



From Webinar Participant to EFL Lecturer: Identity Construction through Pedagogy, AI, and Research

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Received: 23 June 2026 Revised: 20 August 2026 Accepted: 7 September 2026

Abstrak

Identitas profesional telah banyak dikaji dalam pendidikan guru bahasa, tetapi masih sedikit penelitian yang menjelaskan bagaimana partisipasi berkelanjutan dalam ekosistem webinar mengintegrasikan pembelajaran pedagogis, literasi kecerdasan buatan, dan keterlibatan penelitian selama peralihan dari mahasiswa magister menjadi dosen. Penelitian naratif ini mengeksplorasi kontribusi pengembangan profesional berbasis webinar terhadap konstruksi identitas profesional Nada (nama samaran), seorang dosen EFL Indonesia yang mulai mengikuti webinar sebagai mahasiswa magister pada tahun 2020. Data dikumpulkan melalui tiga wawancara naratif mendalam dan dokumen pendukung, kemudian dianalisis dengan analisis naratif tematik. Temuan menunjukkan lintasan identitas yang bersifat kumulatif. Pertama, partisipasi mandiri dalam webinar berkembang dari kebutuhan penyelesaian tesis menjadi pembelajaran berkelanjutan, jejaring, dan sosialisasi akademik. Kedua, paparan terhadap komunitas pengembangan dosen dan penelitian memungkinkan Nadamengantisipasi tanggung jawab akademik dan memosisikan dirinya dari seorang peserta menjadi seorang dosen. Ketiga, pembelajaran pedagogis, literasi AI, dan keterlibatan penelitian menjadi sumber identitas yang saling menguatkan, yang tampak pada pengajaran daring yang lebih ringkas, meningkatnya kepercayaan diri dalam menyiapkan bahan ajar berbantuan AI, aktivitas publikasi, dan perolehan hibah penelitian dosen pemula yang kompetitif. Studi ini menawarkan kontribusi orisinal berupa penjelasan temporal tentang webinar sebagai komunitas praktik digital tempat pembelajaran profesional, gambaran diri masa depan, dan pengakuan akademik secara bersama-sama mendukung negosiasi identitas. Temuan ini menegaskan nilai pengembangan berbasis webinar untuk mempersiapkan pendidik EFL menjalankan peran pengajaran, teknologi, dan penelitian secara terpadu.

Kata Kunci: dosen EFL, kecerdasan buatan, konstruksi identitas profesional, pengembangan profesional berbasis webinar, penyelidikan naratif.

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Abstract

Professional identity has been widely examined in language teacher education, yet little is known about how sustained participation in webinar ecosystems integrates pedagogical learning, artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, and research engagement during the transition from master's student to lecturer. This narrative inquiry explored how webinar-based professional development contributed to the professional identity construction of Nada (pseudonym), an Indonesian EFL lecturer who began attending webinars as a master's student in 2020. Data were collected through three in-depth narrative interviews and supporting documents and were analyzed using thematic narrative analysis. The findings show a cumulative identity trajectory. First, self-directed webinar participation expanded from thesis-related learning into sustained professional learning, networking, and academic socialization. Second, exposure to lecturer-development and research communities enabled Nada to



anticipate academic responsibilities and reposition herself from a participant to a lecturer. Third, pedagogical learning, AI literacy, and research engagement became mutually reinforcing identity resources, reflected in more concise online teaching, greater confidence in AI-assisted material preparation, publication activity, and the acquisition of a competitive early-career research grant. The study offers an original temporal account of webinars as digital communities of practice in which professional learning, possible future selves, and academic recognition jointly support identity negotiation. It highlights the value of webinar-based development for preparing EFL educators for integrated teaching, technological, and research roles.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; EFL lecturer; narrative inquiry, professional identity construction; webinar-based professional development.*

