Chapter 5
Voicing Indonesian ESP Teachers' Emotions:
Their Vulnerability and Professional Transformation

Noni Mia Rahmawati
http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0649-354X
Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia

Yazid Basthomi
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

Priyatno Ardi
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9523-2060
Universitas Sanata Dharma, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Emotions play a crucial role in teachers' professional identity constructions, yet the impact of vulnerability on language teachers' transformation and development remains underexplored. This narrative inquiry study delves into the lived experiences of two English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers from different universities in Indonesia to uncover how vulnerability influences their professional growth. Using a purposive sampling technique, the study gathered rich, in-depth data through semi-structured interviews, and the data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that vulnerability is not merely a challenge, but also a catalyst for professional transformation. Social and institutional contexts emerged as key factors shaping ESP teachers' experiences that highlighted the intricate relationship between vulnerability and professional development. By shedding light on these dynamics,

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this study contributes to the growing discourse on how teachers' emotions affect their professional growth and calls for further research into the multifaceted role of vulnerability in diverse educational settings.

INTRODUCTION

Being a teacher is a highly emotional journey (see Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2012). Emotions are a fundamental component of education since they constitute a multifaceted state of feelings that induce psychological and physical transformations (Teng, 2017) which are prone to affect teachers' cognition and motivation (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). It is essential to understand teachers' emotions to find out the impact of how and under what circumstances they actually teach in emotionally demanding classroom contexts (Agudo, 2018). In the classroom, teachers commonly attempt to present positive emotions to their students to achieve teaching aims (Sutton, 2004). Teachers can decide whether to make their classrooms fun or dull by presenting suitable emotions, of which strong emotions can motivate them to act differently from how they usually perform (Teng, 2017). They also tend to control their unpleasant emotions (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). However, suppression of emotions leads to teachers' lack of emotional authenticity, an incongruity between the emotional experience and emotional expression (Keller & Becker, 2021). Thus, not only recognising students' emotions, teachers also need to better understand their own emotions to create emotionally suitable learning environments and have positive interactions and authentic relationships with their students (Chen, 2016; Madalinska-Michalak, 2015).

Working in socio-cultural environments and interacting with their teaching contexts, individual teacher's visions and pedagogical beliefs may contrast with those of others that lead to feelings of vulnerability (Holappa et al., 2022). Vulnerability is crucial in constructing teacher identity as it is associated with their emotional reactions to their work and practice (Bacova & Turner, 2023). Not only seen from the subjective professional-self of the teachers, the feeling of vulnerability also has moral and political roots in the workplace conditions that can affect teachers' job satisfaction and their professional performance quality (Kelchtermans, 1996). In classroom and institutional contexts, it captures the unavoidable element of passivity that comes with teaching as although teaching focusses on acting, planning, and designing, there is also a passive component of undergoing surprise, puzzlement, and powerlessness (Kelchtermans, 2009). Teachers, then, must allow themselves to be vulnerable to properly engage and empathise with their students (Alsup, 2018) since in teaching, more and less than one had anticipated always occurs at the same time (Kelchtermans, 2009). In a broader educational context, evolving policies and

shifting public expectations in an increasingly commercialised and competitive educational environment are putting teachers' profession and professional identities more vulnerable as they affect the moral foundation that teachers need to build their professional identities (Gao, 2008). Understanding vulnerability is essential to properly comprehend teachers and how their teaching has evolved (Kelchtermans, 1996) and to establish a connection between the diverse emotional responses within teaching experience, especially in academic settings where reform or change is required (Song, 2022).

Like other teaching endeavours, language teaching, including English Language Teaching (ELT), is an emotionally intense practice of a complex process saturating various range of emotions (Rosiek & Beghetto, 2009). Previous studies often saw language teacher emotions to be problematic for their negative effects on the teachers' teaching and professional development, so that teachers' emotions are regarded as challenges that need to be mainly faced individually through professional development (Gao, 2008; Song, 2018, 2022). However, post-structuralist perspectives induce research on emotions in education to pay more attention to the link between teacher-self and social, cultural, and political structures of educational institutions (e.g., Song, 2018; Song & Park, 2019; Zembylas, 2011). Loh and Liew (2016) found that Singaporean English teachers' emotional labour was intensified by conflicting governmental and institutional policies on evaluative means for measuring English competence as opposed to the teachers' understanding of what composes effective pedagogy and second language (L2) acquisition. Similarly, Wolff and De Costa (2017) narrated that Puja's status as a non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) affected her emotional responses over language policies, ideological biases, and institutional norms as she experienced a U.S. MATESOL program, which eventually made her confidence dropped significantly. Related to the relationship between ideology and emotions of NNESTs in Korea, (Song & Park, 2019) concluded that teachers' emotions are shaped by dominant ideologies as shown by their interviewees who all attributed their overcoming of anxiety as NNESTs to their study abroad or overseas training experiences in native English-speaking countries.

As a branch of ELT, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) distinguishes itself by focusing on attending learners' communicative needs (Hyland, 2022) as it was originally developed to assist second or foreign English learners in advancing their study or careers (Basturkmen, 2021). Not only are required to acquire English communicative and pedagogical skills, ESP teachers must also obtain skills beyond their main expertise to meet learners' needs (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021) so that they often grapple with content knowledge gaps (Wu & Badger, 2009). Such struggle leads to raising concerns about ESP teachers' qualifications (Wang, 2010), resulting in the marginalisation of the status of ESP as a discipline, particularly in universities, for ESP teachers viewed their work to be less acknowledged by their institutions

and their inability to claim expertise in a particular field (Qi et al., 2021; Tao & Gao, 2018). These circumstances may lead ESP teachers to being vulnerable since teachers' vulnerability may come from educational policies which question, contest, or reject teachers' professional behaviour and moral judgments in the classroom (Yuan et al., 2022).

