



A photovoice study on early career EFL teachers' professional identity construction in Indonesian Islamic primary schools

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ABSTRACT

Even though teacher identity has been globally investigated by previous researchers, early career teacher professional identity construction receives scanty attention. To fill this void, the present photovoice study aims to explore how EFL teachers construct their professional identities during their early career of teaching in Islamic primary schools. Designed in participatory visual research, two early career EFL teachers in Indonesian Islamic primary schools were recruited to participate. Data were collected through photovoice method and analyzed adapting thematic analysis. Study findings demonstrate that the EFL teachers portrayed their practiced identities in their early career. These teacher identities covered teaching-practices and methodologies, socio-cultural context, teacher-student relationship, professional development and support, and personal reflections. The study carries implications for teacher education programs and the professional development of EFL educators in Islamic primary schools. Recognizing the importance of cultural and religious dimensions in teacher identity development, teacher training programs should incorporate strategies to prepare early career teachers for the professional identity construction posed by Islamic educational settings.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: March 04, 2025

Revised: May 19, 2025

Accepted: May 22, 2025

Keywords:

Early career EFL teachers;
Professional identity
construction; Islamic primary
schools; Teacher identity

To cite this article: Ali, F., Akbar, R. A., & Dewi, Y. L. (2025). A photovoice study on early career EFL teachers' professional identity construction in Indonesian Islamic primary schools. *Erudita: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(1), 78–93. <https://doi.org/10.28918/erudita.v5i1.12094>

To link to this article: <https://e-journal.uingusdur.ac.id/erudita/article/view/erudita516>



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Introduction

Teacher professional identity has been highlighted as a crucial aspect in conceptualizing teachers' work career, such as emotions (Teng, 2020), context-boundedness (Zhu et al., 2020), power of discourse (Garza-Rodríguez et al., 2021), and the relationship between teacher identity and agency (Cobb et al., 2018). Recent studies have investigated at how early career teachers in practical classrooms (Han, 2021) and pre-service teachers during their

initial teacher education (Flores, 2020) constructed their identities. Teacher professional identity is viewed as a dynamic attainment undergoing persistent negotiation and modification through interactions and exchanges in situated workplaces (Zhu & Zhu, 2018).

Teacher identity is an overarching construct including beliefs, goals, and standards. In addition, they stated that identity refers to the ways teachers perceive themselves as teachers and the way they portray themselves to their students (Schutz et al., 2007). A proficiently established teacher identity forms the basis for effective decision-making in the classroom. Teachers who understand their values, beliefs, and teaching philosophy are better equipped to make decisions that harmonize with their identity and enhance the educational experience for students (Trent & Decoursey, 2011). Teachers with a strong identity are more capable of overcoming the barriers that will inevitably arise in their profession. They are more resilient and capable of purposefully adjusting to changing circumstances (Dinham et al., 2017).

Developing a teacher identity encourages a sense of commitment to the teaching profession. Teachers who have a strong identification with their role are tend to remain in the teaching profession and actively engage in continuous professional development (Nazari et al., 2021). When exploring teacher identities, it is essential to recognize that, while there is some consistency in how teachers perceive their roles, there may be variations to consider. There is also continuous change as teachers cope with particular social-historical contexts (Teng, 2020). This construction and reconstruction of teacher identity is not only based on the continually changing self-knowing of teachers but also on teachers' perceptions of the profession itself (Dikilitaş & Bahrami, 2022). Thus, what teachers know of themselves, their perception of the characteristics and nature of the teaching profession, and their beliefs about their roles are all interrelated in forming teacher identity.

This study explores the professional identities of early career EFL teachers as they are integrated in their experiential narratives in order to reflect the multifaceted nature of teacher identity in changing circumstances. The process of developing a teacher's identity through contact with others in a professional setting is known as teacher identity construction (Zacharias, 2017). It accomplishes this by adapting the EFL teacher identity model (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014). The authentic approach promotes the EFL teacher identity in two frames: practice-centered and context-centered frames, from the standpoint of frames (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014).

