

**NON-NATIVE GERMAN SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
IN THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURE
IN TEACHING GERMAN AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA**

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
ABSTRAK	xiii
ABSTRACT	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	2
1.2.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.....	2
1.2.2 German as a Foreign Language in Malaysia	4
1.3 Statement of the Research Problem	9
1.4 Research Objectives	13
1.5 Research Questions	14
1.6 Significance of the Study	14
1.7 Limitations of the Study	15
1.8 Definitions of Key Terms.....	16
1.9 Summary	18
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Teachers' Practices	19
2.2.1 The Concept of Beliefs.....	19
2.2.2 Defining Teachers' Beliefs.....	20

2.2.3	Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Teachers' Practices	22
2.2.4	Language Teacher Cognition Framework.....	24
2.3	The Integration of Culture in Teaching Language	27
2.3.1	What is Language?.....	27
2.3.1(a)	What is Foreign Language?.....	28
2.3.1(b)	German as a Foreign Language.....	28
2.3.2	What is Culture?.....	31
2.3.3	The Relationship between Culture and Language.....	33
2.3.4	Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom.....	35
2.3.4(a)	Integration of Culture.....	39
2.3.4(b)	Integration of Cultural Elements	40
2.3.4(c)	Integration of Culture and Language Learning Motivation	40
2.4	Native Speaker and Non-native Speaker.....	41
2.5	Related Studies.....	43
2.5.1	Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Teaching Language in the Global Context	43
2.5.2	Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Teaching Language in Malaysian Context.....	48
2.6	Conceptual Framework of the Study.....	50
2.7	Summary	53
	CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	54
3.1	Introduction	54
3.2	Research Design	54
3.3	Mixed Methods Sampling	56
3.3.1	Sampling for Quantitative Research	56
3.3.2	Sampling for Qualitative Research	57
3.4	Instrument.....	58

3.4.1	Questionnaire	59
3.4.2	Semi-Structured Interviews.....	62
3.4.3	Observation	64
3.5	Results of the Reliability Test	67
3.6	Pilot Study	68
3.7	Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis	68
3.8	Validity and Reliability in Mixed Methods Research	70
3.9	Ethical Considerations.....	71
3.10	Summary	72
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA .		73
4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	Study's Response Rate	73
4.3	Demographic Information of the Participants	74
4.4	Descriptive Analysis	79
4.5	RQ1 - What are the NNGS Teachers' Beliefs Concerning the Integration of Culture in the Teaching of GFL in Malaysian Secondary Schools?.....	80
4.5.1	NNGS Secondary School Teachers' Beliefs.....	81
4.5.2	NNGS Secondary School Teachers' Classroom Activities.....	84
4.5.3	Teaching Objectives.....	86
4.5.4	Types of Cultural Elements.....	87
4.6	Correlation Analysis.....	88
4.6.1	Test of Normality	88
4.6.2	The Relationship between NNGS Teachers' Beliefs with Teaching Objectives.....	90
4.6.3	The Relationship between NNGS Teachers' Beliefs with Types of Cultural Elements.....	91
4.7	Summary of Quantitative Data.....	92

CHAPTER 5	RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA	93
5.1	Introduction	93
5.2	The Demographic Information of the Participants.....	94
5.3	Teachers’ Beliefs.....	96
5.3.1	Prior Learning Experiences.....	96
5.3.2	Pre-Service and In-Service Training.....	96
5.3.3	The Concept of Culture.....	97
5.3.4	The Relationship between Language and Culture.....	98
5.4	Teachers’ Practices.....	99
5.4.1	Teaching Strategies	99
5.4.2	Classroom Observation	102
5.5	Summary of the Qualitative Data.....	105
CHAPTER 6	DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND	
	CONCLUSION.....	106
6.1	Introduction	106
6.2	Purpose and the Research Design of the Study.....	106
6.3	Summary of the Findings	106
6.3.1	NNGS Secondary School Teachers’ Beliefs (RQ1).....	107
6.3.2	NNGS Secondary School Teachers’ Practices (RQ2).....	107
6.4	Discussion of the Findings	108
6.4.1	Discussion of NNGS Secondary School Teachers’ Beliefs.....	108
6.4.1(a)	Prior Learning Experiences, Pre-Service and In- Service Training.....	108
6.4.1(b)	The Concept of Culture.....	109
6.4.1(c)	The Relationship between Language and Culture.....	110
6.4.2	Discussion of NNGS Teachers’ Practices.....	111
6.5	Implications and Recommendations	114
6.6	Directions for Future Research.....	116

6.7	Conclusion.....	117
	REFERENCES.....	119
	APPENDICES	
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1	Demographic Information of the Participants.....58
Table 3.2	Research Instruments in this Study59
Table 3.3	Details of the Questionnaire Items60
Table 3.4	Interview Schedule of the Study63
Table 3.5	Observations Schedule65
Table 3.6	Reliability Test Result of the Questionnaire67
Table 3.7	Procedures in the Data Analysis69
Table 3.8	Research Questions, Data Collection Method and Data Analysis70
Table 4.1	Distribution of Gender of Participants74
Table 4.2	Distribution of Age of Participants75
Table 4.3	Mean Score Scale and Interpretation79
Table 4.4	Overall Level, Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Each Section.....80
Table 4.5	NNGS Secondary School Teachers' Beliefs.....82
Table 4.6	NNGS Secondary School Teachers' Classroom Activities85
Table 4.7	Teaching Objectives.....87
Table 4.8	Types of Cultural Elements that the Teachers Consider Important ...87
Table 4.9	Normality of the Data through Skewness and Kurtosis.....88
Table 4.10	Correlation Coefficient Interpretation.....89
Table 4.11	Correlations between NNGS Teachers' Beliefs, Teaching Objectives and Types of Cultural Elements.....90
Table 4.12	The Relationship between NNGS Teachers' Beliefs with the Teaching Objectives.....91

