

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Shaping identities beyond the classroom: The influence of journal editorship on Vietnamese EFL lecturers' professional development

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the impact of journal editorship on the professional identity of Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers. Situated within the unique context of Vietnam's rapidly evolving EFL educational landscape, the research aims to uncover how the role of a journal editor influences lecturers' professional self-perception and practices. The study employs a qualitative design, utilizing semi-structured interviews with two Vietnamese EFL lecturers—one male with one year of experience and one female with three years of experience as journal editors. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data. Four key themes emerge from the study: enhanced professional efficacy, navigating challenges and resilience, expanding professional networks and influence, and integrating global and local perspectives. These themes collectively illustrate the transformative role of journal editorship in shaping professional identities, highlighting increased self-efficacy, resilience, expanded professional networks, and the integration of global and local EFL teaching methodologies.

Keywords: influence; journal editorship; professional development; professional identity; Vietnamese EFL lecturers

1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Vietnam, the professional identity of lecturers emerges as a focal point of interest and investigation ^[1]. This qualitative study zeroes in on a specific aspect of this identity formation: the influence of the experience of serving as a journal editor on Vietnamese EFL lecturers. The role of a journal editor is often viewed as a significant professional milestone that offers a unique vantage point on the academic discipline, potentially reshaping one's professional self-concept ^[2, 3].

Vietnam's burgeoning EFL sector has seen a growing need for a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape the professional identities of its educators. These identities are not static but are continually molded by various roles and experiences that educators undergo in their career trajectory ^[4-6]. The role of a journal editor stands out in this context due to its potential to alter an educator's professional identity significantly.

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Grounded in theories of professional identity formation within communities of practice, as articulated by scholars like Lave and Wenger ^[7], this study explores how the role of a journal editor contributes to the evolving professional identities of Vietnamese EFL lecturers. These theories propose that professional identity is dynamically developed through participation and engagement in different professional communities.

The central research question of this study is: How does the experience of being a journal editor influence the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers? By concentrating on this question, the study aims to unveil the intricate ways in which the role of a journal editor impacts these educators' sense of self and professional standing within the academic community.

The social value of this study is grounded in its emphasis on understanding the impact of journal editorship on the professional identities of EFL educators in Vietnam, a topic of considerable importance and relevance. As EFL education continues to play a crucial role in Vietnam's integration into the global community, the development of educators who are not only competent in their subject matter but also engaged and reflective practitioners is vital. This study addresses this need by highlighting how professional activities such as journal editorship contribute to shaping educators' professional identities, thereby influencing their teaching practices, engagement with the academic community, and ultimately, the quality of EFL education in Vietnam. Scientifically, this study addresses a knowledge gap by linking two critical subfields: teacher identity and professional development, and the impact of professional activities, such as journal editorship, on these aspects. While existing literature has explored various facets of EFL educators' professional identity, the specific influence of journal editorship remains underexplored. This linkage is crucial as it offers insights into how the engagement in scholarly activities beyond teaching can foster professional growth, reshape educators' self-concept, and enhance their contributions to the field.

This study, therefore, builds a compelling rationale for its execution by highlighting the dual significance of its investigation: socially, by underscoring the importance of understanding the transformative effects of journal editorship on educators' identities for the betterment of EFL education, and scientifically, by filling an existing gap in the literature through the examination of how professional activities intersect with and influence the professional development and identity of teachers in the field of EFL. Through this dual focus, the research aims to contribute valuable insights to the fields of language education, teacher identity, and professional development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Professional identity in EFL education

Professional identity in the field of EFL education is a multifaceted construct. Varghese et al. ^[8] described it as a dynamic amalgamation of personal beliefs, values, and experiences in teaching. This aligns with the study by Beijgaard et al. ^[9], who highlighted the evolving nature of professional identity in response to changing teaching contexts and practices. Recent research further expands on this by exploring how technological advancements, digital learning environments, and cross-cultural interactions have become integral in shaping the professional identity of EFL teachers in the modern educational landscape ^[10]. To clarify, "professional identity" refers to the self-concept individuals hold regarding themselves as professionals in their field, encompassing how they see their roles, responsibilities, and their place within the profession. This identity is influenced by interactions with peers, students, and the broader educational community, as well as by personal reflection on professional experiences. Wenger's ^[11] concept of identity in communities of practice further underscored this dynamism, suggesting that professional identity is shaped through participation in various professional communities. "Communities of practice" are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting

on an ongoing basis. Wenger ^[11] posited that being part of such communities plays a crucial role in forming our identity, as it involves learning, sharing, and negotiating meanings within the community. The significance of digital communities of practice, especially during the recent shift towards online learning, underscores the evolving nature of professional identity in today's EFL context ^[12]. However, the literature has not extensively covered the impact of journal editorship on academic professional development, marking a significant gap. While the roles of classroom teaching and participation in professional development programs are well-documented ^[13], the unique contributions of journal editorship to professional identity and development remain underexplored.

