

## FACTORS AFFECTING TESOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	17/11/2021	The development of language teacher identity plays an important part in the professional development of teachers. However, in the context of Vietnam, factors affecting the language teacher identity development of TESOL students have not been much paid attention. In this context, this study aims at exploring the factors that affect TESOL students' English language teacher identity development at a context of a higher education in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study included one hundred TESOL students participating in questionnaires. The results of the study that three factors, namely student-teacher related factors, teacher-trainer related factors and learning context-related factors affected the development of TESOL students' English language teacher identity positively. The student-teacher factors had the strongest influence. These results are hoped to contribute to a better understanding of TESOL students' perception on the development of language teacher identity.
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### KEYWORDS

Language teacher identity  
TESOL student  
Personal identity  
Professional identity  
Factor

## CÁC YẾU TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG ĐẾN SỰ PHÁT TRIỂN BẢN SẮC CỦA GIÁO SINH CHUYÊN NGÀNH GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 17/11/2021	Sự phát triển bản sắc giáo viên ngôn ngữ đóng một phần quan trọng trong sự phát triển nghề nghiệp của giáo viên. Tuy nhiên, ở Việt Nam, các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến sự phát triển bản sắc giáo viên của sinh viên chuyên ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh chưa được quan tâm nhiều. Trong bối cảnh đó, nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm ra các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến sự phát triển bản sắc của sinh viên chuyên ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại trường Đại học ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu bao gồm 100 sinh viên chuyên ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh tham gia trả lời bảng câu hỏi. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy ba yếu tố gồm có yếu tố liên quan đến giáo sinh, yếu tố liên quan đến giáo viên hướng dẫn và các yếu tố liên quan đến bối cảnh học tập đều ảnh hưởng tích cực đến sự phát triển bản sắc của sinh viên chuyên ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh. Trong đó yếu tố giáo sinh có ảnh hưởng mạnh mẽ nhất. Những kết quả này hy vọng sẽ góp phần hiểu rõ hơn nhận thức của sinh viên chuyên ngành giảng dạy tiếng Anh về sự phát triển bản sắc của họ.
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### TỪ KHÓA

Bản sắc giáo viên  
Giáo sinh  
Bản sắc cá nhân  
Bản sắc chuyên môn  
Yếu tố ảnh hưởng

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## 1. Introduction

More than thirty years ago, the lack of a theoretical framework was a concern of many researchers to support language teacher education programs [1], [2]. Therefore, the main foundation of language teacher education in this period focuses on the knowledge-based learning to the teaching practices, not in the process of teacher education development. After that, preliminary researches about teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and so forth [3], [4] also clearly show that these attributes cannot be seen atomically, and the teacher identity is considered as a crucial component in determining language teaching methods in the classroom. Teacher education not only involves the application of new teaching methodologies, but teachers must also "understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" [5, p. 410]. Therefore, the importance of teacher identity influences the change of teacher education. This shift represents the interaction between teachers and students in the larger social ecosystem; teachers are no longer knowledge input suppliers and feedback providers. As noted by Kanno and Stuart [6], teachers negotiate to accept these roles, recognition has generated increasing interest in the development of the language teacher identity (LTI).

Regarding to the Vietnam context, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education has been a priority task in meeting professional teacher education in recent years. Therefore, many decrees, decisions, and guidelines have been issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) on teaching quality requirements. In particular, the MOET formulated a framework for teachers' teaching competence, which includes specific areas such as language teaching knowledge; language learner's knowledge; language teaching practices and so forth. It can be seen that language teacher education in Vietnam has many advantages, but it is not enough to help teachers achieve new professional development and ensure the highest quality. Teacher education program faces many problems, which prevent the development of students' discipline and practice teaching ability. The biggest problem is that teacher education agents cannot work asynchronously to meet the improvement needs of teachers [7]. The second problem is directly related to teacher who has not yet realized the importance of establishing personal identity. The third problem concerns the relationship between training program and practice situation. In short, student-teachers cannot identify their own teacher's identity and they do not take a reflective attitude towards teaching and consider their own practice seriously. Therefore, this paper attempts to scrutinize the factors that affect TESOL students' English LTI development in the context of University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This study endeavors to answer the following question:

- What are the factors that affect TESOL students' English LTI development?

