

NARRATIVES AND IDENTITIES: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES FROM 2004 TO 2022

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Abstract: Amidst the recent surge in English language teacher identity research, this article systematically reviews existing research studies (n=30) conducted on English language teacher identity across English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL), and native English-speaking contexts that employed narrative inquiry as its methodology. Employing Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) framework, the systematic review identifies major themes on teacher professional identity classifying articles on three broad stages of professional development from student teachers' identity negotiation to novice teachers' identity development and experienced teachers' and teacher educators' identity construction. It reveals that English language teachers' identity is influenced by their practice in learning communities in varying contexts, macro factors like gender, race, ideology and discourse, critical incidents and agency, conflicting emotions, teacher education programs, and imagined identity and investing. In addition, the article offers a critical assessment of narrative inquiry in language teacher identity and gives suggestions for future research. Finally, it proposes a preliminary framework on the trajectory of identity construction and its implications for English language curriculum and teacher development.

Keywords: English language teaching, narrative inquiry, systematic review, teacher identity

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Research studies reveal heterogeneous definitions, approaches, and factors influencing English language teachers' identity construction. According to Norton (2000), identity is "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how that person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). Similarly, Pennycook (2001) describes it as "a constant ongoing negotiation of how we relate to the world" (p. 149). Varghese (2008), who connects the notion of identity with teachers' professional space, argues that teachers' professional identity relates to how teachers see themselves and how they enact in their professional setting. From these definitions, one can infer that teacher identity is a dynamic and relational phenomenon best described as a continuous process (Teng, 2018). Teacher identity is "relational, interactional, constructed, and performed in contexts" (Miller, 2009, p. 175), which is characterised by social, cultural, discursive and institutional elements where the unavoidable interrelationship between personal and professional is realised (Day, 2011). Besides, "broader cultural, policy and social structures in which teachers live and work,

the emotional contexts, and the personal and professional elements of teachers' lives, experiences, beliefs and practices" (Day, 2011 p. 48) influence identity development.

Multiple studies on teacher professional identity are evident. However, very few researchers (Golzar, 2020; Izadinia, 2013; Yuan, 2019) have conducted a systematic review on English language teacher identity. For example, Izadinia (2013) analysed studies (n=29) on student teachers' identity formation and identified four significant emphases – reflective practices, learning communities, setting, and (previous) experiences – that contributed to their identity development. Likewise, reviewing articles (n=22) in L2 school contexts, Yuan (2019) developed a tentative framework of non-native English speaker teachers' (NNEST) identity trajectory with three possible routes, such as cognitive engagement, emotional experiences, and social interaction. During the process, NNESTs undergo contradiction and conflicting situations. Those teachers capable of negotiating identity in conflict situations and vulnerability develop identity, whereas the rest withdraw from teaching. Similarly, Golzar (2020) presented a systematic review of empirical studies from 1997 to 2020 exploring English language teachers' identity formation through classroom practice. These articles review specific stages (preservice, novice, experienced) of teachers' identity construction in specific contexts (such as EFL/ESL) that provided only a fragmented picture of the identity trajectory of English language teachers.

Given that none of the existing systematic reviews presents a comprehensive picture – preservice teachers, novice teachers, and experienced teachers and teacher educators from native, EFL and ESL contexts – of English language teachers' identity construction, in this article, we present a critical review of empirical studies on English language teachers' identities that were published from 2004 to 2022. The report also develops a framework of English language teachers' identity trajectory through the critical analysis of selected articles.

As this systematic review includes empirical studies on English language teachers' identity construction that employed narrative inquiry as its methodology, it is worth noting how identities are manifested, realised, and negotiated through narratives. Narratives and identities are so intertwined that narratives are widely regarded as the primary tool for constructing and expressing identity. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) perceive teacher identities as storied identities and pay attention to how teachers tell stories, whom they tell, when, and where. For Riessman (2008), narratives of our lived experiences reveal and construct our identities and represent them. During the storied construction of identities, narrators claim and assign identities to others who appear in their narratives. During identity construction "narratives integrate ways of knowing and being" (p. 460), due to which it has been the locus of study in social and educational research recently.

Furthermore, Barkhuizen et al. (2014) note that narrative inquiry aids ELT researchers in understanding the inner mental realms of teachers and learners, as well as the nature of teaching and learning practised by teachers, mainly how language educators and learners organise and communicate their experiences and identities to themselves and others. So, including articles on English language teachers' identities that employed narrative research design is significant. In addition, to our knowledge, none of the existing systematic reviews on teachers' professional identities has focused on the research that employed narrative inquiry as its research methodology. In this study, therefore, we review the usage of narrative inquiry in teacher identity

research and the way forward for future investigation. To achieve the set objectives, it becomes imperative to respond to the following research questions:

1. What major themes exist in the existing research on English language teachers' professional identity using the narrative inquiry method?
2. How has narrative inquiry been employed to explore identity, and what can be the directions for future research?

