



“Nurtured by My Motherland”: An Autobiographical Introspective Narrative Inquiry into Ecological Influences on Becoming a Qualitative Teacher-Researcher

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Received: 2025/09/07

Accepted: 2025/11/01

Abstract: Language teachers are professionally expected to serve as educational innovators, change agents, and particularly teacher-researchers. Teacher-researcher identity and its negotiation have received much attention from international scholars. In Vietnam, substantial research has been conducted to examine this concept and its influential factors among tertiary lecturers. Nevertheless, a research gap remains in understanding factors affecting teacher-researcher identity negotiation from other teacher demographics, particularly from an insider's perspective. Therefore, this autobiographical introspective narrative inquiry addressed this gap by shedding light on the contextual influences on my teacher-researcher identity negotiated during the process of completing a Master's graduation thesis. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development as the theoretical framework, the study gathered data from my autobiographical writings and semi-structured interviews with two purposefully-selected outsiders. The collected data were deductively analyzed through thematic analysis. Results revealed that contextual influences (personal, academic, institutional, and socio-cultural contributors) on my teacher-researcher identity negotiation were nested into an ecological system of four concentrated layers, including the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems, respectively. These findings further showed how the socio-academic condition of the Mekong Delta region affectionately nurtured my growing maturity as a qualitative teacher-researcher. Beyond its scholarly contribution, this study is also a testament to how one's roots can illuminate the path toward becoming a teacher-researcher, offering inspiration for others walking a similar journey.

Keywords: Autobiographical Narratives, English Language Teaching, Teacher-researcher Identity, Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development.

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Introduction

As recent decades have passed by, educational research has ubiquitously been conceptualized as a highly valued component of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). This endeavor offers a platform for refining pedagogical practices, advances long-term career trajectories, and fosters an in-depth engagement with professional communities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). Through conducting research, teachers are allowed to enhance teaching methodologies and further embark on ongoing processes of constructing, reconstructing, deconstructing, negotiating, and renegotiating their teacher-researcher identity (Burns, 2016). A wealth of international studies has collectively concurred on the complex and dynamic nature of this identity negotiation within the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Their findings underscored its centrality to teachers' agency, academic buoyancy, professional growth, and emotional well-being (Çakmak & Çelik, 2024). Moreover, these studies have highlighted the universally-agreed-upon role of comprehending how teacher-researcher identity alters under contextual influences as it proposes pedagogical implications for teachers' professional path and research engagement (Lu, 2024).

In Vietnamese contexts, numerous studies have attempted to explore the construction of teacher-researcher identity and the contextual influences shaping it (Ngo et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2024). However, a research limitation of these studies is their exclusive focus on tertiary-level EFL lecturers and Ph.D. candidates, probably overlooking other teacher groups, especially novice teachers who pursue research-based Master's degrees. Furthermore, despite the growing recognition of research as an integral part of teachers' professional lives, there remains a research problem concerning how novice teachers experience identity negotiation when engaging in educational research in the Master's programs. Without such understanding, educational institutions and policymakers may struggle to design effective support systems to foster these teachers' development as competent and confident researchers (Mai & Brundrett, 2024; Phan et al., 2025). Additionally, the dominance of studies focusing on senior academics has left voices of early-career teacher-researchers largely unheard, resulting in an incomplete portrayal of teacher-researcher identity formation across various career stages. Addressing this gap is therefore essential to achieving a more comprehensive understanding of teacher identity in the Vietnamese EFL context. This study addresses this gap by deploying an introspective autobiographical narrative inquiry within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development. By shedding light on an insider's lived experiences, the study illuminates interconnected ecological factors that influence the teacher-researcher identity reconstruction process during the eight-month period wherein I

conducted a Master's graduation thesis. Through this examination, the study offers a critical perspective that is rarely explored in existing literature, ultimately contributing novel insights to the field of teacher identity self-research in Vietnam.

Literature Review

Teacher-Researcher Identity and Its Negotiation

Professional identity is defined as an ever-changing, dynamic, and multifaceted concept that is differently understood across various professions (Clandinin et al., 2000). In the field of education, it is conceptualized through the critical lens of teachers' professional selves, particularly how they perceive themselves in the teaching profession (Burns, 2016; Nana & Jing, 2017; Phan et al., 2025). Within the conceptualization of teachers' professional identities, teacher-researcher identity is expressed in how teachers position and reposition themselves as not only teachers but also teacher-researchers (Lu, 2024). Nonetheless, it is critical to note that this dual identity is not only ingrained in tertiary lecturers, as it is ubiquitously assumed. In fact, it extends across various educational levels, irrespective of teaching positions or teacher demographics (Prabandari et al., 2024; Vandamme, 2017). As Phan et al. (2025) asserted, whenever teachers enter the research field, they bring unique individual assumptions that teaching practices can be efficiently enhanced through research and simultaneously integrate this critical role into professional identities.

In the field of TEFL, teacher research has been commonly examined, with teachers engaging in research tasks such as generating ideas, designing research projects, conducting studies, writing reports, and disseminating research findings (Heng et al., 2020). As Leuverink and Aarts (2018) reaffirmed, such teacher research is characterized by six features, including teacher-as-researcher, systematic, practice-improving, collaborative, context-specific, and dynamic ones. These elements are interconnected and contribute to an ongoing developmental process that negotiates teacher-researcher identity. As to the significance of research itself, it is more likely to transform teachers into teacher-researchers, solidifying their occupational status (Mai & Brundrett, 2024). More significantly, such roles are expected to strengthen their social relationships and thereby enhance their roles as innovators and change agents at organizational levels (Kaasila et al., 2025; Wu, 2022).

Factors Affecting the Negotiation of Teacher-Researcher Identity

The negotiation of teacher-researcher identity is a process where teachers critically reconstruct worldviews, philosophies of teaching as a profession, and value systems (Trinh

et al., 2025). This process is impacted by a variety of contextual influences, which can be categorized into the individual, academic, institutional, and socio-cultural dimensions (Heng et al., 2020; Leuverink & Aarts, 2018).

At the center of the teacher-researcher identity lies individual motivation and academic resilience (Ngo et al., 2022). Teachers' intrinsic motivation to engage in research is driven by a genuine curiosity, a desire for professional enhancements, and the belief that research can transform their real-world classroom practices. This motivation compels teachers to take on research projects that resonate with their own interests and educational trajectories, ultimately negotiating professional identities as teacher-researchers. Alongside motivation, academic resilience is equally essential in doing research as teachers who face obstacles in research must demonstrate perseverance and a commitment to learning from their failures.

