



**PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF TWO EFL
TEACHERS IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS:
EVIDENCE FROM INDONESIA**

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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While studies on teacher professional identity construction have been extensively documented, there is a paucity of research that explores English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' professional identity construction in vocational high school contexts. To address such a gap, this study has two purposes: (1) to investigate how EFL teachers in vocational high school construct their teachers' professional identity and (2) to investigate how their professional identity is developed over time.

The two EFL teachers who participated have been teaching in Vocational High School more than 10 years in different institution and region. Not only that all the participants also received the Indonesian Government's acknowledgement as "Certificate of Educator." The woman is a teacher in Pasuruan, and the other is a man who teaches English in Malang.

This study was narrative inquiry and the data of this study were primarily garnered through online semi-structured interview with the participants via WhatsApp message and voice note almost 25 to 60 minutes during February to April 2021. In this study, the participants recognized that their identity was pseudonymous, and the data analyzed and presented would not put them in peril. This study also used some artifacts, such as their certificates, photo of their works or activities of the participants to complete the data.

After collecting the data, the data analysis was presented by using an iterative process, alternating between listening to interview records, reading the transcripts, coding, categorizing codes into themes, and consulting the themes. The data integrated with the three dimensions of narrative inquiry. They are 1) *interaction* refers on the participants' social relationship and interaction with their colleagues (professional community/forum) and students; 2) *temporality* explains their struggle to reconstruct professional identity on the earlier career, current career and future; 3) *situation* talks about how their place (school, family) influence their professional identity.

The study's findings suggest that 1) the participants' teacher professional identity is constructed by social-collegial interaction, school policy enactment, and past experience and future aspirations, and 2) their identity is developed across time geared by family support, gendered perception, engagement with colleagues, and interest in the English language.

This paper ends with suggestions for in-service teacher education to design pedagogy that leads teachers into systemic professional identity trainings.

ABSTRAK

Wahyuningsih, Sri. 2021. Pembentukan Identitas Profesional Dua Guru Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan: Bukti dari Indonesia. Tesis, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Program Pascasarjana, Universitas Islam Malang. Pembimbing: Dr. Alfian Zuhairi, M.Pd.

Kata kunci: EFL; penelitian naratif; pembentukan identitas profesional guru; Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan

Penelitian tentang pembentukan identitas profesional guru memang telah didokumentasikan secara luas, tetapi masih sedikit penelitian yang mengeksplorasi pembentukan identitas profesional guru bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) dalam konteks Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK). Untuk mengatasi kesenjangan tersebut, penelitian ini memiliki dua tujuan: (1) untuk menyelidiki bagaimana guru bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan membangun identitas profesional guru mereka dan (2) untuk menyelidiki bagaimana identitas profesional mereka dikembangkan dari waktu ke waktu.

Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah dua guru bahasa Inggris yang telah mengajar di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan lebih dari 10 tahun di lembaga dan wilayah yang berbeda. Tidak hanya itu, seluruh peserta juga mendapatkan pengakuan dari Pemerintah Indonesia yaitu telah menerima “Sertifikat Pendidik”. Satu orang guru perempuan yang mengajar di salah satu SMK Negeri di Pasuruan, dan yang lainnya adalah guru laki-laki yang mengajar bahasa Inggris di salah satu SMK Negeri di kota Malang.

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian naratif dan data penelitian ini terutama dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur secara daring (online) dengan peserta melalui pesan WhatsApp dan voice note hampir 25 hingga 60 menit selama Februari hingga April 2021. Dalam penelitian ini, para partisipan mengetahui bahwa identitas mereka adalah nama samaran, dan data yang dianalisis serta disajikan tidak akan membahayakan mereka. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan beberapa artefak, seperti sertifikat, foto karya atau aktivitas peserta untuk melengkapi data.