METHOD

This study used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) approach. Some critical components like 1) specific research questions that the research attempts to answer, 2) specific guidelines for article search, inclusion, and exclusion, 3) clear-cut methods to mitigate prejudices in paper selection and reviewing, 4) methodological transparency, and 5) systematic and exhaustive study of the research (Evans & Benefield, 2001) are included to make the review process rigorous and systematic. Only empirical studies on English language teachers' professional identities initially published in English in peer-reviewed journals were considered for the review process. Books, book chapters, conference proceedings, and articles that used methodology other than narrative inquiry were excluded. Using the key phrases 'English language teacher,' 'teacher professional identity,' 'narrative inquiry and identity,' and 'English language education,' we searched relevant articles on Google Scholar, Eric, Scopus, JSTOR, and some of the influential journals mainly *TESOL Quarterly*, *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, and *Teaching and Teacher Education*, among others.

Through the initial search, 65 articles were downloaded, out of which five duplicate articles were removed, and only 60 research studies were considered for the title and abstract screening. Only 30 articles out of 60 were included for detailed critical review as the remaining articles were excluded in different stages of titles and abstract screening (n=20), and detailed scanning of the text and exclusion as they were non-empirical, irrelevant, and out of specified period (n=10). Figure 1 presents the screening, inclusion and exclusion process and the final number of articles considered for the thematic synthesis. Articles that were considered for systematic review are written in the context of China (n=6), Hong Kong (n=5), USA (n=5), Iran (n=3), Thailand (n=2), Canada (n=2), Japan (n=1), New Zealand (n=1), Mexico (n=1), South Korea (n=1), Australia (n=1), Colombia (n=1), and Indonesia (n=1).

The distribution of the number of articles in different contexts indicates that English teachers' identity research that employs narrative inquiry as its research methodology is in the increasing trend, mainly in Asia. Out of 30 articles reviewed, 19 are from Asia, and the rest are from other continents. A brief description of the thematic areas of the articles, along with the year of publication and context, is presented in Table 1. Though the limited number of articles included for review narrows the scope of this study, the inclusion of the studies from diverse contexts helps develop English language teachers' identity trajectory representative across the contexts.

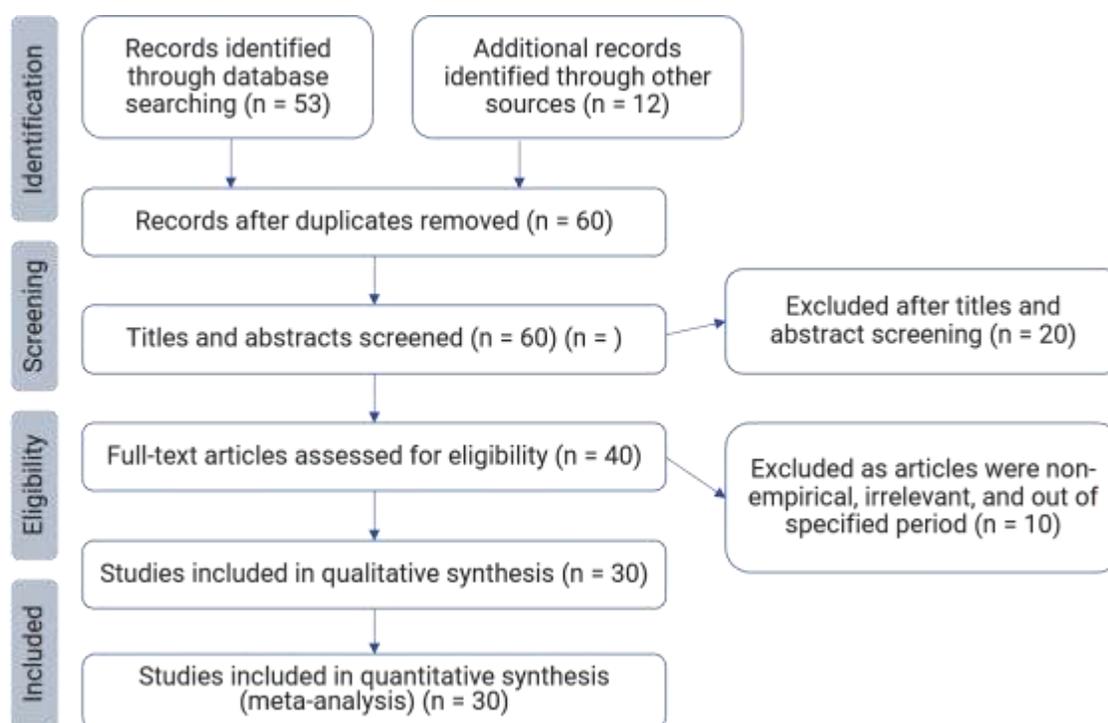


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart

Table 1 English Teachers’ Identity Research across Contexts

Author(s) & Year	Thematic Concentration	Context
1. Simon-Maeda (2004)	Mediation of gendered discourse and sociocultural inequalities in identity negotiation of female teachers and teacher educators	Japan
2. Tsui (2007)	EFL teachers’ identity negotiation through practice	Hong Kong
3. Norton and Early (2011)	Identity negotiation of teachers as researchers through storytelling during digital literacy program	Canada
4. Reis (2011)	Traces ESL writing teachers' identity development concerning his beliefs and attitudes on NS myth	USA
5. Trent (2012)	Identity negotiation of novice teachers teaching in secondary schools	Hong Kong
6. Liu and Xu (2013)	The influence of varied power relations on the teacher educators’ trajectory of learning in communities of practice	China
7. Xu (2014)	Identity construction of university teachers as researchers	China
8. Liu (2014)	An autobiographical account of how EFL teachers’ identity has formed, shifted, and reconstructed	Canada