How to cite: Kurtianti, E. (2026). From Webinar Participant to EFL Lecturer: Identity Construction through Pedagogy, AI, and Research. *Journal of Nusantara Education*, 6(1), 28-38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57176/r2thtg95>

Introduction

Teacher professional identity is a key focus of language teacher education, as it shapes teachers' self-perception, their performance of professional roles, and their reactions to educational change (Beijaard et al., 2004; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Contemporary views of identity as dynamic, multiple, and socially negotiated in the interplay between individual beliefs, professional experiences, institutional expectations, and participation in professional communities (Barkhuizen, 2017; Wenger, 1998). Professional identity is especially relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where teachers are constantly negotiating multiple roles as language teachers, technology users, curriculum developers, researchers, and lifelong learners (Kayi-Aydar, 2019).

The digitalization of education has been rapid, and has changed the professional development of teachers (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Philipsen et al., 2019; Trust et al., 2016). Workshops, seminars, conferences, and other face-to-face learning opportunities are increasingly complemented by webinars, virtual conferences, online communities, and social networking platforms.

These opportunities allow educators to engage in professional development beyond institutional and geographical boundaries, forming the basis of knowledge exchange, collaboration, and networking in different contexts (Trust et al., 2016). Online professional development promotes teacher agency,

pedagogical competence, self-efficacy, and professional engagement through flexible opportunities for continuous learning and engagement with larger professional networks (Philipsen et al., 2019).

Webinars have become a sustainable and viable platform, among various forms of professional development. The widespread use of these tools during and after the COVID-19 pandemic pointed to their capacity to promote professional learning, networking, and academic engagement (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; König et al., 2020). Webinars offer EFL educators, the opportunity to update their pedagogical knowledge, interact with new technologies, and join academic communities that go beyond local institutional settings. Concurrently, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has changed educational practices.

Generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and other AIs are being increasingly utilized in teaching, assessment, the development of materials, and research. Hence, following ethical and pedagogical principles, educators are responsible for developing their skills to support AI literacy and to critically judge the potential of these technologies to enhance learning (Kasneci et al., 2023; Luckin, 2018; Tlili et al., 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In addition, lecturers are expected to publish scholarly works, conduct research and assist in the creation of knowledge within higher education. Therefore, academic identities are increasingly composed of

pedagogical competence, technological competence, and research engagement (Borg, 2013; Tao & Gao, 2017; Yuan & Burns, 2017).

Although substantial research has examined teacher identity, online professional development, AI integration, and researcher identity, these areas have largely been investigated separately. Previous studies have explored teacher identity development in formal teacher education programs, online professional learning communities, and AI-related professional development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Izadinia, 2013; Trust et al., 2016). However, little is known about how sustained participation in webinar ecosystems shapes the long-term identity trajectories of EFL educators who later become lecturers and researchers. Existing studies tend to emphasize short-term professional development outcomes rather than the longitudinal process of identity transformation that occurs through continuous engagement in webinar communities (Avalos, 2011; Kennedy, 2016).

Moreover, there is a paucity of research on the interactions of pedagogical development, AI literacy, and research engagement in shaping professional identity. However, in modern academic careers, these areas are coming closer together, with teachers required to be good teachers, to embrace new technologies, and to participate in knowledge creation. As such, it is important to understand how these dimensions interact to impact identity development.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring the role of webinar-based professional development in EFL pedagogy, artificial intelligence, and research in an EFL lecturer's identity construction. The study is grounded in Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998), Teacher Professional Identity Theory (Beijaard et al., 2004) and Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986). It explores how continued participation in webinar communities can promote professional learning and identity change. Specifically, this study focuses on the following research questions: (1) How does an EFL teacher construct her professional identity through participating in webinars on EFL pedagogy, AI, and research? (2) What is the transformation of a webinar participant into an EFL lecturer and how does it happen through webinar-based professional development? (3) What is the impact of pedagogical learning, AI literacy development,

and research engagement on the development of lecturer and researcher identities?