Table 4.13	The Relationship between NNGS Teachers’ Beliefs with Types of Cultural Elements.....	92
Table 5.1	Coding Scheme of the Qualitative Data.....	93
Table 5.2	Demographic Information of the Participants.....	94
Table 5.3	Cultural Elements that Need to Teach	101
Table 5.4	The Amount of Time for the Integration of Cultural Elements-Related Activities	102
Table 5.5	Teachers and Their GFL Class.....	104

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
GFL	German as a Foreign Language
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
GI	Goethe-Institut
GC	Google Classroom
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
KSSM	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah
L2	Second Language
MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
MOE	Ministry of Education
PASCH	Schools: Partners for the Future
NNGS	Non-native German-Speaking
NNS	Non-native Speakers
NS	Native Speaker
RQ	Research Question
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UM	Universiti Malaya
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1	Framework of Language Teacher Cognition and Practice.....25
Figure 2.2	Conceptual Framework of the Study.....50
Figure 3.1	Convergent Design (One Phase Design).....55
Figure 4.1	Distribution of Age of Participants75
Figure 4.2	Participants' Teaching Experiences76
Figure 4.3	Participants' Academic Qualifications76
Figure 4.4	Participants' Professional Qualifications77
Figure 4.5	Duration of Studied in Germany78
Figure 4.6	Levels of German Classes79

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	Questionnaire
Appendix B	Interview Protocol
Appendix C	Sample of Classroom Observation Checklist
Appendix D	Sample of Observation Field Notes
Appendix E	Sample Letter of Application to Conduct Research
Appendix F	Invitation Letter to Secondary School Teachers to Participate in One-to-One Interview
Appendix G	Consent Form for Teachers to Participate in Research
Appendix H	Consent Form for Students to Participate in Research
Appendix I	Sample of Transcript

**KEPERCAYAAN DAN AMALAN GURU SEKOLAH MENENGAH BUKAN
PENUTUR ASLI JERMAN DALAM MENGINTEGRASIKAN BUDAYA
DALAM PENGAJARAN BAHASA JERMAN SEBAGAI BAHASA ASING
DI MALAYSIA**

ABSTRAK

Pengintegrasian unsur budaya ke dalam pengajaran bahasa Jerman sebagai bahasa asing (GFL) penting untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan komunikasi pelajar tentang budaya Jerman. Walau bagaimanapun, bidang ini telah mendapat perhatian yang terhad dalam penyelidikan terdahulu mengenai GFL dan guru Malaysia. Kajian kaedah campuran ini meninjau 66 guru dan menemu bual lima peserta untuk meneroka kepercayaan guru bukan penutur asli Jerman di sekolah menengah Malaysia dan bagaimana kepercayaan ini mempengaruhi amalan mereka dalam mengintegrasikan unsur budaya ke dalam pengajaran GFL. Kajian mendapati bahawa majoriti guru memegang kepercayaan positif tentang peyepaduan unsur budaya dalam kelas GFL dan mengiktiraf keperluan untuk mewujudkan persekitaran pembelajaran budaya. Data temu bual mendedahkan bahawa guru-guru ini menggunakan strategi pengajaran yang berkesan, seperti kaedah perbandingan, main peranan, dan penggunaan bahan autentik untuk menangani topik budaya. Namun begitu, pemerhatian bilik darjah mendedahkan bahawa guru memperuntukkan hanya 48.7% masa kelas untuk aktiviti kebudayaan. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada literatur pedagogi GFL dengan memberi penerangan tentang kepercayaan dan amalan guru berkaitan integrasi unsur budaya dalam pengajaran mereka. Kajian ini juga memberikan cadangan kepada Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia dan guru untuk membangunkan rancangan yang lebih komprehensif dalam mengintegrasikan budaya dalam pengajaran GFL.

**NON-NATIVE GERMAN SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURE IN
TEACHING GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA**

ABSTRACT

The integration of cultural elements into German as a foreign language (GFL) pedagogy is crucial for enhancing students’ understanding and communication of German cultures. However, this area has received limited attention in previous research on GFL and Malaysian teachers. This mixed-methods study surveyed 66 teachers and interviewed five participants to explore the beliefs of non-native German teachers in Malaysian secondary schools and how these beliefs influence their practices in integrating cultural elements into GFL instruction. The study found that the majority of teachers held positive beliefs about incorporating cultural elements in GFL classes and recognised the need to create a cultural learning environment. The interview data revealed that these teachers employed effective teaching strategies, such as the comparison method, role play, and the use of authentic materials to address cultural topics. However, classroom observations revealed that, on average, teachers allocated only 48.7% of class time to cultural activities. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on GFL pedagogy by shedding light on teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding the integration of cultural elements in their instruction. The study also provides recommendations for the Ministry of Education Malaysia and teachers to develop a more comprehensive plan for implementing the integration of cultural elements in GFL classes.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the beliefs and practices of non-native German-speaking (NNGS) secondary school teachers in Malaysia in relation to the integration of culture into the teaching of German as a foreign language (GFL), focusing specifically on cultural elements. This is predicated on the notion that, rather than taking place at random, teaching actions are influenced by the beliefs of the teachers.