Author(s) & Year	Thematic Concentration	Context
9. Golombek and Klager (2015)	A preservice teacher's identity negotiation and contradiction he grappled with	USA
10. Kayi-Aydar (2015)	The complex interaction among competence, practice, race, power, and agency in identity negotiation	USA
11. Barkhuizen, (2016)	Teachers' imagined identities over time	New Zealand
12. Yuan and Lee (2016)	Student teachers' identity construction during practicum in a private boarding school	Hong Kong
13. Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2018)	Exploration of identity construction of EFL teachers with a focus on critical incidents and agency	Iran
14. Serna-Gutiérrez and Mora-Pablo (2018)	Critical occurrences and the development of identity among transnational student-teachers	Mexico
15. Charles (2019)	Influence of race on native English speaker teachers' identity negotiation	South Korea
16. Sung (2019)	Undergraduate student's identity negotiation with investment, imagined community, and imagined identity	Hong Kong
17. Leigh (2019)	Subject positions foreign teachers draw through narratives and the emergence of identity	Hong Kong
18. Nguyen and Dao (2019)	Influence of NNEST/NEST ideology, communities of practice, and identity integration in pedagogy in teaching-learning practices	Australia
19. Fan and de Jong (2019)	NNEST identity negotiation with ideology, race, and practice	USA
20. Macías Villegas et al. (2020)	Student teachers' identity construction through practice in learning communities	Colombia
21. Wang (2020)	Constraints first-year EFL teachers face during identity construction	China
22. Li (2020)	Interaction of core beliefs and emotions in the identity development of two private tutors	China
23. Ubaidillah et al. (2020)	Imagined identity of a preservice teacher	Indonesia
24. Aghaei et al. (2020)	Perception of role identities among Iranian EFL teachers and dominant role identities	Iran
25. Lin et al. (2020)	Negotiation between sexuality and professional self in EFL teaching	Thailand
26. Prabjandee (2020)	The impact of teacher education programs on preservice teachers' identity construction	Thailand
27. Xie and Dong (2020)	Investigation of identity crisis elements among Chinese EFL instructors in a higher vocational institution	China

Author(s) & Year	Thematic Concentration	Context
28. Xiong and Li, (2020)	Female EFL teachers' identity negotiation to adapt to work-life balance	China
29. Karalis Noel, (2021)	Factors that influence in pursuing and departing from the teaching profession	United States
30. Maleknia et al., (2022)	English language teachers' gendered identity	Iran

During the analysis process, identity categories and influencing factors, along with the findings of the studies, are extracted and tabulated for critical analysis as raw data. Then the excerpts were compared, contrasted, and synthesised to establish a pattern on the identity trajectory of English language teachers to address the first research question. Besides, the thematic synthesis also offers a framework for identity trajectory.

In addition, to answer the second question relating to methodology, methodological information was tabulated in which research duration, participants, data collection methods and actual process employed, and data analysis approaches and actual analysis process used by the researchers were extracted. Then those extracts were compared, contrasted, and synthesised to have a better understanding of the methodology. Furthermore, the merits and inadequacies of the research methodology and directions for further studies were indicated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A systematic and rigorous analysis of 30 shortlisted articles on English language teachers' identity research emerged with three broad themes in terms of the stage of identity negotiation. The articles were first divided into three broad categories –preservice teachers' identity negotiation, novice teachers' identity development, and experienced teachers and teacher educators' identity construction –and analysed to find a pattern of identity negotiation as teachers face different kinds of challenges in various stages of professional development and require development opportunities accordingly. After the thematic review, the methodological trend in English language teachers' professional identity is presented.

Preservice Teachers' Identity Negotiation

A review of nine articles on preservice teachers' identity negotiation emerged with five significant factors: (1) imagination, imagined community, and imagined identity (Barkhuizen, 2016); (2) teacher education (Nguyen & Dao, 2019); (3) ethnicity, race, ideology and agency (Kayi-Aydar, 2015); (4) practice in learning communities (Macías Villegas et al., 2020); and (5) investment (Sung, 2019) that influenced preservice teachers' identity negotiation. Ubaidillah et al. (2020), in their exploration of the imagined identity of a preservice teacher Andy studying at a private university in Indonesia, revealed that the imagination and imagined identity he developed during his past learning experience heavily impacted his identity construction. However, Barkhuizen (2016) has shown a contrastive result. Barkhuizen reports that though Sela, a preservice teacher in New Zealand, initially imagined herself teaching English to the immigrant community of Tonga, she ended up being an English teacher in a school where

students from a privileged white community study. Her investment in English language learning and negotiation of identity in different times and spaces and the resultant social capital she developed made her choose to teach English at a privileged high school, a new identity than she had imagined nine years before.