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. Research site and participants

This study was conducted at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This university is one of the multi-disciplinary universities in Vietnam, in which the Faculty of English language offers three majors in the training program: English for translation and interpretation, English for Business, and TESOL methodology. Specially, TESOL methodology is a new major and it includes English teaching methodology 1 (3 credits); English teaching methodology 2 (3 credits); Classroom language and management (3 credits); Teaching English to young learners (3 credits); and Teaching practicum (3 credits). English teaching methodology 1 and 2 focus on theories around English teaching issues, teaching methods, techniques and practice of teaching; Classroom language and management focuses on helping learners with classroom management skills; Teaching English to young learners focuses on teaching methods for young learners and teaching practices; and Teaching practicum provides TESOL students chances to practice what they have learned in the real classes.

The participants of this study were 100 TESOL students. Most of the participants in the study have teaching experience, and this percentage can be clearly seen as 83.0% of the students had this type of experience. Only the remaining (17.0%) of students had no experience. The number of teaching year was divided into 3 categories: under 1 year, 1-2 years, over 2 years. It was clear that more than half of the students (51.0%) have less than 1 year of experience, the number of students had 1 -2 years of experience accounted for 31.0% and few students had more than 2 years of experience (16.0%). The number of students working as teaching assistants accounts for the highest proportion (54.0%), followed by part-time teachers with the share of 33.0% and finally, the number of students who were full-time teachers accounted for the lowest proportion (13.0%).

## 2.2. Research instrument

This study employed the closed-ended questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire which was partly adapted from Tran and Huynh's [8] study consists of two parts. The first part inquires the participants' personal information. The second part includes 42 items seeking to find out factors affecting TESOL students' English LTI development. Student-teacher related factors include five sub-factor groups (Attitude: 4 items; Knowledge: 4 items; Skills: 2 items; Psychology: 3 items); Teacher-trainer related factors consist of two sub-factor groups (Competence: 4 items; Assistance: 2 items); Context-related factors encompass five sub-factor groups (teaching practicum: 7 items; learning materials: 5 items; Facilities at learning environment: 3 items; Facilities at teaching practicum: 3 items; Peers: 4 items). The Cronbach Alpha of the questionnaire was at .91, which means that the reliability was very high.

## 2.3. Procedures for data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was piloted by two experts and five students who were not participating in the study. In terms of data collecting, the questionnaire was created by Google Form, then a link to the Google Form was sent to 125 students in four classes; however, 110 questionnaires were returned. There were 110 questionnaires returned from participants, but only 100 questionnaires were valid. The questionnaire was distributed to students who were studying TESOL courses. Each student spent roughly 15 minutes completing the questionnaire. With respect to data analysis, SPSS software was used to analyze the former in terms of mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and frequency. The interval mean scores are interpreted as follows: 1-1.80: strongly disagree; 1.81-2.60: disagree; 2.61-3.40: neutral; 3.41- 4.20: agree; 4.21 – 5.00: strongly agree.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Results

Regarding the factors affecting the identity development of TESOL students' English LTI development, there are three main factors, viz. student-teacher related factors, teacher-trainer related factors and context-related factors. Table 1 presents the mean scores of the factors affecting TESOL students' English LTI development. The mean score of student-teacher related factors is at 4.67 (SD=.60), followed by that of teacher-trainer related factors (M=4.60; SD=.72) and learning context-related factors (M=4.23; SD=.87). It can be understood that these factors seem to have positive influence on TESOL students' English LTI development.

**Table 1.** Factors affecting TESOL students' English LTI development

No.		N = 100	
		M	SD
1	Student-teacher related factors	4.67	0.60
2	Teacher-trainer related factors	4.60	0.72
3	Context-related factors	4.23	0.87
	<b>Total</b>	4.55	0.69