The significance of culture in teaching foreign language (FL) or a second language (L2) has long been a source of debate (Kramsch, 2013). There is no shared understanding of cultural integration in FL or L2 education. According to Farooq et al. (2018), people acquire a FL concurrently with learning the target culture, and language serves as a tool for communication, as well as a medium for cultural transmission. Teachers and students have greater opportunity to communicate with foreigners owing to the globalisation of the economy and science. As a result, in addition to learning more about the diverse cultures of other countries, teachers and students must also be able to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries (Zhan, 2016).

According to Afriani (2019), if one wishes to master a language, the relationship between culture and language cannot be separated. Culture has an influence on the brains of language speakers, whether consciously or unintentionally. Language acquisition entails understanding not only the language itself, but also the ideas and values that shape it in order for it to be culturally appropriate (Afriani, 2019).

Beliefs of teachers “can be regarded as a subset of cognition” (Borg, 2003; Woods, 1996). Teacher cognition refers to “what teachers know, believe, and think” in

an unnoticed cognitive aspect of teaching (Borg, 2003, p. 81). The premise is that teachers are active decision-makers who choose teaching techniques based on their expertise, beliefs, and ideas (Borg, 2003). According to Borg (2006, p.1), “cognition” refers to “what language teachers think, know, and believe.” In other words, cognition embodies psychological constructs, such as beliefs, attitudes, theories, and knowledge, as well as assumptions, images, concepts, metaphors, and opinions.

Teachers’ knowledge bases and belief structures are ingrained in their unique belief systems, and are related to students and teaching materials. Teachers’ beliefs can be profound and difficult to modify (Borg, 2006; Pajares, 1992), and they are seen to have a greater influence on their overall classroom practice than their expertise (Pajares, 1992).

The teaching process has benefitted immensely from the research on teachers’ practices and beliefs. Several educational research studies have focused on discovering what teachers think, know, and believe. According to studies, teachers’ beliefs become a complex focus in the exploration of teachers’ beliefs in a range of domains, such as pedagogical content, previous learning experience, teaching practices, and learning process (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Iwan & Newton, 2021; Maijala, 2020; Mumu, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2018; Shirazi, 2017; Utami, 2016; Wafa, 2016).

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices

In the education setting, belief is a potent tool for influencing teacher behaviour in the classroom. According to Borg (2019), beliefs as components of teacher cognition comprise teacher knowledge and personal opinion, which indicates that teacher beliefs

are collections of knowledge, views, and personal theories that help teachers conceptualise their work and are deemed true.

Teachers' beliefs are an essential concept in defining the teachers' mental processes that contribute to their classroom teaching performance (Whyte et al., 2022). Teachers' beliefs have long been a focus of teaching research, as they are seen to be crucial in assisting teachers in establishing or forming effective teaching and learning ideas.

Beliefs are an important concept for teacher cognition researchers, since they are frequently considered to be the fundamental mental structure that influences what teachers learn and how they make pedagogical judgments (Nespor, 1987; Sah & Shah, 2020). According to Nespor (1987), teachers employ belief systems or belief structures to organise and express their personal information, ideas, perceptions, assumptions, perspectives, ideologies, and ideals. It is broadly acknowledged that teachers' beliefs serve as the foundation for action (Borg, 2011), and that beliefs affect and direct teachers' decisions (Whyte et al., 2022).

Teachers' beliefs about teaching are influenced by their previous learning experiences, which serve as filters for teachers when interpreting new information (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Teachers' teaching practice has a profound impact, which is not necessarily reflected in their classroom behaviour, and has a significant impact on their teaching decisions (Abdi & Asadi, 2015; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Yunus, 2020). What teachers believe will be reflected in reality, as these beliefs influence their decision-making and teaching practices in the classroom (Sah & Shah, 2020).

Teachers' practices are the most essential components, and they are inextricably linked to teachers' beliefs. Teaching practice reflects what is going on in teachers' minds and what they believe to be the true meaning of language acquisition. Teachers'

professional knowledge and actual practices may vary not only between nations, but also among teachers within the same country. To have a better understanding of their prevalence, it is vital to explore how particular beliefs and practices are related to the characteristics of teachers and classrooms (OECD, 2009). Teaching practices are regarded as a means of positively influencing the learning environment in the classroom.

According to Utami (2016), raising teachers' awareness of their beliefs about language acquisition is a crucial step towards achieving visible positive changes in the foreign language classroom. Teachers' responsibilities vary considerably since they must prepare lessons, control students' behaviour, make on-the-spot decisions, motivate students, develop rapport with students, and perform numerous other tasks, and how they perform these tasks is heavily influenced by their beliefs (Yunus, 2020).

Teaching activities are personal and related to an individual's teaching, and teachers' beliefs, which are shaped by their education and teaching experience, influence how they conceptualise their classroom activities and assignments (Borg, 2011; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). In the field of teacher education, it has long been recognised that teachers' practices in classroom activities reflect their beliefs (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Clark, C. & Peterson, 1986; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Sah & Shah, 2020; Yunus, 2020).

1.2.2 German as a Foreign Language in Malaysia

In order to explore the beliefs and practices of the NNGS secondary school teachers in Malaysia regarding the integration of cultural elements in the teaching of the GFL, background information regarding the current teaching of GFL in Malaysia, as well as historical background, is likely to be useful.