Similarly, Sung (2019) discovered that an undergraduate student's L2 investment and identities were mediated by the anticipated possibility of ensuring positive returns on the investments. His identity was determined by his strategic and selective investments, which were "shaped by the exercise of personal agency in response to specific contextual conditions, as well as by the desire for membership in an imagined international community and an imagined identity associated with a cosmopolitan lifestyle in the projected future" (p. 13). While imagination and imagined identity seemed to have positively impacted the identity construction of preservice teachers in the study of Sung (2019) and Ubaidillah et al. (2020), Barkhuizen (2016) revealed that investing in language learning and negotiation of identity across time and contexts resulted with yielding social capital and construction of new identity different from what preservice teacher had imagined initially.

Meanwhile, ethnicity, race, ideology, and agency also heavily impacted the identity negotiation of preservice English teachers. For instance, Nguyen and Dao (2019) explored the identity construction of five prospective non-native teachers from different language backgrounds doing applied linguistic/TESOL at an Australian university. They revealed the influence of NNEST/NEST ideology at the beginning and consequent disillusionment from the ideology. The engagement of these teachers in new learning communities in Australia initially challenged their self-perception as competent teachers. However, they had a new realisation of their competence level. Their meaningful engagement in communities of practice consequently helped develop an identity as skilled teachers. In addition, integration of identity exploration in the pedagogy implemented during their course positively impacted their identity development.

In contrast, Kayi-Aydar's (2015) examination of the life experiences of Janelle, a white American, unveiled the "complex interplay among competence, classroom practice, membership, race, and power in the process of identity (re)construction" (p. 138) from a prospective Spanish teacher to English as a second language (ESL) teacher. Janelle's status as a non-native Spanish speaker and her racial and ethnic identification as a white American barred her from having a valid entry to practice and prevented her from forming the professional identity she desired. As a white American, she had the privilege of communicating as a native speaker of English. So, she finally switched from teaching Spanish to teaching English as a second language (ESL). These two studies show mixed results of interplay among race, caste, native/non-native ideology, and agency in the identity construction of English teachers.

The teacher education program is another factor that influences the identity construction of English language teachers. Macías Villegas et al. (2020) examined a group of student teachers at a Colombian university's undergraduate English teacher education program and evidenced that student teachers faced identity conflicts and tensions right after they were exposed to the program. However, interaction with the members of the teachers' community, engagement in teacher education curriculum, teaching practicum, and reflection and sharing resolved their initial tensions and conflicts, thereby helping them reconsider their concepts of English teachers. However, Prabjandee (2020), in a similar kind of study in the context of Thailand, came up with

contrastive results. His findings suggest that identity development is more intricate, multifaceted, and fragmented in teacher education, where students are required to connect the dots of their teacher identity formation on their own. The teacher education program played a passive role in constructing teacher identity, and the framework of experience in teacher education did not suffice for the students to perform teacher identity development. These studies indicate that teacher agency must play a critical role in proactively connecting the dots for identity construction during teacher education.

Emotion and critical incidents also play a crucial role in the identity construction of preservice English language teachers. For instance, Yuan and Lee (2016) explored how a student-teacher – Ming – negotiated and navigated his conflicting emotions during his practicum in a private boarding school in the suburb of Beijing. The findings of this research revealed that negative feelings at work impacted Ming's conviction of himself as a teacher. Furthermore, the limits imposed by school surroundings and mentors eventually exacerbated his negative emotions that hampered his identity negotiation. Nonetheless, the positive feelings and satisfactions Ming gained from his pupils' achievement and acknowledgement played a significant role in his identity formation.

Meanwhile, Serna-Gutiérrez and Mora-Pablo (2018) investigated how critical incidents experienced by transnational student teachers in Central Mexico influenced their identities. Their study showed that the critical incidents that transnational students experienced led them to utilise linguistic capital initially and choose the BA TESOL program and then English language teaching as a profession. In addition, their study in the US and teaching practice during BA TESOL also significantly shaped their ways of teaching and, thereby, their identity as English teachers. Furthermore, the nature of the English program and the incidents they underwent motivated them to join teaching.

To sum up, imagined identity and consequent investment in language learning to realise such identities emerged as one of the significant factors influencing the identity construction of preservice English language teachers. Besides, macro factors like ethnicity, race, and ideology heavily impacted their identity construction. Kayi-Aydar (2015) and Nguyen and Dao (2019) show mixed results regarding the influence of ideology and race in identity development. Likewise, teacher education programs and preservice teachers' active engagement and agency influenced their identity construction heavily.