Regarding the student-teacher related factors seen in Table 2, which includes groups of four sub-factors, namely attitude, knowledge, skills, and psychology. In terms of attitude, they were "always try to complete activities" (Item A1.2: M=4.77; SD=.53), "always serious" (Item A1.1: M=4.75; SD=.52) in the teaching practice. In addition, they "always take the initiative in teaching-related work" (Item A1.4: M=4.55; SD=.72) and were "always ready to do teaching-related work" (Item A1.3: M=4.54; SD=.81). In terms of knowledge, they always "learn more about the teaching knowledge during the practicum" (Item B2.1: M=4.74; SD=.58), "learn more about the teaching knowledge during the learning course" (Item B2.2: M=4.69; SD=.63), "learn from [their] peers teaching experience" (Item B2.3: M=4.69; SD=.61) and "get experience after every teaching practice session" (Item B2.4: M=4.57; SD=.62). As for skills, TESOL students could "improve [their] language skills" (Item C3.2: M=4.60; SD=.72) and "apply skills [they] have learned into teaching" (Item C3.1: M=4.40; SD=0.80). As regards psychology, they always "encourage" themselves "after every teaching feedback" (Item D4.3: M=4.59; SD=.68), "keep calm when doing teaching practice" (Item D4.2: M=4.13; SD=.97), and they were "confident in the teaching competence that" they "have in teaching practice" (Item D4.1: M=4.32; SD=.89). This may indicate that TESOL students played as one of the key roles in shaping their English LTI development.

**Table 2. Student-teacher related factors**

No.		N=100		
		M	SD	
1	Attitude	A1.1 I am always serious about my teaching practice.	4.75	0.52
		A1.2 I always try to complete activities the teaching practice.	4.77	0.53
		A1.3 I'm always ready to do teaching-related work.	4.54	0.81
		A1.4 I always take the initiative in teaching-related work.	4.55	0.72
2	Knowledge	B2.1 I always learn more about the teaching knowledge during the practicum.	4.74	0.58
		B2.2 I always learn more about the teaching knowledge during the learning course.	4.69	0.63
		B2.3 I always learn from my peers teaching experience.	4.69	0.61
		B2.4 I always get experience after every teaching practice session.	4.57	0.62
3	Skills	C3.1 I can apply skills I have learned into teaching.	4.40	0.80
		C3.2 I can improve my language skills.	4.60	0.72
4	Psychology	D4.1 I am confident in the teaching competence that I have in teaching practice.	4.32	0.89
		D4.2 I always keep calm when doing teaching practice.	4.13	0.97
		D4.3 I always encourage myself after every teaching feedback.	4.59	0.68

**Table 3. Teacher-trainer related factors**

No.		N=100		
		M	SD	
1	Competence	E5.1 Teacher trainers have a lot of teaching experience to guide me to practice.	4.61	0.74
		E5.2 Teacher trainers have a specific work plan for each week of my teaching practice.	4.50	0.78
		E5.3 Teacher trainers give detailed instructions before my teaching practice.	4.43	0.86
		E5.4 Teacher trainers give detailed feedback after my teaching practice.	4.65	0.64
2	Assistance	B2.1 I always learn more about the teaching knowledge during the practicum.	4.74	0.58
		B2.2 I always learn more about the teaching knowledge during the learning course.	4.69	0.63

As seen in Table 3, TESOL students believed that the teacher-trainers' competence (M=4.63; SD=.69) had more impact on TESOL students' English LTI development than teacher trainers' assistance (M=4.56; SD=.70). From the student-teacher's perspectives, the teacher-trainers' perception, teacher trainers "give detailed feedback after [TESOL students'] teaching practice" (Item

E5.4:M=4.65; SD=.64) and “have a lot of teaching experience to guide [TESOL students] to practice” (Item E5.1:M=4.61; SD=.74). In addition, they also strongly agreed that “Teacher trainers have a specific work plan for each week of [TESOL students’] teaching practice” (Item E5.2:M=4.50; SD=.78) and “Teacher trainers give detailed instructions before [TESOL students’] teaching practice” (Item E5.3:M =4.43; SD=.86) helped them a lot in the process of developing teacher identity.

The context-related factors in Table 4 have five sub-factor groups. With respect to the teaching practicum, the majority of TESOL students indicated that “Learners at [their] practicum places always respect [them] during [their] teaching practicum” (Item G7.6:M=4.40; SD=.85). Next, they also gave an equal degree of agreement on “Work at the teaching practicum is clearly assigned” (Item G7.3:M=4.27; SD=.94), “Colleagues are always willing to share their teaching experience with [them]” ( Item G7.8:M=4.27; SD=.95), “Learners at [their] practicum places are always actively participating in [their] teaching activities” (Item G7.5:M=4.25; SD=.96), “Colleagues always provide support when [they] need it” (Item G7.7:M=4.25 ; SD=.78), “Learners at [their] practicum places always cooperate in [their] teaching process” (Item G7.4:M=4.14; SD=.90), “[They] have acquired most of [their] pedagogical methods during [their] teaching practicum” (Item G7.1:M=4.11; SD=.74). Finally, the lowest agreement in this regard was “Working conditions in [their] teaching practicum are professional” (Item G7.2:M=3.92; SD=.89).

