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Professional Identity of Secondary School EFL Teachers: An Investigation into Identity Formation and Types of Identities Claimed

Achame Haile^{1*}, Hailom Banteyerga²

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the professional identity of secondary school English as foreign language (EFL) teachers in the Sidama Regional state, Ethiopia. It mainly focused on EFL teachers' identity formation and the types of professional identities they claim. A narrative inquiry, as a popular form of qualitative research approach was employed to gather data from purposively selected 16 EFL teachers from five secondary schools. Narrative interviews and focus group discussions were used to generate the data. The data was analysed based on the grounded theory approach. The results indicated that EFL teachers' professional identity formation process is a gradual, continuous, and complex process. Exposure to native speakers, inspiration from role model teachers, university courses, collegial discussions, taking trainings, and the day-to-day activities of teaching English were found to mediate the formation of identity. The findings also indicate some of the claimed professional identities of EFL teachers subsuming: subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts, particularly inspirers, socialisers, entertainers, and actors. The results, thus, imply that close attention should be paid to EFL teachers' professional identity formation trajectories and the types of professional identities they claim in order to establish strong professional identities.

Key words: /Claimed identities/ EFL teachers' professional identity/Identity/ Identity formation/ Teacher identity /

1. Introduction

The educational system's success or failure is primarily determined by its teachers (Cheng, 2021). Teachers with strong professional identities and appropriate professional understanding would contribute to the quality of education and the success of the education system. Thus, teaching, by definition, necessitates a significant investment on the teacher's self. In this sense, English language teaching (ELT) is multifaceted, involving complex social and psychological dimensions. First, Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, and Brown (2013) emphasise that if identities are neither immanent nor completely socially determined, they become a task that individuals must work for. Second language learning thus becomes a kind of "identity work," in which the learner transforms into a different person than the one who did not previously know the second

^{1*} Corresponding Author; PhD ELT Candidate, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Email: achuhaile@gmail.com. Detail information about the authors is given at the end of this article.

language. Similarly, teaching English as a foreign language in Ethiopia could be seen as one of the routes to professional identity formation for EFL teachers.

Teaching language entails more than just delivering the subject matter; it also involves teaching oneself. Hence, we subtly teach who we are. According to Hamachek (1999), "consciously we teach what we know, and subconsciously we teach who we are" (p.209). This demonstrates the significance of teachers' professional identities in the teaching and learning process.

Research has not yet shown a very clear historical account of the process of the development or the formation of teachers' professional identity (TPI). Even from early childhood, many people may claim that they want to be a teacher. In this regard, the formation of one's professional identity as a teacher can, therefore, be said to start early in life (Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014). In this view, little attention has been paid to how EFL teachers' professional identity formation takes place and what mediates its formation in the context of Ethiopia.

In the early 1970s, identity politics emerged to describe how people work to gain more power, representation, or recognition for themselves and the social groups to which they belong (Olsen, 2008). TPI development in second language teacher education is a new and emerging research field as well (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Furthermore, Varghese *et al.*, provided that identity research can be traced back to two relatively independent lines of thought. One school of thought on language TPI is related to applied linguistics research, which places the teacher at the center of research attention, for example, by investigating teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. In contrast, another line of research has begun to investigate the socio-cultural and socio-political dimensions of teaching as a profession. In this view, the second line of thinking paves the way for the emergence of professional identity research.

Individual teachers have their own internal model of what it means to be a teacher in their chosen field, and each teaching fields has its own construct of teacher identity that defines what teachers in that field must know and be able to do (Cheung *et al.*, 2014). In this sense, a more in-depth examination of what it means to be an English language teacher in Ethiopian secondary schools, as well as what teachers need to know to perform well in their field is required. Teacher identity is truly holistic, encompassing cognitive, emotional, bodily, and creative aspect. Furthermore, learning about theories and pedagogical approaches is insufficient, and discussions about professional identities are frequently avoided because people are hesitant to reveal "perceived weaknesses" (Alsup, 2006, p.14). As a result, overlooking this aspect of the matter will result in the omission of key aspect of being a teacher.

The review made by Beijaard *et al.* (2004) indicates that the literature lacks a clear definition of professional identity. This is due to the multiplicity of the origins of identity and its facets. In the recent publication, Moghadam, Adel, Ghaniabadi, and Amirian (2019, p.4) citing Kerby (1991) define teacher identity as an on-going process with three dimensions subsuming: the perceived present (who am I as a professional?), anticipated future (who would I desire to be?), and reconstructed past (how did I become a professional teacher?). Volkmann and Anderson (1998) also define teacher identity as all about how they define themselves, including their perception and belief of who they are, what their roles are, the significance of their teaching, and why they belong to the community of teaching. In general terms, teachers' professional identity is primarily concerned with what it means to be an EFL teacher.

It is evident that one of the current concerns in Ethiopia is that a large number of high school English teachers are studying other fields such as accounting and economics to change their profession. Besides, the number of students who choose English as their major field of study at the university where one of the researchers teach is decreasing year after year. This could clearly have a significant impact on the EFL teachers' professional identity and stability.