This study contributes to the literature on teacher identity, webinar-based professional development, and AI-enhanced language education by providing a longitudinal account of how participation in webinar communities supports professional transformation. The findings are expected to inform the design of sustainable professional development initiatives that support the holistic development of EFL educators in the digital era.

Professional development is recognized as a major vehicle for educators to develop and reconstruct their professional identities. It not only improves teachers' knowledge and skills, but also their beliefs, values, professional agency and self-understanding (Day & Sachs, 2004). Professional learning provides educators with new ideas, practices and expectations that may alter their perception of themselves and their professional roles. Professional identity is not a fixed quality, but a dynamic process which is continuously negotiated through learning and experience (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004).

Across the literature, relevant professional learning is consistently reported to be associated with higher self-efficacy, greater instructional competence, stronger professional commitment, and enhanced teacher agency (Avalos, 2011; Kennedy, 2016). More importantly, professional learning experiences may influence how educators position themselves in their professional communities and how they imagine future professional possibilities (Jiang & Zhang, 2021). In this way professional development becomes not simply a way of improving practice, but also a place where professional identities are constructed, questioned and re-construct.

Recent study also suggests that identity development is closely connected to educators' investment in professional learning opportunities (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Teachers who participate actively in professional development often connect that participation to desired future identities and career goals. Therefore, professional learning has developmental and identity-building functions.

The increasing availability of digital learning environments has transformed professional development by creating new opportunities for participation, collaboration, and networking. Among these environments, webinars have become important spaces for

professional learning because they provide access to expertise, scholarly discussions, and professional communities regardless of geographical location. Research on online professional learning communities indicates that participation in digitally mediated learning environments promotes reflective practice, collaborative knowledge construction, and professional growth (Trust et al., 2016).

For EFL educators, webinar participation can be particularly significant because it facilitates engagement with emerging pedagogical approaches, technological innovations, and academic research. Such experiences can support the development of professional agency and encourage educators to assume more active roles within professional communities. Ozer and Popp (2022) argue that continuous professional development contributes not only to instructional improvement but also to the development of positive professional cultures and identities. Similarly, Xu (2025) found that participation in professional learning programs can lead to identity transformation by strengthening teachers' agency and professional confidence.

Contemporary professional learning increasingly includes AI literacy in addition to pedagogical development. As AI technologies are being more and more incorporated into educational practice, teachers are expected to evaluate, adapt and integrate these tools responsibly and effectively (Kasneci et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). The ability to use AI is thus becoming an important dimension of teacher professionalism. Recent scholarship suggests that educators' professional roles and identities have to be renegotiated to adapt to technological change (Li & Xu, 2023). In addition to being providers of knowledge, teachers are increasingly expected to become facilitators, critical users of technology and designers of innovative learning experiences.

A second important aspect of academic professionalism is doing research. In higher education, lecturers are expected to contribute to the production of knowledge through research, publications, scholarly collaboration and engagement with the community. Consequently, many educators transition from teaching-focused to integrated lecturer-researcher identities (Borg, 2013). Research identity is built through engaging in scholarly activities and participating in research communities, which enables educators to change from being consumers of

knowledge to producers of knowledge (Yuan & Burns, 2017).

Previous studies have identified the importance of involvement in the research community in developing researcher identity (Wang & He, 2022). Similarly, Rachmajanti et al. (2021), concluded that autonomous professional learning improves the EFL teachers' professional identity and encourages continuous growth. The findings indicate that professional development activities that target research methodology, academic writing, publication and scholarly networking may play a critical role in shaping lecturer and researcher identities.

The overall literature points toward a growing intertwining of pedagogical learning, AI literacy and research engagement as aspects of professional identity development. However, there is a paucity of research on the interplay of these dimensions in the case of webinar-based professional learning environments and their contribution to long-term identity transformation among EFL educators.

The study is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives which are Communities of Practice Theory, Teacher Professional Identity Theory, and Possible Selves Theory.