Learning a foreign language in Malaysia is not a new phenomenon, and the Malaysian government has given it significant consideration. Malaysian secondary schools are required under the Education Act 1996 (Akta Pendidikan 1996), to provide facilities for the teaching of Arabic, Japanese, German, or French (Lembaga Penyelidikan Undang-Undang, 1997). Foreign languages, such as Arabic, Japanese, German, French, Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, and Thai have been offered and taught as compulsory or elective subjects in several higher education institutes. Students are encouraged to acquire foreign languages, in order to expand their linguistic repertoire, making it easier to communicate with others, seek employment, and obtain information.

As a developing country, the Malaysian government has established policies and objectives regarding the importance of foreign language learning in Malaysia. Among the government's policies and objectives for FL learning include, firstly, learning additional language proficiency other than the native language - the Malay language - and the second language, particularly the English language. The second objective is to gain a deeper comprehension of the FL culture. Thirdly is to have the opportunity to learn about the technology used in those countries. Fourthly is to have the opportunity of working with foreign companies in Malaysia. Fifthly is to encourage students to continue their studies in the countries concerned. Lastly is to prepare Malaysia to become a multilingual nation (R. A. Rashid et al., 2007).

FL learning not only allows students to converse in foreign languages, but it also allows them to compete globally (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2005). In order to ensure that the country achieves its goal of becoming a developed nation, while maintaining its competitiveness in trade and commerce, the government has adopted a number of measures. By implementing the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2015–2025, while encouraging more Malaysian students to learn foreign languages, one of

the initiatives is to strengthen human capital, in order to maintain Malaysia's competitiveness in the labour market (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). MEB 2013-2025 aims to broaden the provision of additional language education (third language), in order to enhance students' command of multiple languages (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Students' mastery of additional languages after Malay and English is strongly encouraged, in order to cultivate the next generation, who are competitive not only on the national stage, but also on the international arena.

In 1995, the German language was first introduced in Malaysia's secondary schools that selected by the MOE. With the introduction of the MEB 2013-2025, the standard-based curriculum and assessment of the secondary school (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah-KSSM) for GFL was developed. The new curriculum takes into account the requirements of the MEB 2013-2025, which focuses on student learning and success to meet national needs. The MEB aims to develop students with the six characteristics, namely knowledge, reasoning, leadership, bilingualism, ethics and spirituality, and national identity so that they are aligned for global competition. These characteristics are very important in ensuring that students can not only contribute to the family, communities and country but also meet and exceed the challenges of the 21st century (KKSM Tingkatan 1, 2015; KKSM Tingkatan 2, 2016; KKSM Tingkatan 3, 2017; KKSM Tingkatan 4 & 5, 2018).

According to Thanasoulas (2001), communicative competence, language proficiency, grammatical competence, and changes in attitude toward oneself or another culture are all components of FL acquisition. FL acquisition, as well as acquiring GFL, emphasise the capability of the four language skills of writing, reading, listening, and speaking, as well as language aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and pronunciation. Language skills and aspects of language are taught together to assist

students in improving their communication skills. The GFL curriculum also emphasises on the culture of the German language (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2015-2018). The KSSM for GFL aims to enhance students' communicative skills in an appropriate manner, and equip them to interact with other people. Furthermore, they will be able to broaden their knowledge of multicultural values, as well as their appreciation and focus on their own cultural identity. All of this can aid them in learning a FL.

The GFL syllabus covers five main themes, including social interactions, leisure and activities, food and drink, education and learning, and living and environment (Cristache et al., 2009; Kursisa et al., 2008; Pilypaitytė et al., 2010), with cultural elements such as language expression in daily routines, food, school, holidays, art, music, literature, tradition, festivals and celebrations, sports, clothing, lifestyle, geography, and family embedded both implicitly and explicitly. Integrating cultural elements into GFL teaching is vital for enhancing language learning, developing intercultural competence, fostering motivation and engagement, and promoting cultural awareness. As culture and language are intertwined (Liton & Madanat, 2013; Purba, 2011; Stockwell, 2018; Trang & Anh, 2022), comprehending cultural norms, values, and practices can enhance learners' understanding of the language. Authentic materials, cultural events, role play cultural scenarios, involving native speakers, and discussing cultural differences are some ways to integrate cultural elements into GFL teaching. By learning about German culture, learners can develop a better understanding and appreciation of different ways of life, promoting empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Much discussion has been made in recent years, on enhancing the importance of culture in FL teaching, as well as drawing more attention to the need for additional

cultural knowledge in the classroom. FL educators have globally contended that it is pointless to teach a FL without integrating culture because FL learning should provide learners with the capability to understand people from various cultural backgrounds, and consequently, culture should be taught alongside language (Kim, 2020; Kovács, 2017; Thanasoulas, 2001; Wu, 2018). Learning objectives and results should be designed with the notion that students can become fluent in a FL, if they are able to understand how their target language is employed in its cultural setting.

How can incorporating culture enhance the effectiveness of teaching GFL? According to Thanasoulas (2001), culture may enhance and enrich learners' communication skills, guiding them to empathise with and respect other cultures, as well as objectivity and cultural perceptiveness. German is most commonly used in communication and information. Students can establish intercultural friendships and collaborate with international partners through using German in communication, while they apply German as the means of receiving, processing, and passing on information. Learning a FL also enables better contact with different cultures. As a result, teaching a FL, such as German, aims to familiarise students with a different culture and way of life. Students' ability to use language in an aesthetic manner enhances their ability to learn about and convey various forms of literature. They are expected to be able to express their own ideas, ways of thinking, beliefs, and emotions with imagination and creativity (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2015-2018).