How to teach English as an international language (EIL) and how English teachers negotiate their identities and rethink of their pedagogies remain unexplored topics. In other words, while much emphasis has been placed on the development of teaching EIL and its methodologies, the issue of EFL teacher identity formation has received little attention (Le Ha, 2008). Because EFL teaching is not standardised, there are vastly different structures, standards, and job duties for teachers that vary from country to country (Gilman, 2016). Gilman (2016) citing Valeo and Faez (2013) stated that the profession is "fragmented and lacking uniformity". Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Ethiopia appears to lack established

professional associations, which could improve what Le Ha (2008) refers to as a 'sense of belonging and connectedness' among the English teachers of the country. As a result, little is known about how EFL teachers define themselves professionally and feel about their profession in Ethiopia.

One can notice that majority of TEFL research in Ethiopia focuses on English language skills and classroom practices. This, again, creates an imbalance in the focus of ELT research once more. When discussing the imbalance of research concerns on teachers' identity, Palmer (1998) notes that the " 'who,' the personhood of the teacher, has been pushed into the background because it has been claimed to be 'too personal' to talk about in public" (p.111). Hence, conducting research on EFL teachers' professional identities and bringing the issue to the forefront makes sense. According to Buzzelli and Johnston (2014), there are two types of identities: assigned identities and claimed identities. The identity imposed on one by others is referred to as assigned identity, whereas claimed identity is the identity or identities that one acknowledges or claims for oneself. Accordingly, what types of professional identities EFL teachers in Ethiopia have remain a critical question in teacher identity research. In Japan, for example, English teachers identify themselves as university professors rather than English teachers (Fraser, 2011).

Across the globe, several studies have been conducted on the issue of teachers' professional identity. For example, Beijaard *et al.* (2004) in Leiden University, The Netherlands, made an extensive review of 22 recent research on teachers' professional identity between the years of 1988 and 2000 dividing the issue into three categories such as studies in which the focus was on teachers' professional identity formation, studies in which the focus was on the identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity, and studies in which professional identity was (re)presented by teachers' stories. The reviewed studies can be best characterised as small-scale and in-depth. In the studies reviewed, the concept of professional identity was defined differently or not defined at all. As indicated by the reviewers, many of the reviewed studies appeared to study on teachers' personal practical knowledge.

In the Ethiopian context, Jelan (2013) conducted a doctoral study on the effects of working conditions on the professional identity of EFL teachers as revealed through their narratives and emotional experiences. He eventually discovered a complex interaction between working conditions for teachers and professional identity. As far as the researchers' knowledge is concerned, there is generally no previous research that has attempted to investigate the professional identity formation of EFL teachers and the types of professional identities they claim in Ethiopia. Therefore, the current study sought to answers to the following research questions:

1. How is the professional identity of secondary school EFL teachers formed?
2. What types of professional identities do EFL teachers claim?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 How Professional Identity Formation Processes Take Place

Learning to teach language is a long-term process. It is quite related to identity formation since second language learning is one way of gaining the professional identity of being a language teacher (Burns, 2009). In general terms, Flores and Day (2006) describe the teachers' identity formation process as a long, complex and multi-dimensional process. In other words, it is a way of expressing how one grows to be a teacher. The formation of an EFL teacher's identity is mainly a matter of integrating one's experience of language learning with the teaching of language. Eggen (2004) emphasises that becoming a teacher and forming one's identity as a teacher can start during teacher education or even before. For example, becoming a teacher starts when someone is first exposed to supervision by parents and teachers and when he/she starts thinking about the constituents of a teacher's identity (Eggen, 2004). Thus, the identity of the teacher will,

accordingly, be in constant development and under the on-going influence of the practices he or she is involved in (Eggen, 2004, p.57). Therefore, the process of identity formation is not linear; rather, it is uneven and multifaceted.

Medina Velázquez (2017, p.3) sees identity formation from a psychosocial perspective and believes that teachers' professional identities develop at the same rate as the teacher himself. According to Wenger (1998), identity formation is a dynamic process that involves the interaction of one's self with the context. When a teacher advances from novice to expert status, he or she negotiates experience, positions, and participation in professional activities. Thus, seeing oneself through the eyes of others and negotiating professionally could assist in the formation of teachers' identities.

According to various scholars, multiple variables mediate the formation of teachers' identities. Yuan and Lee (2015), for example, noted that pre-service teacher education programs help teachers form their identities by engaging in cognitive learning and interacting with various socialising elements. Similarly, university coursework and teaching practicums mediate identity formation. Yazan (2018b) states that coursework and internship experiences enhance the formation of MA TESOL (Master of Arts in Teaching English to speakers of other languages) identity formation. Eventually, various professional development courses offered to teachers in Mexico City public schools facilitate identity formation (Teeters, Alvarez, McKimmy, & Dimidjian, 2021). Therefore, teachers' professional identity formation is a long process which can be reinforced by different variables.

2.2 Types of Professional Identity EFL Teachers Claim

The identity of EFL teachers is a multifaceted issue. It is difficult to identify the specific types of identities that EFL teachers claim as their professional identity. Professional identity literature does not clearly name the construct when it comes to this concept. According to Coldron and Smith (1999), some teachers' identities are born with them, while others are earned and some are thrust upon them. Similarly, these authors argue that an individual teacher's professional identity and location are determined biographically through his or her own choices and socially "given." Still, whether teachers' professional identities are created or inherited is a matter of academic debate. EFL teachers' identities are a synthesis of two types of identities: claimed and assigned (Varghese *et al.* 2005). Similarly, Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) define "assigned identity" as the identity given to teachers as a result of their role as English teachers, whereas "claimed identity" is the identity claimed or understood by teachers regarding themselves.

