

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the overall framework of the study. It includes the research background, research questions, research objectives, significance of the research, scope and limitation of the research, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

The field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has undergone a significant shift in its approach to teaching. In the past, it was all about the language, but now it is more about the teacher's personal life and experiences. Teaching is fundamentally an emotional process, and the classroom environment can become emotionally charged, mainly when instruction occurs in a second language. Rokita-jaśkow (2023) argues that the emotional atmosphere in a classroom becomes significantly more intense when teaching and learning occur in a foreign language. For individuals in the pre-service teaching program, this emotional intensity is amplified as they transition from learners to professional educators. This shows that how well teachers do their job and how strong they are as professionals are closely related to how they manage their emotions during their years of study.

To handle classroom complexity, new teachers need to develop strong emotional regulation (ER) skills. Grecucci and Sanfey (2014) explain that emotional regulation involves the processes people use to influence their emotions, how they experience or express them, and when they feel them. However, for some students, this process does not always function adaptively, leading to emotional dysregulation. Emotional dysregulation is defined as a student's difficulty managing emotional responses adaptively, which can lead to significant impairments in daily academic functioning and social interactions within the university environment (Wolfers, 2025). This difficulty is crucial because emotions are linked to how well students learn, how motivated they are, and how engaged they are in the classroom. (Fried, 2011). As a result, teachers who can successfully regulate their emotions are better prepared to create a

conducive learning environment and facilitate positive social interactions with their students. Managing your own emotions is key to success in teaching and long-term well-being.

Despite the benefits of emotional regulation, prospective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers often face significant psychological and pedagogical obstacles that test their emotional limits. In higher education, emotional dysregulation manifests as patterns that directly interfere with students' goal-directed activities, such as completing academic tasks and maintaining consistent study progress (Thompson, 2019). Other factors often compound these struggles. Research indicates that students with emotional dysregulation often face comorbid challenges such as heightened anxiety and cognitive-related communication barriers, which contribute to the complexity of their academic journey (Field, 2025). Understanding these challenges is crucial for identifying the emotional support future educators need to succeed in their studies.

The way a prospective teacher copes with emotional struggles is linked to how they develop their professional identity. According to Alharbi et al. (2020), an educator's professional identity is strongly reflected in their emotional experiences and responses in the field. Beyond the immediate difficulties they face, prospective teachers have aspirations that represent future-oriented goals and expectations, driving their professional development. These aspirations motivate them to overcome current obstacles and envision a prosperous future. Thus, examining the relationship between current struggles and future aspirations offers a complete understanding of the journey within an English education program.

Previous studies in this field have primarily examined the emotional labor of experienced teachers or used quantitative measurements to assess teacher fatigue. Some researchers have investigated how experienced educators use reappraisal and suppression strategies to maintain professional discipline in various international contexts (see Grecucci and Sanfey, 2014; Alharbi et al., 2020; Rokita-jaskow, 2023). Specifically, Alharbi et al. (2020) explored how Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers use emotion regulation to maintain their professional identity. However, these studies often

overlook the unique developmental phase of prospective teachers, who may lack the professional maturity to handle sudden emotional changes during their studies. Although the existing literature provides a general overview of emotional challenges, there is a lack of research examining how emotional dysregulation develops or persists throughout a teacher preparation program. This gap in the literature highlights the need for more localized, personal accounts of how pre-service teachers navigate their emotional worlds during their academic journey, especially when their emotional patterns interfere with goal-directed activities such as consistent study progress (Thompson, 2019).

This research was conducted in response to the urgent need to humanize teacher education by focusing on individual life experiences. Most pre-service teacher evaluations prioritize external performance measures, overlooking the internal emotional struggles that can occur during the years of study. This research investigates the specific strategies an aspiring teacher uses to regulate emotions, offering a deeper understanding of the psychological preparation required before entering the profession. Understanding these strategies is vital because emotional dysregulation can significantly impair a student's daily functioning and interpersonal relationships on campus (Wolfers, 2025). In the Indonesian context, recent findings indicate that prospective teachers often prioritize strategies focused on antecedent factors, such as situation selection and cognitive change, to navigate their social environment (Imamyartha et al., 2023). These strategies often manifest as social-relational efforts, where students build networks to gain social acceptance or use peer groups as vital spaces to relieve psychological burdens (Imamyartha et al., 2023). This research also offers a critical perspective on how future aspirations can serve as a shield against daily stressors encountered during his study in the English education program. Ultimately, this research encourages integrating emotional resilience support into the formal curriculum for language teacher candidates.