Setelah data terkumpul, analisis data disajikan dengan menggunakan proses iteratif, dengan cara mendengarkan rekaman wawancara, membaca transkrip, mengkode, mengkategorikan kode ke dalam tema, dan mengkonsultasikan tema. Data terintegrasi dalam tiga dimensi penelitian naratif, yaitu 1) interaksi mengacu pada hubungan sosial peserta dan interaksi dengan rekan sejawat (komunitas/forum profesi) dan siswa; 2) temporalitas menjelaskan perjuangan mereka untuk merekonstruksi identitas profesional pada karir sebelumnya, karir saat ini dan masa depan; 3) situasi berhubungan dengan tempat mereka tinggal dan bekerja (sekolah, keluarga) mempengaruhi identitas profesional mereka.

Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa 1) identitas profesional guru peserta dibentuk oleh interaksi sosial-kolega, berlakunya kebijakan sekolah, dan pengalaman masa lalu serta aspirasi masa depan, dan 2) identitas mereka

dikembangkan sepanjang waktu yang diarahkan oleh dukungan keluarga, persepsi gender, keterlibatan dengan rekan kerja, dan minat dalam bahasa Inggris.

Penelitian ini diakhiri dengan saran untuk guru merancang pengembangan aspek pedagogi yang mengarahkan ke pelatihan identitas profesional yang sistemik.



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The expansion of Vocational High School in Indonesia has been started since 2006 and it was reinforced by the Ministry of Education and Culture's revitalization program in 2016, which planned a vocational high school and general high school to be 50:50. Based on the data from Ministry Education of Indonesia (2020), the number of vocational high school in Indonesia rises 1.065 from 13.236 (2016/2017) to 14.301 (2019/2020) with 3.622 public and 10.679 private schools and the total numbers of pupils are 5.249.149. The main goal of this revitalization focuses on preparing students to be skillful and ready to work (Maryanti, Rohana & Kristiawan, 2020; Wagiran, Pardjono, Suyanto, & Sofyan, 2017).

In light with these reforms, English not only applied in national curriculum as foreign language but also as communicative language in which students should be competent. Therefore, some of vocational high schools in Indonesia have concerned mastery of English ability through the bilingual learning ecosystem, for instance; English Day Program and English Area Program. Furthermore, Kailani & Rafidiyah (2020) explained that these programs ran well to encourage students to use English on daily basis (2020, p. 62). Other research which focused on English as foreign and communicative language was conducted by Yufrizal (2017), who focused on the perceptions of teachers and students on what

communicative competence means, and how they perceive each component of the communicative competence of English. He also highlighted that English instructors' perceived no substantial difference between non-English Language Teaching (non-ELT) students and ELT students on the concepts of communicative competence and strategic competence. The linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills of non-ELT and ELT students varied greatly from teaching.

Despite the various educational reform programs applied by the government, Indonesia is still struggling with several issues of the quality of its education, such as teacher professional identity. As stated by Syamsinar & Jabu (2016) on their study which concentrated on the issue of teachers' problems dealing with professional competence in teaching English. The findings of this study is that six problems of teacher competence in vocational high schools include (a) mastering materials problems, (b) mastering in curriculum, (c) developing creative materials, (d) developing teacher professional continuously, (e) problems using the IT and (f) managing the class.

Besides that, the atmosphere of local culture and society around the students and teachers have different perception of the important becoming proficient at English language (Asmin, 2019; Margana, 2016; Saddhono, 2018; Wang, 2021; Widodo, 2015). Discussing about the influence of local culture to learn English, Leigh (2019) in her study which examines the professional identities of eight early years EFL teachers working in Shenzhen, China through interviews concludes that the research not only collects evidence from EFL

teachers' perceptions of their status as international teachers, but also conveys insights into aspects of the Chinese culture that have an influence on the teaching experience. These results have consequences for decision makers, recruiters, administrators and educators. However, how much the topics influence the learners' understandings and beliefs depends on the individual views and beliefs of the teachers and lecturers, and on the "professional identity" that is found in the subjects (Gandana & Parr, 2013). The same argument also stated by McChesney & Aldridge (2019) said that the factors influenced the process of learning and teaching involving of management of the school and education, teachers, students and their social environment.