Five subframes of the practice-centered frame can be identified, i.e., the instructional, disciplinary, professional, vocational, and economic frames. A teacher's classroom presence and the responsibilities, including instructional "content and methods", are reflected in the instructional framework (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 20). The interaction between a teacher and a particular field, particularly "knowledge and research", is addressed by the disciplinary frame (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 21). Within the professional frame, "individual teacher characteristics" linked to the insight, attitudes, and strategies of a specific subject are referred to (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 22). The "affective component" of teacher identity, which includes a teacher's "commitment and attachment" to teaching in a technical discipline, is embraced by the vocational frame (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 23). Meanwhile, the economic frame also clarifies a teacher's "academic and economic position" in a particular role or sectors (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 24). The teacher professional

identity offered a framework where teachers may create their own ideas of how to be, how to act, and how to understand their jobs and their role in society.

Distinctive frames of context, such as global, local, and sociocultural frames, moderate the five practice-centered frames of teacher identity. The local frame is addressed to the milieu in which teachers work and live, including "departmental, institutional, community and national contexts" (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 26). The global frame showcases worldwide trends, such as the expansion of English as an international language, which encompass the ELT field. The sociocultural frame alludes to how individuals engage with a teacher's "linguistic, ethnic, racial, and gender" identity in the workplace (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, p. 27).

The formation of a teachers' professional identity occurs at the nexus of three domains, i.e., personal experience, professional context, and the external political environment (Mockler, 2011) and grows through pedagogical approaches at a particular workplace (Han, 2021). Banegas recommends that the "individual sites of agency" serve as a mediator between teachers' identities and institutional contexts in his study on how experienced English language instructors make pedagogical modifications Banegas (2022). In this process, agency is essential to identity construction and professional development for teachers (Hökkä et al., 2012). Based on these notions, it may be assumed that early career teachers' process of shaping their identities is intricate and unique.

However, constructing a professional identity can be a challenging process for early career teachers. The novice teachers may face challenges in shaping their identities if they lack sufficient chances for hands-on classroom experience. The absence of practical experience could hinder their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical teaching context (Nazari et al., 2021). Challenges related to understanding and managing diverse student groups can influence the formation of a teacher's sense of self (Gu et al., 2022). A significant challenge may arise from the difference between the theoretical knowledge acquired in teacher education programs and the practical challenges encountered in the classroom (Walkington, 2005). Moreover, if the novice teachers receive inadequate guidance and assistance during their teaching practicum, this can definitely limit early career teachers' ability to build their professional identity (Ai et al., 2022).

Early career teachers appear to struggle with the separation between their personal and professional identities. They experience it when they transition from being student teachers to practicing teachers (Tsui, 2007). It can be challenging for novice teachers to navigate their path as they construct their professional identities (Goktepe & Kunt, 2021). Tension, stress, or burnout may result from the hurdles (Diasti, 2021). The tendency of beginning teachers to quit their professions early is because they are unable to leverage difficult situations into learning opportunities (Zhong & Craig, 2020). In response to this, early career EFL teachers, including in primary schools, are demanded to shape their new professional identities while preserving their personal identities to sustain. This case is worthy of deeper empirical investigation. The study seeks to answer the following research question: How do EFL teachers construct their professional identities during their early career of teaching in Islamic primary schools? The present study contributes to the realm of teacher professional identity construction by providing implications for professional development, teacher training programs, and mentoring in EFL contexts.

Method

Research design

In order to accomplish the research objective, a photovoice study approach (Wang & Burris, 1997) is employed to acquire in-depth insight into the stories and critical reflection of early career EFL teachers. The study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how these teachers cultivate their professional identities. Photovoice, originated by Wang and Burris (1997), is a participatory research method that allows participants to express themselves through photographs (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Some steps for conducting photovoice study included selecting the participants, introducing the photovoice methodology, using initial themes for taking pictures, used cameras to visually capture aspects of their professional lives, discussing photographs and identifying themes, and planning with participants a format to share photographs and stories (Wang, 2006).