Novice Teachers' Identity Development

After the completion of the teacher education program, engagement in learning communities, and teaching practicum, the most crucial stage ensues in the identity construction of novice teachers. During this stage, novice teachers undergo many challenges from institutional structures, norms, and external social contexts (Wang, 2020). They also experience a vast gap between their cognition on pedagogical content knowledge and expectation from the school or the gap between expectation and reality (Golombek & Klager, 2015), conflicting pre and in-service identity or the gap between teacher education and actual practice (Karalis Noel, 2021), and challenges of maintaining the relationship with colleagues during engagement in

school activities (Trent, 2012). In addition, the positioning of a novice teacher in discourses by school authorities (Trent, 2012) largely determines their career as a teacher.

Novice teachers grapple with the challenges of balancing the pedagogical content knowledge and the contextual reality, expectation vs. reality, and other institutional environmental factors. Wang (2020), for example, highlights the three significant constraints – institutional, leadership, and contextual – that five first-year EFL teachers in China faced while constructing their identities. Regarding institutional constraints, the novice teachers found heavy workloads, large class sizes, and examination fixation tradition detrimental to their identity construction. Next, their professional identity was affected by unsympathetic supervisors/leaders, unsupportive senior staff, and an inflexible curriculum. Lastly, “the ways that they access inside and outside institutional power have a forceful consequence of undermining or undergirding their EFL teaching” (Wang, 2020, p. 16), adversely impacting their identity development.

Similar to Wang (2020), Golombek and Klager (2015) trace the tensions and contradictions novice teachers undergo while teaching an advanced grammar class in the USA. They emphasise the conflict between advanced grammar teachers’ identity-in-activity, which they acquired while preparing for the exam, and the communication-focused instructors they hoped to be. Besides, Trent (2012) explored how early career teachers in Hong Kong negotiated their identities during their teaching practices and with different discourses of teaching-learning. The findings of his study suggest that novice teachers’ relation with their colleagues, their engagement in teaching-learning activities and practices, and their positioning in discourses of teaching-learning by their school and broader educational environment determined their decision on whether to pursue a teaching career further or quit teaching.

Novice teachers’ ability to negotiate the gap between expectation and reality, educational environment and support from colleagues, and institutional authority played a crucial role in constructing teacher identity. From the different conflicting situations and contradictions that novice teachers have faced, it can be inferred that English language teachers are most vulnerable, requiring emotional support and development opportunities during the novice stage, a crucial phase in terms of their identity construction. Despite being the vital stage of professional development requiring the most support, very few studies (n=4) are conducted in the area. However, the number could be less as we only considered articles that employed narrative inquiry as its methodology.

Experienced Teachers’ Identity Construction

Out of 30 articles included in the systematic review, 17 were concerned with experienced teachers’ identity construction. From the analysis, three broad themes were drawn based on the identity categories and influencing factors, namely: (1) identity construction through practice across contexts; (2) influence of macro factors such as gender, race, ideology, and discourse; and (3) critical incidents, agency, and storytelling.

Identity Construction through Practice across Contexts

The review showed that one of the major categories that influenced the identity construction of experienced English language teachers is the teaching-learning practices across the contexts. Tsui (2007), for instance, employing Wenger's (1998) notion of identification and negotiation, analysed the lived experience of an EFL teacher, Minfang, teaching in the People's Republic of China. The investigation revealed that "identity is relational as well as experiential, reificative as well as participative, and individual as well as social" (p. 678). Furthermore, "reifying oneself and having oneself reified as a member of a community constitutes an important aspect of identification" (Tsui, 2007, p. 678). Tsui adds that another important aspect of identity development is legitimate access to practice and the skills gained out of practice. In a similar study, Liu and Xu (2013) indicated that teachers are required to shift their identity according to the changing work context. This process is intertwined with a two-way trajectory of learning mediated by various power relations in communities of practice. Xie and Dong (2020) rightly point out that to facilitate adaptation in changing contexts and support in situations of vulnerability, even experienced teachers require support and development opportunities.

Another study by Xu (2014) depicts how engagement in communities of practice, particularly in research activities, influences the identity construction of English language teachers. Exploring the life story of Chinese EFL university teachers, Xu depicts scenarios of identity construction of them as researchers that include teachers' interest in research and publication, institutional and peer support in the workplace and professional life cycles (professional development requirement in their professional cycle) in which they are involved playing the crucial role. Likewise, through autobiographical narrative inquiry, Liu (2014) explored how his identity with English has formed, shifted, and reconstructed across contexts in communities of practice at different stages of his teaching career. Though his journey into English language teaching was motivated by the high status of English in China, with the advanced competency level of English and understanding of postcolonial linguistic discourse that positions two languages differently, he experienced an identity crisis due to the split of identity between native Chinese identity and English identity. The linguistic capital he gained during his teaching journey consequently posed an identity crisis.