Studies specifically focusing on EFL educators, such as Tsui ^[14] and Pennington and Richards ^[15], have emphasized the complexity of identity formation in this field, influenced by factors such as cultural backgrounds, teaching environments, and the global status of the English language. The literature thus establishes the understanding that professional identity among EFL educators is not static but continually evolving.

2.2. The role of journal editorship in academic professions

Journal editorship is widely regarded as a prestigious and influential role in academia. It involves curating academic discourse, shaping the direction of research fields, and mentoring emerging scholars ^[16]. To unpack this further, "journal editorship" entails the responsibilities of overseeing the selection and review of articles for publication, guiding the journal's editorial policy, and working to ensure the integrity and quality of the academic discourse within a specific field. A review of existing studies indicates a scarcity of research on how this significant role impacts the professional development and identity of educators, particularly in the EFL context ^[17]. According to Guskey ^[18-20], such roles can significantly impact professional identity by validating expertise and leadership within a field. In light of these observations, it becomes imperative to investigate the specific influences of journal editorship on the professional identity of EFL educators. This inquiry could bridge the identified gap by offering new insights into the ways in which editorial responsibilities contribute to an educator's professional growth, visibility in the academic community, and overall sense of professional belonging ^[21].

In the context of EFL, journal editorship can be particularly influential due to the field's inherent connection with publishing and knowledge dissemination. Hyland and Wong ^[22] discussed how editorship in EFL not only confers status but also provides unique insights into the academic discourse, potentially influencing one's teaching philosophy and practice. However, as Flowerdew ^[23, 24] pointed out, the role can also pose challenges, such as balancing editorial responsibilities with teaching and research, thus requiring the negotiation of multiple identities and possibly leading to professional growth or stress. These challenges highlight the dynamic nature of professional identity, especially in fields where scholarly publication plays a central role.

2.3. EFL education in Vietnam

The landscape of EFL education in Vietnam is unique due to its historical, cultural, and political contexts. This distinctiveness presents a valuable case for studying the interplay between global academic roles and local educational practices. Nguyen et al. ^[25] described how English language education in Vietnam has evolved rapidly, influenced by global and local demands. This evolution has implications for the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers, as they navigate a context that is increasingly globalized yet rooted in local educational traditions. The existing literature on EFL education in Vietnam, while extensive, tends to focus more on classroom practices and less on the external professional roles educators may engage in, such as journal editorship ^[26]. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how such roles influence professional

identity, potentially offering insights into broader educational reforms and professional development strategies in the region.

Studies by Pham and Saltmarsh ^[27] and Tran ^[26] highlight the complexities faced by Vietnamese EFL educators in adapting to these changes, suggesting a constant negotiation of identity in response to global and local influences. This negotiation is particularly relevant when considering roles such as journal editorship, which may embody these global-local dynamics. The examination of this role within the Vietnamese EFL context, therefore, not only contributes to the field of professional identity but also enriches our understanding of the global influences on local educational practices.

The literature points towards a complex interplay between professional identity, the role of journal editorship, and the specific context of EFL education in Vietnam. Professional identity in EFL is shaped by a myriad of factors and is continually evolving. The role of journal editorship is seen as a significant contributor to this evolution, offering both status and challenges that can reshape an educator's professional identity. The unique context of Vietnam adds further layers to this dynamic, suggesting that the impact of journal editorship on professional identity may be distinct in this setting. This study aims to explore this impact in depth, contributing to the broader understanding of professional identity in EFL education.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

The research design of this study is rooted in a qualitative approach, specifically employing semi-structured interviews to explore the impact of journal editorship on the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers. This methodological choice is guided by the study's aim to gain nuanced, contextualized insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants. Qualitative research, with its emphasis on understanding human experiences, behaviors, and emotions, is particularly suited to exploring the nuances of professional identity, a construct that is inherently subjective and multifaceted.