Claimed identity is said to be the professional identity assertion of teachers, regarding which they testify regarding their profession. In this respect, how English teachers understand themselves professionally and name their identities specifically is crucial to identifying themselves. For example, a high school English teacher identifies himself/herself professionally as a language teacher as general professional testimony. On the other hand, the national English curriculum assigns or imposes a professional identity of what it means to be an English teacher at the high school level through stating the professional standards. Similarly, society perhaps ascribes various attributes to English teachers and expects the teacher to act according to the professional standards. For instance, an English teacher is expected to produce native like fluency and accuracy. Further, EFL teachers claimed identity is manifested in the roles they play professionally, what Farrell calls professional role identity. Farrell (2011) defines professional role identity as "how teachers recognise their roles within their world and involves their beliefs, values, and assumptions about teaching and being a teacher" (p.55). Farrell (2011) investigated the professional role identities of three experienced ESL college teachers in Canada as communicated in regular group meetings. Eventually, he found out a total of 16 main role identities, which were divided into three major role identity clusters: the teacher as a manager, the teacher as a professional, and the teacher as an acculturator. Similarly, Beijaard *et al.* (2000, p.754) classified teachers as subject matter experts, didactical experts, and pedagogical experts. These researchers defined teachers as subject matter experts, i.e., teachers who base their profession on subject matter knowledge and skills, as opposed to didactical experts, who base their profession on knowledge and skills related to the planning, execution, and evaluation of teaching and learning processes. Meanwhile, a pedagogical expert is a teacher who bases his or her profession on knowledge and skills that

help students develop socially, emotionally, and morally. It is evident from the empirical studies that there is a literature gap in the aspects of EFL teachers' claimed professional identities.

2.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Theorising language teacher identity is difficult and problematic due to its complexity and fluidity. In this sense, Barkhuizen (2016b) emphasises that "... when graduate research students begin to explore an identity-related research project they often begin to panic when confronted with the challenge of finding an appropriate theoretical framework" (p.1). Barkhuizen further added that once they (graduate students) start to explore the theoretical and empirical literature, things become a bit murky and decisions are difficult to make. In this view, the researchers faced a similar problem of identifying one theory that underpins the current study. As a result, this study employed multiple theoretical frameworks, as Varghese *et al.* (2005) suggested the importance of multiple theories and only in this way we can hope to gain a fuller picture of an immensely complex phenomenon such as teacher identity.

In the current study, EFL teachers' professional identities are examined in relation to their identity formation and the types of identities they claim or possess and majority of the identity research works have based their theoretical framework on Wenger's (1998) theory of community of practice (henceforth, CoP). According to Wenger (1998), a community of practice is a group of people who share a common enterprise and pursue mutual goals as well as a common skill or profession. The basic assumption of CoP is the social nature of learning, commonly termed as the social theory of learning, since learning and identity formation are inseparable. In this regard, Zhou and Brown (2015) put "social learning theory focuses on what people learn from observing and interacting with other people" (p.19). In this theory, learning is viewed as social participation where people come together to actively engage in the "practices of social communities" and to construct "identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998). The main essence of this theory is participation in a given community, in this case, ELT communities. Such participation may lead to the formation of a professional identity in which individual teachers learn to become who they are now and aspire to be in the future. In this respect, Nguyen (2017) states that "... individuals form their identity as a result of participation in communities of practice, and the practice constructed by individuals is the obvious expression of their identity" (p.57). Thus, EFL teachers' professional identity is a continuous process of negotiating and defining what it means to be a teacher in a given teaching community and the wider social contexts.

Wenger (1998) considers three distinct modes of belonging in CoP to make sense of the processes of identity formation, namely: engagement, alignment, and imagination. He specified that engagement is the active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning, whereas imagination is creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience. Meanwhile, alignment refers to coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises (see Wenger 1998, pp.173-174).

In the context of this study, engagement can be linked to doing the daily routines together, sharing professional stories, and planning lessons. Teachers may also imagine and align themselves with the global ELT communities to meet the international demands of EFL professionals. Thus, if EFL teachers are engaged in such a scenario, they will easily negotiate and form their professional identities.

Furthermore, Cooley's (1902) concept of the "looking glass self" and the "mirror" metaphor drawn from sociology underpin the claimed professional identity of the teachers in this study. Cooley further stated that the looking glass self has three major components. These include: we imagine how we must appear to others, we imagine how that appearance is judged, and we develop our self through other people's judgments. Thus, one can deduce from Cooley's assumption of the looking glass self that teachers' identities can be formed and realised when they are concerned with how they appear to others, such as society, colleagues, and students. Meanwhile, the judgement they receive from these groups regarding their professional identity and the teaching profession determines their identity.

Teachers and the teaching profession are given various symbolic meanings and labels all over the world. Teachers, according to Lawal (2011), are labeled as "priest or prophet" and "slave or underdog". The

labeling of priest or prophet would mean the assigned professional identity of a given teacher. Similarly, slave or underdog could signify that EFL teachers may face several obstacles and the return they get from the profession is minimal. As a result, such labelling related to the teaching profession indicates the assigned identity of teachers. Still the types of professional identity EFL teachers claim is not clear and it could be perceived from their biographical narratives and reflection they share regarding their profession.