Influence of Macro Factors: Gender, Race, Ideology, and Discourse

Gender, race, ideology, and discourse seem to have a hegemonic influence on the identity negotiation of English language teachers. Drawing on post-structural feminist theory, Xiong and Li (2020) showed "how a female EFL teacher (re)negotiated and reconciled her professional and gender identities across the boundaries of home and work" (p. 106). They indicated that "in times of change and within both professional and domestic discourses, identity is not fixed, unified but necessarily fragmented, contradictory and discontinuous" (p. 106). There is a hegemonic influence of gender roles that oppress their identity negotiation. Likewise, Simon-Maeda (2004), examining her own and other female EFL teachers' lived experiences, argues that female teachers' identities are discursively constructed and inscribed by gendered and sociocultural inequalities requiring alternative empowering discourses for identity transformation. Maleknia et al. (2022) also corroborate Simon-Maeda's (2004) findings.

Similarly, Lin et al. (2020) explored how a queer EFL teacher subjectively constructs self in tertiary education through a post-structural lens in Thailand. Though the participant felt vulnerable to exposing sexuality as queer, she expressed her agency through discussion on sexuality. The engagement with sexual orientation was imagined and fulfilled by adopting a critical pedagogical approach in a heterosexual setting. The unmarked presence and influence of queer self in the pedagogical approaches she adapted to in English language teaching is evident.

The race also plays an influence on the identity construction and pedagogical choices of English language teachers. Charles (2019), for instance, investigated how black ELT professionals teaching in South Korea interpreted their identity as NES and how these identities influence their pedagogy. Lived experiences of self-identified black native English speakers demonstrate that race defined their perceived role as cultural ambassadors representing their race and diversity within western culture. Furthermore, they adopted a culturally responsive pedagogical approach in which they tried to represent cultural diversity and other cultural ingredients of the English-speaking community, which students perceived to be rewarding.

Furthermore, native/non-native speakerism that intertwines with the race also influences the identity construction of English language teachers. Fan and de Jong (2019) examined the experiences of a Chinese language teacher (Wan) in the United States. They discussed how Wan, a prospective ESL teacher, negotiated her identity during her US-based TESOL teacher preparation program and ended up being a TCSOL (teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages) teacher. Wan's stories depicted a previously competent ESL teacher in China who gradually lost her confidence in teaching English by internalising native/non-native speakers' ideology after joining the master in TESOL teacher education program in the USA. She, in fact, viewed herself as an unqualified ESL and NNEST and became a TCSOL teacher in America. Li (2020) also unveiled the similar lived experiences of two private English teachers in China who lost confidence due to the "influence of native-speakerism culture" (p. 14) that obliged them to seek approval on pronunciation from a native speaker. Likewise, Reis (2011) studied an ESL writing teacher's identity construction, particularly how his beliefs and attitudes on the Native Speakers myth were connected to his identity. The study depicted that albeit a blind believer in NS myth, he gradually challenged the ideology and empowered his students. However, his beliefs remained contradictory and ambivalent.

Critical Incidents, Agency, and Storytelling in Identity Negotiation

Critical incidents and teacher agency are also emerging areas of research on the professional identity construction of English language teachers. Exploring the life history of English language teachers with a critical-event focus, Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2018) indicate that the identities of the participating teachers were socially formed and restricted, leaving no possibility for personal action. According to the authors, teacher agency has primarily been implemented in a schooled manner, developed during years of apprenticeship to teaching.

In another study, Norton and Early (2011) investigate the extent to which narrative inquiry may shed light on the negotiation of the researcher's identity in language teaching research. The study revealed that Norton and Early, as researchers, established different identities, such as international guests, teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and collaborative team members

through their narratives. Besides, they further demonstrated that small stories enriched traditional narrative inquiry both methodologically and theoretically and made visible how the identities of English language teachers and researchers were constructed. Similarly, Leigh (2019) explored how foreign teachers drew subject positions as narrative resources and what identities emerged from the teachers' narratives. The findings revealed that foreign teachers negotiated multiple identities as English teachers by adopting and rejecting subject positions. These subject positions provide insights into the elements that affect teachers' narrated experiences and interpretations of who they are as English teachers in a foreign land.

Exploration of English Teachers' Professional identity through Narrative Inquiry

As we reviewed only the identity research of English language teachers that employed narrative inquiry as methodology, in this section, we present a review of varieties of data collection approaches, research duration, participants, and data analysis approaches used by narrative inquirers. The results emerged with interesting findings that researchers have used multiple sources of data collection apart from face-to-face retrospective storytelling sessions (Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Tsui, 2007). These include semi-structured interviews (Barkhuizen, 2016; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Wang, 2020), narrative frames (Xu, 2014), open-ended questionnaires (Reis, 2011), informal conversations (Barkhuizen, 2016; Liu & Xu, 2013), self-reflection journals (Xie & Dong, 2020), and class observations (Li, 2020; Sung, 2019).