Research setting and participants

This photovoice study was overtaken in two Islamic primary schools located in Pekalongan, Central Java and Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia. Two first-to-second-year EFL teachers in the primary schools, Nely (Teacher 1) and Yunita (Teacher 2), (pseudonyms), were recruited to participate in the study. Prior to selecting the final two, they were contacted through my personal and professional networks. Further, they were selected adapting purposive sampling. This describes a sampling technique in which the researcher chooses the sample with a particular purpose in mind (Ivankova et al., 2006). Besides, the willingness of each participant also be the reason why researcher selected them. They signed a consent form to declare their participation in this study. The participants' stories served as the main data source for unpacking the complex ways in which these early career EFL teachers constructed their professional identities. In every instance, the participants eagerly embraced the opportunity to contribute their viewpoints, experiences, and knowledge (Wang, 2006).

Data collection

Data were generated from photovoice. The photovoice was used to identify pre-service EFL teachers' experiences in constructing their identities during teaching practicum. The captured and collected photos were narrated by the participants adapting the procedure of creating photovoice proposed by Kingery et al. (2016) They were instructed to write about their experiences and select pictures that captured their feelings. They would have to specifically explain what each image SHOWED, including what they See, what is actually Happening, how this pertains to Our lives, and Why this shortcoming or strength Exists? what can they Do to handle it? (Kingery et al., 2016).

Data analysis

This study employed thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Data garnered from photovoice narrations were transcribed. The phases of thematic analysis included familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A foundational step in the coding and categorization of the interconnected data that qualified

teacher professional identity formation processes was the process of identifying meanings (Wang, 2021).

Data trustworthiness

To guarantee the trustworthiness and verification of the photovoice data, this study applied member checking to test the findings and interpretations with the participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The member checking was organized in the last phase of thematic analysis, i.e. producing the final report. The researchers submit both analysis and interpretation to the participants with the aim of receiving their feedback and comments. This indicates that member checking as the final step allows the researchers to establish the fit between the participants' voices and the researchers' representation of the photovoice data.

Findings and discussion

Teaching-practices and methodologies

In this photo, one of the participants, Nely (Teacher 1), described her experience in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Pekalongan, Central Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she had an English class of third-grade students.

Figure 1

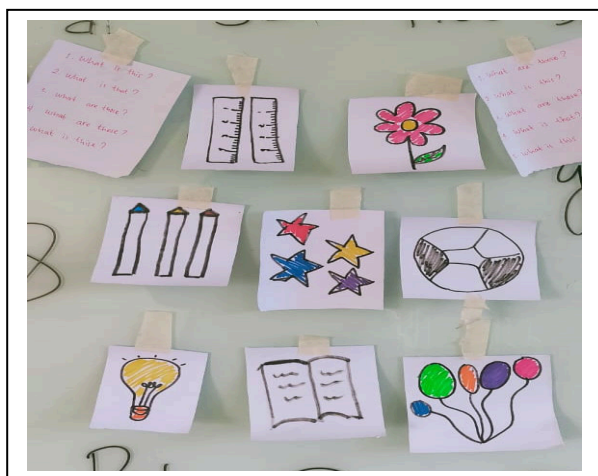
Practicing a Scramble Game, Captured by Nely



This photo was taken on December 12, 2023, as they attempted to complete the scramble game. They were in third grade at my school. At the time, I used the scramble game as a teaching tool for acquiring some vocabulary that focused on spelling those words. During the learning process, all of the pupils participated and were eager. A small group of four pupils competed to see who could solve the most words in 30 minutes. They may also learn to manage their emotions and articulate their opinions in this teamwork learning environment. Overall, this method worked well.