Generally, multiple theoretical frameworks such as Cooley's (1902) "*looking glass self*" and the *communities of practice* by Wenger (1998) underpin this study. The following figure shows the conceptual framework of the study.

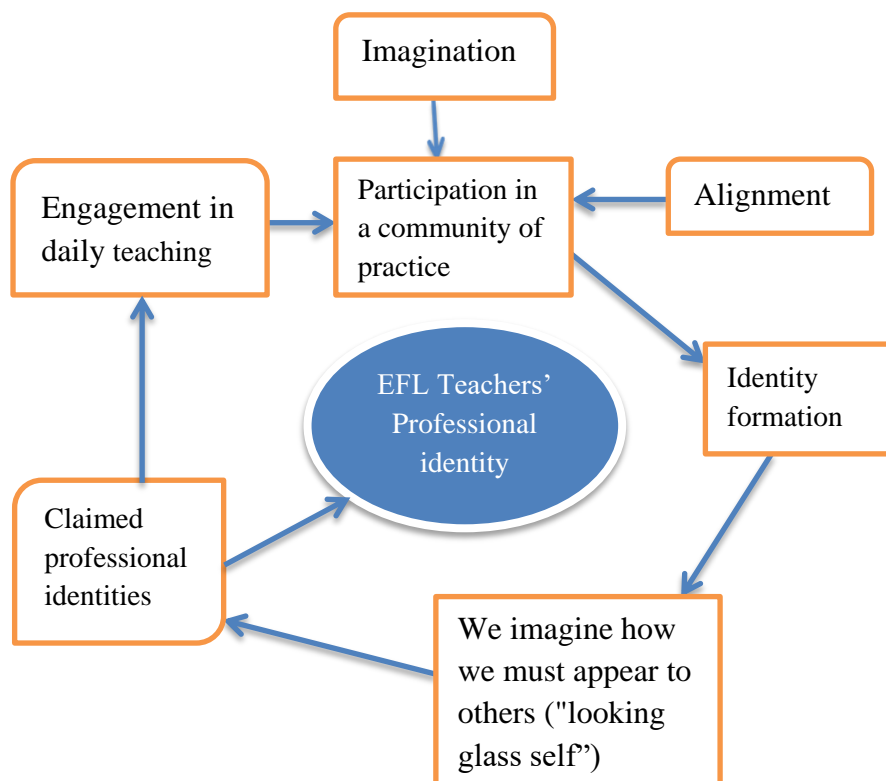


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the Study (Adapted from Cooley, 1902; and Wenger, 1998)

In the figure, the framework shows the mediating variables that reinforce the formation of teachers' identity. Active participation in ELT activities, imagining and forming an identity image beyond the local classroom scenario influence identity formation from this point of view. Similarly, aligning the professional identities of EFL teachers in secondary schools with the broader perspective of EFL professionals helps in the construction of identities. On the other hand, imagining how we appear to others and how we should present our professional identity to significant others, such as society, the school community, and the teaching staff at large, leads us to show our claimed professional identity. In summary, the conceptual framework presented in the figure above shows the formation of teacher identities and the types of claimed professional identities in the Ethiopian secondary school context.

3. Methodology

To begin, this article has been emanated from a Ph.D. thesis that used a convergent mixed method. This section, on the other hand, focuses on the methodological procedures used in the qualitative aspects of the study, which is the primary focus of this article.

3.1 Research Approach

As a popular method of qualitative research, narrative inquiry was used in this study. In this approach, individuals' lives are described by narrative inquirers. They collect and tell stories about people's lives and write narratives of their own experiences (Creswell, 2012, pp.516–517). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), our identities are the stories we tell ourselves. Similarly, narrative inquiry entails gathering stories and focusing on the meanings that people assign to their experiences. Similarly, Britzman (1992) stated that experience does not inform who we are, but rather that we create our identities through the telling of our experiences. As a result, among the various forms of narrative research, the biographical one was used to investigate EFL teachers' identity formation and the types of claimed identities.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted in Hawassa city administration and a few selected 'Woreda' or districts of Sidama National Regional State Secondary Schools with a focus on teachers teaching English in grades 9–12. For simplicity, there are 97 government secondary schools and 470 English teachers in the Sidama National Regional State. According to Dörnyei (2007), an initial sample size of 6–10 may be appropriate for qualitative research. However, there is no consensus on the number of participants in a given focus group discussion (FGD). Morgan (1988), cited in Cohen *et al.* (2000) suggests that four to twelve people per group are appropriate. In this study, 16 English teachers (two female and 14 male) were chosen from five secondary schools using a purposive sampling technique, primarily based on teaching experience. Their teaching experience ranges from 9_39 years. Individual interviews in narrative form were conducted with eight teachers, and the focus group discussion included eight teachers. In brief, one English teacher from Alamura Secondary and Preparatory School, one from Aleta Wondo Secondary and Preparatory School, and one from Aleta Hidase Secondary and Preparatory School took part in the individual narrative interview. Similarly, three teachers from Tabor Secondary and Preparatory School and two from Yirgalem Secondary and Preparatory School participated in the individual narrative interviews. Four EFL teachers from Tabor Secondary and Preparatory School and four from Yirgalem Secondary and Preparatory School participated in the FGD. The following table shows the profile of the participants.