In Indonesian universities, ESP is a compulsory subject in non-English departments (Kusni, 2013) that differs depending on each university and its curriculum (Akhiroh, 2017). The ESP teachers in the non-English departments are either English teachers from English or non-English departments, or content teachers with no ELT backgrounds (Adi & Khotimah, 2018; Akhiroh, 2017). These teachers are perceived as lacking in qualifications to design and instruct ESP (Poedjiastutie & Syafinaz, 2020; Yoestara, 2017) due to the absence of institutions that specialise in the training of ESP teachers and those that offer seminars or workshops to assist them in their professional development (Poedjiastutie & Syafinaz, 2020). Such condition puts ESP teachers at similar vulnerable position as novice or beginning teachers who frequently face an unavoidable loss of confidence in their teaching own abilities, accompanied by strong and conflicting emotions (Agudo, 2018).

Previous studies have investigated the impact of teacher emotions, which are influenced by the teacher's self and the social, cultural, and political contexts of educational institutions, on teaching and professional growth. However, the specific role of vulnerability in shaping teachers' instructional practices and professional development, particularly among ESP teachers, remains underexplored. Understanding teacher vulnerability is crucial for a nuanced comprehension of teachers and the development of their teaching practices (Kelchtermans, 1996). To address the paucity, this study investigates the influence of Indonesian ESP teachers' vulnerability on their professional transformation based on Kelchtermans' (2009) three elements that compose teachers' vulnerability. Grasping how ESP teachers' vulnerability can impact their professional transformation can be the basis for providing and improving policies on ESP teaching that can better cater the specific needs of ESP teachers in transforming and developing their professional selves. Therefore, the current study aims to answer the research question "How does ESP teachers' vulnerability impact their professional transformation?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' Emotions

Emotions are crucial in teaching (Hargreaves, 1998), and teachers, as emotional practitioners, can make classrooms stimulating or boring (Hargreaves, 2000).

Teacher emotions can refer to evaluative reactions covering various psychological and physical subsystems that are specifically anchored in the specific events and social contexts that teachers face in their work (Frenzel et al., 2021). Frenzel et al. (2015) posit that teacher emotions are person, subject, and group specific, as each teacher's emotions may differ from one another, varying systematically depending on the academic subject and groups of students being taught. However, teacher emotions are influenced beyond the teacher-selves since emotions are also socially and culturally embedded (Hargreaves, 2000; Zembylas, 2003). Emotions are crucial in pedagogical practices, student-teacher relationships, reform attempts and change processes, and comprehending power dynamics and social structures in schools and society (Zembylas, 2011). Hargreaves (2000) integrates four key concepts of emotions that are influential: (1) emotional intelligence, (2) emotional labour, (3) emotional understanding, and (4) emotional geographies. These concepts emphasize that teacher emotions are not simply individual traits, but are also affected by their interactions, identities, and working conditions, and that teachers' emotional experiences are central to the quality of teaching, learning, and educational reforms.

Over the course of a career, emotional and cognitive well-being, which are affected by personal biography, social contexts, and external factors, are crucial for effective teaching (Day & Leitch, 2001). Teachers' emotions are highly relevant not only for the functioning of classrooms, particularly for student outcomes, but also for the teachers' well-being (Chen, 2019; Frenzel et al., 2016, 2020; Keller et al., 2015). van Veen et al. (2005) divided their teacher participant's emotions into negative and positive emotions. The negative emotions stemmed from insufficient time, a substantial volume of portfolios each semester, and inadequate support from the subject colleagues, school administration, and government. Meanwhile, positive emotions emerged when the teaching purposes were fostered and when there were chances to develop the teaching practice and strengthen the professional identity. Positive emotions are associated with positive instructions (Hargreaves, 1998; Jiang et al., 2021), as more contented teachers are more likely to provide better teaching (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

Not only influencing classroom events, teachers' emotions can also profoundly shape teachers' reflective practices and their professional growth, as Dreer (2024) claims that positive emotions contribute significantly to teachers' job satisfaction and their subsequent retention. Challenging emotions that are frequently deemed to be negative, such as the feelings of frustration and being vulnerable, often drive teachers to probe into their teaching beliefs and methods (Zembylas, 2020). Such feelings may incite meaningful changes in teaching practices although teachers may feel uncomfortable due to those emotional unease (Kelchtermans, 2005; Korthagen, 2017; O'Connor, 2008). On the other hand, teachers' positive emotions, such as their joy and pride of students' achievement (Chen, 2019), satisfaction in profes-

sional accomplishment (van Veen et al., 2005), contentment from fostering good relationships with students (Hargreaves, 2000), and excitement from practicing creative teaching (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009), can confirm teachers' purposes and strengthen their commitment as teachers (Chen, 2019; Dreer, 2024). Nonetheless, both teachers' positive and negative emotions connect their experiences and reflections that lead them to developing or transforming their professional selves in redefining their identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sang, 2022). Sachs (2005) underlines that teachers' emotional lives are significant to identity construction since emotions mediate their sense of agency, belonging, and professional direction.

In the context of ESP, the teachers' emotional landscape is uniquely shaped since they navigate emotionally charged situations from interdisciplinary teaching, shifting institutional demands, and a lack of content knowledge in the specific fields they teach (Basturkmen, 2014; Hyland, 2017). The conditions can cause stress, uncertainty, and feelings of marginalization that often brings tensions around teachers' identity and sense of belonging in the profession (Mahendra, 2020; Qin, 2021). Yet, such challenging emotions can stimulate professional growth as ESP teachers reflect deeply on their teaching practices and engage in proactive strategies that ultimately trigger professional transformation (Nazari et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2022).

Vulnerability and Teacher Professional Transformation

Vulnerability is essential in shaping teacher identity since it relates to their emotional responses to their job and practice (Bacova & Turner, 2023). It is a multidimensional emotional experience in an array of contexts that can be an experience of openness (i.e., open vulnerability) and trust or a sense of powerless, betrayal, defencelessness (i.e., protective vulnerability), of which individuals becoming vulnerable may mean being open that can facilitate learning, trust building, and collaboration, or, in contrast, withdrawing themselves in a defensive or protective attitudes (Lasky, 2005). Teachers often feel emotional vulnerability when there is a gap between their experienced emotions and their expected emotions which are deemed to be appropriate in a certain context (Zembylas, 2002). When teachers experience open vulnerability, they tend to have positive attitudes that direct themselves to professional developments and self-transformation (Song, 2016). Vulnerability is in complex ways intertwined with agency and authority, influencing each other (Teng, 2020). Teachers' agency can make them shift from one type of vulnerability to another which resulted in shifting pedagogies (Song, 2016). Thus, teachers' vulnerability, as a part of their emotions, also contributes to their identity construction.