The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study include Lave and Wenger's ^[7] communities of practice and Wenger's ^[11] concept of identity in professional communities. These frameworks provide a lens through which to understand professional identity as a dynamic construct that evolves with participation in various professional communities. The role of a journal editor is viewed as a significant form of participation that could influence one's identity within the professional community of EFL educators. By employing these frameworks, the study situates the experiences of Vietnamese EFL lecturers within the broader context of how professional identities are formed and reformed through engagement in specific roles and communities.

To deepen the readership's understanding of how these theoretical perspectives specifically inform the study's methodology and analysis, it is essential to elaborate on their application. Lave and Wenger's ^[7] notion of legitimate peripheral participation explicates the process by which individuals become integrated into a community of practice, initially participating on the periphery and gradually moving toward full engagement as they gain experience and expertise. This study employs this concept to examine how the roles of journal editorship serve as points of entry for EFL lecturers into the wider academic and professional community, allowing them to transition from peripheral participants to more central figures within this community. Moreover, Wenger's ^[11] framework on identity formation within professional communities is used to analyze how engagement in the editorial process contributes to the lecturers' sense of belonging, competence, and identity within the field of EFL education. The methodology incorporates qualitative interviews to explore the narratives of the participants, seeking to understand how their editorial experiences reflect broader processes of learning, identity negotiation, and community engagement as outlined by these theoretical frameworks.

Through this approach, the analysis aims to reveal the intricate ways in which the act of participating in journal editorship shapes the professional identities of EFL lecturers, in line with the theoretical underpinnings of Lave and Wenger's ^[7] work on communities of practice.

In summary, the research design of this qualitative study is strategically tailored to explore the rich, complex nature of professional identity among Vietnamese EFL lecturers who have experienced the role of a journal editor. Through semi-structured interviews, guided by the theoretical frameworks of communities of practice and identity formation in professional communities, the study aims to uncover in-depth, contextualized understandings of how this role influences professional identity. This approach promises to yield valuable insights into the interplay between professional roles and identity development in the field of EFL education.

3.2. Participants

The study focuses on two Vietnamese EFL lecturers from a higher education institution in Vietnam, selected to provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of journal editorship on professional identity in the context of EFL education. The first participant is a male lecturer with one year of experience as an invited editor for an English language teaching journal. His relatively recent entry into the editorial role offers insights into the initial stages of how such a position might influence professional identity. The second participant is a female lecturer with three years of experience as a section editor for a similar journal. Her longer tenure in the editorial role allows for an exploration of the more sustained and possibly deeper impacts on professional identity.

The selection of these participants is intentional to capture a range of experiences based on gender and duration of editorial involvement. This diversity is expected to enrich the study's findings by providing varied perspectives on the influence of journal editorship. The male participant's fresh perspective as an invited editor can be contrasted with the female participant's more seasoned viewpoint as a section editor, thereby offering a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study. The rationale for the sample size, specifically focusing on two lecturers, stems from a qualitative research approach aimed at in-depth exploration rather than generalizability. This study employs a case study methodology to delve deeply into the experiences and perceptions of a small, purposefully selected group of individuals, facilitating a detailed understanding of the complex interplay between journal editorship and professional identity. This approach allows for a concentrated examination of the nuanced ways in which editorial roles impact educators in the EFL context, which might be diluted in a larger sample. Additionally, the selection is grounded in the practical constraints of conducting thorough and meaningful qualitative research within the available resources and time frame, ensuring that the study remains focused and manageable.

In terms of ethical considerations, the study adheres to rigorous standards to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Prior to the interviews, both participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, the nature of their involvement, and the measures taken to protect their privacy. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring that they were aware of their rights to withdraw from the study at any point without any adverse consequences. Throughout the research process, all data is treated with the utmost confidentiality, and any identifying information is carefully removed or altered in the study's documentation and dissemination to preserve the anonymity of the participants. This ethical approach is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the research and the trust of the participants.

3.3. Data collection

Data collection for this study was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews, a method chosen for its ability to elicit detailed, personal responses while allowing for flexibility in exploring topics of

interest. Prior to the main data collection phase, a pilot study was conducted to test the interview protocol. This preliminary phase involved interviewing two EFL lecturers who did not participate in the main study but shared similar characteristics with the target participants. The feedback from this pilot study was instrumental in refining the interview questions and approach, ensuring they were appropriately tailored to elicit meaningful insights relevant to the research questions.