Table1: The profile of the participants

No	Participant's Code	Gender	Qualification	Teaching experience in years	Names of the High school
1	T1	Male	M.A	37	Alamura
2	T2	Male	M.A	18	Tabor
3	T3	Male	M.A	22	Tabor
4	T4	Female	M.A	25	Tabor
5	T5	Male	M.A	35	Yirgalem
6	T6	Male	B.A	39	Yirgalem
7	T7	Male	B.A	39	Aleta Wendo
8	T8	Male	B.A	30	Aleta Hidase
9	FGD1T1	Male	M.A	26	Tabor
10	FGD1T2	Male	B.ED	20	Tabor
11	FGD1T3	Male	M.A	18	Tabor
12	FGD1T4	Male	M.A	9	Tabor
13	FGD2T1	Male	M.A	16	Yirgalem
14	FGD2T2	Male	B.A	19	Yirgalem
15	FGD2T3	Male	B.A	14	Yirgalem
16	FGD2T4	Female	M.A	10	Yirgalem

Key

T1_Teacher one, T2_Teacher two

FGD1T1_Focus group discussion one teacher one, FGD2T1_Focus group discussion two teacher one, and so on.

3.3 Instruments

Interview. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect professional stories from EFL teachers. In this regard, three general interview guide questions geared toward the formation of EFL teachers' identities and the types of professional identities they claim were prepared. The interview was finally conducted face-to-face in English using an audio recorder. During the interview, the researchers followed the natural flow of the conversation and added probing questions as needed. The length of the individual interviews generally ranged from 29 minutes to 50 minutes.

Focus Group Discussion. The main intent of focus group discussion according to Al Zadjali (2017) is to enable a researcher to discover teachers' shared beliefs, understandings, and views, gain new insights, facilitate participants in listening to the views of others, and therefore rethink of their own views and experiences. In this study, the participants of the FGD have got a chance to discuss how their professional identity formation takes place. Three general semi-structured interview (discussion) questions were designed and conducted with the selected FGD members. During the discussion, the researchers acted as facilitators mainly asking major and probing questions. The assistant data collector audio recorded the responses of the participants and the researchers as well. The FGD was conducted in English and the length ranged from 1:10 to 1:26 hours.

3.4 Procedures

The researchers communicated the purpose of the study with Sidama Region and Hawassa city education bureau officers to obtain permission to collect data from the selected secondary schools. The selected school sites were then visited, and information about the study's purpose was shared. The objectives of the study were made known to the school principals and English language Department heads at each school. The researchers then visited the sampled schools several times to collect data, which Dörnyei (2007) refers to as "iteration." This is the cyclical process of switching between data collection and analysis. As a result, individual narrative interview and FGD data were collected simultaneously after the participants provided informed verbal consent.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

First and foremost, all interviews and focus group data were transcribed verbatim, including pauses, slips of the tongue, and grammatical errors. The data was not edited to preserve the authenticity of the participants' perspectives. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative data can be analysed in three steps: open, axial, and selective coding. The researchers segmented the data into different categories and coded them accordingly during these steps. In this regard, Charmaz (2006) suggests that coding can be done either word-by-word or line-by-line. In this study, line-by-line and word-by-word coding were used. As Gallicano (2013) emphasizes, during open coding, the textual data is read several times and tentative labels are assigned to chunks of data. As a result, open coding was carried out in this study by combining the established properties of each code and the properties of examples of each participant's words. The relationship between the open codes was determined during axial coding. Meanwhile, Gallicano (2013) claims that core variables, which include all of the data, were identified through selective coding. Finally, axial codes and selective codes for the research questions were developed based on the open codes.

In the present study computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) Nvivo version 10 was used. This software helped the researchers to code the interview and focus discussion data in the form of free and tree nodes. Free node could be parallel with open (initial) coding whereas tree node as axial coding. Nvivo 10 was used to supplement the open coding procedures and it was primarily used in this study to create models and to visualise the data presentation.

In sum, the findings were analysed without stating any names of the participants; rather, their names were changed to codes such as teacher one (T1), teacher two (T2), focus group discussion one teacher one (FGD1T1), and focus group discussion two teacher one (FGD2T1) etc. In qualitative types of studies, finding consistent results and stable data is a puzzle since there are multiple realities in different settings of the study. In this study, efforts were made to carefully set out the research questions and to review the literature meticulously in line with the purpose of the study to ensure the dependability of the data. Similarly, to ensure the possible transferability of the study, the researchers tried to provide information about the participants of the study and the research setting.

4. Results

This section presents the findings of the study in the following manner.

4.1 The Formation of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity

There is no universal agreement on when and how EFL teachers' professional identities are formed. It is understood that the formation is slow and gradual. Several constituents are involved in the professional formation process. In this regard, the participants of the study represented a diverse range of perspectives. According to FGD2T1, becoming an EFL teacher is a gradual process. T2's professional identity formation began in primary school, when he developed an interest in learning and speaking English in various situations, such as discussing the HIV/AIDS issue. T3, on the other hand, stated that the formation of his identity began in high school. The desire to learn English began when he was in high school and grew as he completed his high school education.