Vulnerability fundamentally characterizes and constitutes teaching (Kelchtermans, 2005), not only as an emotional state or experience, but also as a structural characteristic of the profession (Kelchtermans, 2009). Kelchtermans (2009) proposed

three elements that compose vulnerability in teaching. First, teachers are politically vulnerable as they have limited control over their working conditions, for they are subject to certain legal frameworks and regulations, operate in a specific school with specific infrastructures, students, and staff. The second vulnerability is the extremely limited extent to which teachers may assert that their instruction determines the outcomes of their students. When student outcomes are positive, teachers who have a high internal locus of control may feel particularly satisfied with their teaching. However, they may suffer a discouraging effect on their motivation and self-confidence when their student outcomes are poor as they often attribute the outcomes to circumstances that are outside of their control and beyond their efforts. The last vulnerability is the fundamental conditions within the teachers themselves. Teachers are often found to be in the state of being surprised, puzzled, or powerless although they have designed, planned, and acted their teaching. Their decisions or idea of good teaching can also be always challenged or questioned.

Teachers' professional transformation is closely linked not only to external factors, but also to their experiences and responses of vulnerability since the change from protective to open vulnerability is the entry point for emotional reflection and identity shifts (Cole et al., 2022; Zembylas, 2002). The transformation occurs when teachers are willing to admit their emotional moments rather than to avoid them; that is, when they acknowledge their emotions, identify the sources, and understand how their emotions affect teaching (Song, 2016). These moments of shifting from protective to open vulnerability can prompt teachers to engage in deeper reflection on their pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices that foster their professional growth (Kelchtermans, 2005; Mahmood et al., 2024). As they make sense of moments of confusion and perceived inadequacy in teaching, teachers may use their vulnerability as a source of growth to develop more adaptive professional selves (Florida & Mbato, 2020). Vulnerability becomes connected with agency through sustained engagement with emotional reflection that enables teachers to act with more confidence and purpose (Lo & To, 2023; Teng, 2020). However, such transformations are also significantly shaped by social and institutional contexts, as supportive environments that acknowledge teachers' emotional labour and provide space for reflection can enhance teachers' capacity to cope with vulnerability and grow professionally (Cole et al., 2022; Kelchtermans, 2009; Song, 2016). When teachers embrace vulnerability within supportive institutional and relational contexts, it can foster emotional resilience and prompt sustained identity development and pedagogical development (Holappa et al., 2022).

In the ESP context, teachers' vulnerability emerges when they navigate unfamiliar subject content, as they may feel professionally inadequate for lacking subject-matter expertise, limited institutional support, and vague curricular structure (Mahendra, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2018; Zhao et al., 2022). In Indonesian tertiary education ESP

context, for example, Suherman (2024) discovered five issues that hinder English for General Purposes (EGP) teachers from transforming to ESP teachers: 1) subject knowledge, 2) institutional support, 3) ESP material, 4) heterogeneous class, and 5) teaching skills. However, vulnerability can act as a trigger for teachers' professional transformation (Lasky, 2005), including ESP teachers when they engage in sustained reflective practices and collaborative learning with students and subject experts (Mahendra, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2018). Particularly, ESP teachers engaged in curriculum reform often endure a transformation from uncertain practitioners to agentive collaborators through vulnerability-driven identity development (Jiang, 2022). This process involves teachers' agency since those who actively confront their limitations and develop professionally have more opportunities to integrate new pedagogical strategies and redefine their professional identities (Lo & To, 2023; Teng, 2020). Thus, the interaction among teachers' vulnerability, reflective practice, and agency within certain sociocultural contexts is a significant catalyst for their professional transformation and identity development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sachs, 2005; Zembylas, 2003), which is strongly relevant to ESP teachers' professional transformations.

METHOD

Research Design

The current study cantered on how institutional policies affected ESP teachers' vulnerability and how the vulnerability influenced the transformation of their professional selves as ESP teachers. Examining ESP teachers' experiences of vulnerability, how they navigated feelings of confusion or powerlessness, and how they managed teaching ESP classes are essential for achieving the study's objectives.

Accordingly, this study employed narrative inquiry to capture the vulnerable experiences of ESP teachers in the Indonesian context. Narrative inquiry aims at capturing realities in constructing their identity in the past, present, and imagined future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In performing narrative research, "the researcher seeks to understand the lived experience of an individual or small group" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 468). Ary et al. (2010) also argue that narrative research has been mostly employed in understanding changes. Therefore, we believe that employing narrative inquiry approach is appropriate for the study as it allows us to depict ESP teachers' vulnerability and how they make meaning of the vulnerability to transform themselves professionally.

Context

The study was situated within the contexts of teaching ESP in two different private universities in East Java, Indonesia. They were Sami University (pseudonym) and Romu University (pseudonym). Each university had a foreign-language centre. However, the foreign-language centre did not function to coordinate the teaching of ESP performed in the respective university. In addition, not all departments in each university hired an ESP teacher. In Sami University, there were only four ESP teachers who were stationed in four different non-English departments. Similarly, there were four ESP teachers affiliated with four different non-English departments in Romu University. Instead of offering ESP subjects for the students, both universities offered General English (GE, hereafter) as a compulsory subject for the students, especially for freshmen.

Participants

We selected an ESP teacher from each university based on purposive sampling techniques. As a kind of non-probability sampling, the selection of the participants in purposive sampling was based on some characteristics judged to be typical which act as the representative of the population (Ary et al., 2010). A male and female participant were the participants of the study. Rio (pseudonym, male) was selected as the representative of ESP teachers affiliated with non-English department of Sami University, and Karina (pseudonym, female) was chosen to represent ESP teachers affiliated with non-English department of Romu University.