**Table 4.** Context-related factors

No.		N=100	
		M	SD
1. Teaching practicum	G7.1 I have acquired most of my pedagogical methods during my teaching practicum.	4.11	.74
	G7.2 Working conditions in my teaching practicum are professional.	3.92	.89
	G7.3 Work at the teaching practicum is clearly assigned.	4.27	.94
	G7.4 Learners at my practicum places always cooperate in my teaching process.	4.14	.90
	G7.5 Learners at my practicum places are always actively participating in my teaching activities.	4.25	.96
	G7.6 Learners at my practicum places always respect me during my teaching practicum.	4.40	.85
	G7.7 Colleagues always provide support when I need it.	4.25	.78
	G7.8 Colleagues are always willing to share their teaching experience with me.	4.27	.95
2. Learning materials	H8.1 There is a variety of learning materials I need.	4.41	.75
	H8.2 I gain new teaching knowledge because of having updating materials.	4.25	.90
	H8.3 Materials are currently available for my learning.	4.17	.89
	H8.4 There are many useful materials for my learning.	4.40	.70
	H8.5 Learning materials have been obtained from a variety of reliable sources.	4.34	.82
3. Facilities at learning environment	I9.1 Facilities are currently available when I need.	4.27	.87
	I9.2 I develop many demo teaching activities because of having modern facilities.	4.23	.87
	I9.3 The diverse facilities help me in teaching practice.	4.37	.82
4. Facilities at teaching practicum	J10.1 Facilities are currently available when I need.	4.29	.83
	J10.2 I have more teaching activities because of having modern facilities.	4.21	.84
	J10.3 The diverse facilities help me in teaching.	4.27	.81
5. Peers	K11.1 Peers offer me suggestions about my professional development.	4.22	.94
	K11.2 Peers collaborating reflects my teaching practice.	4.31	.91
	K11.3 Peers give me useful advice for my teaching practice.	4.25	.88
	K11.4 Peers help me enthusiastically during my teaching practice process.	4.34	.86

In general, TESOL students agreed to a high degree of usefulness, variety, reliability, and up-to-date learning materials. Specifically, the mean scores were shown in the following order “There is a variety of learning materials [they] need” (Item H8.1: M=4.41; SD=.75), “There are many useful

materials for [their] learning” (Item H8.4: M=4.40; SD=.70), “Learning materials have been obtained from a variety of reliable sources” (Item H8.5: M=4.34; SD=.82), “[They] gain new teaching knowledge because of having updating materials” (Item H8.2: M=4.25; SD=.90) and “Materials are currently available for [their] learning” (Item H8.3: M=4.17; SD=.89).

In terms of facilities at learning environment, participants agreed with the statement “The diverse facilities help [them] in teaching practice” (Item I9.3: M=4.37; SD=.82), followed by “Facilities are currently available when [they] need” (Item I9.1: M=4.27; SD=.87) and “Facilities are currently available when [they] need” (Item I9.2: M=4.23; SD=.87). Besides, in terms of facilities at teaching practicum, the highest mean score was “Facilities are currently available when [they] need” (Item J10.1: M=4.29; SD=.83). “The diverse facilities help [them] in teaching” (Item J10.3) and “[They] have more teaching activities because of having modern facilities” (Item J10.2) also received high favors with mean score of M=4.27, M=4.21, respectively. From these results, it could be seen that facilities were always available at the learning environment as well as the teaching practicum. Finally, “Peers help [TESOL students] enthusiastically during [TESOL students’] teaching practice process” (Item K11.4: M=4.34; SD=.86), “Peers collaborating reflect [TESOL students’] teaching practice” (Item K11.2: M=4.31; SD=.91), “Peers give [TESOL students] useful advice for [their] teaching practice” (Item K11.3: M=4.25; SD=.88), “Peers offer [TESOL students] suggestions about [their] professional development” (Item K11.1: M=4.22; SD=.94).