The further development of the German curriculum in secondary schools is, therefore, characterised by the internationalisation of FL standards. This is a reference level derived from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). At the closure of the secondary school year, students will reach reference level A2 of the CEFR (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2018). German language is an

elective subject available to students in form 1 through form 5, with a minimum time allocation of 64 hours per year (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2019).

Furthermore, German has been included as an elective subject in some secondary schools, while added as a major or elective programme in several private and public institutions of higher education, indicating that learning German is a growing trend in Malaysia. For example, in 1995, only eight secondary schools offered German, and the number has increased to 78 schools by 2021. The German language requires more attention in this area of study, which aims to understand Malaysian NNGS teachers' beliefs and practices in integrating cultural elements into GFL teaching.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

The purpose of this research is to examine the beliefs of NNGS secondary school teachers regarding the integration of cultural elements into German language teaching in Malaysia, as well as how much teachers incorporate cultural elements into their teaching practices. The education sector generally believes that teachers' classroom practices express and reflect teachers' beliefs, and those beliefs have a significant impact on how teachers conceptualise teaching tasks and activities (Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987).

In her research on GFL in Malaysia, J. Z. Lee (2020) emphasises that FL didactic is no longer confined to learning linguistic focus points, but integrates and reinforces the culture of the target language comprehensively, thereby supporting the development of better intercultural language skills. Teachers' perspectives on cultural interpretation and the likelihood of incorporating culture into the process of language teaching may vary tremendously (Kovács, 2017). These discrepancies can be attributed to teachers' prior language learning experience, what they had learnt during the course of their

training, and the numerous opportunities they have had to interact with individuals from the target culture (Kovács, 2017).

Contrary to the positive results of the integration of culture in teaching language, some studies (L. Nguyen et al., 2016; Yesil & Demiröz, 2017) have also reported some negative results. Most teachers in the field of FL education do not regard culture to be a key skill equivalent to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to some, culture is frequently considered as “fifth skill” (Garza, 2010; Kovács, 2017) that should be taught independently, according to some. As a result, culture has been perceived as an additional aspect of FL teaching, with teachers devoting most of their class time to teaching vocabulary and grammar (L. Nguyen et al., 2016; Yesil & Demiröz, 2017), as these are considered the more important objectives in FL education.

In the process of integrating culture into language teaching, certain studies revealed a wide range of the beliefs and practices of the teachers (Farooq et al., 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Kahraman, 2016; Mumu, 2017; Pham, 2019;). Malaysian GFL teachers may also have some negative and uncertain teachers’ beliefs as in the studies mentioned above. As a result, the study was inspired by an inclination to learn more about the beliefs and practices of the Malaysian NNGS secondary school teachers surrounding the integration of cultural elements in GFL curricula in secondary schools in Malaysia.

Previously, language teachers focused mostly on grammar and vocabulary, incorporating them into activities such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Sercu, 2006). For a long time, the role of culture in language teaching has been a topic of contention. According to previous research, many language teachers persist to disregard culture in their practices (L. Nguyen et al., 2016), possibly because they do not see the need to incorporate culture into their curriculum. Despite the growing

number of research on the beliefs and practices of teachers regarding the integration of culture in FL teaching, studies in the context of GFL are exceedingly rare. Moreover, the beliefs of Malaysian NNGS teachers, as well as the degree to which the teachers incorporate cultural elements in their GFL teaching practices, are unexplored areas of research.

Several researchers in previous studies recommended conducting studies to learn more about how teachers acquire their teaching beliefs, where the beliefs originate, and how these beliefs influence their practices (Haukås, 2016). Many prior research have been conducted globally on the teachers' beliefs and practices toward the integration of culture in the EFL classroom (Farooq et al., 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Kahraman, 2016; L. Nguyen et al., 2016; Mumu, 2017; Pham, 2019; Yeşil & Demiröz, 2017). However, the research on teachers' beliefs and practices in the integration of cultural elements such as in GFL pedagogy in Malaysia are particularly rare.

Furthermore, most investigations conducted in Malaysia on teachers' belief and practice issues have heavily focused on specific facets of EFL or ESL language education, such as listening, pronunciation, assessment, and so on (Shah et al., 2017; Othman, 2018; Sah & Shah, 2020). The present study aims to fill the existing gap by conducting a comprehensive investigation into the relationship between the beliefs and practices of NNGS teachers concerning the incorporation of cultural elements related to social interactions, leisure and activities, food and drink, education and learning, and living and environment in the pedagogy of GFL in Malaysian secondary schools.

The current research on German language teaching in Malaysia focuses on grammar, vocabulary, students' learning strategies, translation strategy, use of feature films in German language programmes, and identification of cultural values in German television advertising made by German language students in Malaysia (Berahim, 2013;

Daud, 2016; Koh, 2009; Mayr, 2013; Sanusi, 2016; Schaar et al., 2018; Ying et al., 2018; Yusuf et al., 2020). Meanwhile, research that examines the beliefs and practices of German teachers in Malaysia are still lacking, especially studies focusing on the integration of cultural elements in GFL education.

