Exploring English Professional Teacher Identity in An Islamic School

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Abstract. Many elements, including the teacher professional identity, have an impact on the educational quality, especially in the language teaching and learning process. A teacher's professional identity has a part in building how successfully they fulfil their position as a teacher. Students who will be guided toward having good knowledge and value will affect their success. Since teaching is a socially oriented profession, teacher professional identity affects not just instructors' expectations of what they should do to become good/professional teachers but also their students' identities. Teachers' preferences and expectations for the future growth of their students are influenced by their professional identities. This study attempts to explore how the teachers construct their professional identity in An Islamic School. A narrative case study methodology is employed in this investigation. The data are gathered from two participants of English teachers from one of Islamic Junior High School in Ngaliyan district, Semarang. The study showcases how the English teachers at Islamic School construct and negotiate their professional identity as a moral and character gate keepers.

Key words: English Teacher; Islamic School; Teacher Identity

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, teacher education focuses more on the development of professional and pedagogic competencies. This is evidenced by the training materials used in teacher professional education. In the training materials, teachers are mostly trained to develop lesson plans with problem-based learning models and project-based learning. Evaluation and reflection are more likely to be directed at the learning process that has been carried out. Teachers have not been given learning materials that can change their mindset in viewing themselves as professional English teachers as an International language. In fact, this mindset will shape the teacher's professional identity. The teacher's mindset is formed by the information that enters the mind and the environment in which the teacher works and interacts. A passion for self-improvement and continuing to do so, even when things aren't going well is a sign of a growing mindset. It is this mindset that allows people to thrive when experiencing the most challenging times in their lives (Dwek, 2017). Teachers are understood as teacher agents and the capacity to behave and act professionally when these teachers interact with policy makers and curriculum documents (e.g. curriculum outlines and textbooks, students and peers (Chen & Peng, 2019; Cladini & Husu, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Widodo et al, 2020). Similar to Richards (2010) who stated that professional teachers are often understood as how

teachers understand their professional duties, teacher behaviour in society.

English teachers in Islamic schools in Indonesia face challenges when asked about their professional identity as English teachers. They say that English teachers in Islamic schools have an obligation to develop and help students to behave according to religious values. Teaching English is considered as a means to teach values and instil religion, not to improve children's communication skills with English which allows them to dare to socialize in the International world (Qoyyimah et al, 2020). This problem arises because of the experience of teachers in education policy in Indonesia, the values applied by schools, and messy class. The low motivation and careless behaviour of students causes teachers to have the intention to help students solve family problems and correct behaviour problems as part of the main professional duties of English teachers (Qoyyimah et all, 2020).

For many Muslim teachers in Indonesia, for instance, teaching is a form of religious devotion; as a result, the educators believe religion as a motivation for entering the English teaching profession (Yuwono & Harbon, 2010) and as the foundation for their professional judgments (Qoyyimah et al., 2020). Despite the fact that culture and religion are integrated into the educational process, little is known about the professional identities of English teachers who work in schools with a religious focus.

This dilemmatic problem is interesting to be

studied further, namely the extent to which English teachers in Islamic schools can identify and construct the professional identity of English teachers as an International language. Also, how the professional identity of language teachers informs the aspirations of teachers in seeing the future of their students. Although the construction and development of teacher professional identity has been studied and discussed extensively (Elyas & Picard, 2012; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Widodo, 2017; Widodo, 2020) in Language Education, few have explored professional identity in Islamic schools (especially in Semarang City Central Java). The professionalism of English teachers is determined by International standards or criteria that apply in all countries. Thus, English teachers produced from formal educational institutions have the same competency standards throughout the world, especially in countries that set English as a foreign language that must be taught and learned.

Additionally, according to Beijaard et al. (2000), there are three ideas of what defines a professional identity: subject matter experts, didactical experts, and pedagogical experts. And this study is limited on exploring English teacher professional identity in Islamic School based on Richard's (2016) in Indonesia context. Language Teaching and the Construction of Teacher Identity According to Richards (2016), "those characteristics of teacher knowledge and skill that seem to lie at the heart of expert teaching competency and performance in language education" are divided into ten categories. These are: 1. Language ability 2. Content expertise 3. Teaching abilities 4. Contextual knowledge 5. Identity as a language instructor 6. Contextual awareness Teaching that is cantered on the needs of the student 7. Pedagogical logical abilities Membership in a community of practice 8. Theorizing from experience 9. Professionalism 10. We begin with the skill areas that have been identified.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a narrative design to explore the participants' own experiences during their time as an English teacher. Reflection on these experiences is useful for encouraging individual growth and self-discovery to develop professional English teacher identity. Experience reflection is a way of using higher order thinking skills to explore information about how participants develop their potential. The participants of this research is an English Teacher in MTs Fatahillah (one of Private Islamic School) who has been teaching English for about 4 years. She is pursuing magister program in UNNES. Participants were drawn from English educational background study. The place chosen for this research is one of the familiar Islamic private schools in Ngaliyan district Semarang. The selection of research location is based on the consideration that the teachers where they work can improve the quality of themselves and students in the future, moreover MTs has a vision specially to carry out the values and morals to the students moral development.

Data collection is done by asking for permission in advance from prospective participants to get their willingness to become research participants. Next, the researcher distributed a questionnaire containing questions that reflected the participants' reflections and their views on Professional English teacher identity when they have been teaching for about 4 years. Data collection is done with the help of google form media. Then, they were asked to tell more clearly with an unstructured interview if they thought there was an answer that needed to be clarified. The researcher was fully aware of each role with the participants both as researchers and as colleagues when they were subjectively and reflectively involved in the data collection process. Furthermore, their answers were identified and grouped into themes according to their reflection on experiences. Finally, the data were analysed and interpreted using professional teacher theory, Richards's the construction of teacher Identity in Language Teaching theory.