From the stories that both participants shared with the researchers prior to the study, the two ESP teachers were selected due to the similarity of their background experiences in becoming ESP teachers affiliated with non-English departments in their respective universities. Both were not initially applied for the position as an ESP teacher. However, due to the policies of their universities, they were positioned as ESP teachers detached from the English departments in their universities. Thus, they experienced emotional struggle as ESP teachers. Both participants also stated that they did not experience any formal education, trainings, or workshops related to teaching ESP prior to being positioned as ESP teachers in their respective university. However, when the study was performed, they have taught ESP subjects for around five years. It can be supposed, then, that they have sufficient periods in performing pedagogical practices in their ESP classes and developing themselves professionally as ESP teachers. Prior to collecting the data, we asked both participants to give their consent as their involvements in this study were voluntarily, thus, they could withdraw their participation. Each participant biography is described in the following.

Rio's Biography

Rio earned his Master's degree in English language teaching from Sami University in 2015. After earning his Master's degree, he went to Thailand from 2016 to 2017 to represent Sami University in a collaboration program between the university and a university in Thailand for teaching Indonesian language and ESP to the Thai students of the Faculty of International Science (FIS). Following his return to Indonesia, Rio taught ESP subjects in several departments in Sami University as a non-permanent teaching staff. He applied for a position as a faculty member in the English Department of the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training (FETT, hereafter) in Sami University in 2019. Yet, different from the position he had applied for, Rio has been stationed in the Management Department of the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB, hereafter) of Sami University as an ESP teacher since he was accepted to work in the university. He has overseen all ESP courses offered by all departments belonging to FEB since then. Rio is also responsible as the head of the International Development Division (IDD, hereafter) in the FEB, of which some of its duties are preparing the students for joining international programs and managing TOEFL preparation classes for FEB's students.

Karina's Biography

Karina obtained her Master's degree from a public university in Indonesia in 2015. Before applying to be a faculty member of Romu University, she became an English tutor for elementary school students. Similar to Rio's experience, Karina also applied for a position as a faculty member in the English Department of the FETT in Romu University in 2016. However, when she was accepted to work there, she found out that she was positioned as an English instructor in the university's language centre, which was different from the position that she had applied for. During her first-year teaching there, she taught in English test preparation classes for freshmen in Romu University's language centre. Starting from 2017, she has been stationed in the Communication Science Department of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FSPS, hereafter). She has been teaching ESP subject in the department since then.

Data Collection

Data were collected from in-depth one-on-one interviews with both participants, of which each interview lasted for about one and a half to two hours. The questions for the interviews were developed based on Kelchtermans' (2009) three elements that compose vulnerability in teaching. They focused on the participants' vulnerability

related to the political vulnerability resulted from their institutions' policies, their students' learning achievement, and their own vulnerability during their teaching practices. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ease the participants in narrating their stories. The interviews were recorded, and the collected data were then transcribed for data analysis.

The data from the interview were collected and analysed by applying active interviewing perspective (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). In this regard, the meaning making was interactional and constructed together between the interviewer and participants (Song, 2016). As the researchers, we also played an active role in the interview, shifting between placing ourselves as the researchers and English teachers. Being an ESP teacher herself, one of us also shared her stories of her vulnerability and experiences in teaching ESP during the interviews. This helped the participants to be opened in sharing their stories as they had common ground with the researchers. Yet, we maintained our roles as researchers in interpreting the data collected from the interviews by having analytical perspective and paying close attention to the conflicts in the ESP teachers' stories.

Data Analysis

We analysed the data by searching particularly for possible answers that are varied and often conflicting to highlight the multiple and differing nature of teachers' vulnerability. We adapted six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, we familiarized ourselves with the data collected from the interviews by repeatedly listening to the recordings. Second, we transcribed the data in the recordings and we read the transcriptions several times to grasp thorough understanding of the data. While transcribing the data, we also translated the data collected from the interviews in Bahasa Indonesia into English. Third, while reading and re-reading the transcriptions, we marked the excerpts from both participants which were relevant to Kelchterman's (2009) three elements of vulnerability in teaching. Fourth, we produced codes of the data. The coding process was theory-driven as we approached the data based on questions developed from the three elements of vulnerability in teaching. In coding the data, we aimed to identify features of the data that were related to the participants' vulnerability as well as their pedagogical and professional transformations. Fifth, we specified the codes into themes suitable with Kelchterman's (2009) three elements of vulnerability in teaching, including participants' vulnerability related to the political vulnerability resulted from their institutions' policies, students' learning achievement, and teachers' own vulnerability during their teaching practices. While doing this phase, we compared the data from both participants to find whether there were any coherent patterns related to

the three elements. Finally, we produced the report based on the conclusion that we drew from the previous phases of our data analysis stage.

We applied member checking to ensure the dependability or trustworthiness of the study. One of the methods in member checking is returning the collected and analysed data to the participants of a study (Birt et al., 2016). Doyle (2007) argues that member checking is regarded as "one of the most significant methods within qualitative research for establishing or strengthening the credibility of a study" (p. 889). In this study, member checking was completed by inviting the participants to give reviews, comments, and additions to the collected and analysed data. The participants offered additional interpretations that shape and enrich the findings of this study.

FINDINGS

Rio's Story

As stated in his biography, when Rio applied to become a faculty member at Sami University, he had not intended to become an ESP teacher there. His initial aim was to secure a position as a lecturer in the English Department of FETT. Nonetheless, he was not entirely surprised by the decision, as he had previously taught some ESP subjects at the university and had also represented it as an ESP teacher in a collaboration program with a university in Thailand. Rio believed he experienced a mix of emotions because he had faced a more significant setback when Sami University management misplaced his initial job application forms.