### 3.2. Discussion

The study results have shown TESOL students indicated that student-teacher factors were the leading group factor, and they affected TESOL students’ English LTI development in a positive way. In terms of attitudes, they had a positive attitude towards teaching practice, especially they were serious about their teaching practice, tried to complete activities, were ready to do teaching-related work, took the initiative in teaching-related work. In terms of skills, they indicated that they could enhance and apply their skills in teaching. With respect to psychology, they also had a good psychology such as having confidence, calmness when they teach. Last but not least, TESOL students’ knowledge was enhanced as they studied at learning environment and worked in their teaching practicum, and their language skills developed in tandem. These can be explained because the majority of study participants have teaching experience (83%) in different positions such as teaching assistants (54%), part-time teachers (33%) and full-time teacher (13%). Therefore, they can complete the work at the internship site easily, have enough knowledge and experience, good psychology to be able to develop their teacher identity.

Teacher-trainers had different tasks such as support, guidance, assessment, etc. Besides, student-teacher needed to connect with teacher-trainer to complete their learning and teaching practice. Therefore, the relationship between teacher-trainer and student-teacher was closely related to form and develop the identity of TESOL students. According to the quantitative results, TESOL students all believed that their teacher-trainers had the competence and assistance for their learning and teaching practice. Teacher-trainers had a lot of teaching experience, specific plans, detailed instructions as well as detailed feedback for the teaching activities of these TESOL students. In addition, TESOL students also received enthusiastic support in the teaching and learning process. Theoretically, Izadinia [9] who indicated that teacher-trainers play a decisive role in building professional identity. Compared with previous studies, many researchers have also found that teacher-trainers highlight, promote, influence the formation and development of teachers’ identities [9]-[11]. In short, it can be stated that enthusiastic teacher-trainers actively guided TESOL students, so students could easily develop their personal and professional identity deeply and vice versa.

Last but not least, learning context-related factors also strongly influenced the development of TESOL students’ identities. However, this factor had less powerful affection than the above two

factors. The study showed that sub-factors such as teaching practicum, learning materials, facilities at learning environment, facilities at teaching practicum, peers all gave high mean scores, which proved that these sub-factors had an influence on developing the identity of TESOL students. Specifically, teaching practicum had the lowest mean score of the five sub-factors. This could be explained that because the teaching practicum period of TESOL students was quite short (6 weeks), so they did not clearly see the impact of colleagues and students on this development. Working conditions, colleagues, students, the nature of work at their teaching practicum actively supported the development of their personal identity as well as their professional identity. Next, there were the diverse, useful, available, up-to-date, reliable learning materials. As a result, TESOL students could use these materials optimally and thoroughly in the process of developing their identity. In addition, the facilities at the school environment as well as the teaching practicum place also got high mean scores, which showed that the facilities in both places are diverse, modern and available for the student-teacher identity development process. Finally, peers also contributed in providing suggestions, advice, reflection, helping them along the way so that they could develop their identity. Many researchers have also given the results that the effect of context in shaping student-teacher identity is quite pronounced [12]-[14]. After presenting and analyzing the results, the study concludes that context has a strong influence on TESOL students' English LTI.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the study have suggested that student-teacher related factors, teacher-trainer related factors and learning context-related factors directly affected TESOL students' English LTI development. Among these factors, student-teacher related factors had the strongest influence, followed by teacher-trainer related factors and learning context-related factors. Some implications based on these results are recommended. Because the results of the study showed that TESOL students agreed that they needed more teaching practice to reflect the teaching methods, skills and competencies they have achieved throughout their study process. To achieve this, student teachers should participate in activities and teaching exercises that demonstrate their competences and skills. TESOL students will be more prepared for the problems they will confront during their initial years as teachers if they engage in reflective practice. In this or similar ways, student-teachers will be able to get through the rough times quickly during their first years of teaching. Teacher-trainers should be people with high expertise and long-term experience to be able to give useful guidance and advice to TESOL students. In addition, teacher-trainers need to capture and understand the psychology of the TESOL students they guide to give the right direction for each student, because each TESOL student has skills, knowledge, and experience at different levels and mentality. Through the study, it can be seen that administrators need to provide more opportunities for TESOL students to develop their identity right from the first years of studying TESOL. Administrators can think about offering more teaching seminars. Facilitate internships for the first years instead of the last years so that TESOL students are less surprised and have more time for teaching practice.

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