For the purpose of this study, it can be shown that few information and results can be obtained from previous research that discussed the real impact of teachers' practices and beliefs toward the integration of cultural elements with FL teaching, particularly the German language. In general, studies that examine cultural aspects in FL teaching are primarily focused on EFL or ESL (Farooq et al., 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Mumu, 2017; Pham, 2019; Yeşil & Demiröz, 2017), with little emphasis on German language studies, especially in Malaysia. As a result, the current study is being carried out to learn more about the beliefs and practices of Malaysian teachers on incorporating cultural elements in GFL teaching.

Moreover, prior research primarily relied on questionnaires (Farooq et al., 2018; Othman, 2018; Petravić & Golub, 2016) or interviews (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Mumu, 2017; L. Nguyen et al., 2016; Yesil & Demiröz, 2017) to gather information on teachers' beliefs and practices. However, to obtain deeper insights, it is necessary to acquire more comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data. In the present study, a mixed-methods research approach was employed, simultaneously collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. This methodology was chosen to produce more definitive findings that offer a more detailed and comprehensive understanding. In addition, the inclusion of quantitative data has the potential to reinforce and enhance qualitative data analysis.

Based on their previous experience, teachers form beliefs with regard to their teaching objectives, teaching methods and techniques, interaction patterns in the

classroom, the character of teachers, and the character as students (Borg, 2006). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, prior researchers have conducted relatively limited studies on teachers' beliefs and practices in integrating cultural elements in teaching GFL in the Malaysian setting. The current study aims to address this gap. Since this is a topic on which some teachers may have thoughts, the most valuable point to examine is how teachers perceive integrating foreign cultures in their target language classrooms, as this may be the first step toward integrating culture into language teaching and developing culturally competent students. As a result, the researcher believes there is a significant need for a study in the Malaysian context to investigate NNGS secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices about integrating cultural elements in their GFL classrooms.

In the future, the findings of this study can serve as a way for teachers to reflect on their own teaching skills, and raise awareness on the need for integrating cultural elements in the teaching of GFL. Aside from that, students will gain a greater understanding of the German cultures, be able to converse successfully and properly in the German language, as well as feel more driven to study the language.

1.4 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to look into the NNGS secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices toward culture integration, specifically cultural elements in teaching GFL in Malaysian secondary schools. The following are the study's objectives:

1. To explore non-native German-speaking teachers' beliefs concerning the integration of culture in the teaching of German as a foreign language in Malaysian secondary schools.

2. To examine non-native German-speaking teachers' practices in terms of integrating culture in the teaching of German as a foreign language in Malaysian secondary schools.

1.5 Research Questions

This study intends to investigate the beliefs and practices of NNGS secondary school teachers in integrating culture, specifically focusing on the incorporation of cultural elements in the teaching of GFL. In particular, the study explores the degree to which they integrate culture while teaching GFL. The following are the research questions:

1. What are the non-native German-speaking teachers' beliefs concerning the integration of culture in the teaching of German as a foreign language in Malaysian secondary schools?

2. To what extent do non-native German-speaking teachers integrate culture in their German as a foreign language teaching practices in Malaysian secondary schools?

1.6 Significance of the Study

By the exploration of the NNGS secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices toward the integration of culture in Malaysian GFL classrooms, focusing on the incorporation of cultural elements, this study sheds light on the link between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices. In all respect, the findings of this study are significant in German language education in Malaysia.

First and foremost, the study will benefit the key stakeholders: the Malaysian GFL teachers. The findings will provide valuable information to GFL teachers working on the front lines. The study's results can be used as a resource for other teachers to reflect on their own teaching techniques and the ideas that support their beliefs, thereby

enhancing their comprehension of the significance of cultural elements in the teaching of GFL in Malaysia. This awareness can also inspire GFL teachers to incorporate cultural elements into their own teaching in innovative and creative ways.

Secondly, syllabus designers, material designers, curriculum developers, and test developers may benefit from the study's findings to continue improving the portrayal and incorporation of cultural elements in language teaching programmes by informing them of the diverse ways and purposes for which teachers use culture, in addition to their limitations and strengths, as well as their treatment of textbook cultural material. Subsequently, the overall knowledge will be dedicated to the development of the curriculum implementation procedures such as planning, developing, and implementing in the Malaysian context.

Thirdly, this study suggests that cultural elements in GFL, in all of their variety and richness, allow students to easily navigate communication routes. In this multicultural society, as communications have become increasingly globalised, special emphasis is now being placed on enabling students to interact with people of different languages and cultural settings. Students will gain proficiency in conversing in the target language with both native and non-native speakers, and will be more inspired to learn the language. The integration of cultural elements in GFL classrooms allows students to become more familiar with diverse cultures, while studying the language with a better understanding of the target society, which can lead to more favourable attitudes and tolerance toward foreign culture knowledge.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Even though this study was carefully designed to examine Malaysian NNGS secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices in integrating cultural elements in the teaching of GFL, it has limitations. The first limitation is the small sample size. This

study focused only on national secondary schools that offer GFL in Malaysia. The sample size for quantitative data collection was rather small, with 66 participants, while 5 of the 66 participants were involved in qualitative data collection. Due to the small sample size, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other GFL teachers in Malaysia. Since the objective of this study was to capture the essence of complications and gain insights into NNGS secondary school teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, the researcher was only able to achieve this goal by focusing on 66 participants.