> *When I applied for the position, no one from the university informed me about being stationed in the FEB. However, this lack of information didn't come as a shock to me. I had experienced something even more surprising before. When I returned from Thailand, I discovered that the university management had lost my job application forms, which I had already submitted to them. Despite this setback, one of the deputy rectors, who also happened to be my professor, suggested that I teach ESP subjects at the university while waiting for another opportunity to arise. Therefore, when the decision was made to assign me as an ESP teacher in the FEB, it didn't come as a significant surprise to me.*

Rio generally saw himself as someone capable of letting go and adjusting to new environments. Consequently, he noted that the longer he taught ESP subjects at FEB, the more he discovered the advantages of being an ESP teacher. One benefit he identified was the inherent specificity of teaching ESP, which made him feel like he had already found his calling in ELT.

One advantage of being an ESP teacher for me is its specificity. I don't need to search for my niche in ELT; instead, I can delve deeper into ESP. Additionally, I believe there isn't as much research on ESP compared to other topics in ELT, which presents an opportunity for me to contribute to the field.

Rio was confident that he had discovered his career path as an ESP teacher. His role in overseeing FEB's international events as the head of the faculty's IDD was a significant factor in solidifying this conviction. Furthermore, as an ESP teacher, he had the opportunity not only to instruct English to ESP students but also to professionals. Rio was of the belief that if the university were to assign him to the English Department of FETT in the future, he would continue teaching ESP subjects without hesitation.

I think I have found my career path. I do not know why, but I think it is because I am managing the international division in the FEB. Besides that, when I teach ESP, I also teach ESP to professionals, not only to students. … If one day I am stationed in the FETT, I still want to teach ESP

Rio's conviction about finding his career path stemmed from his sense of comfort within his current academic environment at the FEB. He felt that his colleagues in the faculty treated him with kindness and recognized his abilities as an ESP teacher, as well as his capacity to assist the faculty, particularly in organizing its international events. Rio firmly believed that he had already established himself as an integral member of the FEB faculty.

I am thankful that my colleagues in the FEB accept me and treat me nicely. Their responses are good, and I can do many things there. … It is maybe because they know that I can do many things and get involved when they hold many events. … I think I have made myself as an important member of the faculty.

Rio's position as the head of FEB's IDD was crucial in fostering his comfort as one of the faculty members. He noted that his significant role in the faculty's internationalization programs made him feel appreciated by his colleagues. Rio believed that without his involvement in FEB's IDD, he might have felt isolated due to the lack of support for ESP teachers at Sami University. Additionally, as an ESP teacher, Rio felt valued by his colleagues in the FEB, who frequently sought his opinion on matters related to English.

If I am not involved in the IDD, I would feel isolated because there is no supporting environment for ESP teachers in the university. By becoming the head of the IDD, I feel so appreciated here in the FEB. … I also feel appreciated here for being an ESP teacher, not only being the head of the IDD. They often consult with me when there are things related to English, for example on the language of our scientific journal articles.

Despite feeling comfortable in the FEB, Rio had concerns about his academic career development due to his affiliation with a non-English department, which

meant he lost the opportunity to supervise student thesis writings. However, Rio expressed that he had begun to let go of this concern gradually. The more he delved into understanding the necessary processes to advance his academic career, the more certain he became that he could still attain the highest academic status despite being stationed in a non-English department.

It is true that I am worried with my career development, for example, because I lost the privilege to supervise student thesis writings. … As long as I can become a professor one day, it is not a problem for me being stationed in the FEB. It is only a matter of administrative things.

Rio was confident in his teaching method, observing a significant improvement in his students' English proficiency levels. By the end of his ESP courses, he assumed that most of his students had reached an intermediate level of proficiency. He favoured employing project-based learning in his ESP classes because he believed it indirectly compelled his students to engage with English.

I think my students' achievements are moderate in general. … At the beginning, most of them are poor in English. … I can see their efforts when I applied project-based learning. … You know, in private universities, we need to force our students to give their best in learning.

Rio also took pride in his students' accomplishments, noting that more FEB students had participated in outbound mobility programs overseas in recent years compared to students from the English Department of FETT. He asserted that his teaching efforts in the FEB had truly made a difference in his students' academic achievements. Witnessing his students' success brought him satisfaction as an ESP teacher.

I have many students who join outbound mobility programs overseas, and I am proud of it. That is a good achievement. I have bigger number of students who joined the mobility programs than those from the FETT. … I strongly believe that my efforts to make my students learn do make a difference in their achievements. … My students' success brings satisfaction to me.

When asked how he would react if most of his ESP students were to fail, Rio expressed that he would feel disheartened and would need to reflect on himself, particularly his teaching methods. Fortunately, he had never encountered such a situation. He believed that by consistently giving his best efforts in teaching ESP, he was able to avoid such outcomes. Once more, he emphasized the importance of employing methods that indirectly encouraged his students to engage with English, highlighting their efficacy in fostering learning.

If most of my students are failed, I must have a self-reflection. It means I did something wrong. However, thankfully, I have never experienced that. I do big, extra, efforts for my students, like making YouTube videos. … I also "force" them to learn by giving them oral tests, so whether they like it or not, they must study.

Rio expressed a dislike for feeling puzzled or powerless while teaching in the classroom. He emphasized his tendency to thoroughly prepare before entering his ESP classes. When faced with challenging questions from students, he responded based on his experiences and knowledge of relevant theories. Rio also asserted his flexibility in shifting teaching methods when things did not go as planned, reinforcing his adaptability to new environments. Throughout the discussion, Rio reiterated the extra efforts he made for his students in teaching ESP.

I think I never got flustered when I teach because I usually prepare myself before that. I try to learn the content well, so until now, I never get surprised for being unprepared. … I have ever got challenging questions from some of my students, and I answered them based on the theories that I know or from my experiences. … I never hold answering my students' questions. I do not like it. I am not that kind of person. … That is why I try to prepare myself well before I teach. … When things go wrong in my classes, I am not puzzled. I think I am someone who can easily switch to something else when things do not go as I have planned.

Rio's motivation for teaching ESP stemmed from his desire to unlock the potential of others, particularly his students, through the use of English. He was aware that he still had to learn more as an ESP teacher. Yet, he showed his confidence once again during the interview as he stated that he had already possessed a good content mastery. Rio believed he was on the correct path in developing his career as an ESP teacher.