The main theoretical perspective from which the development of learning and identity through participation in professional communities is understood is the Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998). He says that identity is formed through participation in shared practices, and newcomers move from peripheral participation to more central forms of engagement. In the present study, webinars are theorized as digital communities of practice that offer EFL educators the chance to engage with experts and peers, exchange knowledge and develop their professional identities.

The Teacher Professional Identity Theory concerns the fluidity and change in professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). In this sense, identity is constructed through the interaction of personal experiences, contextual factors and professional learning opportunities. Therefore, taking part in the webinars may stimulate educators to challenge their assumptions of teaching, technology, research and professional practice and to negotiate and reconstruct their identities on an ongoing basis.

The third theoretical perspective is Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) that accounts for the impact of future-oriented

aspirations on professional development. People are driven by visions of who they want to be, and these imagined future selves shape decisions about learning and careers. Exposure to successful lecturers, researchers, and educational innovators may enhance the aspirations of the participants to pursue career and professional development in academia.

Together, these theories provide a multidimensional explanation of identity construction. Communities of Practice Theory highlights the social processes of learning and participation, Teacher Professional Identity Theory explains how identities are negotiated and reconstructed, and Possible Selves Theory accounts for the motivational forces that drive professional transformation. Drawing on these perspectives, this study conceptualizes webinar participation as a professional learning ecosystem through which pedagogical development, AI literacy, and research engagement contribute to the construction of lecturer and researcher identities.

Method

Research Design

The professional identity construction of an EFL lecturer was investigated in this study through long-term involvement in webinar-based professional development using a narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry was selected because it enables researchers to study how people make meaning of their experiences and identities through stories over time (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The study traced the participant's trajectory from a participant of a webinar to an EFL teacher and explored the roles of pedagogical learning, AI literacy, and research participation in shaping her professional identity.

Participant

The participant was purposively recruited as her experiences were closely aligned with the focus of the study. The participant is referred to as Nada to maintain confidentiality. While pursuing a master's degree in English Education, she attended webinars in 2020. Upon graduation, she was hired as a research assistant by her co-supervisor, an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lecturer at a State Islamic University in Indonesia, before taking up a lecturer position at a private university, where she has been teaching for two semesters. A single-participant design was selected to obtain an information-rich, temporally detailed account of identity

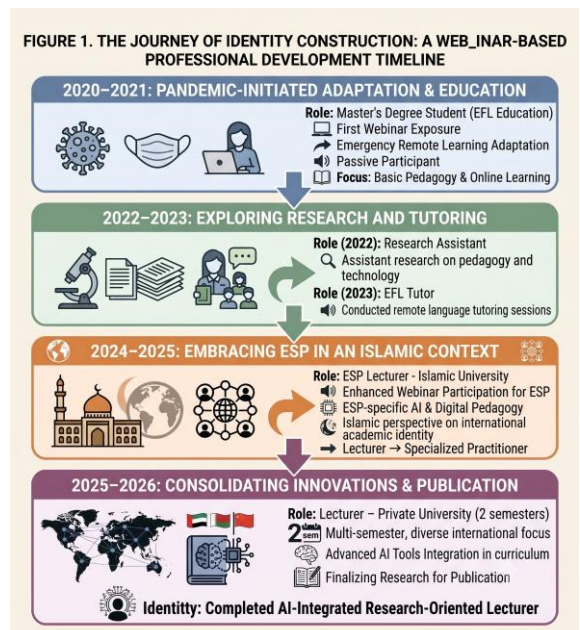
construction rather than to pursue statistical representativeness. Nada met the case-selection criteria because her sustained webinar participation spanned several career stages: master's student, research assistant, ESP lecturer, and university lecturer, and directly connected the three focal domains of pedagogy, AI, and research.

Throughout this period, Nada consistently engaged in webinars related to English language teaching, educational technology, AI, research methodology, academic writing, and lecturer development. Her sustained participation over several years provided a rich context for examining professional identity development.