The results also showed variations in terms of the duration of time in which the studies were conducted. For instance, Tsui (2007), using face-to-face storytelling, reflective diaries, and semi-structured intensive conversations, explored the complex process of identity formation of an EFL teacher, Minfang, in his six years of teaching career in China. Wang (2020) studied five EFL teachers from different universities in China during their first year of the teacher education program. The duration of studies ranges from six months (Norton & Early, 2011) to ten years of life history (Xie & Dong, 2020), employing self-reflection journals, in-depth interviews, and many other data sources.

Narrative researchers are found to have used multiple strategies for collecting data. Some of the researchers (Barkhuizen, 2016; Fan & de Jong, 2019; Leigh, 2019; Liu & Xu, 2013; Nguyen & Dao, 2019; Xie & Dong, 2020) have made the actual process and strategies of data collection and the co-construction of identity explicit, while many others (Charles, 2019; Li, 2020; Macías Villegas et al., 2020) have not mentioned the actual process of data collection, storying and restorying in the methodology section. Nguyen and Dao (2019), in the methodology section, note that "before storytelling participants were purposefully advised to be mindful of interactive, continuous and situated aspect of their experience so that stories could be elicited without interruption in-between" (p. 3). Likewise, Liu and Xu (2013), in their exploration of teacher educators' (Feng) identity construction in the workplace, elicited data from four in-depth interviews, informal conversations on various occasions, and reflective essays written by Feng. During the narrative generation, Feng's sharing sometimes elicited responses from the interlocutors as well. Besides, researchers like Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2018) organised interviews to stimulate stories of experiences from the participant, initially requesting him to share the teaching-learning experience in school and then his studies in BA and MA in TEFL at

a university. This kind of episodic storytelling made participants feel easier to recollect their experiences than to cover the stories of the wide frame.

Regarding data analysis approaches, thematic/paradigmatic analysis (Fan & de Jong, 2019; Liu & Xu, 2013; Prabjandee, 2020; Xie & Dong, 2020) is found to be heavily employed, while the short story approach (Barkhuizen, 2016), positioning analysis (Leigh, 2019), and a mixture of narrative thematic analysis along with chi-square statistical analysis (Aghaei et al., 2020) are also evident. Employing a thematic analysis approach, Fan and de Jong (2019) analysed the stories of a Chinese candidate of an ESL teacher enrolling in a TESOL program at a US-based university. The coding steps in this study included initial sense-making and thematic coding involving open and axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Then, deductive coding was conducted in terms of four broad theoretical categories. The whole process of paradigmatic analysis could be summarised as deconstructing, constructing, and reconstructing the data.

Meanwhile, Barkhuizen (2016) employed a short story approach, a form of “systematic thematic analysis of the content and context” (p. 661), in investigating the imagined identity of a preservice teacher named Sela. In his narrative knowledging process, he focused on the stories that are thematically relevant to identity construction, shifting identities, and investing in them. Later, context and content were analysed using the short story analysis framework. During the process, the participant was also actively involved in the meaning-making by reflecting on the interpretation of the stories conducted by the researcher.

Norton and Early (2011) have significant contributions in terms of exemplifying the process of sorting the stories out of the vast data source. They utilised the conceptual framework of Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to select large stories for further interpretation. Furthermore, Bamberg (2004, 2006) and Georgakopoulou (2006) helped in the categorisation of short stories from a large data set. This study utilised both the traditional narrative approach and short stories in the exploration of English language teacher educators’ identity construction as researchers. Norton and Early (2011) clearly defined the story selection criteria and picked stories accordingly, which is hardly evident in many research studies (Charles, 2019; Golombek & Klager, 2015; Tsui, 2007). They analysed both traditional coherent large stories and short stories as data sources.

A Framework on English Language Teachers’ Identity Trajectory

The critical systematic review of 30 articles on English language teachers’ professional identity research using narrative inquiry emerged with a clear pattern of teachers’ professional identity development. Though the thematic review is divided into three broad categories regarding teachers’ professional development stages and identity development, they undergo identical processes in all the stages. The result showed that identity construction occurs through three possible routes: cognitive engagement; micro, meso, and macro-level sociocultural interactions and practices; and various emotional dispositions that affect each other, as shown in Figure 2. Furthermore, during three different stages of professional development – preservice teachers, novice teachers, and experienced teachers and teacher educators – they undergo a similar process of identity conflict and thereby identity development or identity crisis, as reflected in the figure.

