking is not just only acquiring the content, pedagogical technique, or research strategies for reflection on teaching practice, it is also related to ways on honoring personal beliefs, life choices, and experiences that consist of value and meaning while enacting elements of the professional identity that society demands (Alsup, 2006, p. 126). Borderland narrative discourse assisted and reflected emotional and cognitive dissonance among multiple cultural – contextual understanding of "teacher", personal stands and beliefs as well as experiences, and understandings of professional expectations and responsibilities (Alsup, 2006, p. 126).

As borderland discourse is a merge of discourses, one of which is usually the accepted

one or hegemonic discourse, teachers can judge themselves, or be judged by others, as to give up home discourses or personal stands in preference to the privileged ones. They may also engage in hegemonic discourses to position themselves directly and in productive contact with home or personal discourses (Alsup, 2006, p. 131). Teachers can enact critical personal pedagogies that affect their understanding of the cultural context or master narrative of teacher (Alsup, 2006, p. 131). The teachers who engage in borderland discourse are willing and be able “to live with initial cognitive dissonance and conflicts”, an important part of professional identity formation and are “one of the leading edges of modification and resistance” (Gee, 1999, p. 179).

## Research Methodology

This study was a qualitative research which employed a narrative inquiry to explore the multiple identities (personal and professional) of the English teachers in a Christian school through their life stories. Stories which are also “narratives” have been a vital source of data in qualitative research. They are an important feature in the literature on identity which illustrates how they shape and are shaped by identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). The life stories from teachers regarding to their own lives and experiences together with their teaching practice in school provide opportunities for them to explore aspects of their identities. Literature in teaching emphasizes the way of

conceiving identity through comprehension of the teachers’ stories (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). The essence of a teacher narrative to express identity within “a changing professional landscape” is expressed in important work on teachers’ stories in consideration of their significance of growing understanding of their professional identities within changing contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

Borderland discourse was the theoretical framework for data collection, data analysis, and discussion of findings in this study. Narrative inquiry was conducted by semi-structured face to face interviews which were audiotaped upon informants’ consent and be transcribed. This method is suitable for exploring the process of identity development in depth. The data were collected through semi-structured life story interviews (Atkinson, 2007), which were divided into three stages to elicit informants’ *past*, *present*, and *future* lives as a non-Christian English teacher in a Catholic school. It also provided an inquiry into the informants’ early life stories, conflicting issues related to personal belief and the necessity of being professional at the same time.

In addition, observations were carried out on the informants’ upon their consent by “shadowing” to obtain realistic supplementary findings in supporting informants’ narrations of their teacher identity development. Informants were observed by the researcher throughout their working hours and field notes were taken followed by reflections of the researcher.

Saturation of categories and emergence of regularities were applied to terminate shadowing observations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest researchers to apply four specific criteria to decide when to stop collecting the data. One of them is the exhaustion of resources. A second one is saturation of categories when a researcher has reached the point that continuing data collection produces insignificant amounts of new information. The third criterion is the emergence of regularities when the data continually generate similar results. The fourth criterion is over-extension when new information no longer applies to the categories that have emerged. Besides, bridling was conducted prior to, during, and after the data collection process. Self-reflections were made by the researcher on his perception towards the informants before every step of data collection to reduce bias during data interpretation stages.

### **Informants**

Two informants: Kaewjai and Suay were selected according to the selection criteria with the assistance from the Head of Foreign Language Department of a Catholic school in Chonburi province of Thailand. The selection criteria were: non-Christian, Thai English teachers, full time, and with five years or less of teaching experience. They fit into the selection criteria and they represented the average and typical teachers who reflected situations or instances of the phenomenon of interest in this research (Merriam, 2009). Investigation into the initial

stage within the first five years of teacher identity development was vital such that the development processes were more evident. Two informants would provide sufficient data in uncovering the process of teacher identity development if the research is conducted in depth by narrative inquiry (Prabjandee, 2014). Informants' consent was obtained before the data collection began. Their real names were replaced by their choice of pseudonyms to remain anonymous.

### **Data analysis**

The first stage of the data analysis procedure involved reading the transcripts from the interviews. The interviews were transcribed with the assistance of a computer software program. A "life story" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) was constructed for each of the informants through the primary data. The stories were further analyzed by using a categorical-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) to identify emerging themes through coding process by determining keywords. The themes illustrated informants' multiple selves that built up their identities. Each of the themes was listed chronologically to see the stages of identity development across the time, from childhood to their working stages. Themes which were closely connected were grouped into a category that illustrated a general identity. Categories which involved the negotiation of the multiple selves were represented in the findings. Supplementary data was needed to support these themes.