Figure 1 shows a timeline of Nada's professional career from her time as a master's student to a lecturer.

Figure 1.

The Journey of Identity Construction: A Webinar-Based Professional Development Timeline



As illustrated in Figure 1, Nada's professional identity evolved from that of a master's student during the COVID-19 pandemic to a research assistant, an ESP lecturer and subsequently a private university lecturer who integrates AI and research-oriented practices into her professional work.

Data Collection

Data were collected in May 2026 using three rounds of semi-structured narrative interviews and supporting documents. Narrative interviews were conducted to encourage the

participant to narrate significant experiences and to reflect on their impact on her professional development (Barkhuizen et al., 2014).

The interviews addressed experiences of participation in webinars, teaching practices, development of AI literacy, research engagement and career transitions. Narrative reflection was facilitated with open-ended questions, such as “Can you tell me about your experience of joining webinars?” and “How has this experience affected your professional development as a lecturer?” Interviews were conducted online and lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with consent.

To support the interview data, documentary evidence was gathered such as webinar certificates, participation records, professional portfolios, presentation materials, and research-related achievements. These documents were used to contextualize and support the participant’s narratives. Specifically, the documents were used to establish the chronology of webinar participation and career transitions, corroborate narrated events such as attendance and research achievements, and enrich the interpretation of how particular experiences acquired professional meaning. They were used as contextual and corroborative evidence rather than as stand-alone outcome measures.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). Analysis proceeded iteratively, while preserving the temporal organization of Nada’s account. First, each interview transcript was read repeatedly and summarized as a chronological narrative covering the period from 2020 to 2026. Second, meaning units related to webinar participation, pedagogical learning, AI literacy, research engagement, professional agency, and identity change were assigned descriptive codes.

Third, codes were compared across the three interview rounds and the supporting documents to identify convergence, elaboration, and development over time. Fourth, related codes were consolidated into candidate themes and reviewed against the complete narrative for internal coherence, distinctiveness, and consistency with the participant’s career trajectory. Finally, the themes were developed and named according to the principles of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2021).

The process produced three related themes that addressed both the recurring patterns and the chronological development of Nada’s professional identity.

The themes were discussed through Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998), Teacher Professional Identity Theory (Beijaard et al., 2004), and Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, data triangulation, and reflexive memoing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member check was done with the participant on the interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations. Triangulation was achieved by using interviews and documentary evidence. Reflective memos were kept throughout the research process to record analytical decisions and improve transparency.

Ethical Considerations

Data collection was preceded by informed consent from the participant. She was informed about the purpose of the study, procedures, confidentiality measures and her right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. All identifying information was removed to preserve anonymity, and the pseudonym Nada is used throughout the study.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented chronologically to show how Nada’s identity developed from master’s student to research assistant, ESP lecturer, and AI-informed, research-engaged EFL lecturer. Three interrelated themes explain this trajectory: participation in webinar communities, anticipatory movement from participant to lecturer, and the consolidation of pedagogical, technological, and researcher identities.

Professional Identity Construction Through Participation in Webinar Communities

Nada began to construct her professional identity during the COVID-19 pandemic while she was pursuing a master’s degree in English Education. At first, she went to webinars for practical academic reasons, not professional ones. As she explained:

“I went to webinars because I wanted to get my thesis done faster. “During COVID-19 we could not meet lecturers directly, so webinars became a way to

learn research methodology and get information related to my thesis.”

Webinars were a learning strategy that emerged as a response to the lack of access to academic supervision, but what started as a necessity evolved into a continued practice of professional learning. After attending a faculty webinar on research methodology, Nada became much more aware of the many webinar opportunities that were shared by her lecturers. Consequently, she participated in webinars on research methodology, academic writing, lecturer development, research fellowships, doctoral scholarships, and AI in language education.