Figure 1 depicts Nely's innovation in teaching methodologies for her third-grade students. This finding shows a predominant trend among novice EFL teachers was the adoption of communicative language teaching (CLT) principles. Many expressed a commitment to fostering communicative competence by emphasizing interactive and student-centered activities. The early career teacher demonstrated efforts to address diverse learner needs through differentiation strategies. This included adapting materials, providing varied tasks, and implementing alternative assessment methods to accommodate different learning styles and proficiency levels.

Meanwhile, Yunita, Teacher 2, expressed her experience in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Bekasi, West Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she had an English class of third-grade students.

Figure 2*Practicing Demonstrative Determiners with Cardboard, Taken by Yunita*

This picture was taken during a Conversation subject in class 3 using game media with Demonstrative Determiner material (This, That, These, Those). The teacher uses cardboard with pictures on it as media. Where each piece of cardboard contains a different image in a different number. First the teacher explains the material and then warms up, the teacher conducts questions and answers by showing one of the pictures, then the students answer it. After warming up, students form 2 groups, namely boys and girls. Where each group is given a piece of paper containing several questions. Each group has one demonstrator. Thus, the members may not know what the contents of the question are. They know the model, and must be able to demonstrate the question correctly.

Figure 2 portrays Yunita's creative strategies for teaching demonstrative determiners for her third-grade students. What Yunita facilitated in her teaching process shows that early career EFL teachers demonstrated a strong inclination toward incorporating multimodal resources in their lessons. Utilizing a variety of visual aids, videos, podcasts, and interactive online platforms enhanced student engagement and language exposure. Further, a notable trend among early career EFL teachers was the adoption of project-based learning approaches. Creating real-world projects and collaborative activities allowed students to apply language skills in meaningful contexts, promoting deeper understanding and language acquisition.

Socio-cultural context

Informed in this photo, Nely shared her experiences in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Pekalongan, Central Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she managed her students to pray Dhuhur together, one of school religious activities promoted in the school.

Figure 3*Praying Dhuhur Together, Captured by Nely*

My school always tries to build religious culture by held several religious activities such as praying Dhuha and *Dhuhur* together, reading Koran every morning etc. The following photo I took when I was accompanied first grade students praying *Dhuhur*. They looked good at praying although they are first grade students. Before that, I accompanied them *wudlu*. I took this photo because at that time they could be handle easily. Usually, it is a bit difficult to gather them in one place. I need to develop my skill in managing students.

Figure 3 illustrates Nely's roles in managing her students to pray *Dhuhur* together in the classroom. This shows that the daily rhythm of Islamic school life included prayer and religious observances. Early career EFL teachers actively participated in and supported these practices, contributing to the holistic integration of religious and educational experiences for students. They may face challenges in balancing secular and religious education. Navigating between standardized language curricula and the integration of Islamic values required thoughtful planning and negotiation. Further, the teachers in Islamic schools demonstrated a heightened awareness of cultural sensitivity in selecting and adapting teaching materials.

Another teacher, Yunita, shared her voices in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Bekasi, West Java. This was her original photo taken by herself concerning the school culture in the morning.

Figure 4

Morning Activities Entering the School Gate, Taken by Yunita

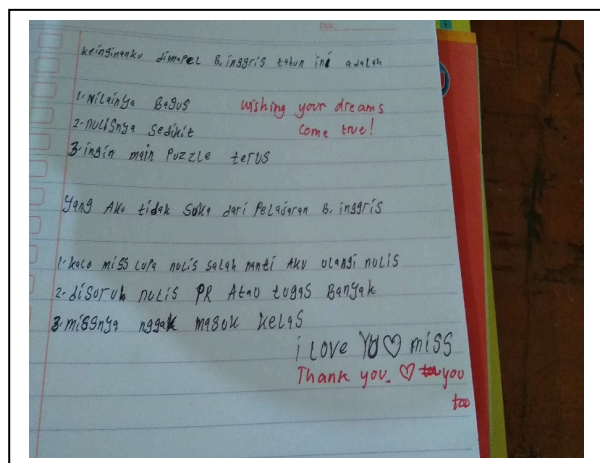


The picture was taken during morning activities, where before the bell rings, the teacher has a picket schedule to welcome students in the morning at 06.30 WIB. It should be noted that greetings by shaking hands between students and teachers can reflect a sense of family at school, as well as forming children's character who has good morals.