Cross case analysis was performed to detect any similarities or differences on the stages of identity development from the two informants involved.

## Findings

The findings of this study were based on the discourse analysis as described in previous data analysis section. The analysis took into account the negotiation of personal and professional selves of informants in their teacher identity development journey through their life stories alongside shadowing observations of their working routine and triangulation procedure.

### 1. Kaewjai

Kaewjai, 31 years old, a graduate of Bachelor of Liberal Arts in English was an English teacher for grade three (English Reading) and grade five (English Listening and Speaking). She had a wide working experience and married to her husband who stayed with her in their own house in Chonburi province, Thailand. She was originated from Bangkok.

#### *1.1 Personal selves influenced professional selves in social interaction*

By the time when Kaewjai joined the English teaching profession, she faced several stages of identity development through her working experience and interaction with people. Starting as a guidance teacher followed by grade one and grade two English teacher, she was gradually been promoted as a committee member of the Foreign Language Department which was responsible for English Language

Department, Chinese Language Department, and Japanese Language Department. She was later assigned an additional post as an assistant to the Head of Foreign Language Department and was in charge of foreign teachers' affairs. She had to deal with foreign teachers frequently in relation to their personal issues such as financial issues, job resignation process as well as other official issues such as submission of documents to Teachers' Council and the Labor Department in obtaining working permits before being issued a visa by the immigration department.

However, some of the foreign teachers did not submit the documents on time or did not pay back the money they borrowed from the school. Kaewjai had to take the step to talk to them in person and explained to them straight to the point in regard to their responsibilities.

"Some of the foreign teachers, not all of them, would not submit their documents on time for their annual visa renewal process. I told them you need to be aware of when you need to submit your official documents because it is your own responsibility, not our responsibility. Even several of them did not return their borrowed money, I told them you need to return the money as other teachers who are in difficulties might need the fund too. I understood their reasons of not returning the money but there were other teachers who needed the fund for emergency." (IN 01/27/2018)

In these contexts, Kaewjai had to be straightforward to people she interacted with at her workplace despite she felt hard to tell them



it was their responsibility and she felt pity for those who were in financial difficulties.

Parents of elementary students had frequent interactions with Kaewjai for various issues ranging from academic inquiries to personal conflicts. They would phone her after working hours or even late at night. Parents would meet her at school and demanded to see their kid's examination papers or quizzes as they were in doubt if the teacher had made errors in checking students' answers. Despite being annoyed, all Kaewjai had to do was to explain to the parents straightforward that it was beyond her authority to release students' assessment papers and they had to refer that matter to the Academic Affairs Department. Therefore, her identity of being straightforward in social interaction was developed to be professional to deal with people.

### ***1.2 Understanding of other religions influenced personal sides***

Kaewjai holds the religious belief of Buddhism. When she began working in the Catholic school, she sang the Christian song during the morning assembly and followed by the Christian prayer during the assembly and certain staff meetings. She followed what other students and teachers did because she felt the need to do so, otherwise, she would feel strange that she could be the only one who did not do so. She felt awkward at first to perform such acts because she studied in public schools which practiced Buddhism teachings and rituals.

“In Thai schools, we will do the long Buddhism prayer every Friday morning but here we have the Catholic prayer. At first, I felt strange, I felt weird like was this the way how they did it but I did not disrespect them. I felt awkward and I did not know how to participate in the mass. Eventually I pray. I even pray in the mass because when I am in the meetings, the Reverent Father said I have to pray. I pray but it does not mean my religion will change.” (IN 12/20/2017)

It took her time to adapt to this new Catholic school's environment and she tried to understand other religions through her friends. Kaewjai mentioned that whenever she prayed, she would think of other religions too. She tried to understand her Christian friends and Muslim friends and she respected their rights and continued her friendship with them. A better understanding of other religions made her more comfortable to tolerate and follow the prayers and rituals of the Catholic school where she worked. That did not change her personal religious belief and for her professional self, she felt it was fine to follow the prayers or rituals as what other teachers did. She eventually developed her identity to be religious tolerance and was comfortable to be part of the community of the Catholic school where she worked.