Hence, it is important that EFL teachers have affected learning and teaching practice as well as teachers' professional identity (Leigh, 2019; Profst, 2019). Norton (1997, p.410) argued that there is the significant relationship among identity, language learning, and classroom teaching. He used the term identity to describe how individuals interpret their relationship with the world, how that relationship is evolved in time and space and how they understand their future opportunities. He agreed with West (1992) that this identity is linked to the want to be recognized, the want to be affiliated, and the want for protection and secure. West maintains that such wishes cannot be isolated from the allocation in society of material resources. Individuals who have access to a variety of resources within a society will have the ability and privilege to affect their understanding of their connection with the world and of their future prospects.

To support the development of teachers' professional identity, actually Indonesian government legitimated "Teachers and Lectures Law 2005" which emphasizes the positions of both professions and how those develop their qualification and competency. The article no. 10 in this law states that, teachers' and lecturers' competencies consist of pedagogical competency, personality competency, social competency, and professional-competency. For those reasons, Indonesian Government has regulated teachers and lecturers' certificated through process so that they can receive "Certificate of educators". Although this qualification is received by teachers, this does not imply they stop being professional teachers and developing their identity.

Being a competent or professional teacher needs long journey, likewise EFL teachers in vocational high schools. In what Manara (2013, p.194) quotes Palmer (1998) & Danielewicz, (2001), that being an expert teacher is not methodology or even ideology but someone who requires understanding his/her own self, engages in teaching and identity in one's teaching. So that teaching is not purely ways of acting or behavior, yet teaching is his/her soul. Thus, professional development also involves more than professional experience and practice, as placed on teachers by professionalism and professional discourses (by governments, by systems, by individual school, and even by universities and teacher education institutions) (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 75).

Although research on teacher professional identity construction has been well documented (Leigh, 2019; Solary & Ortega, 2020; Ubaidillah, Mustofa, Khotimah, Ismiatun, Anwar, & Rahmawati, 2020; Widodo, Fang, & Elyas, 2020),

little attention has been directed to explore teachers' professional identity in vocational high school context. As Hanna, Oostdam, Severiens, & Zijlstra, (2020, p.3-4) concluded in their study that most of the studies in teachers' identity, focus on giving some treatments to them and how well the program or treatments run affectively to their class.

Due to the complex issues that have been faced by English teachers in Vocational High Schools, this oversight and the belief that professional identity is essential in EFL teachers of vocational high schools, and motivates me to conduct this study as a part of them. Story is never ending; it always flows as the flowing water which is every time changes depend on our own struggling to develop our identity. As mentioned by Danielewicz (2001, p.11) that naturally, personalities cannot necessarily be united or fixed; they are always flowing, always multiple and continuously in development. However, this does not mean that we cannot remember ourselves; periods and circumstances of coalescence are present.

To gain more understanding of this area, this study purposes and focuses on investigating more complete how two EFL teachers in vocational high school context in Indonesia construct and change over time their professional identity based on Connelly & Clandinin, 2006.

1.2 Statement of the problems

The present study aims to investigate the process of constructing an identity among EFL teachers at vocational high school and how their identity change over time. Thus, I elaborate research questions of this study i

1. How do the EFL teachers at vocational high school construct their teacher professional identity?
2. How does their professional identity develop across time?

1.3 Objective of the study

From the background and statement of the problems, this study aims:

1. to investigate how EFL teachers in vocational high school construct their teachers' professional identity.

The result of this objective shows how the participants struggle to be EFL teachers, their first year of teaching and aspects that encourage them.

2. to investigate how their professional identity develops over time.

Through the enlightenment of the data related to this objective, it displays two participants construct or reconstruct their professional identity through multi interaction with their place, institution or forum, students, colleagues continuously.