Viewed through Communities of Practice Theory, Nada’s webinar participation represented movement from peripheral access toward more consequential professional participation. Because the webinars were voluntary and distributed across institutions, they functioned as porous digital communities rather than a single bounded community. Repeated access to experts, peers, scholarly language, and academic practices gradually made participation in academia imaginable and legitimate (Wenger, 1998).

This trajectory also reflects the fluid and dialogical nature of teacher identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004). Nada did not switch from one identity to the other but accumulated and swapped identities as graduate student, research assistant, ESP lecturer, university lecturer and emerging researcher.

Her continued participation can also be understood as investment in a desired future self (Darvin & Norton, 2015). What began as a strategy for completing a thesis became sustained access to the academic world she hoped to enter.

The finding broadens research on professional learning communities by indicating that identity work may begin prior to formal entry into the profession. This case illustrates how informal engagement with webinars allowed a future lecturer to envisage, practice and gradually enact professional membership, in comparison to research on teachers working “in the field” or identity development through practicum (Ardi et al., 2023; Trust et al., 2016).

Webinar-Based Professional Development as a Pathway from Participant to Lecturer

The second theme relates to how the participation in the webinar assisted Nada to move from participant to lecturer. What was also noticeable in her story was that she deliberately

attended webinars about lecturer professionalism before becoming a lecturer.

“I attended webinars about lecturer development even though I was not a lecturer yet because I wanted to anticipate on the responsibilities that lecturers have.”

The excerpt reveals anticipatory identity work: Nada made a point of finding out about the academic workload before she took the lecturer’s job. Her engagement in webinars on lecturer development, research fellowships, doctoral scholarships and publication strategies was thus not incidental, but an intentional preparation for an academic career.

This orientation is explained by the Possible Selves Theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Lecturers, researchers and academic leaders provided credible images of the person Nada could become, connecting future aspiration with present learning choices and career action.

Post-graduation, anticipatory learning blended with concrete opportunities: Nada worked as a research assistant, met webinar speakers face-to-face, taught ESP part-time, and eventually joined a private university. These experiences turned imagined membership into participation and reinforced her sense of belonging to academic communities.

Becoming a lecturer was therefore not merely a job outcome but the culmination of sustained learning, networking, and identity preparation.

This pattern supports the view of teacher learning as identity change: professional learning reshaped Nada’s self-perception, agency, and career trajectory (Jiang & Zhang, 2021; Xu, 2025).

More broadly, the case shows that consequential identity work can occur beyond formal teacher education, mentoring, and workplace socialization (Abednia, 2012; Flores & Day, 2006). Webinars operated as a bridge across institutional boundaries, connecting student identity with lecturer identity.

This transition demonstrates the fluid and hybrid negotiation of identities across personal, institutional, and professional domains in Indonesian EFL scholarship (Prabandari et al., 2024; Ubaidillah et al., 2024). Nada’s roles as a student, research assistant, lecturer, researcher and AI-informed educator were all mutually shaping and co-existing.

Pedagogical Learning, AI Literacy, and Research Engagement as Foundations of Lecturer and Researcher Identity

The third theme demonstrates the interaction of pedagogical learning, AI literacy and research engagement in Nada's lecturer and researcher identity formation. In terms of pedagogy, Nada said that webinars helped her to rethink teaching practices, especially in online learning contexts.

"Online teaching is a different pedagogy.

If I teach too long, students get bored. I learned that I have to explain clearly and effectively in shorter time."

The reflection shows that webinar learning prompted pedagogical adaptation rather than the simple adoption of techniques. Nada connected concise explanation and pacing with student engagement, which strengthened her confidence and self-understanding as a lecturer.

This pattern is consistent with research showing that meaningful professional development changes knowledge, beliefs, practice, and professional self-understanding (Avalos, 2011; Kennedy, 2016). In Nada's case, reflective adaptation of online teaching formed the pedagogical dimension of her emerging lecturer identity. Artificial intelligence literacy became a related technological dimension.