Figure 4 demonstrates the school atmosphere in the morning. It can be noticed that a student greets his teachers when entering the school gate. It is worth mentioning that responding to the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, early career EFL teachers demonstrated an awareness of the importance of culturally responsive teaching. Integrating culturally relevant materials and activities fostered a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Likewise, the finding also denotes that the early career EFL teachers reported a strong integration of Islamic values within the curriculum.

Teacher-student relationship

Given in this photo, Nely narrated her voices in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Pekalongan, Central Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she read her student reflections of teaching and learning process. The reflection is used to promote teacher-student relationship.

Figure 5*Students' Impressions with Teacher 1, Captured by Nely*

I took this photo on July 21, 2023. That day was our first meeting in academic year 2023/2024. To create a mutual symbiosis and a good relationship between teacher and students, I asked them to write what they thought about English learning and their wishes. They also had to write the way I accompany them during learning process. It was done as my reflection so that I can develop our relationship as good as well.

Figure 5 portrays the students' impression with learning process facilitated by Teacher 1. This finding shows that the early career EFL teacher incorporated student interests into lesson planning. Integrating topics and activities that resonated with students fostered engagement and strengthened the teacher-student connection. It also manifests that providing constructive feedback and encouragement were highlighted as essential components of positive teacher-student relationships. Recognizing students' efforts, offering specific feedback, and acknowledging achievements shaped their confidence and trust. Further, she navigated the delicate balance between professionalism and friendliness. Maintaining authority while demonstrating care and approachability contributed to a positive teacher-student dynamic.

Meanwhile, Yunita, Teacher 2, shared her experience in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Bekasi, West Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she tried to build a positive relationship with her students.

Figure 6*Students' Impressions with Teacher 2, Taken by Yunita*

The photo was taken when the students asked for permission to refill mineral water in the bottle. I as one of the English teachers in the school applies One Day One Sentence which the students have practiced, such as "May I go to the restroom/toilet?", "May I fill my water bottle, please?", "May I sharpen my pencil, please?", "Miss, can you help me to open my bottle?" "Miss.. May I go to the canteen?"

Figure 6 shows that Teacher 2 acted as a role model to educate her students in daily activities. This finding shows that Teacher 2 highlighted the importance of maintaining an

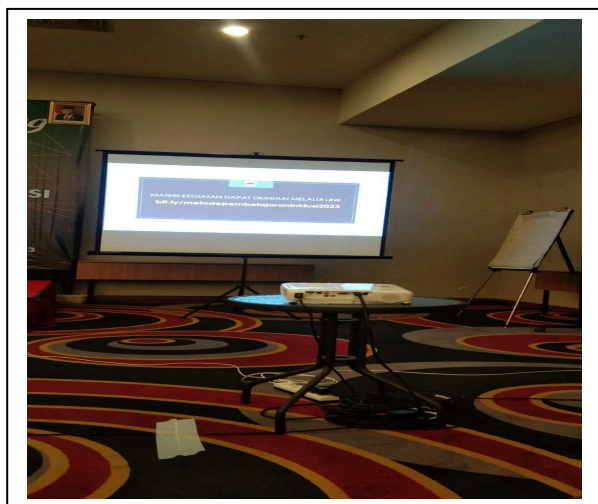
approachable communication style. Using clear and friendly language, being open to questions, and encouraging student input contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere. The practice of active listening and empathy emerged as central to positive teacher-student relationships. Teacher 2 acknowledged the significance of understanding students' perspectives, concerns, and individual needs. Furthermore, the early career EFL teacher emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in building positive relationships. Understanding and respecting students' cultural backgrounds facilitated trust and created a more inclusive learning environment.