The second limitation of the study was that it only looked at teachers' perspectives. However, since this study focused on teachers' beliefs about the integration of cultural elements and their classroom practices, it did not consider the perspectives of others, such as students and school administrators, who are directly associated in the teaching of GFL. Incorporating the views of these stakeholders into future studies will enhance data sources, and help to understand more vividly the situation of cultural elements integration in Malaysian in the teaching of GFL.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

This study is intended to explore the beliefs and practices of NNGS secondary schools teachers regarding the integration of cultural elements in the GFL classrooms in Malaysian secondary schools. The following section provides definitions of key terms used in the study and to help clarify the purpose of the study:

Non-native speaker: A non-native speaker refers to a user of a language that a person has not acquired from birth, may have gaps in some aspects of the language, and will not designate himself as a native speaker of the language (Riordan, 2018).

Beliefs: “Beliefs are propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change” (Borg, 2011, p.370).

Teachers’ beliefs: Teachers’ beliefs are “propositions about all aspects of their work which teachers hold to be true or false” (p.381) and shape (positively or negatively) by teachers’ personal learning experiences and are well developed by the time they enroll in the university. Teachers’ beliefs function as a filter whereby the new knowledge and understanding are interpreted by teachers, and can have a long-term impact on their classroom practices (Phipps & Borg, 2009).

Teachers’ practices: Teachers’ practices, also known as teachers’ classroom practices, teachers’ actual practices or teachers’ instructional practices, refer to how teachers apply their knowledge, thoughts and beliefs, into action in the classroom (Borg, 2003).

Culture: “Culture is a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyle of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create” (Liddicoat et al., 2003, p.45).

Integration of culture: Integration of culture is the process where individuals from one culture take on another culture while keeping up with their own way of life. It entails the acquaintance of individuals’ way of life with another culture. People keep up with their own way of life while taking on new social practices like beliefs and customs. For example, presenting some cultural elements to another culture like attitude, arts, and religion (Magdaline, 2018).

Integration of cultural elements: Words and expressions carrying specific cultural characteristics are referred as “cultural elements” (Gao, 2016, p.13). In this

study, integration of cultural elements is defined as incorporating types and categories of culture, such as language expression in daily routines, food, school, holidays, art, music, literature, tradition, festivals and celebrations, sports, clothing, lifestyle, geography, and family.

1.9 Summary

The first chapter presents an overview of the full research. Secondly, it introduces general information about the background of GFL. Following that, the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, and the significance of the research are presented. The limitations of the research are then discussed. This chapter defines and explains the key terms involved in this research.

The existing literature on teachers' beliefs and practices toward integrating culture in the FL teaching will be explored in the following chapter. It will also review the theories and research on the teachers' practices and beliefs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter re-evaluates the existing literature, which provides information and supports the study's research questions. It offers the theoretical framework that is essential for the conceptual framework of the study. The theoretical framework consists of many scholars' definitions of beliefs, teachers' beliefs, the connection between teachers' practices and beliefs, the link between culture and language, and the integration of culture in FL teaching.

2.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Teachers' Practices

2.2.1 The Concept of Beliefs

Firstly, we must define the fundamental idea of beliefs. Following a study of the literature on beliefs, Pajares (1992) defines beliefs as an individual's judgement about the truth or falsity of a proposition, which can only be obtained through a communal understanding of what individuals say, mean, and do. According to Pajares (1992), the concept of beliefs mostly refers to words such as "attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy" (p.309). Beliefs are important not just in determining behaviour and organising knowledge, but also in evaluating, accepting, and rejecting new information (Pajares, 1992).

Borg (2011) concludes that beliefs are propositions that people perceive to be true, and that are frequently implicit, have a powerful evaluation, and emotional

component, offer a foundation for behaviour, and are reluctant to change. Beliefs, in other words, are considered to be extremely personal, implied, and exclusive to every individual. Belief is sometimes unspeakable, but will be shown through action.

Michaela Borg (2001) concludes that belief can also be used as a guide for thinking and behaviour. It is a proposition held aware or unaware, evaluated in the sense of being accepted as true by the individual, and realised through emotional commitment. The majority of definitions of belief suggest that beliefs influence or direct people's thinking and behaviour.

Beliefs are socially described perceptions of reality that are incorporated into schemata as mental and affective constructions of experience. They guide teachers' behaviour and inform their practices by serving as "an interpretive framework through which they make sense of what they do in their classrooms" (Larenas et al., 2015). Beliefs are a type of self-knowledge made up of implied assumptions about teaching, such as learning, the classroom, students, or lessons (Kagan, 1992), and related to decisions made by teachers about their ideas, views, and knowledge, conveyed as judgments about what to do and what is desired (Basturkmen et al., 2004).

Based on the definitions provided by the mentioned scholars, it can be deduced that belief is a person's opinion about something they perceive to be true.

2.2.2 Defining Teachers' Beliefs

Each teacher, even GFL teachers, has their own beliefs regarding teaching settings, such as students, roles, duties, and curriculum discipline. When a teacher enters a classroom, they must have a plan in mind for how they will instruct the students. The beliefs of teachers are the concepts that teachers have about teaching and learning (Phipps & Borg, 2009).

Before delving into teacher beliefs, it is vital to first understand teacher cognition. Teacher cognition is a broad term that relates to the beliefs that teachers have. Teachers' beliefs and teachers' perceptions are terms under the big umbrella term – teachers' cognition (Borg, 2003).

Teachers' beliefs are views that teachers hold to be true or untrue about all aspects of their job, and teachers' personal learning experiences influence them in a positive way or negatively (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Teachers bring beliefs gained from years of learning experiences into education, which influences how they teach.