FINDINGS DAN DISCUSSIONS

The following describes the themes that have been presented by the participants related to the exploration of the identity of English teachers in the context of madrasah. There are two mechanisms in determining the position of the teacher, and the way the teacher constructs his professional identity.

Positioning by opposition and distancing

When asked if there is a teacher who can be a role model to be followed to be a good teacher, the participant revealed that in the past she only had a teacher who often came to class, then immediately gave assignments to students, she also felt the latter. class is very tense and less fun. From that experience, she was determined to be a cheerful teacher, making learning interesting,

having a fun learning atmosphere and always giving appreciation for student achievements. Here is an excerpt of her statement.

In the past, I often met teachers who came to class and immediately gave assignments to students. I also often faced a stressful classroom atmosphere when I was a student. From that experience, I want to be a cheerful teacher, who can create active learning, a pleasant learning atmosphere, and always appreciate student achievement.

From the excerpts of the data, it can be analysed from the use of the expression "directly giving assignments", "a tense classroom atmosphere" that participants express experiences recorded in their subconscious mind, "there are no pleasant teachers". All teachers only give the task load to their students. She also mentioned her favourite teacher from a prominent Japanese teacher, namely Sosaku Kobayashi. Here is an excerpt of his statement.

I want to be Sosaku Kobayashi, the principal of Tomoegakuen school. Kobayashi is the most kind and humanist principal and teacher in my opinion.

From these data statements, it can be concluded that there are still many teachers who have not been able to provide deep inspiration, concern, and empathy to students. Students have not felt the figure of a humanist and caring teacher. This shows that there are still many unprofessional teachers. The four required competencies have not been achieved properly. Therefore, it is necessary to improve and improve the quality of teachers. For this reason, it is necessary to organize teacher management that can capture the extent of teacher competence so far. The portrait of the teacher competency map is important for improving the quality of teachers in the future. So that teacher training is not only held and passed, but really pays attention to the quality of the output. The Ministry of Education and Culture, in this case the directorate of manpower, makes regulations and international standard teacher education curricula.

Participants stated that the professional abilities of teachers were obtained from training at the teacher partner institution TANOTO Foundation. She said the organization influenced the way she taught. She feels that the organization has facilitated her in carrying out active, effective, and structured learning.

Positioning by Positive identification and recognition

Participants revealed that they come from rural families who live simply, and work as farmers. Living in the midst of a simple family, participants feel they have been forged to become individuals who are tenacious, tough, and have high fighting power so that the participants' lives will be better in the future. Participants also feel more responsible for their success as professional teachers. They say that he is diligent and passionate about his duties as a teacher. She also likes the teaching profession, and feels happy to be in that profession. She also stated that educating is his soul. The characteristics of both parents who were diligent, tough and hardworking were passed down to the participants. The following is an excerpt from a sample of participant answers.

I come from a hard-working family. My mom and dad are diligent, tough, and passionate people at work. That attitude was passed down to me. As a teacher, I am always enthusiastic in carrying out this task. I always apply four competencies to teachers, namely personality, pedagogic, social and professional competencies. Not only at school but also in the community (P1).

From the quote above, the participants tried to be able to have the four competencies that must be possessed by a teacher, and tried to apply these competencies in schools and also in the community. Participants also said that they have never experienced significant obstacles in living the teaching profession. She can overcome all kinds of obstacles, all of which can be managed well. For this reason, participants need to improve their professional abilities by participating in various trainings that can support their careers. This includes online learning training using the Moodle app. She said, during the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching using the Moodle application and the results were quite effective. Participants also have a passion for writing best practices and publishing them in online and print media.

When asked about her motivation to become a teacher, the participants answered that being a teacher was her dream since she was young, and she really enjoyed the teaching profession. She also revealed that after becoming a teacher, his life was very organized, orderly and responsible. And become a cheerful everyday life. She wants to continue to be a teacher while continuing his education to a higher level.

Positive positioning indicates that participants have a strong motivation to become professional teachers. This motivation and growth mindset is very much needed for teachers who must

continue to learn to be able to keep up with the very dynamic developments of science and technology.

The Construction of teacher professional identities

The resource persons talked about the importance of being a good and caring teacher. Starting from that the teacher will be able to develop his personality into a professional teacher. Participants described it very clearly. Likewise, teachers must have a growth mindset, namely a mindset or belief that their basic abilities can be developed and improved through dedication and hard work. This dedication and hard work will encourage teachers to be creative and innovative in learning. The teacher is what students want all this time. Then, another professional teacher identity is the nature of responsibility. A good teacher must be responsible for herself and her students. Against her, the teacher must educate herself to be able to master the four required teacher competencies. This is in line with Richards (2016)'s opinion which states that professional identity can be measured by 10 components, namely language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focused teaching, pedagogical reasoning skills, theorizing. of practice, membership in a community of practice and professionalism. In addition, teachers must also have good discipline, behave politely and be role models.

CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that the professional identity of the English teacher must be clear to the teacher. Because this identity will encourage teachers to always carry out self-development, critical, innovative, caring and responsible. The growth mindset is also very important for teachers to have. With a growth mindset, teachers will continue to grow into professional figures who become ideal teachers, role models and inspirations for their students. In addition, four teacher competencies, especially those related to professional competence, must continue to be improved by participating in various scientific meetings in the form of seminars and workshops. The pofessional teachers must have language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focused teaching, pedagogical reasoning skills, theorizing from practice, membership in a community of practice and professionalism**.**

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