Professional development support

Based on this photo, Nely described her experiences in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Pekalongan, Central Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she participated in a workshop organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Education in Solo, Central Java, Indonesia.

Figure 7

Participation in a National Workshop, Captured by Nely



I took this photo when I was joining a workshop held by educational ministry of Central Java in Solo. This workshop was about developing learning method for inclusive school, participated by more than 100 teachers from Central Java. It was done as a commitment for Central Java Education Ministry's program in making all of schools in Central Java as inclusive school. I joined this workshop as my preparation for that. I think, by joining this workshop, it will help me construct a good learning strategy because there are some inclusive students (hyper-active and temperamental students) in my school.

Figure 7 demonstrates that Teacher 1 benefited from taking part in a workshop organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Education in Solo, Central Java, Indonesia. This finding shows that many early career EFL teachers actively participated in professional learning networks, both online and offline. Engaging with colleagues, attending workshops, and participating in webinars contributed to a continuous cycle of professional development and innovation.

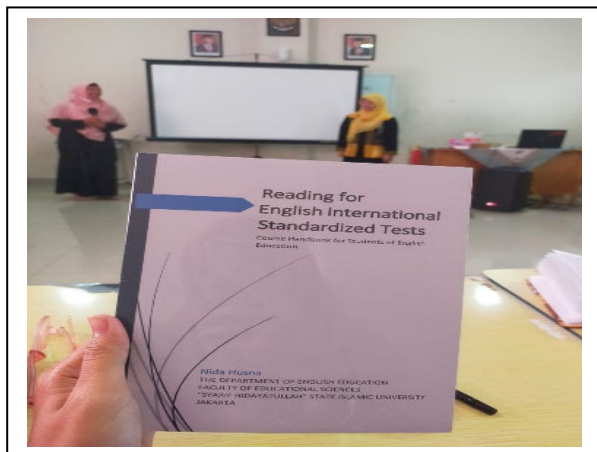
Teacher 1 reported that participation in workshops and seminars positively influenced instructional practices. She shared that implementing new strategies, incorporating technology, and adopting student-centered approaches was learned during professional development activities. Additionally, she also expressed that networking events were highlighted as valuable opportunities for early career EFL teachers to connect with peers, mentors, and professionals in the field. Collaborative discussions, idea-sharing, and mentorship relationships were established through networking.

Meanwhile, Yunita, Teacher 2, shared her experience in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Bekasi, West Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when

she attended a workshop with a theme "Reading for English International Standardized Tests."

Figure 8

Participation in a School Workshop, Taken by Yunita



This picture was taken when I received a reward, the book created by one of the speakers from the DFI Teacher Development workshop that held by Darul Fuqoha Indonesia Islamic Boarding School in collaboration with the Department of English Education Faculty of Educational Sciences, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, which was attended by all teachers in all units. The theme on the first day was "Preparation of Lesson Plan", the theme on the second day was "Teaching and Learning Activity based on Multiple Intelligences", the third day theme was "Active Learning Method", and the theme on the last day was "Classroom Action Research".

Figure 8 shows that Teacher 2 benefited from taking part in a workshop organized in the school where she worked collaborated with one of Islamic universities in Jakarta, Indonesia. The finding also shows that the early career EFL teacher highlighted the availability of professional development opportunities that specifically catered to the intersection of Islamic education and English language teaching. Workshops and training sessions addressed the unique challenges faced by EFL educators in Islamic school contexts. In other words, Teacher 2 stated that professional development activities were seen as contributing to career advancement. Teachers who actively participated in workshops, seminars, and networking events reported greater opportunities for promotions, leadership roles, and career growth.

Personal reflections

In this photo, one of the participants, Nely, shared her lived experience in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Pekalongan, Central Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she administered school documents.