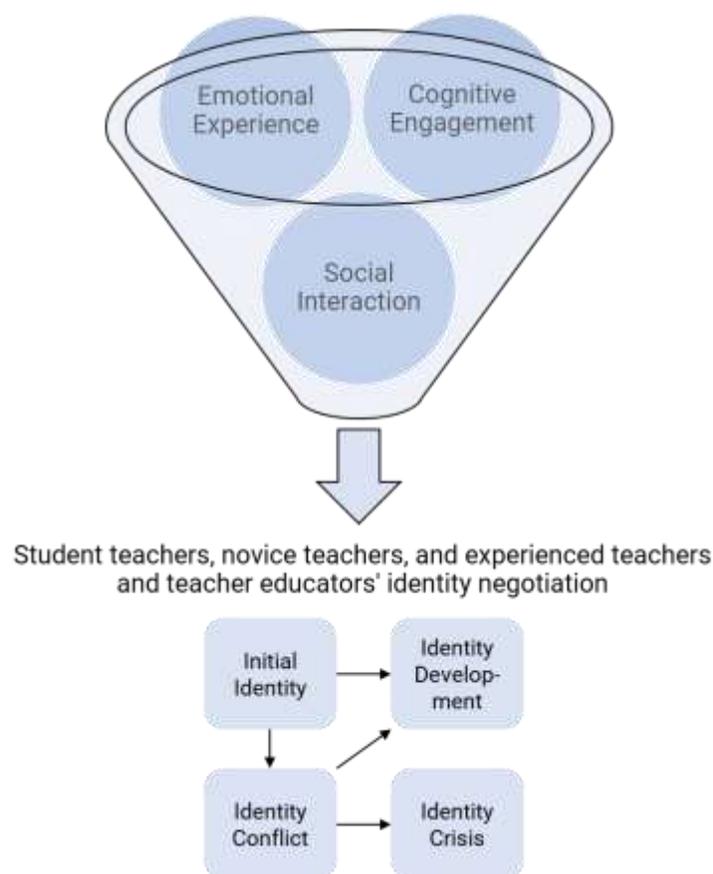


Figure 2. A Framework of English language teachers' identity trajectory

Both preservice and novice teachers undergo the situations of identity conflict and thereby identity negotiation or identity crisis as teachers. As presented in the figure, Nguyen and Dao (2019) show the conflict preservice teachers experience during the teacher education program in a new sociocultural context. However, through meaningful engagement in new communities of practice in Australia, they were able to develop confidence and their identity as competent teachers. Even Barkhuizen (2016) reports a preservice teacher's investment in a teacher education program to realise her imagined identity and how she was able to negotiate her identity as an English language teacher in New Zealand. A preservice teacher named Sela, through cognitive engagement and investing in language learning, yielded social capital and constructed the identity of an English teacher in a privileged school. However, Kayi-Aydar (2015) demonstrates how a non-native speaker of Spanish who initially aspired to be a Spanish teacher ultimately internalised native/non-native ideology and gave up her initial identity to become an ESL teacher. The findings of all these studies justify how preservice teachers face identity conflict and ultimately transform identity or face identity crises.

Even novice teachers undergo identical situations. Novice teachers experience conflicting situations and the gap between initial expectations and reality (Golombek & Klager, 2015). Those who negotiate and develop new identities in a situation of conflicting emotions, sociocultural practices, and cognitive engagements survive in teaching (Trent, 2012; Wang, 2020), while others withdraw themselves from the profession. Teachers undergo the situation of identity conflict and vulnerability in all stages of their professional careers. However, they require professional development and support the most during the novice stage of their teaching.

Though teachers are most vulnerable in the novice stage of their career (Liu & Xu, 2013), even experienced teachers face a crisis of identity. Liu (2014) presents how an experienced teacher from China with an advanced competency level faced an identity crisis with the internalisation of postcolonial discourse that positions two languages differently. Similarly, Fan and de Jong (2019) and Li (2020) also present the identity crisis and vulnerability faced by experienced teachers with the internalisation of native/non-native speaker ideology, respectively. Thus, the research study suggests a need for continuing professional development of English language teachers to cope with changing contexts and the needs of the students irrespective of their level of experience.

CONCLUSIONS

As we shortlisted only empirical articles on teacher professional identity that applied narrative inquiry as its methodology for systematic review, a large pool of research articles that employed methods other than narrative inquiry were excluded. When we explore how identities are constructed and negotiated by English language teachers in different contexts in thematic review, the methodological review is limited to the narrative inquiry trend. Still, as identities are constructed and negotiated through narratives, selecting articles based on methodological concentration remains logical and valid, and the report does not digress from thematic concentration.

Exploration of English language teachers' identity research utilising narrative inquiry as a method is still in its infancy and is an emerging trend in the Asian region. Amongst the teacher identity research studies, most of them were on experienced teachers' identity construction. Though novice teachers are most vulnerable and face many challenges from teaching-learning environments and other contextual factors requiring professional support the most, very few research studies have been conducted on novice teachers' identity negotiation. However, experienced teachers and teacher educators are not spared from challenges requiring continuing professional development opportunities.

In all stages, teachers undergo identity conflicts with their initial identity as they engage in teacher education programs and teaching-learning in different sociocultural contexts. During such conflicting situations, those who negotiate and develop identity survive in teaching, while the rest withdraw from the profession. In the case of preservice teachers, since identity exploration through narratives during teacher education positively impacts their identity construction, a recommendation is made for the inclusion of identity exploration in the curriculum and pedagogy of the English language teacher education program. However, as identity exploration is mainly based on the stories generated through reflective storytelling

sessions, the use of sociolinguistic short stories elicited through conversation between participants and the interlocutors may enrich narrative research.

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