"I feel more confident as a teacher today.

AI has been assisting me to prepare materials faster, generate ideas and better manage my work."

AI was more than a productivity tool in Nada's account; it became a marker of professional competence and relevance. Learning to use AI for material preparation, idea generation, and workload management supported her agency and confidence as a technology-responsive lecturer.

Whereas much AI-in-education research emphasizes affordances and applications (Kasneji et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019), this finding foregrounds an identity implication: perceived competence with emerging technology can become a resource through which lecturers renegotiate who they are and how they remain professionally relevant (Li & Xu, 2023).

The most transformative part of Nada's professional journey was her engagement with research. She gained confidence as a researcher through webinars on academic writing, publication strategies and research methodology.

"I worked as a research assistant, so I became more active in writing journal articles. I have published several articles in national journals and submitted articles to two Scopus-indexed journals."

Her development as a researcher was even more evident when she said she received a research grant.

"My research proposal on *Penelitian Dosen Pemula* (PDP) was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. I like to teach and do research and collaborate and apply for more grants."

Research engagement provided the strongest external validation of Nada's emerging researcher identity. Publication activity and the award of competitive research funding marked a shift from consuming scholarly knowledge to producing it. This extends research on researcher identity by showing that webinar-based learning can provide entry points to publication knowledge, scholarly networks, research opportunities, and recognition outside formal university-school research communities (Rachmajanti et al., 2021; Wang & He, 2022).

Thus, webinars supported researcher development not through attendance alone but through the cumulative conversion of learning into writing, collaboration, grant applications, and recognized scholarly achievement.

Taken together, the three themes describe a continuous rather than episodic process of identity construction. Webinar participation first provided social access to professional communities (Communities of Practice), then supported the imagining and pursuit of a lecturer self (Possible Selves), and finally enabled the negotiation of a multidimensional identity through pedagogical practice, AI use, research activity, and external recognition (Teacher Professional Identity). The themes are sequentially related but mutually reinforcing: participation generated aspirations; aspirations guided selective learning and career action; and enacted competence and recognition strengthened further participation. Theoretically, the case suggests that digital professional development can function as an identity ecosystem in which social participation, future-oriented motivation, and professional self-understanding operate together across career transitions.

Conclusion

This study investigated how webinar-based professional development contributes to the formation of an EFL lecturer's professional identity. The findings demonstrated that Nada's professional identity was developed through consistent participation in the webinar communities, where she progressively evolved from a master's student in need of academic assistance to a lecturer and budding researcher. Her emerging professional self was affected by the professional learning, networking, and academic community participation opportunities provided via webinars.

Additionally, the study discovered that webinars functioned as a bridge between participant and lecturer, enabling Nada to anticipate, get ready for, and ultimately take on academic duties. Her ongoing participation in webinars on academic careers, research, and lecturer development facilitated her move into higher education and helped her forge a future-focused professional identity.

Pedagogical learning, AI literacy, and research engagement were also identified as interrelated foundations of lecturer and researcher identity. These experiences contributed to her teaching competence, technological confidence, research productivity

and professional agency, and her multidimensional professional identity.

Theoretically, the study shows that Communities of Practice Theory, Possible Selves Theory, and Teacher Professional Identity Theory explain connected phases of the same process: access to professional communities, the formation of future-oriented aspirations, and the negotiation of an enacted lecturer–researcher identity. Practically, the findings position webinars as accessible spaces for professional learning, networking, career preparation, and identity development among prospective and early-career EFL lecturers.

Because the study involved one participant, it does not seek statistical generalization. Its contribution lies in an information-rich, contextually situated account that may support analytical comparison with similar professional trajectories. Future studies could examine multiple participants, compare webinar ecosystems, or combine retrospective narratives with prospective observation. Overall, the study conceptualizes webinar-based professional development as an identity ecosystem that can simultaneously support pedagogical competence, digital literacy, research engagement, professional networking, and academic socialization.

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