Figure 9

Teacher Reflection by the End of Semester, Captured by Nely



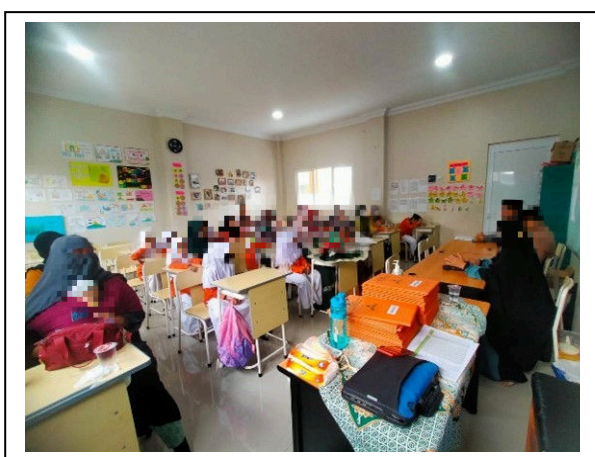
This photo was taken when I was accompanying one of my colleagues in delivering students achievement in the last semester. In this occasion, I got a chance to tell parents students' progress. Several parents were proud of their children's progress despite some of them were not. I explained them in detail how their children could be. They were allowed to give several suggestions to me in creating a good atmosphere for English learning process and to make a meaningful learning in the future. I made this chance as my reflection to be a better teacher in the future.

Figure 9 illustrates Nely's personal reflection on what she had done during the semester. This result depicts that reflective practices were evident among novice EFL teachers. Regular self-reflection, journaling, and collaborative discussions were utilized to analyze teaching experiences, identify areas for improvement, and refine instructional approaches. Opportunities for reflection and self-awareness, whether through journals, reflective writing, or group discussions, allow pre-service teachers to critically examine their evolving identities.

Meanwhile, Yunita, Teacher 2, narrated her experience in early teaching career in an Islamic primary school in Bekasi, West Java. This was her original photo taken by herself when she joined a school meeting as a reflection for her teaching career.

Figure 10

Teacher Reflection in a School Meeting, Taken by Yunita



This photograph shows a meeting organized by the school in the end of a semester for distributing the achievement report to the parents and their children. In this agenda, we as teachers could share the teaching and learning process achieved by students. What I reflect from this event is that teachers should communicate with students' parents to share the students' progress.

Figure 10 demonstrates Yunita's personal reflection on what she had done during the semester. Engaging in reflective practices facilitates a deeper understanding of one's teaching beliefs and values. In addition, parental involvement was emphasized as a significant aspect of Islamic school culture. Early career EFL teachers recognized the importance of understanding and meeting parental expectations, fostering open communication, and involving parents in their children's language education.

Based on the photovoice data, the discussion looks into the research findings acquired using the Photovoice methodology, offering light on the complex processes of professional identity development among early career English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors in the specific environment of Islamic primary schools. As a participatory visual research approach, photovoice enables participants to visually capture and share their experiences, providing a comprehensive knowledge of the intersections of cultural, religious, and educational influences shaping their professional identities (Palmer et al., 2015). Novice EFL teachers undergo a crucial phase of professional development where they transition theoretical knowledge into classroom practice. This study seeks to examine the teaching practices and methodologies employed by these educators, acknowledging the significance of understanding their initial experiences to inform targeted support and training programs.

The professional identity formation of early career EFL teachers holds significant implications for educational practices (Trent & Decoursey, 2011), particularly in the unique context of Islamic primary schools. This discussion explores a research study that utilizes a photovoice study approach to unravel the complex processes involved in the construction of

professional identity among novice EFL educators in Islamic primary settings. The study on early career EFL teachers' professional identity construction in Islamic primary schools employs a photovoice study methodology to illuminate the intricate process of identity development. Rooted in the transformative potential of visual and narrative methodologies, the research delves into the experiences of novice EFL teachers in Islamic primary settings.