Pajares (1992) views teachers' beliefs as points of view and values toward the teaching process. Teachers' beliefs influence their judgments, behaviours, and beliefs in the classroom. Previous studies have indicated that teachers' theories of knowledge and theories of how students acquire knowledge may be the foundation of their classroom teaching planning and practices (Pajares, 1992).

Clark and Peterson (1986) classified teachers' thought processes into three categories: "teacher planning, teachers' interactive ideas and decisions, and theories and beliefs of teachers" (p.10). Given the paucity of research on teachers' beliefs at the time, the addition of the last category was important.

Teachers' beliefs have become an interesting issue because of the contribution they make to improve language teaching and learning. It has a huge impact on classroom principles, due to the types of decisions they make and their reflections on language teaching and learning beliefs (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017).

Furthermore, Kaweian (2018) stated in her thesis that teachers' beliefs are individual, and often unconscious, yet they are critical to understanding the teaching system. Teachers' beliefs are developed prior formal teacher education, and appear to be difficult to modify, as they filter what teachers learn through teacher education. The

impact of earlier school experiences as a student, teacher education training, as well as formal and informal language learning and teaching experiences has an effect on teaching practices and decisions made in the classroom.

As summarised by Borg (2003, p. 81), teachers' cognition and practice are "mutually informative". The word "teacher cognition" is used in this context is referred to the unseen dimension of teaching, especially what the teacher knows, believes, and thinks. As a result, we know that numerous factors form and affect teachers' beliefs, some of which may or may not be visible.

2.2.3 Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Teachers' Practices

Belief construction is personal. Teachers can only understand new ideas through their own perspectives, so as to establish their own personal ideas through experience, and then rethink and express their ideas verbally (Karanfil, 2016). When it comes to integrating culture into language education, this concept is crucial because it indicates that teachers will make decisions based on their own educational frameworks.

Teachers' practices, also known as teachers' classroom practices, teachers' actual practices, or teachers' instructional practices, refer to how teachers apply their knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs, into action in the classroom (Borg, 2003). One of the basic reasons that make teachers' classroom practice unique is the teachers' beliefs (Utami, 2016) that differentiates their teaching practice from one to another, and the instructions in class are varied.

Although teacher cognition became popular as a research field more than three decades ago, it was not until the mid-1990s that researchers began to focus on L2 and FL teacher cognition, which has continued to grow to the present day (Borg, 2019). In terms of research focus, numerous facets of FL and L2 teaching have been examined from the viewpoint of teacher cognition. Several earlier research explored language

teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices, in relation to teaching and learning in general (Larenas et al., 2015; Utami, 2016; Wafa 2016), while other studies have focused on specific facets of language teaching, such as corrective feedback on pronunciation (Couper, 2019), communicative language teaching (Rahman et al., 2018), teaching literary texts (Cheung & Hennebry-Leung, 2020), learner autonomy (Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2018), written corrective feedback (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019), the use of video (Waluyo et al., 2021) and the use of music and songs (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021). The study of teachers' beliefs and practices toward integrating culture in the GFL classroom is an aspect that has yet to be investigated.

Most of the findings of the studies conducted abroad (e.g. Turkey, Vietnam, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran) revealed that the teachers have a positive attitude towards culture and are aware of its importance in language instruction (Farooq et al., 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Kahraman, 2016; Mumu, 2017; Pham, 2019). However, studies on this field are very lacking in the Malaysian context.

In addition to the positive results of integrating culture into language teaching, some research has also shown some negative results. For instance, L. Nguyen et al. (2016) and Yesil and Demiröz (2017) discovered that some teachers are opposed to teaching culture in language classrooms, claiming that they were not teachers of culture. Overall, participants did not appear to realise the importance of cultural integration. Instead, they believed that the most essential part of their job was to assist others in learning languages.

Various studies have found that, while there is an increased interest among teachers, there is also a resistance to integrating culture into classroom education. Teachers devoted less time in class integrating culture into FL teaching than they did

language, and they set limited cultural teaching goals (Farooq et al., 2018; Ghavamnia, 2020; Kahraman, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2016).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are no relevant studies in the context of Malaysian secondary schools have looked into teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching the German language, or teachers' beliefs and practices in integrating cultural elements in GFL classrooms. Only a few empirical works focused on the beliefs and practices of the Malaysian ESL teachers about pronunciation, school-based assessment, listening, the use of music and songs in ESL teaching and communicative language teaching (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Hassan & Gao, 2021; Jonglai et al., 2021; Othman, 2018; Sah & Shah, 2020; Shah et al., 2017). Findings from these studies have indicated how teachers' beliefs influence their decision-making that underlies their instructional practices. The most important finding is that the teachers' personal teaching experiences, as well as their professional and societal circumstances, have great influence on their beliefs. Teachers used their pedagogical expertise and beliefs to understand, combining existing teaching-learning techniques and demonstrating understanding of teaching goals and objectives.

In summary, teachers' beliefs about the subject they will teach influence every decision they make. Teachers' beliefs influence how they provide information, instruct students, provide feedback, and make other decisions. As a result, the teachers' beliefs concerning the teaching process are very significant.

2.2.4 Language Teacher Cognition Framework

This framework emphasised the key elements in the research of language teacher cognition, such as schooling, professional coursework, classroom practice, and contextual factors (see Figure 2.1). Teachers have a thorough understanding of every aspect of their profession based on this framework. Borg uses the term "teacher