Academic factors, particularly the quality of supervisorship and academic interaction within a research environment, hold a crucial role in the development of a teacher-researcher identity (Bao et al., 2024). First and foremost, the relationship between a teacher and their thesis supervisor is one of the most significant academic influences on their research trajectory. As Aydin et al. (2023) asserted, the relationship between supervisors and supervisees "accommodates power that directly influences the quality of the thesis product and the successful completion of it" (p. 150). Supervisors who provide intellectual stimulation, constructive feedback, and emotional support significantly enhance supervisees' efficacy in research endeavors. Secondly, academic interaction with stakeholders is central to negotiating teacher-researcher identity (Ngo et al., 2022, 2024). Engaging with colleagues undergoing similar lived experiences fosters a collaborative environment where teachers can share ideas, discuss challenges, and offer timely support (Weise et al., 2020).

Institutional influences, including research policies, institutional research culture, and the expectations set by the educational organization, have a profound impact on how teachers approach research (Van der Heijden et al., 2015). As Wu (2022) argued, in some cases, institutional support may be a catalyst for developing a teacher-researcher identity. When institutions prioritize research, provide ample resources, and foster a research-oriented culture, teachers are more likely to embrace their research roles. Nonetheless, in case teachers perceive a disconnect between their personal research interests and their institution's concentration, they may self-perceive themselves as marginalized or disconnected from the research culture (Clark et al., 2022). In these cases, teachers are forced to construct their own teacher-researcher identity since they seek to align their individual academic goals with their professional aspirations.

Socio-cultural factors (e.g., teacher professionalization, shifting research trends, and national educational reforms) are considered as one of the greatest compasses in the development of teacher-researcher identities. [Zhu et al. \(2020\)](#) reevaluated that these broader influences decide how teachers perceive the role of research in their local practices. Indeed, the growing movements in education have led to new research methodologies, which require teachers to adapt their research practices in order to remain relevant. Furthermore, national reforms influence the expectations placed on teachers, one of which refers to how they integrate research into their professional roles. Arguably, these socio-cultural contributors do not simply affect the content of research but also form teachers' repositioning within their profession ([Wang & Fang, 2025](#)). As a result, teachers must navigate an ever-changing socio-cultural context, contiguously reassessing, redefining, and re-conceptualizing their roles as teacher-researchers to align with these external pressures ([Bui & Nguyen, 2016](#)).

In brief, the development of a teacher-researcher identity is under the influence of a multi-layered system. Each layer holds a unique function to shape how teachers construct and negotiate their identity as teacher-researchers. As teachers are faced with challenges and opportunities, they had better continuously adapt and integrate these factors, which ultimately support them in building a cohesive and united professional identity ([Beijaard et al., 2004](#))

Related Studies on Factors Affecting Teacher-Researcher Identity Negotiation

The existing body of literature regarding factors affecting EFL teachers' teacher-researcher identity negotiation has highlighted the significant role of contextual influences in this process. Internationally, a study by [Nana and Jing \(2017\)](#) on Chinese EFL lecturers found that both social and academic environments were key in shaping teacher-researcher identities. Personal traits such as intrinsic motivation, academic credentials, and professional networks further contributed to how these teachers formed their identities as teacher-researchers. Similarly, [Prabandari et al. \(2024\)](#) in Indonesia shed light on the challenges that teachers faced in conducting action research and building their professional identities. This study revealed that institutional factors contributed to critical gaps between teachers' perceptions of research and their actual research performances, which in turn reconstructed their teacher-researcher identities. Recently, [Çakmak and Çelik \(2024\)](#) found that pre-service and experienced Turkish teachers developed their teacher-researcher identities through a combination of academic, social, and personal factors, with personal motivations being central to the process.

In Vietnamese contexts, studies on the contextual factors shaping teacher-researcher identities are still limited. [Ngo et al. \(2024\)](#) identified contextual influences on Vietnamese EFL lecturers, noting that their identities were formed through the interaction of personal factors and broader contextual influences within an ecological framework. Additionally, [Le and Pham's \(2024\)](#) autoethnographic study examined a Vietnamese lecturer's experience of balancing roles of EFL teacher, researcher, and cultural intermediary. This valued the ongoing negotiation and reevaluation of the teacher-researcher identity in response to personal beliefs, cultural expectations, and teaching responsibilities.

Although substantial research has focused on teacher-researcher identity negotiation of experienced EFL teachers, Ph.D. candidates, and individuals within structured academic programs, there remains a gap in understanding contextual influences on how EFL Master's students in Vietnam construct and negotiate teacher-researcher identities during the process of doing a graduation thesis. Moreover, a shortage of empirical studies utilizing introspective autobiographical narrative inquiry to capture personal and social influences on such identity negotiation has been stated. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by exploring how contextual influences have an impact on teacher-researcher identity negotiation from an insider perspective, focusing on my experiences as a Master's student who has engaged in teaching and learning to research in a TEFL-majored Master's program.

TEFL-Majored Graduate Education in Vietnam

Graduate education in Vietnam has been experiencing significant growth in recent decades, thereby reflecting the country's efforts to modernize its academic workforce and ameliorate professional competencies in line with global integration and readiness, and sustainability ([Kelly, 2000](#)). Nonetheless, with the decline of opportunities in Eastern bloc countries and the increasing influences of Western academic models, the country has progressively moved toward a more flexible, competency-based graduate education system ([Trung & Swierczek, 2009](#)). Master's programs feature a blend of research- and practice-oriented approaches. These programs typically last for two years, combining coursework with the completion of a thesis, which must be defended before an evaluation committee ([Kelly, 2000](#)).

Among the various graduate programs, TEFL-majored Master's ones have become a key pathway for preparing EFL teachers to meet local, national, and international standards. Offered by leading institutions in teacher education and training, these programs are designed to equip graduate students with a comprehensive set of theoretical, methodological, and practical skills. The curriculum covers essential areas such as second language acquisition,

language teaching methodologies, curriculum and syllabus design, materials development, testing and assessment, continuing professional development, and, importantly, educational research in the field of TEFL (Nguyen & Hall, 2017; Nguyen & Vu, 2020). A key feature of these programs is the emphasis on developing students' research competencies, which are essential for addressing contemporary issues in TEFL and tackling educational challenges through conducting empirical research (Nguyen & Dao, 2019). Ultimately, these programs cultivate reflective teacher-researchers who are socially defined as educational innovators and change agents in socio-cultural contexts, capable of driving innovation, ensuring sustainable development, and contributing to the broader discourse in this field.