1.4 Significance of the study

Conducting this study motivated myself, as one of the part of EFL teachers in Vocational High School and possible others. Through the story which changes over time, we can learn others' experience life story which can develop or reconstruct some one idea and also the idea of education. We can change our mind on how to understand individual interaction and interpretation with their society, professional forum, and even around the world. Through imagination the world

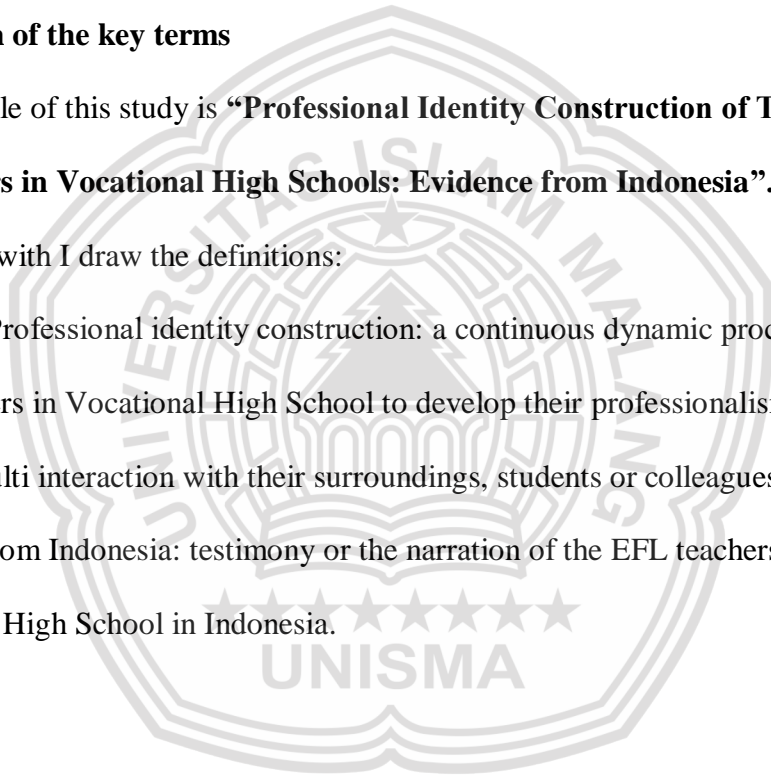
could be meaningful and our experience has sense (Johnson, 1987 in Clandinin, 2006).

The findings of this study will enlighten professional identity of EFL teachers in Vocational High School, especially in Indonesia and more motivate them to do reflective practice in learning and in the profession.

1.5 Definition of the key terms

The title of this study is **“Professional Identity Construction of Two EFL Teachers in Vocational High Schools: Evidence from Indonesia”**. From the title, here with I draw the definitions:

1. Teachers’ Professional identity construction: a continuous dynamic process of EFL teachers in Vocational High School to develop their professionalism through multi interaction with their surroundings, students or colleagues.
2. Evidence from Indonesia: testimony or the narration of the EFL teachers in Vocational High School in Indonesia.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

In sum, this study aimed to investigate how two EFL teachers in vocational high school construct their teachers' professional identity and how their professional identity develops over time. The results shows that four aspects which influenced them to become English teachers (including family, friends or colleagues, culture or gender perception and love in English). Those aspects have motivated them in developing their professional identity although in their first year of teaching they also had some issues related their class management and their English competence (including grammar and vocabulary).

Communicating, sharing experience and attending various forums continuously then applying what they get in their real life as a personal and professional identity have a constructive role in developing EFL teachers' professional identity. Thus, EFL teachers need to comprehend the issues and hence engage in professional activities that can ultimately further develop their professional identity to overcome their challenges. Here, teaching and learning should be together continuously in EFL teachers' social live, place where they work and live. Through their journey, they could construct or reform their professional identity.

5.2 Suggestion

Though this study has been conducted by many researchers and educators, I would suggest that conducting a longitudinal study would generate an in-depth understanding to the process of identity formation. As I explained in the previous chapters, professional identity involves both the person and others. Thus, a longer study could capture a comprehensive account of the phenomenon. Conducting a study before becoming novice teachers, first year of teaching and current teaching would provide more details to the development of their professional identities. Moreover, it would be worthwhile to provide an account for each teacher to provide more depth for teacher identity development.

In addition to that, further studies should consider the role of colleagues, mentors and other stakeholders within the school culture when conducting a research on teacher identity. Their views might shed light on other factors that affect teacher identity. Moreover, studies on professional identity focusing on linguistics phenomenon profoundly are needed to enlighten other sides of professional identity construction.

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