Following the revisions, the interview questions were designed to explore various dimensions of the participants' experiences as journal editors and how these experiences influenced their professional identity. Some of the revised questions included: "Can you describe a significant moment during your editorship that you believe had an impact on your professional identity?", "How has your role as a journal editor influenced your perspectives or practices in EFL teaching?", and "What challenges have you encountered in balancing your editor and lecturer roles, and how have these challenges affected your view of yourself as a professional?"

Each participant engaged in multiple interviews, with each session lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. These interviews were intentionally held in a comfortable and private setting, as chosen by the participants, to foster a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open and in-depth discussion. The decision to conduct the interviews in Vietnamese was made to allow participants to express themselves more freely and naturally, thus ensuring that the nuances and subtleties of their experiences and reflections were fully captured. To maintain the accuracy and integrity of the data collected, a professional translator proficient in both Vietnamese and English was employed to translate the interview transcripts. This approach ensured that detailed insights were obtained from each participant across the multiple sessions, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of their perspectives. To further ensure the accuracy and subtlety of the translations, a secondary review of the translated interview transcripts was performed by a subject matter expert fluent in both Vietnamese and English. This expert, knowledgeable in both the linguistic nuances and the specialized terminology of EFL education, cross-verified the translations for accuracy, capturing the depth of participants' responses. This additional validation step was crucial in maintaining the integrity of the data and mitigating any potential misinterpretations arising from translation errors.

The data collection process was designed to be thorough and sensitive to the participants' comfort and convenience, ensuring that the information gathered was both rich in detail and reflective of their genuine experiences and perspectives. This approach was crucial for gaining in-depth insights into how the experience of being a journal editor influences the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers.

3.4. Data analysis

Thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data, was conducted for the present study. This approach allows for a flexible and detailed interpretation of the complex data sets typically gathered in studies exploring professional identity [28].

The process of thematic analysis began with a comprehensive and iterative reading of the interview transcripts to familiarize with the depth and breadth of the content. This initial reading was crucial in identifying preliminary ideas and patterns that emerged from the participants' narratives. Following this, a more focused coding process was undertaken. During this stage, segments of the data were systematically coded, involving the careful annotation of the transcripts with labels that succinctly captured the essence of each idea or concept expressed by the participants. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, two researchers independently coded the data, and then inter-coder reliability was assessed. This step was vital for verifying the consistency and accuracy of the coding between researchers, thus enhancing the credibility of the thematic analysis. The inter-coder reliability was determined using Cohen's kappa coefficient, which provided a statistical measure of inter-coder agreement that was found to be within an acceptable range, indicating a

high level of consistency in coding across researchers ($\kappa=.72$). After coding, the identified codes were sorted and grouped into potential themes. These themes represented patterns across the data set that were pertinent to the research question, capturing the teachers' stated beliefs about the influence of journal editorship on their professional identity as EFL lecturers. This stage involved a constant movement back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts, and the developed themes, ensuring a coherent and accurate reflection of the data.

The next step entailed reviewing and refining the themes. This involved checking the themes against the dataset to determine if they accurately represented the participants' narratives and ensuring that they had a clear and identifiable focus. During this phase, some themes were merged, refined, or split to more accurately reflect the nuances in the data. Finally, the analysis culminated in the definition and naming of the final themes. This last stage involved a detailed analysis of each theme and the overall narrative that the analysis tells about the research question. The themes were then described and related back to the research question and the existing literature on professional identity and EFL education, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of how the experience of being a journal editor influences the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers.

Throughout the process, the analysis remained grounded in the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, ensuring that the findings were not only data-driven but also theoretically informed. This approach to data analysis was integral in yielding insightful, credible, and meaningful interpretations of the qualitative data gathered.

4. Findings

The analysis of interview data uncovered four primary themes that capture the teacher participants' perceptions of how journal editorship influences their professional lives. These themes encompass the impact of editorial roles on their sense of professional efficacy, the challenges they face and their resilience in overcoming them, the expansion of their professional networks and influence, and the integration of global and local perspectives in their practice. Each of these themes is detailed in the following sections.

4.1. Enhanced sense of professional efficacy

A significant theme that surfaced from the data is the enhanced sense of professional efficacy among the Vietnamese EFL lecturers participating in journal editorship. Both participants, one male with one year and the other female with three years of editorial experience, articulated experiences that demonstrate this theme. This finding reflects a key aspect of their professional identity development as influenced by their roles as journal editors.