Theoretical Framework Guiding the Current Study

The theoretical framework adapted for this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development. This social theory sheds light on the dynamic interaction between individuals and the surrounding setting in which they are embedded, and vice versa. Bronfenbrenner (1979) perceived human development as a "progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which they live, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which they are embedded" (p. 21). Therefore, this theory values the interconnections of multiple layers of influences, each nested within the other, and examines the roles of surrounding contexts in shaping an individual's development.

For this study, Bronfenbrenner's original model (see Figure 1) was chosen due to its relevance in examining the contextual factors that impact my identity. Christensen (2016) argued that this foundational model is particularly useful in understanding how contextual elements either support or impede development, as it is described as "a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). These systems are the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, macro-system, and chrono-system, each of them hold significant roles in shaping the human development in an extent to which they interact with. At its core, the micro-system involves the immediate environment, such as family, peers, schools, and other settings where direct interactions occur, exerting the most immediate influence on development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Moving outward, the meso-system refers to the interconnections between these micro-systems, which can either facilitate or hinder their development. The exo-system refers to critical environments in which the individual does not directly participate, yet such environments still have an influence on her or his development. Moving outward, the macro-system represents the broader cultural,

societal, and economic context, which decides people's values, beliefs, and expectations. Finally, the chrono-system takes into account the role of time, including how critical events, transitions, and historical alterations impact development over time.

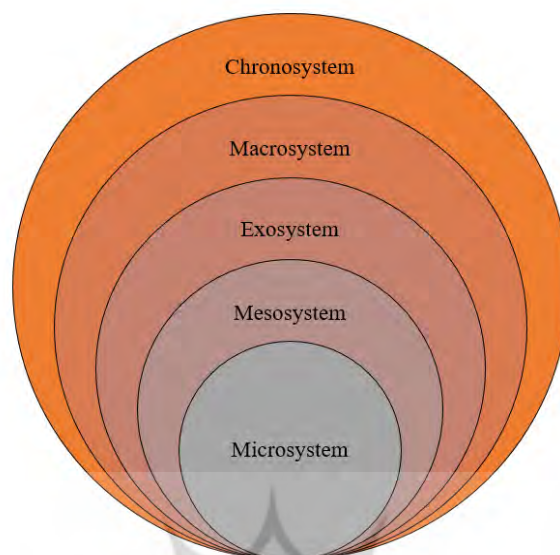


Figure 1. A Nested Five-Layer Ecological System (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Bronfenbrenner's theory has been effectively adapted in some studies examining the contextual influences on EFL teachers' teacher-researcher identities. For instance, Lu and Yoon (2024) explored how Chinese EFL lecturers' teacher-researcher identities aligned with institutional and national policies, highlighting the misalignment between their interpretations and institutional expectations. Similarly, Ngo et al. (2022, 2024) studied how Vietnamese EFL lecturers' research engagement and identity were shaped by individual and contextual factors within an ecological system. For this study, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original model was adapted to focus on short-term contextual influences on teacher-researcher identity development in my Master's thesis completion. While the chronosystem typically addresses long-term developmental changes, it was excluded in this study because of its focus on a specific period of time. Instead, the study used the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system to analyze contextual factors that influenced my identity at the time I conducted my graduation thesis. This adaptation allowed for a focused exploration of the immediate factors that facilitated the construction and negotiation of my teacher-researcher identity within a limited timeframe.

Grounded upon this theory, the current study seeks to answer the sole research question: *How do contextual factors in an ecological system affect my teacher-researcher identity negotiation during conducting a Master’s graduation thesis?*

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed autobiographical introspective narrative inquiry as its methodological approach to exploring the factors affecting my negotiation of teacher-researcher identity during the process of completing my Master’s thesis. Narrative inquiry allows individuals to delve into their lived experiences by living and re-living, and narrating and re-narrating their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Through recalling and reflecting on personal narratives, individuals make sense of their identities and reshape their inner selves (Holland et al., 1998). Autobiography, in this context, centers on my personal journey, positioning the self both as the subject and the narrator of my stories. As Creswell (2007, 2012) evaluated, this approach is particularly effective in capturing personal insights and interpreting them within specific contexts. According to Given (2008), autobiographical inquiry further serves as a significant tool for exploring the complexities of experiences, allowing the researcher to trace the evolution of their thoughts, emotions, and values.

This methodological approach was chosen for this study for several reasons. Firstly, it allowed me to engage in deep self-reflection and examine contextual influences on the alterations in my teacher-researcher identity. Secondly, autobiographical narrative inquiry provided a first-person perspective, offering an authentic and emotionally rich analysis of my experiences. Thirdly, this approach aligned well with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development since it facilitated an investigation into the complex interplay between personal factors and various contextual influences that had reconstructed my teacher-researcher identity. Collectively, on implementing this design, I was better able to document how my identity as a teacher-researcher was constructed and negotiated within the dynamic ecological system of my graduate studies.

Research Context and Participant

I conducted this study at Can Tho University, where I have been learning for my Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. The Master’s program I enrolled is the research-based one named “Principles and methods of English language education” (Vietnamese translated as *Lý luận và phương pháp dạy học bộ môn tiếng Anh*). The program aims to equip graduate students

with both theoretical knowledge and research competencies. It consists of a total of 60 academic credits divided into 15 hours of lectures, 45 hours of practical application, and 45 hours of self-directed learning for each credit. Among these, 27 credits are dedicated to research competency development (including a 15-credit graduation thesis), 29 credits focus on TEFL knowledge, and 4 credits are dedicated to philosophical foundations. After completing all coursework, each student must conduct an individual research project as their graduation thesis under the supervision of one or two academic supervisors. The final thesis is evaluated through a 30-minute defense presentation before a committee of five experienced educators, with evaluation criteria including thesis quality (5 points), formatting and organization (2 points), oral presentation (2 points), and a publication (1 point). Upon completion, graduate students are expected to meet a range of learning outcomes related to knowledge, skills, and values that align with the requirements of modern education and global citizenship (Phan et al., 2025).