My self-driven motivation to teach ESP is I want to unlock one's potential which is often hindered by their inability in English. … I have to learn more for teaching ESP. … Now, I dare to say that I am very confident in teaching ESP. I believe that I have a good mastery of the content. Looking at my students' achievements, I know that I am on the right track.

Karina's Story

Like Rio, Karina did not initially intend to become an ESP teacher at Romu University. However, her path to the role was marked by a mistake in the university's announcement of job openings. In her first year as a faculty member, she taught at the university's language centre before eventually being assigned to the FSPS. Unlike Rio, Karina expressed stronger disappointment regarding this decision. She felt that the university management had misled her, but she was unable to contest it as she had already signed a contract with the university prior to the decision. Additionally, her department head once requested her to teach subjects unrelated to English, deepening her resentment toward the university management.

When I knew that I was placed in the FSPS, I was angry and disappointed. I felt that I was deceived by the university. I have ever felt a grudge toward the

university's head of the personnel division. … I still had to teach there because I have signed the contract given by the university. … Once, the head of the department told me to accept it when I was asked to teach subjects unrelated to English. I was angry, confused, and disappointed at that that time. It was beyond my expectation.

Realizing that there was little she could do to change her situation, Karina chose to adapt to her new role as an ESP teacher. Alongside other ESP teachers at Romu University who had faced similar circumstances, Karina took actions by adjusting the compulsory general English subjects offered by the faculty. They collectively decided to transition these subjects into ESP courses that better aligned with the needs of their students. This initiative marked the beginning of Karina's journey in transforming herself professionally as an ESP teacher.

I had no choice but to accept the situation. … The compulsory English subject for all freshmen in my university was about teaching General English. My colleagues and I discussed that, and we decided to make the compulsory English subject offered in our departments as ESP subjects.

Karina's professional transformation was also supported by her academic environment in the FSPS. She noted that her colleagues treated her with kindness, and the FSPS management actively included her in all activities, especially those related to academic issues. the faculty management encouraged Karina to engage in research and community service projects related to English teaching, thus fostering her academic development. The supportive measures made her feel welcomed by her fellow faculty members in the FSPS.

The dean always involves me in completing administrative matters and managing faculty's events. … My colleagues in the department also treat me nicely. … They make me a part of the team when we discuss academic issues. … However, in terms of doing research or community services, I am usually partnered with ESP teachers from other non-English departments. … I can use the results of the research or community services for my career development because they are still related to English teaching.

Despite displaying a more positive attitude toward her new role as an ESP teacher, Karina still harboured concerns about her academic and professional development. She recounted moments where she felt her knowledge in English was underutilized, given her affiliation with a non-English department. Furthermore, she expressed worries about her inability to collaborate with students on English-related research projects or supervise thesis writings, as there were no university policies addressing such issues for faculty members outside the English department.

Although the university management assured her that she need not worry about her academic career development as long as she taught English-related subjects, Karina felt compelled to exert additional efforts to develop herself professionally.

She recognized the need to seek out other academic environments beyond her faculty for further growth. Despite these challenges, Karina acknowledged that accepting her situation as an ESP teacher was the only viable option at the moment.

> *I was worried with my career development. … The university management told me that no matter where I am stationed there would be no problem as long as I teach English related subjects. … The first time I joined my department, I have ever felt that my knowledge in English is useless because I teach in a non-English department. … I still feel that I need more efforts to develop myself professionally because I need to find other communities outside my department to develop myself. … I want to have a chance to supervise students' thesis writings or do research with the students. … However, for now, all I can do is accepting my situation.*

During the interview, Karina disclosed that she was a first-year student in a doctoral program in ELT at a public university in Indonesia. When asked about her future goals upon completing the program, she expressed uncertainty about her plans. She acknowledged that she might not be able to fully leverage her doctoral degree for career advancement if she remained affiliated with a non-English department. However, she hesitated to switch to a different affiliation because she felt comfortable in her current academic environment, a sentiment she reiterated multiple times during the interview. Adding to her dilemma, Karina admitted that she was not entirely comfortable with her status as an ESP teacher, believing that she lacked the necessary skills to effectively teach ESP subjects. This sense of discomfort compounded her uncertainty about her future career path.

> *For now, I have no plan what I am going to do next after I earn my doctoral degree. … If there is a chance to join the English department or to move to another university, I am not going to refuse it. However, I am comfortable joining my department now. … I am still not comfortable with my position as an ESP teacher. … I feel that I have to learn more to teach ESP because I'm not satisfied with my current achievements as an ESP teacher.*

During the discussion about her students' achievements, Karina expressed disappointment, noting that they were lower than her expectations. She attributed this partly to her perceived lack of qualifications in teaching ESP, which fuelled her desire to improve professionally in this area. However, her determination to enhance her skills faced a setback when she realized that teaching ESP subjects to freshmen, who mostly had low-level English proficiency, for just one semester would not yield significant impacts on their learning. Karina described her freshmen students as overly reliant on her for learning, necessitating constant control and coercion to engage them in the learning process. This situation left her feeling disheartened and discouraged.

> *When my students' achievements are lower than what I expect from them, I realize that a part of it is because I am still lacking in terms of my teaching technique*

in teaching ESP. … It makes me realize that I need to improve myself. … One thing that demotivates me as an ESP teacher now is that the English subject is offered to freshmen only for one semester because I feel like I have to always control them so that they will study.

Karina experienced a range of emotions when observing her students' responses to her ESP classes. At times, she felt demotivated when she perceived that her students underestimated the importance of ESP subjects, perhaps viewing them as secondary. However, her motivation was reignited when she witnessed her students' excitement and dedication to learning the topics she presented. Karina explicitly stated that her motivation in teaching ESP was closely tied to her students' responses to her classes. Their engagement and enthusiasm served as a driving force for her to continue teaching ESP with passion and dedication.

I become dispirited when my students take my class for granted. … I felt that my students are forced to learn English, while English is not a subject of their expertise. However, when I see my students are excited and give their best effort to learn English although their proficiency is still low, it motivates me again to teach them English. … My level of motivation relates to how my students respond to my teaching instructions.