The male participant, with his recent immersion into the editorial role, provided a telling excerpt: "*Taking on the editor's mantle has been transformative. Making decisions on paper acceptances and guiding authors gave me a newfound confidence in my expertise. It was a realization that my contributions were valuable to the EFL field.*" This statement encapsulates a pivotal shift in his professional identity, aligning with the communities of practice framework. By engaging in the practices of a journal editor, he was able to participate more actively and influentially in the EFL community. This participation facilitated a redefinition of his professional self, enhancing his sense of efficacy and belonging within the field. The concept of identity in professional communities further elucidates this transformation. The role of an editor provided a context for him to reevaluate and strengthen his identity as an EFL professional, endorsing his sense of competence and expertise.

Similarly, the female participant's experience echoed a deepening of professional efficacy through her extended editorial role. She shared, "*My three-year journey as a section editor has profoundly shaped my*

professional identity. It is not just about skill enhancement; it is about affirming my understanding and application of EFL practices at a deeper level.” This narrative reveals a gradual but profound consolidation of her professional identity, a process well-explained by the communities of practice framework. Her prolonged engagement in the editorial community allowed her to internalize and embody the norms, values, and knowledge of the EFL field. The concept of identity in professional communities further clarifies this experience. The ongoing participation and recognition in the editorial role reinforced her identity as a competent and authoritative figure in the EFL community, contributing to a stronger sense of professional self.

4.2. Navigating challenges and resilience

Another key finding from the study is the theme of navigating challenges and developing resilience, as experienced by the Vietnamese EFL lecturers in their roles as journal editors. Both participants, the male with one year and the female with three years of experience in journal editorship, shared insights that highlight the complexities and learning opportunities inherent in their editorial roles.

The male participant reflected on the initial challenges he faced: *“At the beginning, it was overwhelming. Balancing editorial duties with teaching responsibilities required a lot of adjustments. However, navigating these challenges has made me more resilient and adaptable in my professional life.”* This experience underscores the concept of identity in professional communities. The participant’s engagement with the challenges of his editorial role contributed to a reconfiguration of his professional identity, where resilience and adaptability became key components. Moreover, from the perspective of communities of practice, his journey through these difficulties represents a form of situated learning, where the process of overcoming obstacles within the editorial community played a crucial role in his professional development.

Similarly, the female participant shared her experiences of resilience: *“The constant demand to stay updated with the latest research trends and make informed decisions was daunting. But over time, it empowered me with a deeper understanding and a stronger sense of purpose in my EFL career.”* Her narrative aligns with the communities of practice framework, highlighting how sustained participation in the editorial role fostered a deeper immersion in the EFL field, enhancing her professional competence and confidence. Furthermore, the concept of identity in professional communities elucidates how this process contributed to the strengthening of her professional identity, where resilience and an enriched understanding of her field emerged as defining characteristics.

4.3. Expanding professional networks and influence

The third significant finding from the study is the theme of expanding professional networks and influence. This theme emerged prominently in the narratives of both participants, the male with one year and the female with three years of experience in journal editorship, highlighting the impact of their editorial roles on broadening their professional connections and enhancing their influence within the EFL community.

The male participant described this expansion: *“Since becoming an editor, I have connected with a diverse range of EFL professionals worldwide. These connections have not only broadened my perspective but also increased my influence in the field.”* This experience aligns with the communities of practice framework, where his participation as an editor extended his engagement with the wider EFL community, leading to an expanded professional network. Additionally, the concept of identity in professional communities provides insight into how these new connections influenced his professional identity. The broadened network and increased influence reinforced his sense of belonging and significance within the professional community, shaping his identity as a more connected and influential EFL educator.

The female participant also reflected on her expanded influence: *“My role as an editor has opened doors to collaborations and opportunities that were previously inaccessible. It is not just about being known; it is about contributing to meaningful dialogues in the EFL field.”* Her narrative demonstrates the impact of her editorial role in enhancing her professional stature and influence. From the perspective of the communities of practice framework, her sustained editorial involvement facilitated deeper integration into the EFL community, fostering collaborations and opportunities. Furthermore, in line with the concept of identity in professional communities, these experiences contributed to the development of her identity as a central figure within her professional network, capable of contributing significantly to the field.