As the participant and researcher in this study, I drew upon my personal experiences as a language teacher in my beloved motherland, the Mekong Delta region. I was born in 2001 in a rural village in Long Phu District, Soc Trang Province. Growing up in an extended family, I was nurtured with the affection and support from my paternal Grandfather and Parents, and I was encouraged to pursue higher education. I started learning English in grade six at a local secondary school without any clear orientation to my future profession. However, it was not until grade eleven that my female teacher ignited my intrinsic motivation to learn the language, which further enabled me to pursue English more intentionally in my university life. Currently, as an early-career English teacher with four years of experience in private language centers and academic institutions, I completed my Bachelor's degree in English Studies in early 2023. My passion for English education has been with me since my school years. I conceptualize my teaching as a long-term mission that concentrates on interpersonal and professional growth, learner development, and contribution to my community. Enrolling in the Master's program in mid-August 2023 marked the beginning of my engagement with educational research. My research interests cover teacher professional identity, researcher identity, teacher emotions, academic buoyancy, and CPD, especially in the context of globalization and educational changes and internationalization. Throughout my graduate studies, I have actively participated in CPD-related activities, regarding educational research as a crucial tool for reflection and innovation in my teaching practices. I hold a firm belief that understanding these aspects is key to enhancing teacher education programs and promoting sustainable CPD-related models. As a dedicated member of a research-based

community of practice (CoP), I have collaborated with other teacher-researchers and my fellow Master's peers to conduct studies and contribute to article publications in international journals. Such lived experiences have strengthened my research competencies and enabled me to apply research findings to my teaching practices and social contribution. Drawing on my professional learning experiences, I anchor my teaching philosophy in five core values: "Đức" (Virtue), "Tâm" (Compassion), "Tài" (Talent), "Tầm" (Vision), and "Trí" (Wisdom). I believe that when these five values are wholly cultivated and harmonized, the ultimate value of "Thành" (Fulfillment) can be attained, representing genuine success and holistic fulfillment in the teaching profession.

As to my graduation thesis, I conducted a biographical and autobiographical narrative inquiry into Vietnamese EFL teachers' researcher identity construction and negotiation. It lasted from December 2025 to August 2025. This dual-layered investigation weaved together the rich lived experiences of my participants and my own evolving journey to becoming a novice teacher-researcher. The thesis had been quietly nurtured in my mind since late 2023. I had invested not only time and effort but also deep personal hopes into it. As the journey is now reaching its destination, I find myself eagerly anticipating the outcomes it may yield, both in terms of academic contribution and its resonance with other teacher-researchers navigating similar crossroads in their professional lives.

Data Collection and Analysis

My autobiographical writings served as the primary data collection method in this study to shed light on contextual influences on the construction and negotiation of my teacher-researcher identity. This approach allowed me to systematically reflect on my experiences throughout the thesis-conducting process. Such writing was deployed focusing on real-time journaling during the eight-month thesis writing period (from December 2024 to August 2025). During this time, I partook in introspective reflections, concentrating on emotional responses, research-related challenges, identity tensions, and strategies for managing the academic demands of the thesis.

Considering mitigating my potential bias, I used semi-structured interviews with two of my Master's peers, Kiên and Cường (pseudonyms), as a secondary data source for triangulation. Kiên and Cường are two of my close peers from the Master's program. We often collaborated on research projects together. Furthermore, both are familiar with my academic journey and teaching experiences, making their perspectives valuable for understanding my teacher-researcher identity development. Throughout the thesis process,

they provided external insights on my semi-structured interview protocol and transcripts, which helped to mitigate any bias from my own self-reflections. These interviews facilitated me in capturing external perspectives on my thesis journey and identity, providing insights that might not have been fully visible through self-reflection itself. Kiên and Cường were selected because they were familiar with my Master's learning journey and teaching experiences, making them well-positioned to offer informed and contextually relevant reflections. To create a comfortable environment for sharing, one of my male Master's peers was invited to be the interviewer and conduct the interviews. This interviewer was professionally close to Kiên, Cường, and me in our research projects. Additionally, an interview protocol was designed in advance to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes. The protocol covered four areas comprising (1) personal influences, (2) academic influences, (3) institutional influences, and (4) socio-cultural influences on experiences in conducting my graduation thesis.

For the analysis of the data, thematic analysis was carefully chosen to identify, analyze, synthesize, and report the data through patterns and codes. As [Clarke and Braun \(2017\)](#) asserted, this approach is particularly suitable for exploring how complex lived experiences unfold over time. The first step was that I familiarized myself with the collected data. I started thoroughly reading the autobiographical writings and interview transcripts multiple times, making notes on initial ideas. This helped me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data as a whole before diving into the identification of specific patterns. Next, I generated initial codes by highlighting meaningful excerpts from the data and labeling them with highlighted codes, which represented key aspects of levels of contextual influences guided by the theoretical framework. By doing so, I was better able to break down the data into four manageable themes (e.g., micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems), each of which could be examined more closely. Once the initial themes were established, I moved on to searching for sub-themes in relation to each factor affecting my teacher-researcher identity negotiation. This step involved grouping related sub-themes into broader themes that reflected common patterns across the data. After identifying the sub-themes, I reviewed them to ensure they accurately represented the data. I revisited the themes to check if they were consistent with the original codes and if they captured the meaning behind the experiences described. During this process, some themes were refined and new ones emerged as I further explored the connections between the data. The next step referred to defining and naming the final themes. I carefully defined each theme and gave them names that clearly conveyed their

essence. Finally, I wrote the report, integrating the themes into a coherent narrative illustrated by long quotations and interview excerpts.

Ethical Considerations

As both the researcher and the primary participant in this autobiographical narrative inquiry, I was mindful of the ethical considerations inherent in recalling my personal lived experiences. In addition, during semi-structured interviews, both Kiên and Cường were fully informed about the purpose of the study and provided written consent. Their identities were safeguarded through the usage of pseudonyms, and all qualitative data collected was securely handled. The autobiographical writings and interview data were stored on my personal computer, which was protected by a robust password to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the current study, I implemented four key strategies based on established research criteria ([Lincoln & Guba 1985](#)). Credibility was enhanced through the member checking wherein I sent the transcribed interviews back to Kiên and Cường for their clarification and subsequent modifications. This allowed them to confirm the accuracy of their statements and provide additional insights if necessary. For transferability, I offered a detailed description of the research context, my personal background, and methodological decisions that I made throughout the study. This endeavor aimed to provide the ultimate transparency and enable potential readers to assess the applicability of the findings. Dependability was reinforced through regular discussions with my thesis supervisor, a qualified teacher educator with expertise in educational research, ensuring consistency and rigor in the research process. Lastly, confirmability was strengthened by using direct quotes from autobiographical writings and interviews to illustrate each identified theme. This would ensure that findings were rooted in the nominated participants' voices and experiences rather than being solely my interpretation.

Findings

During the eight months in which I conducted my Master's graduation thesis, critical interactions with different stakeholders were central to my dramatic teacher-researcher identity negotiation. This section reports several contextual influences on my lived experiences in conducting the graduation thesis, categorized into four themes: personal,

academic, institutional, and socio-cultural contributors, all of which are nested into an ecological system (see Figure 2).