T7 provided detailed narratives about the formation of identity. He stated that exposure to native speakers plays an important role in the development of professional identity. He also stated that attending mission school education and obtaining resources from native teachers were critical components in the development of identity. T7 demonstrates this idea as follows:

I started learning English in this high school when it was the primary school of SIM (Sudan Interior Mission) the school of Sudan interior mission there were Americans some teachers were Americans. They taught us English and they were missionaries. They taught us from grade five up to eight and I learned they taught us different vocabularies and they gave us different booklets for free. At that time I didn't feel like English but I've good command of English and I get some skills from them. And I never feared communicating with anybody and this helped to build my confidence. The teachers who taught me were very proud at the elementary level they were well-educated people who tried to help us to get the message. I started to think about why I don't start to help my students like this when I teach I try to help my students how to communicate in English (T7).

T2's interest in learning English was sparked by interactions with tourists and assisting them in making a purchase and this was regarded as a stepping stone in the formation of identity. Similarly, T2 in FGD2T2 also explained that he was enrolled in university and found a model teacher who was a fluent English speaker. Thus, this shows that being taught at the college and university levels by well-known and fluent speakers benefits the current fluency and identity of FGD2T2. The formation of T5's and FGD2T2's identities was aided by advice from college and university instructors about teaching English through English and focusing on practicing speaking skills on a daily basis. Furthermore, practicing the language skills without fear on a daily basis contributes significantly to the formation of identity. T6 expressed: "Through reading, following media, writing paragraphs and speaking English without fear or afraid but if you are afraid to speak English it isn't interesting".

Considering oneself as teachers a teacher of English language is a fundamental one for identity formation. Thus, T1 expressed: "I think I form myself and the identity of this subject by being and by seeing myself as I an English teacher I tried to form myself in that way or direction". FGD1T3 developed his professional identity and sense of self as an English teacher the moment he started teaching. When FGD2T1 began his first class, he felt and acted like an EFL teacher. Furthermore, when participants of the study were asked to describe the formation of their professional identity, they reflected on various interplaying variables. For example, celebrating English day, coaching new teachers, collegial discussions, and sharing experiences, all aid in the formation of identity. In relation to this, T1 stated: "We design that is one day that is English day every teachers and student must communicate in English specially Friday starting from good morning greeting each other and different simple communications".

The extract above implies that the celebration of English day and the making of English a mandatory activity on the selected day had played great roles in shaping their identities. Coaching the novice teacher

and bringing that teacher into the English teaching community is critical in shaping one's identity. Regarding this, the following are words of T1:

This year we've one fresh teacher without even PGDT and I'm in problem with shaping him because he is just doesn't know what teaching mean including the subject matter. They say he is simply an English teacher they send him to our school we tried to shape him.

Similarly, FGD1T4 explained that socializing with department staff shapes the formation of identity. He stated that the staff is very smart, sociable, and optimistic. Most of the time, the staff learns new things from one another, which helps in the development of our professional identity. Equally, T1 explained that discussions during CPD (continuous professional development) guide the advancement of one's profession. During the CPD, the teachers discuss where they are from and what their problems or limitations are in English. Thus, interacting with staff members and discussing on CPD issues becomes a part of one's professional identity. Formal and informal discussions, lessons from the internet, books, and listening to English news and audios play major roles in the formation of identity. FGD1T4 narrated these in the following way:

Ok professional identity can be built from experience throughout the experiences you can developed your profession uh and the learning that can be informal and formal but most of the time formal one as my knowledge is concerned the informal learning is very important. Learning from the internet learning from the books learning from the other person that can be the natives or others and or listening to the audios listening to the news and other things are very important to develop the profession.

The FGD1T1 narrative clearly demonstrates that the formation of professional identity is a day-to-day activity facilitated by role model teachers. In the same way, T6 expressed the formation of his identity as a day-to-day activity. He said, "My current professional identity is developed from the day-to-day activity of the subject."

Professional identity is also formed when one starts the actual teaching learning activities and feels the sense of being an English teacher. Concerning this, T4 narrated:

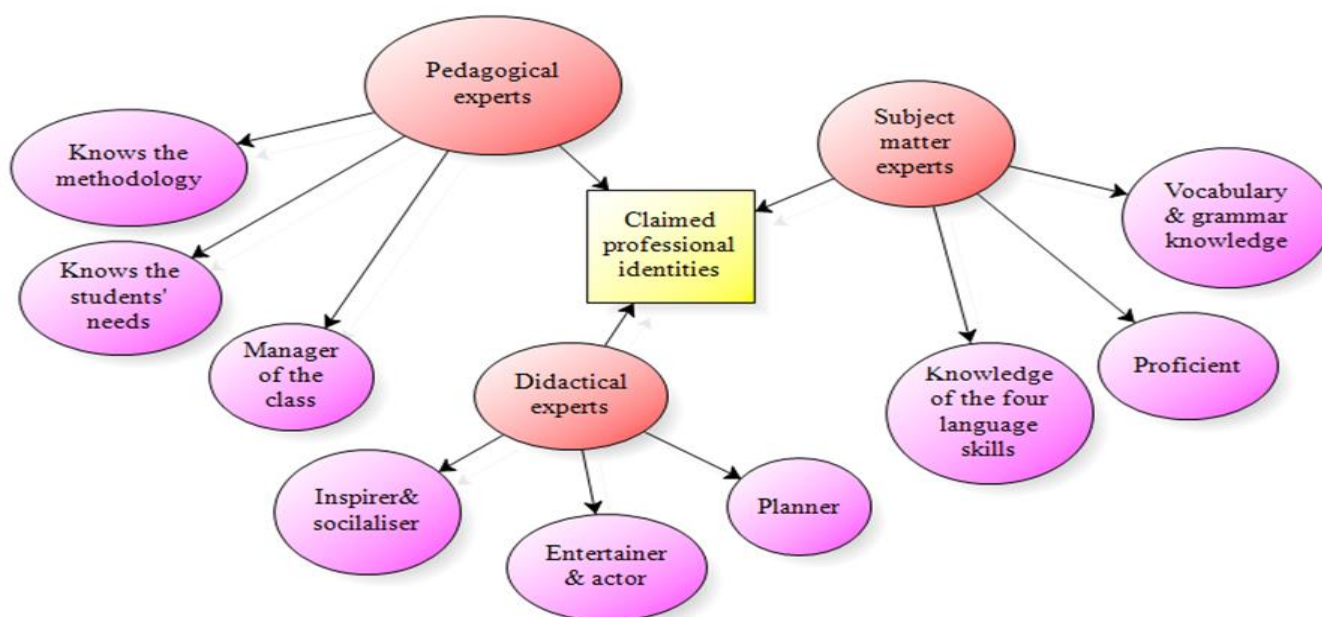
As I told you it started in 1993 E.C. just I considered myself that I'm an English teacher I acted as an English teacher then that 1993 E.C. is the year I started teaching English. The training I got helped me very much that is why I can say I'm good in that area (T4).

In sum, the professional identity formation of EFL teachers is diverse and supported by a variety of variables. As a result, identity formation is a multifaceted and an on-going process.

4.2 Types of Professional Identity EFL Teachers Claim

People may not be able to see EFL teachers' professional identities, but EFL teachers' professional identities can be inferred from their (teachers') narratives. Teachers are hesitant to reveal their professional identity to others in the most obvious cases. Determining what types of professional identities EFL teachers claim or possess as English language teachers remains a difficult task in this regard. However, the participants in this study articulated their claimed professional identities in their narratives as follows.

Teachers narrated various types of professional identities peculiar to English language teachers in a variety of ways in the model below. However, because the constructs are interconnected, categorising those lists into different aspects of claimed professional identity is a difficult task. Nonetheless, the following model summarises the claimed professional identities of EFL teachers based on the results of the present study.



Model1: EFL Teachers claimed professional identities

Subject matter experts. Knowledge of the subject matter is the first identity expressed by T4. She narrates: "He must have good language performance; he has to have knowledge of the subject matter." Further, T1 states that the person who knows all areas of English courses is the one considered to be the subject matter expert. FGD1T2 narrated, "Ok, when we're talking about English teachers and what I'm working on and the knowledge of teaching, which is the place for the students and the subject matter." Hence, knowledge of the subject matter is seen as important constituents of subject matter expertise.

Furthermore, an English teacher with expert knowledge of the four language skills is regarded as a given teacher's claimed identity. T1 exemplified this as follows: "An English teacher is a teacher who teaches the students as he must know all English uh areas of courses such as those four skills and also other English languages parts such as vocabulary and grammar".

Adequate knowledge of the four language skills is a necessary component of the teacher's claimed identity. T4 demonstrated how better English performance and subject matter knowledge can be seen as concrete examples of claimed professional identity.

Pedagogical expert. T7 asserted that a teacher is considered a pedagogical expert if he/she teaches English correctly and knows how to teach language skills correctly. Similarly, T2 emphasizes the importance of understanding the students' needs. T2's narrations also demonstrated this as "you've got to know what the students need and what my students need; the first thing a teacher must ask."

When asked about his professional identity, FGD1T1 stated that he considers himself as a manager and facilitator of his classes. is the class's manager and director. He stated:

I reflect the kind of direct person to show the ways to my students not telling all the information I'm not a teacher; by the way, I'm the director of the class to show the way how the students can develop themselves. We can't teach all things in the classroom why because of the limitation of time and so many things. Then we're doing that we direct how they can get the knowledge so I expect myself a director of the class.

Further, FGD2T1 emphasised that knowledge of the students' background is the one construct of a pedagogical expert.

Approaching the students in a friendly manner and acting as a facilitator is the type of identity T5 claims. He narrates, "When I enter the class, most of the time I act as a facilitator, and I try to approach my students as friends, and most of the time I try to make the teaching-learning process more active and I give more time to students to participate."

The importance of a stress-free classroom environment for English teaching and learning was emphasized in FGD1T4. As a result, he makes an effort to make the class enjoyable and stress-free.

Didactical expert. The didactical expert, as one construct of teachers' professional identities, focuses on the planning, execution, and evaluation of teaching and learning processes. It discusses teachers' roles and responsibilities, as well as moral, emotional, and ethical issues in the classroom. It also includes some specific teacher characteristics, such as personality traits. Because of their close relationship, the lists of claimed professional identities included under didactical experts and pedagogical experts overlap.