Karina found herself grappling with her students' low-level English proficiency, which significantly impacted her experience of teaching ESP. Frequently, she felt compelled to revert to teaching General English because her students struggled to grasp the ESP materials and activities provided to them. She observed that her students became disheartened when she shifted to teaching GE topics, as they perceived her ESP classes as resembling the English classes they had during secondary and high school. Nevertheless, Karina argued that she had no alternative but to revert to teaching GE due to her students' limited English proficiency. Despite these challenges, Karina endeavoured to adapt her materials by integrating content-specific topics. She aimed to align her ESP materials and activities with those used in content classes, thereby bridging the gap between language learning and subject-specific content.

When I am forced to eventually go back to GE because of their low proficiency, I see that my students are not interested in my ESP class. It seems that they see my ESP class the same as their English classes during their secondary or high school days. … Yet, I have no other choice to go back to teaching ESP because they will get puzzled if I directly give them reading texts suitable with teaching ESP. … As much as I can, I try to relate the materials of my ESP classes with the contents specific to my students' expertise.

Karina reflected on her experiences inside the classroom, sharing moments of feeling flustered when unable to answer students' questions, particularly those related to content-specific vocabulary. Additionally, she admitted to frequently becoming upset when students did not follow her instructions or when unforeseen circum-

stances disrupted her planned lessons, such as sudden university or faculty events. While these situations did not necessarily puzzle her, they did trouble her, as she felt pressured to swiftly devise alternative plans to maintain the flow of the class.

> *I have experienced being flustered for being unable to answer their questions which are related to content-specific vocabulary. … I get upset when things do not go as I have planned them. Such things happened because my students do not prepare themselves well although I have asked them to do that prior to the meeting or because the faculty suddenly asks me to attend an event. … The situation does not puzzle me, but it makes me upset since I need to come up with new activities immediately.*

Karina perceived herself as inferior to content teachers in her department, believing that her students did not treat her with the same respect they showed to content teachers. She highlighted instances where students prioritized assignments from content classes over those from her ESP class, even when they shared the same deadline. This behaviour, in her view, reinforced the perception that students considered ESP subjects to be secondary to content subjects. Karina attempted to rationalize this situation by speculating that other ESP teachers affiliated with non-English departments might encounter similar challenges. This acknowledgment, however, did not diminish her feelings of inferiority or the frustration she experienced due to what she perceived as a lack of equal regard for ESP subjects compared to content subjects.

> *Sometimes I feel that my position as their ESP teacher is lower than the position of their content teachers. I am not as important as those teachers. … I think it is not only me who feel that way, but other ESP teachers who are affiliated in non-English departments may also feel the same thing.*

Despite experiencing discontentment and facing numerous challenges as an ESP teacher, Karina remained motivated to enhance her professional skills to elevate the quality of her ESP classes. Her self-driven motivation stemmed from a dream of assisting non-English department students in achieving proficiency in English. Karina found inspiration in the idea that while it may be common for English department students to excel in English, it is particularly commendable when non-English department students demonstrate proficiency not only in their content subjects but also in English. This aspiration served as a driving force for her to continuously strive for improvement as an ESP teacher.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of Rio's and Karina's experiences as ESP teachers reveals different emotional responses and structural conditions in accepting their roles and pursuing

professional development. Rio's narrative suggests a greater openness to vulnerability, contributing to his positive outlook on teaching ESP and his enthusiasm for enhancing his qualifications in this field. In contrast, Karina's story illustrates a tendency toward protective vulnerability, characterized by a stronger emotional struggle in accepting her status as an ESP teacher and addressing her teaching experiences through her choice of words. Despite these differences, both narratives underscore the profound influence of vulnerability on the participants' professional transformations as ESP teachers. Rio's openness to vulnerability appears to have facilitated his proactive approach to teaching ESP and seeking professional growth. On the other hand, Karina's experience of protective vulnerability, while presenting more challenges, likely serves as a catalyst for deeper self-reflection and growth in her role as an ESP teacher. Ultimately, both stories highlight the complex interplay between vulnerability, emotional experiences, and professional development in the journey of becoming an ESP teacher.

The policies established by the university or faculty, which regulate the position and role of ESP teachers, especially those who are affiliated with non-English departments, are crucial in dealing with and shaping ESP teachers' sense of vulnerability. They serve as political instruments that force both Rio and Karina to construct and redefine their identity as ESP teachers. In this vein, understanding teachers' vulnerability through micro-political terms involves recognizing the intricate power dynamics within educational contexts as teachers cannot fully control their working conditions, in which they work within certain regulations, quality control systems, and policy demands (Kelchtermans, 1996; 2009).

In these stories, the absence of a particular regulation which oversees ESP teachers' rights and responsibilities brings concerns to the teachers' academic career development. In Indonesia, academic career development for faculty members of higher education institutions is assessed based on weighing systems suitable to the kinds of performed activities in education, research, and community services (Directorate General of Science Resources and Higher Education, 2019). This weighing system causes ESP teachers who are affiliated with non-English departments to experience the "loss of something professionally valuable" (Kelchtermans, 1996, p. 310). As Rio and Karina highlighted, they lost the privilege to supervise students' thesis writing. This aspect of student supervision carried more weight in the educational context since it allowed them to guide students in research, thesis writing, and academic publications.

Both participants' stories also reveal students' achievements as another source of their vulnerability. Teachers are often vulnerable about whether they can make a difference on students' outcomes which affects their professional efficacy. Only to a very limited degree, teachers can claim that the students' outcomes are the result of following to their actions (Kelchtermans, 2009). The stories suggest that Rio

demonstrated an internal locus of control for he believes that his teaching method plays an important part in the success of his students, while Karina exhibited an external locus of control since she mostly felt powerless in the face of the external situations which affect her students' outcomes. In this regard, teachers who believe they are responsible for their students' performance and view students' outcomes as a result of their own efforts and abilities tend to have a positive attitude toward teaching (Senler, 2016). It can be seen from both stories that Rio's open vulnerability produces high job satisfaction that influences his perceptions on his status as an ESP teacher, while Karina's protective vulnerability creates a sense of being powerless that makes her uncomfortable with her status as an ESP teacher.