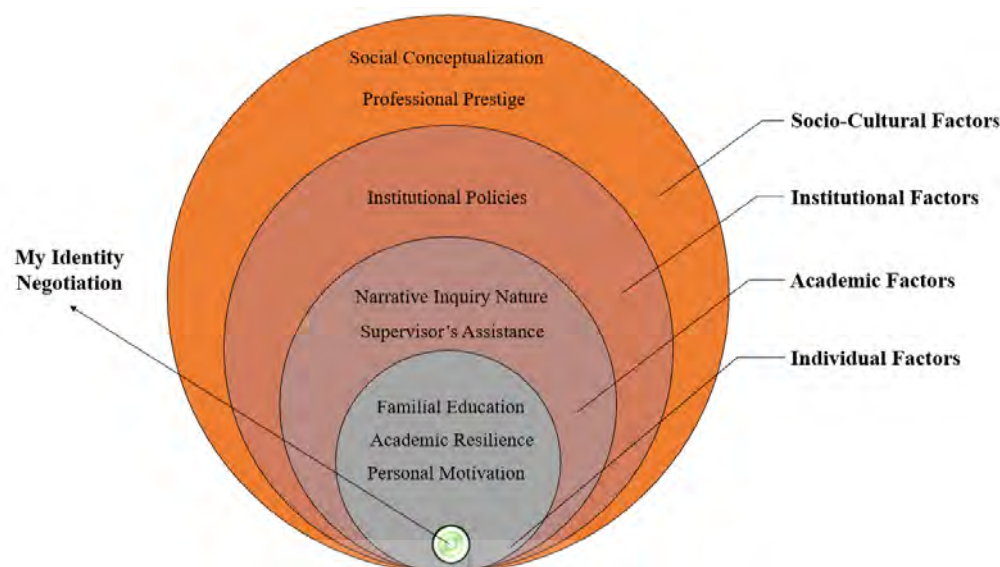


Figure 2. A Four-Layer Ecological System Affecting My Teacher-Researcher Identity Negotiation

Personal Factors

Intrinsic Motivation

As I began my thesis, I quickly realized that this journey was a worth-exploring one driven by my intrinsic motivation. I recall many late nights when I felt physically exhausted with qualitative data chaos. My eyes burned from staring at the screen for too long, and my back ached from sitting for hours on end. Even when it felt impossible, something inside me kept pushing me forward.

I think what kept me going was my inner desire to prove to myself that I was capable of making my thesis idea a reality. When I was fatigued, eyes stinging from too much screen time, back aching from sitting too long in a day, I still opened my laptop. I kept typing, editing, reading, and rereading. It was that quiet persistence that reminded me of my commitment to my beloved thesis. (My autobiography)

There were some moments when everything felt overwhelming with retelling my participants' narratives. In some moments of self-doubt, I questioned whether it was worth putting myself in this chaos. Nonetheless, each time, I came back to the belief that this was my work, my journey, and that I had to see it through for my own growth.

Even when everything felt overwhelming with narrative inquiry. I kept pushing forward, honoring the belief that this thesis mattered to me, to some extent I can learn from my methodological choice. I tried to stay true to my values and my commitment to this work. (My autobiography)

As the journey continued, I came to acknowledge that my intrinsic motivation should be conceptualized as connecting my research with my professional self as a teacher. The thesis was a place where my teaching philosophy and my research intersected, giving the entire process a greater sense of purpose and meaning.

This journey of motivation sustained me through moments of uncertainty, allowing me to connect my research to my teaching values. It gave the process a deeper meaning and kept me grounded. I realized this thesis was more than just writing itself. To me, now, it was an opportunity to align my work with who I am as an emerging teacher-researcher. (My autobiography)

Academic Self-Resilience

While intrinsic motivation kept me moving forward, academic self-resilience was the force that enabled me to persist through the more difficult moments of the research process. At the beginning, I had expected the data to reveal a clear story plot on its own. I thought I would easily identify story threads. The more I read interview transcripts, the more I felt lost, unsure of how to proceed.

The more I read the transcripts, the more I felt lost. The stories were beautifully told, but the connections were not quite clear. Questions like "What do these stories imply about teacher identity?" and "Where are the threads?" kept haunting me. I would spend hours coding pages, only to delete them the next day. I myself could not give up. I kept coming back to it by rereading, rethinking, rewriting, and trying to make sense of it all. (My autobiography)

Instead of rushing to conclusions, I decided to slow down and let the data reveal itself in its own time. I realized that the key was that I should not force meaning into the data, yet allow it to emerge naturally. I stopped trying to impose structure and let the complexity remain, trusting that clarity would come with patience.

I read slowly, line by line, allowing meaning to emerge organically. I learned that meaning does not always come immediately. It takes more time and patience. I had to trust that it would unfold on its own. (My autobiography)

A pivotal moment came when I received feedback from Kiên. He pointed out how my resilience referred to respecting the complexity and chaos of the data and staying committed even when things did not make sense. His sharing woke me up,

He (the researcher) was frustrated, I can see and affirm that, yet he stayed. He treated his participants' words like they were sacred [...] It can be because it came from his self-determination. (Kiên, outsider-nominated interview)

Familial Education

In addition to intrinsic motivation and academic self-resilience, I found that familial education played an essential role in supporting me through this thesis process. From my childhood, my family instilled in me the significance of education. These early lessons laid the strongest foundation that helped me persevere throughout my graduate study.

My beloved Parents always work hard to invest in my education. Particularly, my late paternal Grandfather taught me the importance of education which can change an individual's life. They utilize much of their physical, mental, financial health and wealth to uplift me into this social class. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason why I give up. I must try as much as I can in this Master's learning journey, especially this thesis conducting. (My autobiography)

Whenever I doubted myself or felt like giving up, I remembered what my family had taught me. They taught me that success requires dedication and consistent effort. Furthermore, I had to conduct research with my perseverance, do the best I could, and continue even when it got tough. In my autobiographical writing, I noted down,

Whenever I felt like quitting, I remembered the lessons my family had instilled in me. The importance of discipline, the value of hard work, and the belief that success comes from consistent effort. (My autobiography)

As the research process continued, I realized how these values had helped me ignite my intrinsic motivation and develop academic resilience. I learned to approach challenges not with frustration but with a calm determination, knowing that slow and steady progress was key. My family taught me to trust the process, knowing that even when things were unclear, progress was still being made.

My family taught me to approach every challenge with patience. I learned that not everything occurs quickly or easily. Some things must take time. That is OK to me. This mindset was vital as I worked through the complexities of my thesis,

reminding me that the process itself was as important as the outcome.
(My autobiography)

Academic Factors

Supervisor's Assistance

Among the various influences that shaped my identity as an emerging qualitative inquirer, the guidance I received from my supervisor stood out as one of the most impactful. One of the key aspects of his supervision was the level of affection he showed toward my writing. His feedback challenged the depth of my ideas, pushing me to think more critically.