### ***1.3 Family's influence balanced personal and professional selves***

Not only Kaewjai was a confident person since she was young, at times, she could be overconfident at her workplace. There was a time



when she was overwhelmed by her tasks as she said in her first interview that she wished to do all the tasks but there was not enough time for her and she needed more time to complete those tasks. She personally felt that her colleagues from her own department such as the English, Chinese, and Japanese departments could not do the paperwork well enough, she might as well do it herself to avoid any undesirable errors. Professionally, she ought to let her respective colleagues to do these tasks because it was their responsibilities and rights even she meant to be helpful to them. Tension aroused whether she should do all the tasks or she should give chances for others to try on their job. She sought her husband's opinion on her job as a teacher because she was unsure if that was the right thing to do and she thought she might have crossed the line into others' job scope. Her husband advised that she had to respect others' position.

"I can ask my husband for suggestions or advice about colleagues or about work. I asked for his opinion, what does he think I should do? He complained that I agreed to do every task. He said that I have to concern that we have different positions, we have different

work. If you work on all of people's tasks, then we do not need them. I said alright. I will respect them and it is their job. I have to trust them even they cannot do the tasks well." (IN 12/20/2017)

Despite her eagerness to do every task she could, she should let respective colleagues do their tasks through her husband's advice. As Kaewjai was staying with her husband, there were opportunities for her to share her work-related issues with her husband and at times, asked for his advice. Kaewjai thought that she could do every task of her colleagues as she assumed they were incapable of doing their tasks well and might end up with errors. She did not trust them completely about their abilities in doing their work. Her husband's view was the tolerance and respect of each other's role and position that everyone has their own assigned tasks and Kaewjai should not interfere with other people's tasks. Kaewjai accepted her husband's standpoint and let her colleagues do their work and should there be any errors, they could refer them back to her. She put her trust on them, respected their roles as school teachers and developed her identity to respect others' rights.