4.4. Integrating global and local perspectives

The study also uncovered the theme of integrating global and local perspectives in the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers who have served as journal editors. This theme, highlighted in the narratives of both the male and female participants with different durations of editorial experience, emphasizes how their roles as journal editors have influenced the blending of global trends and local realities in their professional practices and identities.

The male participant, with his more recent experience as an editor, noted, *“Working as an editor exposed me to a myriad of global EFL methodologies and ideas. Integrating these with our local educational context has been challenging but incredibly enriching for my professional practice.”* This comment reflects a fusion of global and local dimensions in his professional identity, resonating with the communities of practice framework. His editorial role provided a platform for engaging with a global community of EFL professionals, allowing him to juxtapose international insights with the specificities of the Vietnamese context. The concept of identity in professional communities further clarifies this experience by suggesting that such engagements lead to a more nuanced and contextualized professional identity, one that balances and synthesizes global knowledge with local practices.

Similarly, the female participant with a longer tenure as an editor shared, *“My editorship has been a journey of bringing global perspectives into our local EFL conversations. It has shaped my identity as an educator who bridges these two worlds.”* Her experience illustrates a deliberate effort to meld global insights with local EFL teaching and learning realities. According to the communities of practice framework, her prolonged and active participation in the editorial community facilitated a deeper understanding of global EFL trends and their application in Vietnam. Additionally, the concept of identity in professional communities supports the idea that such integrative experiences redefine an educator’s professional identity, enabling them to become intermediaries who effectively connect global advancements with local educational needs.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the existing body of literature on professional identity in the context of EFL education, particularly among Vietnamese lecturers. The themes of enhanced professional efficacy, navigating challenges and resilience, expanding professional networks and influence, and integrating global and local perspectives offer both similarities and distinct differences when compared to previous studies. These differences underscore the unique contributions of this study to the field.

The theme of enhanced professional efficacy resonates with existing literature that emphasizes the role of professional roles and responsibilities in shaping educators’ sense of competence and confidence [14, 15, 18-20]. However, this study extends these findings by specifically highlighting the impact of journal editorship, a relatively underexplored area in EFL education. Unlike previous studies that focused broadly on teaching or

administrative roles ^[29], this study provides specific insights into how editorial responsibilities influence professional identity, offering a more nuanced understanding of this aspect.

In terms of navigating challenges and developing resilience, previous research has often focused on the classroom-related challenges faced by EFL teachers ^[15]. This study diverges by exploring the challenges inherent in the journal editorship role. The finding demonstrates how overcoming these specific challenges contributes to the development of resilience and adaptability, adding a new dimension to our understanding of professional identity in EFL education.

The expansion of professional networks and influence as a result of journal editorship is another area where this study adds new insights. While previous research has acknowledged the importance of professional networks in teacher development ^[25, 30, 31], this study uniquely highlights how the role of a journal editor can significantly broaden these networks and enhance an educator's influence within the academic community. This finding contributes to a deeper understanding of the ways in which professional roles outside of teaching can impact an EFL educator's identity.

Finally, the theme of integrating global and local perspectives reflects a growing area of interest in EFL education, particularly in the context of non-native English-speaking countries ^[26, 27]. The current study provides valuable insights into how the editorial role enables educators to navigate this global-local nexus, thereby enriching their professional identity. This finding adds to the literature by illustrating the specific ways in which journal editorship facilitates the integration of global and local perspectives, a topic not extensively covered in previous research.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the impact of journal editorship on the professional identity of Vietnamese EFL lecturers. Operating within the burgeoning field of EFL education in Vietnam, a setting unique in its cultural, historical, and educational characteristics, this research aimed to uncover the nuanced ways in which specific professional roles, such as that of a journal editor, influence an educator's sense of self within the academic community.

Employing a qualitative research design, the study centered around semi-structured interviews with two Vietnamese EFL lecturers - one male with one year of experience as an invited editor and one female with three years of experience as a section editor. The data collected from these interviews was meticulously analyzed through thematic analysis, guided by Lave and Wenger's communities of practice and Wenger's concept of identity in professional communities. This approach enabled a deep and contextual exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions.