Whenever I received returned drafts from my thesis supervisor, I could see how deeply he had engaged with my work. To me, he did not just fix grammatical mistakes. He challenged my arguments and questioned the clarity of my ideas. My writing felt validated. I needed to keep improving to meet his expectations.
(My autobiography)

In the early stages, I found myself waiting for his guidance, expecting clear deadlines and direct instructions. He encouraged me to plan my own schedule and take ownership of the thesis process. Through this, I developed greater self-regulation and learned to trust my own judgment.

In the beginning, I kept waiting for him to say, "Submit by [deadline]". But he never did. Instead, he taught me how to plan, self-regulate, and take charge of my thesis. His trust in me allowed me to trust myself more, and that confidence grew as I honored my own deadlines. (My autobiography)

Our academic collaboration was perceived to be more than a traditional supervisor-supervisee relationship. Instead of simply offering critical corrections, my supervisor engaged with my own uncertainties and used them as opportunities for exploration. This collaborative approach helped me shift from seeing feedback as a correction to re-conceptualizing it as a shared process of intellectual and emotional maturity.

There was a time when I doubted myself after completing an analysis of my transcripts. I felt lost among the stories. Instead of seeking external help, I decided to look into my supervisor's own research path. I was curious to learn more about his journey and how his work had evolved. (My autobiography)

In reading his dissertation, I acknowledged how closely our academic identities aligned. We had a passion for qualitative research, and our shared interests strengthened my understanding of the research process.

I read my supervisor's dissertation, and I felt a sense of connection between his research and mine. We both had a deep passion for qualitative research and a shared drive to understand the perspectives of others. It felt like we were part of the same academic community, working toward the same goals. (My autobiography)

Through his guidance, I learned that effective supervisorship should be better defined as creating an environment wherein the supervisee can develop independence, self-efficacy, and a deeper understanding of their work. My supervisor's trust in my potential and his focus on fostering my autonomy transformed my thesis process and helped me grow as a new teacher-researcher.

Supervisory assistance became a force for the good and transformative, built on our empathy, mutual respect, and intentional pedagogy. In this journey, my supervisor was not just a mentor but a co-thinker, a patient listener, and a catalyst for my reflection. (My autobiography)

Qualitative Narrative Inquiry Nature

Engaging with qualitative methodologies reshaped the way I approached my research at every level, transforming my understanding of both the process and its broader societal implications. In the beginning, I struggled to navigate the inherent complexity of qualitative designs. However, this fluidity was soon transformed into empowering, facilitating me to redefine my philosophies of qualitative research.

When I first engaged in narrative inquiry, I found its nature challenging. There was no clear and predetermined design. However, as I was more familiar with participants' stories, I learned to embrace its flexibility. The more I immersed myself in the process of interviewing with my participants and nominated outsiders, the more I realized my love for qualitative research. (My autobiography)

As I delved deeper into narrative inquiry, I realized the importance of maintaining a curious and attentive attitude during interviews. I learned that my role as an interviewer was to listen with intent, encouraging my participants to share deeply.

When I acted as the interviewer, it was highly important for me to maintain a curious attitude and always listen to interviewees' sharing deeply. In these manners, they will be more willing to share information and something hidden inside. As I read, this principle is also informed by Taylor and Bogdan's (1984)

guidelines on observation on participant, which teaches qualitative teacher-researchers about the characteristic of naiveness. (My autobiography)

Another transformation came when I explored the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research. I developed a deep appreciation for the concept of inter-subjectivity, understanding its critical role in enhancing the interpretative aspects of the research. Narrative inquiry allowed me to engage with social issues in a nuanced way and to balance objectivity with subjective interpretations.

In narrative inquiry, addressing social issues involves neither rigid adherence to objectivity nor reliance on subjective interpretations. The pursuit of intersubjectivity was fostered in this thesis. Reaching this term of intersubjectivity is very related to pragmatism. (My autobiography)

Institutional Factors

Institutional System Policies

My institution's research policies were essential in helping me complete my thesis. These policies provided the time, research resources, and conducive working environment I needed to focus on my thesis. With the administrative burdens reduced, I could direct my energy toward conducting high-quality research without worrying about daily responsibilities.

Thanks to the enthusiastic support, I could complete my thesis without worrying about the burden of daily work and time. With available policies to support my work and financial aid, I was able to dedicate myself entirely to my research and complete my thesis with my self-efficacy. (My autobiography)

In addition to such assistance, I was given access to valuable research resources. Having quick and unlimited access to scientific databases, journals, and specialized software was crucial for improving the quality of my thesis.

Having unlimited access to scientific databases has expanded my research resources. The university provided high-quality resources. This helped me save me valuable time searching for documents. I could easily access leading journals, articles, and specialized software. These things broadened my horizons about new research trends and hone my analytical skills in a narrative inquiry and develop creative insights. (My autobiography)

Furthermore, the institutional support fostered a culture of academic excellence. The environment created by my school taught me the freedom to explore new ideas and methodologies, which ultimately led to breakthroughs in my research.

The strong support from my institution made me feel capable of exploring new ideas and methodologies. I was given the freedom to experiment and innovate, which, in turn, led to breakthroughs in my research. (My autobiography)

Cường's experiences also highlighted how institutional policies allowed him and me to focus on his thesis work without distractions, emphasizing how essential such support is for academic success.

The policies allowed me to concentrate fully on my and his (my) thesis. With fewer administrative tasks to worry about, I was able to dedicate my time to research and writing, ensuring my work was thorough and focused. (Cường, outsider-nominated interview)

Socio-Cultural Factors

Professional Prestige Earned through Research

As I progressed through the thesis process, my understanding of professional prestige altered. Initially, I saw it as a marker of status within the field, but soon, I realized that true professional prestige was linked to the depth of my teaching and the integrity of my research. Over time, I found myself justifying the importance of taking this thesis seriously. The reason was simple and clear: "I want to teach better and contribute".

I believe that a teacher becomes better when they engage in research. They should not only understand theories but also be better able to generate new knowledge, questioning one's methods, and understanding why what we do matters to learners. (My autobiography)

In my redefined points of view, professional prestige was never a product of years served in the profession. It should come from years spent in learning, evolving, and reflecting on one's practices.