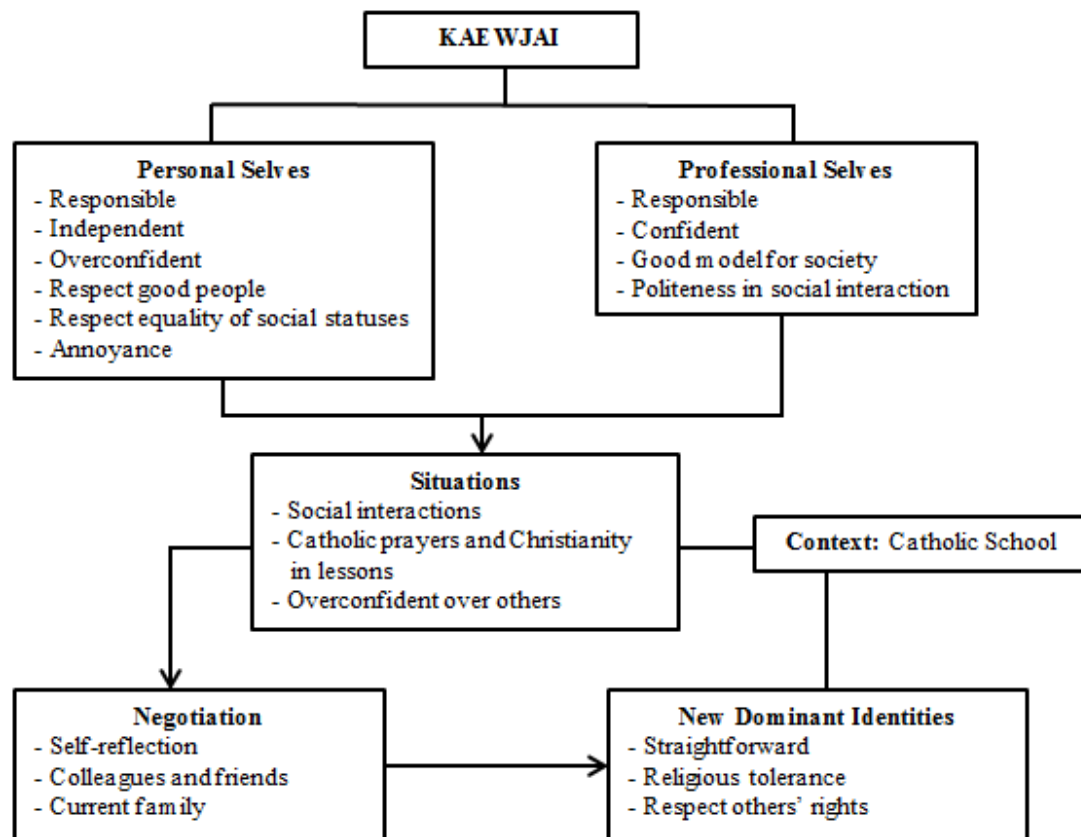


Figure 2. Overview of Kaewjai's teacher identity development and formation of new dominant identities through negotiation of personal and professional selves

## 2. Suay

Suay, 26 years old, a graduate of Bachelor of Education in English was an English teacher for grade five (English Writing) and the class advisory teacher of a grade five class. She was single at the time of data collection and was originated from Sisaket province, the northeastern part of Thailand.

### 2.1 *Personal selves influenced professional selves*

Suay grew up in a working class family with her parents who were farmers and she took care of her younger siblings during her childhood. That led her personal selves to be a responsible

and independent person who ensured tasks were completed and could solve problems by herself. She was a well-planned person who completed her routine tasks on time and planned ahead of what she was going to do next. It was visible that there was nothing on her office table after the late morning, the time after she checked her students' work and returned the work back to them. She kept the rest of her items in the drawers.

However, Suay faced challenges in her English teaching career when she initially joined it as there were over fifty students in every class she taught. It was hard for her to conduct

her lessons especially to students who were the second language learners of English. She expressed her concern over this issue and tried to find ways in coping them by sharing the issue with her friends who were also her close colleagues.

“For the first time I worked in this school, I was worried and nervous that I could not control the students because there were extremely lots of students. There were so many students. There were over fifty students in a classroom. I shared this problem with my friends. They are my close colleagues.”

(IN 11/22/2017)

Suay's teacher identity was also influenced by her English knowledge which she had acquired. A triangulation procedure with a teacher who knew Suay indicated that Suay was initially unprepared to teach when she was offered the English teacher position in this school. She was assigned to co-teach with a native English speaker during the first schooling term. There was a need for her to gain further knowledge in English from time to time according to another teacher who had worked with Suay. Alongside with all these issues, Suay realized her problems and weaknesses and when she was asked how she could deal with these problems, she said despite all these, she had been thinking positively that every problem could be solved. What she needed to do was to plan steps of solutions, to be organized, and performed her ability to her very best. She had a notebook which she wrote content of her lessons and she brought it to her classes so that she could refer it during her teaching.

## ***2.2 Personal selves influences religious tolerance***

Suay was an open-minded person in relation to her personal views on different religions. Her practice and belief in Buddhism made her a moderate person and she stayed neutral towards other religions. She was fine with Christianity when she obtained her first job in the Catholic school. However, she felt surprised and a bit awkward when she first recited a Catholic prayer along with other people during the morning assembly.

“I am fine with the religious practice of this school even when I first got into this school.

I hold my own religion of Buddhism but I respect the religious practices of this school. Initially, it was a bit awkward for me to recite a Catholic prayer during the students' assembly or teachers' meetings but I got used to it because I understand there are different religions. I do not mind too much of it because I am so grateful to be offered the job that I love in this school.” (IN 11/22/2017)

She did not express much of her concern in relation to religious issue and it took some time for her to be comfortable in joining Christian rituals and reciting Catholic prayers during the morning assembly and the teachers' meetings. It was the result of her gratefulness to be offered an English teacher position in a Catholic school which was her first job offer and she continued her career there. Thus, she developed her religious tolerance identity in her Christian school.

### ***2.3 Tensions in English language teaching***

Classroom management and controlling students were challenges for novice teacher like Suay during initial stages of her participation in teaching profession. Each class of over fifty students with a lesson period of fifty minutes required Suay to be organized in her lesson planning. However, due to the nature of young students who were very active, mischievous, and a huge number of them in a class, Suay was overwhelmed with this situation and initially faced tensions at her teaching but she gradually developed her identity to be stricter than before.

“The students are very naughty and noisy most of the time when I teach in the class.