The findings revealed four key themes: enhanced sense of professional efficacy, navigating challenges and resilience, expanding professional networks and influence, and integrating global and local perspectives. These themes collectively highlight the transformative impact of journal editorship on the professional identities of Vietnamese EFL lecturers. Participants reported a heightened sense of confidence and competence, the development of resilience through overcoming editorial challenges, expanded professional networks with increased influence, and an ability to integrate global methodologies with local teaching practices.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. Firstly, they emphasize the importance of roles outside the traditional realm of teaching in shaping EFL educators' professional identities. The role of a journal editor, often overlooked in the literature, has been shown to significantly contribute to professional growth and self-perception. The study also underscores the dynamic nature of professional identity in EFL education, which evolves not just through classroom experiences but also through engagement with the broader academic

community. For EFL lecturers, understanding the value of journal editorship roles could encourage them to seek out these opportunities as part of their professional development, thereby enhancing their efficacy, resilience, and global connectivity. For journal editors and editorial boards, these insights advocate for the creation of support systems and frameworks that recognize and foster the professional development of editors, potentially through mentorship programs, training workshops, and networking events. Educational policymakers, on the other hand, could leverage these findings to advocate for policies that acknowledge and support the multifaceted roles educators play, including editorship, as part of their professional growth and contribution to the educational community.

For EFL education in Vietnam and similar contexts, the findings suggest that embracing roles that connect educators to global trends while grounding them in local realities can lead to a more robust and adaptable professional identity. Moreover, integrating journal editorship roles into professional development strategies could offer valuable pathways for personal and professional growth. Suggestions for this integration include establishing collaborative projects between journals and educational institutions, promoting editorship as a recognized component of academic advancement criteria, and incorporating editorship experience into teacher training and development programs. Such initiatives would not only validate the role of journal editorship in professional development but also encourage a more inclusive and dynamic approach to educator growth, aligning educational practices with the demands and opportunities of the global academic landscape.

In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding professional identity in the field of EFL education, particularly in the context of Vietnam. By shedding light on the significant role of journal editorship, it offers valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in the field of language education. It encourages a broader view of professional development, one that encompasses a range of roles and experiences, thereby enriching the professional lives of EFL educators and, by extension, the educational experiences of their students.

7. Limitations and recommendations for further studies

This study, while providing valuable insights, has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size is notably small, encompassing only two Vietnamese EFL lecturers. While this focused approach allows for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, it limits the generalizability of the findings. The experiences of these two individuals may not fully represent the diverse range of experiences and perspectives that exist among EFL lecturers in Vietnam or in other contexts. Additionally, the study is limited by its sole reliance on qualitative interviews. While this method provides rich, detailed data, the absence of other data sources such as observation or document analysis means that the findings are entirely reliant on participant self-reporting, which may introduce biases or limit the scope of the insights gained.

Based on the limitations identified in the current study, there is a significant opportunity to expand the scope and depth of future research in the area of journal editorship's impact on the professional identity of EFL lecturers. A key recommendation involves broadening the participant pool to include a larger and more diverse sample of EFL lecturers. By incorporating individuals with a wider array of experiences, academic backgrounds, and editorial roles from various educational and cultural settings, future studies could greatly enhance the generalizability of their findings. Such diversity would allow for a richer, more nuanced exploration of how journal editorship influences professional identity across different contexts, potentially revealing variations and commonalities that the current study could not address due to its limited sample size.

Moreover, adopting a mixed-methods research approach would significantly enrich our understanding of the complex phenomena at hand. By integrating qualitative interviews with additional data collection methods—such as direct classroom observations, analysis of editorial and teaching documents, and

quantitative surveys—researchers could capture the multifaceted nature of professional identity development among EFL lecturers. This comprehensive approach would not only validate the qualitative insights gained from interviews but also uncover the intricate ways in which various aspects of an educator’s professional life interact to shape their identity. For instance, classroom observations could reveal how editorial experiences influence teaching practices, while surveys could provide quantitative data on the broader trends and perceptions among EFL lecturers regarding the value of journal editorship in their professional growth.

Finally, conducting comparative studies that examine the experiences of EFL lecturers in different cultural or educational settings could yield invaluable cross-cultural perspectives. Such research would shed light on the potentially unique ways in which journal editorship contributes to professional identity formation in diverse language education landscapes. By comparing and contrasting the experiences of lecturers in various parts of the world, researchers could identify cultural and contextual factors that either facilitate or hinder the positive impact of journal editorship on professional identity. These cross-cultural insights would not only deepen our understanding of the universal and context-specific aspects of professional development in EFL education but also inform more effective support structures and policies for educators engaged in editorial roles globally.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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