"I want learners to learn from someone who reads, asks questions, and reflects. Professional prestige, in my view, is not earned by the number of years worked. It is earned through years of learning, growing, and being. If I want to be proud of my teaching in the future, I need to build my researcher identity now. (My autobiography)

The process of writing my thesis was a critical platform to develop academically and professionally. I wrote it with my hopes of holding myself accountable to the knowledge I was producing, to the learners I would serve, and to the educational field that I am part of.

"There was a time when I doubted whether my thesis would ever be completed. I would stop and think about why I started. What I was really doing was building a research mindset. I wanted my professionalism to be shaped by this process.

(My autobiography)

As I envisioned my future career, I became more convinced that seriously partaking in research needed to start early. I aspired to work at an academic institution where research was not only encouraged but expected, and this aspiration influenced how I approached every stage of my thesis.

I know that in the future, I would prefer to work in an institution where research is a core part of the culture. If I want to be part of such an environment, I must become the type of teacher who can thrive there. That is why I remind myself to avoid shortcuts, to learn thoroughly, to make mistakes, and grow through them. This thesis marks the beginning of becoming the professional I aim to be.

(My autobiography)

Social Conceptualization of TEFL

As I journeyed through the process of completing my thesis, I came to a realization that reshaped my approach to teaching and researching. I rethought what it means to teach English in a way that truly prepares learners for the interconnected world they live in. This realization sparked a deeper interest in conducting research, intrinsically driving me to explore more effective teaching methodologies through my research.

Many people around me still believe that teaching English means focusing on grammar, sentence structures, and pronunciation. Yet, I see it as crucial to move away from grammar-based teaching and towards competency-based teaching. Through doing research and the adoption of new generated methods, I wish to change how teaching is approached in the classroom and to meet the needs of learners in this era of globalization. (My autobiography)

In the Vietnamese society, teachers are ubiquitously viewed not just as educators, but as integral agents of change in the classroom and society. I understood that in order to meet this expectation, I needed to develop strong research competencies. I realized that my role as a teacher extended beyond the classroom, and research was a crucial part of this extended role.

In Vietnamese culture, the role of teachers should not be only teaching. They are expected to be innovators, contributors to research, and agents of change. I

realized that to meet these societal expectations and enhance my professional qualifications, I must continue to learn and engage in research. By doing so, I expected improve my teaching methods, foster creative thinking, and become a more flexible, creative, and pioneering educator. (My autobiography)

In brief, in completing my thesis, I experienced significant growth as both a teacher and an emerging qualitative inquirer. The journey was shaped by the current condition of my motherland, the Mekong Delta region and under the influences of four systems. The thesis was a platform that fostered me to self-reflect on and re-conceptualize my teaching and qualitative research practices. Moving forward, I will continue to build on this foundation, remaining dedicated to learning, research, and growth in my teaching career.

Discussion

The process of constructing teacher-researcher identity throughout my Master's graduation thesis was under a complex array of contextual influences. Adapting [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979\)](#) Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development, I categorized these influences into four groups: personal, academic, institutional, and socio-cultural factors, being consistent with the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro systems, respectively. These systems interacted in a nested structure, each level contributing to my development as an emerging qualitative teacher-inquirer. The socio-academic environment of the Mekong Delta region in which I grew up contributed to nurturing my growth.

At the micro-system level, my intrinsic motivation, academic resilience, and familial education were the foundational elements that guided my identity development as a teacher-researcher. My personal motivation to complete the thesis stemmed from a domestically ingrained belief in the transformative power of education, instilled in me by my family, particularly my late grandfather. Growing up in a socio-economically challenged region of the Mekong Delta further cultivated my resilience. The region's limited resources, coupled with the socio-economic struggles I witnessed, led me to acknowledge the necessity of self-reliance and persistence to overcome life challenges. These experiences were integral in shaping my academic resilience, assisting me in remaining committed to my thesis even during moments of self-doubt and fatigue. Furthermore, the microsystem also includes the socio-cultural values imparted by my family. Vietnamese culture, particularly influenced by Confucianism, places great emphasis on education as a means of improving one's social standing and fulfilling familial duties. The cultural notion of "sĩ diện" (face) highlighted the importance of honor and respect within the family, driving me to prove myself academically.

This cultural value also intersected with gender expectations that as the unique son of my parents, I was expected to reach some professional achievement and contribute to my society meaningfully. My decision to pursue this degree reinforced my sense of agency and self-determination in my academic journey. This personal drive aligns with the critical works of [Nana and Jing \(2017\)](#) and [Çakmak and Çelik \(2024\)](#), who argued that personal and familial influences are vital in the formation of a teacher-researcher identity.

At the meso-system level, the most significant interaction I had was with my thesis supervisor. The supervisory relationship was profoundly decided by cultural values instilled in Confucianism, wherein supervisorship carries moral significance. In Vietnamese culture, the relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee is considered not only academic but also intrinsically ethical, grounded in principles of mutual trust, reverence, and gratitude. This is encapsulated in a Vietnamese saying, “Không thầy đố mày làm nên” (Without a teacher, one cannot succeed), which underscores the central role that a supervisor plays in a supervisee’s development. My thesis supervisor embodied this ethos, providing professional guidance that was extended beyond academic feedback. His support fostered an intellectual partnership wherein he encouraged me to critically engage with my work and take ownership of my research. In addition to such guidance, the process of engaging with qualitative narrative inquiry further altered my teacher-researcher identity. Initially, the open-ended and emergent nature of this methodology was challenging. Nonetheless, as I became more familiar with participants’ narratives in my previous research project and personal narratives in the current study, I learned to appreciate the flexibility that narrative inquiry offered. These aspects of narrative inquiry align with the findings of [Prabandari et al. \(2024\)](#), which suggested that such academic assistance and research methodologies foster critical thinking and promote a deeper connection among stakeholders.

At the exo-system level, the support and resources provided by my institution played a critical role in my research development. The university’s policies, including institutional aid, access to research resources, and academic support, provided an environment conducive to focused research. These institutional supports further allowed me to prioritize my thesis and engage deeply with the research process without the distractions of external pressures. Access to scientific databases and specialized software further enhanced the quality of my research. The presence of dedicated teacher educators within the institution also influenced my development as a new teacher-researcher. These teacher educators, committed to the professional growth of future EFL teachers, were invaluable in providing mentorship and shaping my approach to research and teaching. The institutional support which I received

aligns with the works of [Nana and Jing \(2017\)](#) and [Ngo et al. \(2022, 2024\)](#). Their results valued the positive impact of institutional policies on the self-efficacy and growth of teacher-researchers.