They do not pay attention and there are students who do not submit their homework. I have to be strict with them in order to get my lessons going and I know there is a borderline of being strict with kids nowadays, unlike in the past.” (IN 01/18/2018)

In an English writing class, students of grade 5/7 were very noisy, in chaos, and seemed to be out of control. Suay scolded some of the students several times in a strict manner which I had never seen from my previous observations. (OB 01/11/2018)

Suay became strict to her students on certain contexts which depended on class conditions and students' behavior. She would warn the students sternly when the class was out of control but that did not happen for every lesson she taught or when there were students who did not submit her assigned homework. She acknowledged that she had to be nice to the students but there were times when things were not in control in a class of over fifty students, tension aroused because her noisy class might disturb other classrooms. She had to be strict so that the students would be under control and she could conduct her teaching according to her plans. She was aware of her professional self to what extent could a teacher exhibit an identity of being strict to the students in coping with challenges in classroom teaching.

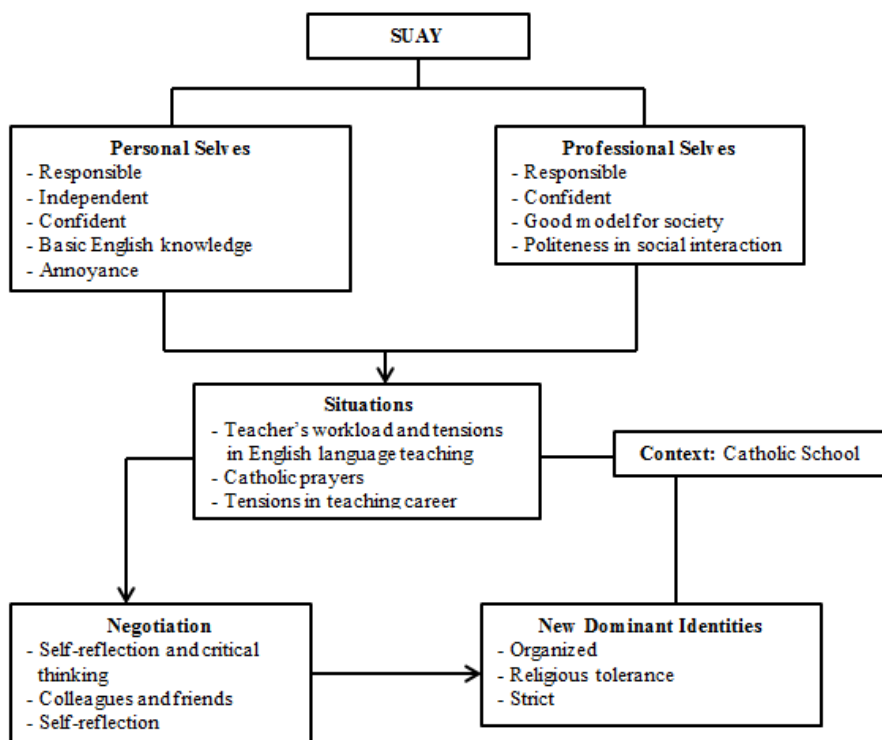


Figure 3. Overview of Suay's teacher identity development and formation of new dominant identities through negotiation of personal and professional selves

## Discussion

Kaewjai and Suay developed religious tolerance as part of their dominant identities not just in the school but out of the school as well. They took an approach to understand and accept the existence of other religions, in particular, Christianity in their workplace. They negotiated their personal self as a Buddhist with their professional self as an English teacher in the Catholic school or otherwise, they would choose to work elsewhere. When Kaewjai initially felt awkward in performing the Catholic prayers in school, she took an approach to understand other religions through discourses with people, to have self-reflections, and tried to understand other religions and respected their existence.

Meanwhile, Suay felt awkward too when she first recited Catholic prayers as she had never done it before. However, her personal selves of happiness and being grateful to be offered the first job she wished overcame her religious tension. The borderland discourse provided opportunities for them to reflect critically their conflicting selves with people around them so as to enable them not just to embody Christianity into their life without giving up their own religion but also other tensions related to their career.

Organization and planning are vital for teachers as challenges in teaching are inevitable. Suay developed her identity to be an organized English teacher in efforts to combat the challenges she faced in her career which

was a distinct condition she had when she was a student. She negotiated her personal self of worry that she might not be able to have a good teaching performance and got into troubles later with her professional self of being responsible, professional, and positive thinking teacher to build up herself as an organized teacher. Her dominant identity as an organized English teacher allowed her to cope with any unexpected challenges in her teaching profession such as facing problematic students and increasing workload. Her discourses with her close friends and self-reflections enabled her to plan things ahead as part of being a responsible teacher.