The visuals depict the diverse duties that early career EFL teachers fulfill, emphasizing the delicate balance between religious and instructional commitments. Participants display times in which they participate in both instructional and pastoral responsibilities through images, showing the complexity of being both language instructors and moral guides within the Islamic primary school setting (O'Boyle, 2018). These illustrations deepen our awareness of teachers' dual duties in developing their professional identities. Teacher education programs should include components that expressly address the incorporation of cultural and religious values into language education (Solari & Martín Ortega, 2022). Providing aspiring EFL instructors with the skills and knowledge to negotiate the junction of language instruction and cultural/religious norms enables them to develop a more coherent professional identity.

Likewise, establishing positive teacher-student relationships is a crucial aspect of effective teaching. This study aims to investigate how early career EFL teachers navigate the complexities of building rapport with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Irani et al., 2020). Early career EFL teachers need to recognize the diversity in their classrooms and actively sought to provide individualized support (Han, 2021). Differentiating instruction, adapting materials, and addressing diverse learning styles were key strategies to meet students' unique needs. The practice of active listening and empathy also emerge as central to positive teacher-student relationships (Cobb et al., 2018).

Early career EFL teachers acknowledged the significance of understanding students' perspectives, concerns, and individual needs. Early career EFL teachers emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in building positive relationships (Garza-Rodríguez et al., 2021). Understanding and respecting students' cultural backgrounds facilitated trust and created a more inclusive learning environment (Beijaard et al., 2004). Early career EFL teachers also need to navigate the delicate balance between professionalism and friendliness. Maintaining authority while demonstrating care and approachability contributed to a positive teacher-student dynamic (Mockler, 2011). Further, establishing mentoring and support mechanisms inside Islamic primary schools is critical for early career EFL teachers' successful professional identity construction (Nguyen, 2017). Experienced mentors can assist beginner educators in negotiating the complicated environment of cultural expectations, assisting them in striking a balance between teaching responsibilities and religious values integration (Schellings et al., 2021).

The visual narratives depict the difficulties that early career EFL teachers experience when managing cultural norms in an Islamic primary school setting. Participants visually chronicle their participation in cultural events and activities, highlighting the conflicts and compromises involved in addressing the needs of a modern school system while adhering to conventional teaching practices (Castañeda, 2011). These images offer a glimpse into the dynamic process of identity negotiation that takes place inside the cultural landscape of Islamic primary schools (Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present photovoice study on the professional identity construction of early career EFL teachers in Islamic primary schools provides unique insights into the complex interplay of cultural, religious, and educational elements. The integration of visual data through Photovoice adds depth to our understanding of the intricate processes involved in identity construction. The implications for teacher education practices and policy development highlight the potential of visual methods in fostering cultural competence, promoting reflective practices, and enhancing the overall professional development of early career EFL teachers in Islamic primary schools.

The findings of this study carry implications for teacher education programs and the professional development of EFL educators in Islamic primary schools. Recognizing the importance of cultural and religious dimensions in professional identity development, teacher training programs should incorporate strategies to prepare early career teachers for the unique challenges posed by such educational settings. The use of Photovoice underscores the importance of visual literacy in teacher education programs. Integrating visual methods into teacher training allows early career EFL teachers to develop the skills needed to visually document and reflect on their professional experiences. Visual literacy programs can empower educators to communicate more effectively and authentically, fostering a deeper understanding of their identity construction process.

The reflective nature of Photovoice encourages early career EFL teachers to engage in continuous reflection on their professional roles and practices. Educational policies should promote reflective practices as a cornerstone of teacher development, fostering a culture where educators regularly examine and refine their approaches to teaching. This, in turn, contributes to the ongoing construction and reconstruction of professional identities. This research synthesis highlights the intricate interplay of factors contributing to the construction of imagined language teacher identities during pre-service teacher education. By recognizing the diverse influences on identity formation, teacher educators can design more effective and tailored programs to support the development of positive and resilient language teacher identities among pre-service teachers. Further research is needed to explore the longitudinal aspects of identity development and the impact of these imagined identities on actual teaching practices.

Acknowledgements

We express our gratitude to Center for Research and Community Service, Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia for funding this research. We would also like to thank the EFL teachers as the participants of this study. Their contribution is worthwhile for this study.

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