At the macro-system level, cultural and societal expectations greatly reconstructed my professional identity. In Vietnam, teaching is seen as a revered profession, and teachers are not only expected to educate but also to engage in research and contribute to the development of the education system. This cultural expectation is heavily influenced by Confucian principles, in which the teacher is seen as a moral figure responsible for shaping future generations. The idea of “Tôn sư trọng đạo” (Reverence for teachers) is central to my practices, and I internalized this value as I navigated my thesis journey. The societal belief that teachers should contribute to educational innovation and research led me to see professional prestige as rooted not just in teaching experience but in one’s contributions to the field of research. Moreover, reflecting on President Hồ Chí Minh’s philosophy, “Vì lợi ích mười năm trồng cây, vì lợi ích trăm năm trồng người” (For the benefits of ten years, plant trees; for the benefits of one hundred years, cultivate people), I acknowledged that the impacts of education and research extended beyond the immediate future. This philosophy reinforced my personal commitment to research as a long-term trajectory and its simultaneous contribution to the Vietnamese education system. It reminded me that teaching and research are integral parts of a larger societal project, the one that aims to cultivate knowledge and contribute to the advancement of the education system. These findings are consistent with those of [Ngo et al. \(2024\)](#), who portrayed the contextual influence of the teaching profession’s prestige and social conceptualization on language teachers’ professional identity construction in the Mekong Delta region.

Locally, in the Vietnamese context, my journey of completing the thesis resonates with the proverb “Có công mài sắt, có ngày nên kim” (Perseverance in grinding iron will one day make a needle). It conveys the enduring value of diligence, effort, and patience in the pursuit of knowledge. President Hồ Chí Minh’s teaching, “Còn kém thì phải học, phải tích cực học cách làm việc, tích cực học chuyên môn cho biết. Nhiều cái mình chưa biết nhưng có quyết tâm học thì phải biết, nhất định biết” (If a person is still lacking, he must learn, must actively learn how to work, and must actively acquire professional knowledge. There are many things he does not yet know, but with self-determination to learn, he will know, and he must certainly know), emphasizes the boundless potential of determination and continuous learning. More significantly, his metaphor, “Hãy nhớ rằng, cơn bão là cơ hội tốt để cây thông và cây bách thể hiện sức mạnh và sự ổn định của chúng” (A storm is a good opportunity for

pine and cypress trees to demonstrate their strength and stability) offers the profound inspiration for viewing academic challenges as moments to cultivate inner strength and stability. Guided by these cultural and philosophical foundations, I have embraced difficulties as opportunities for growth, dedicated myself to self-cultivation, and directed my efforts toward contributing to society. Above all, I carried with me a very deep sense of gratitude to the roots, traditions, and nurturing forces that have sustained my academic journey.

In conclusion, the development of my teacher-researcher identity was reshaped by a multifaceted set of influences in an ecological system. These contextual factors, embedded in the socio-academic conditions of the Mekong Delta region, provided a fertile environment for my growth. The interconnections between personal motivations, familial influences, cultural expectations, institutional supports, and societal values allowed me to emerge as a qualitative teacher-inquirer in the field of TEFL. This ecological perspective also sheds light on the interconnectedness of individual and contextual factors, delving into the dynamic nature of teacher-researcher identity formation. Through this process, I have come to understand that becoming a teacher-researcher is a continuous process of growth, reflection, and contribution to the broader educational landscape.

Conclusion and Limitations

My journey of completing the graduation thesis has been impacted by a combination of personal motivation, academic resilience, socio-cultural values, and institutional support, all contributing to the dramatic negotiation of my teacher-researcher identity. It is clear that the influence at the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system levels holds vital roles in my personal growth as a language teacher and a qualitative teacher-inquirer. These interconnected factors have substantially reinforced my very unique passion for teaching and deepened my commitment to research as an essential component of CPD.

While this study has provided insights into factors shaping my teacher-researcher identity, several limitations remain for further consideration. Firstly, the study is autobiographical in nature, and as such, it is based on my personal lived experiences and self-reflections. Probably, this introduces subjectivity, and my perspective may not fully capture the experiences of others in similar academic contexts. Secondly, the focus on my experiences in the Mekong Delta region limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-cultural and educational contexts. Additionally, the research does not account for the long-term impact of the thesis journey on my identity. It reflects only the initial stages of my development as a new teacher-researcher. Finally, the study primarily

relies on qualitative data from personal reflections and interviews, which, while rich in insight, may lack the broader, quantitative data needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the teacher-researcher identity development process.

Suggestions

Embarking on a Master's degree resembles the cultivation of a flower garden. Gardeners who nurture each bloom with deep care and attention to detail are those who fully experience the transformative power of personal growth and maturity. Similarly, Master's learning journeys, particularly the thesis completion, should not be defined exclusively as a one-time academic exercise. Arguably, it refers to a knowledge-generating journey of personal and professional growth. The thesis, much like a garden, is nurtured not only by the final product but also by the process of self-cultivation itself.

At the heart of this journey lies intrinsic motivation, the essential seed that drives the entire research process. Without it, the research path becomes arduous, and the rewards feel distant. Just as gardeners' passion for planting flowers fuels their self-persistence through droughts and storms, Master's students' inner drive sustains them through the challenges of their thesis. For those embarking on this journey, it is critical to cultivate a deep connection to academic work. Research should be seen as a valuable opportunity to give answers to one's curiosities, contribute to the body of knowledge, and grow as teacher-researchers. Secondly, proactively seeking supervisorship and collaboration is indispensable. A garden thrives through the nurturing influence of the gardeners and the surrounding environment. It is through such supervisorship that Master's students are allowed to learn how to conduct research more effectively and how to think critically and innovatively, question self-assumptions, and develop a genuine sense of academic ownership. Moreover, collaboration with different stakeholders is regarded as invaluable. The exchange of academic ideas, sharing of challenges, and collective wisdom derived from such interactions provide the necessary scaffolding for academic success. Figuratively, like gardeners learning from other seasoned practitioners, Master's students should seek out these relationships, comprehending that they are central to their current and future development.

Finally, future Master's students must comprehend the socio-cultural contexts in which their research is situated to nurture their professional selves and sustain motivation in teaching. In the Vietnamese society, the teaching profession is viewed as a noble calling and a societal responsibility. This cultural reverence for teaching and research serves as a guiding force for many researchers, encouraging them to re-conceptualize their work as a contribution

to the broader educational and societal knowledge. Understanding cultural and societal expectations surrounding teaching and research gives them a greater sense of purpose and accountability, linking their personal academic journey to a more significant social mission, fostering a deep sense of commitment to their research, and contributing to the greater good of educational communities, particularly those in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all participants who generously shared their experiences and insights for this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

Funding Details

This study received no specific funding.

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