T2's professional identities include socializing, cooperating, and being friendly. Having these types of identities is critical when teaching English as a foreign language. Being approachable in the classroom allows students to learn without feeling intimidated. T2's expressions demonstrate this as:

Should be socializer it should be like that he has to be friendly if you're not friendly they will not understand you so you should be friendly they will talk to you in English without fear so a teacher an English teacher should be friendly and he should allow and give chance to students to speak and to try to do different kind of things in English whenever when he meet them and even. An English teacher should be cooperative he/she has to be hum sociable and again friendly.

In the same way, T5 mentioned that being an entertainer and being a caretaker help the teachers present new language concepts. T5 reflected, "Sometimes we act like entertainers and sometimes there are so many concepts that seem new that we act like caretakers and so on." We English teachers do so many multifunction."

T1 and T3 indicated that acting as an English teacher and considering oneself as an English language professional can be seen as claimed professional identities. T1 explained himself by saying, "I think I try to act as an English teacher to make or to put myself as an English teacher."

The narratives of the above teachers reveal various types of claimed professional identities of EFL teachers. Subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts are all included in this category.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study suggest that professional identity formation in EFL teachers occurs gradually and in multiple dimensions. This is what Flores and Day (2006) mean when they say that teachers' identity formation is a long, complex, and multidimensional process, similar to how one grows to be a teacher. Several factors mediate the construction of identity. Exposure to native speakers and inspiration from role model teachers strengthens the formation. The finding also indicates that university courses also play an important role in the formation of teachers' identities. This finding is consistent with Yuan and Lee (2015), who found that pre-service students' participation in university coursework and teaching practicum facilitates identity construction. This implies that early engagement of EFL teachers in various English courses during teacher training programs can shape their identities. Furthermore, Yazan's (2018b) contribution has implications for this study in that coursework and internship experiences enhance identity formation. The discovery also suggests that identity formation occurs when EFL teachers enrol in universities. This finding is similar to Eggen (2004), who discovered that becoming a teacher and forming one's identity as a teacher can begin during teacher education or even before.

The teachers' narratives in this study showed how collegial discussion and the day-to-day activities of teaching English shape identity formation. Institutional regulations such as requiring teachers to use English in the school compound, serve as a mandatory trigger for identity formation. Working together, celebrating English Day, mentoring new teachers, and sharing experiences are all important components of professional identity formation in a community of practice (CoP). A CoP is an essential aspect of a language teacher's identity. These communities, as reported by Wenger (1998), define their work in the field, such as teachers at the school where they teach, teachers in other schools and communities in other parts of the country or world, or other professionals in any of these contexts. Thus, communities of practice are the key facilitators of the development of identity. The findings of this study also show that participating in various forms of continuous professional development (CPD) improves identity development. This finding is consistent with Teeters, Alvarez, McKimmy, and Dimidjian (2021) where various professional development courses offered to teachers in Mexico City public schools facilitate identity formation.

As mentioned earlier in this article, determining the types of professional identities EFL teachers claim as high school English teachers is a difficult task. However, the teachers' narratives show that they have various types of claimed professional identities. Subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts are some of these. Teachers have claimed professional identities such as manager, inspirer, socialiser, entertainer, and actor. EFL teachers also have claimed professional identities as experts in four language skills, ELT methodologies, grammar, and vocabulary. These lists of claimed professional identities are similar to Farrell's (2011) findings on the role identities of ESL teachers. The findings of current study differ from those of Farrell's in that he investigated the identities of ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers in Canada in terms of professional role identity when communicating in regular group meetings. The findings of this study agree with those of Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermont (2000). These authors emphasized that a teacher's professional identity includes being a subject matter expert as well as a didactic and pedagogical expert. Their findings, however, did not reveal whether these identity constituents are claimed or assigned. As a result, the lists of claimed professional identities identified in the current study, such as teachers as inspirers, socialisers, entertainers, and actors, appear to be new contributions to the professional identity study of EFL teachers.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The process of forming an EFL teacher's professional identity is lengthy and parallels to the growth of the teacher himself/herself. As a result, EFL teachers' professional identities are formed through exposure to various ELT trainings and ELT communities. Actual classroom teaching activities, institutional regulations, and the community of practice (CoP), such as doing in collaboration, celebrating English Day, and collegial discussion, all contribute to the development of a professional identity. Meanwhile, EFL teachers claim a variety of professional identities, including subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts. It has been recommended that EFL teachers are encouraged to ask themselves questions such as, "How do they define themselves professionally?" How did they end up teaching English? Who do they want to be? What impression do they make on others? Finally, teacher training programs should include professional identity development for EFL teachers as a key component of teacher training. In conclusion, this study calls for closer attention to EFL teachers' claimed professional identities, as well as their identity formation processes to better understand what it means to be EFL teachers in the secondary schools in Ethiopia at large.

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1. Achame Haile: Collection of data, transcription of the interview data, interpretation of the data, and production of the manuscript was done by Achame Haile.
2. Hailom Banteyerga: Supervised the PhD project and commented on the draft and final versions of the manuscript.

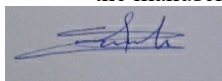
Author details:

¹PhD ELT Candidate, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Corresponding Author Email: achuhaile@gmail.com; Mob. +251913297419; P.O.Box.1176; Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

²PhD in TEFL, Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia .E-mail: hailombante@yahoo.com

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