Being an organized teacher was not enough for Suay to cope with her continuous challenges in her profession, she became stricter than before to control her classes which had a huge amount of students and a limited time of lessons. Her identity of being a strict teacher was the result of negotiation of her multiple selves of being nice to the students but strict in conditions when students were misbehaved. Suay's development of strict teacher identity enabled her to get her lessons going and kept her students doing the assigned homework. Her personal self of annoyance with misbehaved students led her to be strict with her students. However, she acknowledged there is a boundary for a strict teacher towards the students.

Kaewjai developed her personal identity as a confident person due to her independent childhood experience and the fact that she was away from her family and resided with her

husband. At times, she could be overconfident and crossed the borderline of her colleagues' rights to do their job. She took others' tasks as she felt they might not be as competent as her. However, she realized what she had done and through borderland discourses with her husband, she decided to respect others' rights at her workplace. Negotiations of her multiple selves led her to compromise her personal self of overconfident with her professional self to respect other teachers' rights at school.

Besides, she developed herself to be a straightforward teacher in dealing with people in school especially her foreign colleagues and students. As an assistant to the Head of Foreign Language Department in dealing with foreign teachers' affairs, she had to be straightforward in communicating with foreign teachers who refused or forgot to submit their personal documents for working permit and visa renewal. She had to negotiate her personal self of being lenient with her professional self to be straightforward to get important tasks done on time. There were also moments when students' parents approached her in demanding certain requests which were beyond her authority, she felt annoyed but she explained to them straightforward without offence and asked them to meet the Head of School's Academic Affairs for further actions. Despite her friendliness to people, she ought to be straight to the points in dealing with serious issues at school. She allowed her personal self to go along with her professional self without giving up either of them and that required her

negotiation of these selves through discourses, mainly the borderland discourses with her family, friends, and colleagues or through self-reflections.

## Implications

The outcomes of this study provided insights for people of interest to understand how teacher identities were constructed in a context of Christian school in Thailand by teachers who are not Christians. Consequently, people are able to gain a better understanding on how the non-Christian English language teachers developed and negotiated their teacher identity in a Christian school when most of the time, borderland discourse played a significant role in the process of these negotiations. Besides, the comprehension of English teacher identity development and the negotiation of a teacher's personal and professional selves from this study could cultivate better elements in teacher education programs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) as well as supporting groups in schools for new incoming teachers.

## Conclusions

It was clear that through borderland discourses, Kaewjai and Suay were able to express their teacher identity negotiation and development. The borderland discourse requires self-reflection and critical thinking to allow negotiation of conflicting selves to occur. Nevertheless, the teacher identities of Kaewjai and Suay were context dependent and there was a likelihood that these identities might have changed across time and different contexts. There are opportunities for future research, which focus more on longitudinal identity development of English language teachers who hold a different religious belief in the school, which has different religious principles of these teachers.

## Note:

1. This paper is part of a Master's Thesis entitled *English Teacher Identity Development in Borderland Discourse: Delving into Negotiating Personal and Professional Selves*

## References

- Alsup, J. (2006). *Teacher identity discourses: Negotiating personal and professional spaces*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Atkinson, R. (2007). The life story interview as a bridge in narrative inquiry. In D.J. Clandinin (Ed.). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*, (pp. 224-245). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 16(2), 175-189.



- Connelly, M., & Clandinin, J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. London, ON: The Althouse Press.
- Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. London: Routledge.
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Prabjandee, D. (2014). Journey to becoming a Thai English teacher: A new perspective on investigating teacher shortage. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 60(3), 522-537.
- Tantranont, N. (2009). *Continuing professional development for teachers in Thailand*. Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Education, University of Warwick.
- Trent, J. (2010). From rigid dichotomy to measured contingency. Hong Kong preservice teachers' discursive construction of identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 906-913.
- Tsui, A.B.M. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), 657-680.
- Varghese, M, M., & Johnston, B. (2007). Evangelical Christians and English language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(1), 5-31.
- Wangsatorntanakhun, J. (2014). *Stories told in school: Conceptions of identity among adolescent ESL students and their teachers at an international school in Thailand*. Doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University.