Rio and Karina also presented different stories about their vulnerability when interacting with their students in their classes and their strategies for coping with it. Kelchtermans (2009) argues that such vulnerability is "the most fundamental meaning of the concept vulnerability" (p. 266). Despite receiving professional guidance emphasizing the importance of preparedness in teaching, encountering moments of surprise, confusion, and feeling powerless are inevitable aspects of the teaching experience, indicative of the inherent passivity that can be associated with teaching. However, Rio claimed to have never experienced a moment of being puzzled or powerless in his classes when he recalled his teaching experiences, including when he had questions related to his content mastery from his students. Rio's growing interest in knowing more about content specific topics related to his ESP classes led him to prepare himself better in facing surprising situations in his classes. In contrast, when facing issues related to content mastery, Karina often found herself being powerless. Yet, such experiences made her realize that she needed to make some improvement on her content mastery. In this case, Karina's experience is an evident example of an effect of vulnerability which can provide a gateway for transformation once teachers have better understanding between their realities and negotiate for possible alternatives (Zembylas, 2002).

The stories expose not only participants' vulnerability, but also their efforts in transforming themselves professionally as ESP teachers. Despite being politically assigned the status of ESP teacher, both stories capture how their vulnerability (i.e., open and protective vulnerability) plays an important role in shaping their identity as ESP teachers. Although it is assumed that teachers with open vulnerability are likely to possess positive attitude to their professional development, vulnerability is dynamic in constructing teacher identity (Kamali & Nazari, 2023; Song, 2016). Hence, it can be seen from the stories that although Karina displayed her sense of protective vulnerability more than Rio did, it does not mean that she had no intention to transform herself to be a better ESP teacher. Professional understanding, i.e., how teachers think of themselves as teachers (Uitto et al, 2016), is crucial for teachers in making use of their vulnerability to develop themselves professionally. Both Rio

and Karina recognized their vulnerability and understood that they still needed to improve themselves so that their students got the upmost benefit from their ESP classes. Such teacher transformations may come through their reflection, that is by recognizing their emotions, identifying the sources of such emotions, and the impacts of the emotions on teaching (Dong & Han, 2024; Gao & Yuan, 2024; Song, 2016).

However, in constructing teacher identity, social and institutional contexts also have their roles as teachers develop the relationship with students and others in particular contexts. The political and social contexts together with their early educational journeys define teachers' sense of identity construction and purpose as a teacher (Kamali & Nazari, 2023; Lasky, 2005). The stories show how being comfortable in their academic environment helped Rio and Karina shape their identity as ESP teachers. Their willingness to develop themselves professionally is also driven by the sense of being needed as faculty members. Thus, vulnerability as a form of emotional experiences that influence teachers' professional development can be traced to its social and institutional contexts (Dong & Han, 2024; Gao & Yuan, 2024; Kamali & Nazari, 2023; Song, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study has probed into how teacher participants' vulnerability influences their professional transformation and ongoing development as ESP teachers. In both stories, political vulnerability emerged as a central factor in the participants' transformation processes, as they felt powerless in response to institutional decisions regarding their rights and responsibilities. Moreover, concerns over student achievement prompted self-reflection and a recognition of their crucial roles that motivated them to grow professionally. Unprecedented challenges that provoked feelings of surprise, confusion and helplessness also played a role in deepening their self-awareness and commitment to professional development.

The findings suggest that teacher vulnerability is not a weakness to be avoided, but a meaningful catalyst for teachers' professional growth. Recognizing vulnerability as an authentic and transformative emotional experience allows institutions and the teachers themselves to reframe it as a resource rather than a problem. Professional development programs should include emotional literacy and reflection strategies to help teachers navigate and learn from such experiences. Institutions may also implement supportive arrangements, such as mentoring programs and communities of practice, to provide an opportunity for teachers to express and work through their emotional and professional challenges. Additionally, the institutions' policymakers might critically evaluate and revise policies and role definitions of ESP teachers to ensure they support the teachers' professional autonomy, clarity of responsibilities,

and emotional well-being to reduce unnecessary vulnerability and foster a more empowering environment for teacher professional development.

Despite providing insights on teachers' vulnerability, limited participants may limit the generalizability of the findings. Gender was not analysed in this study, while both a male and a female participant were included, so the study cannot address any possible gendered patterns in the perceptions and reactions to vulnerability. Furthermore, this study may not represent ESP teachers' experiences related to vulnerability in other areas or systems since it reflects certain sociocultural and institutional settings. Thus, future studies could delve deeper into how gender and other emotions shape ESP teachers' vulnerability that affects their professional growth. Employing longitudinal or mixed-method studies across different institutional types and cultural contexts may offer more dynamic and holistic findings.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

English for specific purposes: A branch of English language teaching aimed at enhancing learners' communicative competence related to the specific and professional requirements of particular disciplines or occupational settings.

Reflective practice: teachers' ongoing process of critically examining their emotional experiences, moments of vulnerability, and teaching challenges in order to make sense of their practice and support professional transformation within institutional contexts.

Teacher agency: teachers' capacity to make intentional pedagogical and professional decisions by actively responding to emotional experiences, vulnerability, and institutional constraints, in constructing their teaching practices and professional development.

Teacher emotion: teachers' evaluative and contextually grounded affective experiences that emerge from their interactions with pedagogical practices, students, and sociocultural-institutional contexts, which shape their teaching, well-being, and professional identity development.

Teacher identity: A socially constructed and experientially shaped sense of self that reflects how teachers understand who they are, how they act, and how they position themselves within their profession and society.

Teacher professional transformation: The process through which teachers undergo significant development or change in their pedagogical beliefs, practices, and professional identities due to reflection, experience, or contextual demands.

Teacher vulnerability: A multidimensional emotional and structural condition in which teachers experience openness or defensiveness in response to teaching uncertainty that influences their agency, professional development, and identity formation.