This research focuses on uncovering the complex layers of an aspiring teacher's emotional journey through a narrative lens. Rather than focusing on specific classroom tasks, this research examines the overall emotional tension and recovery processes that characterize the participant's life as a student. Specifically, the research explores the

experience of a 22-year-old male student, identified as an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation, as he navigates his third year of study. The research considers his condition as a complex academic journey, as individuals with emotional dysregulation often face comorbid challenges such as heightened anxiety and cognitive-related communication barriers (Field, 2025). Despite his clinical records indicating tendencies toward emotional impulsivity and verbal communication barriers, he remains committed to his English education studies. Uncovering his narrative provides deep insight into the challenges of a prospective teacher whose psychological and linguistic starting point is more complex than average. In line with (Jumainah, 2023), this research focuses on the difficulties he faces, the methods he uses to overcome them, and his vision for the future. Narrative research was chosen as the primary methodology because it is effective for investigating the multifaceted and personal nature of language education (Barkhuizen et al., 2024). The research centers on the process of forming participative meanings during his study in the English education program

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the emotional struggles experienced by an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation during his study in the English education study program?
2. What are his strategies to deal with his emotional struggles?
3. What are his future aspirations for the English education program?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows, aligned with the research questions:

1. To describe the emotional struggles experienced by an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation during his study in the English education study program.
2. To explore his strategies to deal with his emotional struggles.
3. To unravel his future aspirations for the English education program.

1.4 Significance of the Research

1.4.1 For EFL Pre-service Teachers

This research is expected to be a source of reflection for other pre-service teachers who may face similar psychological barriers during their studies. By understanding the lived experience of a peer facing emotional dysregulation, other pre-service teachers can gain practical insights into how such patterns can interfere with their academic focus and progress in their studies. It is hoped that these results will motivate them to develop personal strategies to maintain resilience, not only in teaching but throughout their studies in the English education program.

1.4.2 For Teacher Educators and Program Coordinators

The results provide an empirical basis for teacher education institutions to evaluate their current student support systems. The research emphasizes that institutions need to look beyond academics and begin to recognize that emotional dysregulation can significantly impair students' daily functioning and social interactions on campus. This will hopefully encourage the integration of emotional well-being support into the curriculum, so that future teachers are psychologically prepared long before they enter the professional phase.

1.4.3 For University Mentors and Academic Supervisors

This research provides academic advisors with a deeper understanding of the internal emotional struggles students often face in college. Through these findings, mentors can recognize that communication barriers or visible anxiety are often rooted in more complex emotion regulation challenges. This awareness can help supervisors provide more empathetic and measured support, creating a supervisory environment that prioritizes students' emotional stability despite the demands of a demanding curriculum.

1.4.4 For Future Researchers

This research contributes to expanding knowledge of affective aspects in second language education by focusing on the developmental phase of students' lives. This research provides a methodological draft for future researchers seeking to use narrative inquiry to explore the

interrelationships among emotion dysregulation, professional identity, and future aspirations. In addition, the results of this research open avenues for further research into how complex psychological states influence the academic and professional preparation of teacher candidates in various instructional contexts.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Research

1.5.1 Scope

The scope of this research is strictly centered on the emotional experiences, struggles, and regulation strategies of an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation. This research explores the participant's internal affective landscape, focusing on how he navigates psychological and language-processing barriers throughout his five-semester academic journey in the English Education Program. The research specifically examines the intersection between his emotional patterns, the strategies he employs to maintain academic persistence, and his future professional aspirations.

1.5.2 Limitation

This research is limited to a single case of an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation who is currently enrolled in his fifth semester. Since this is a narrative inquiry focusing on a unique clinical and psychological profile, the findings are not intended to be generalized to all EFL students or pre-service teachers. Furthermore, this research does not evaluate the participants' pedagogical competence, teaching performance, or academic grades. The research is limited to the participant's reconstruction of his internal emotional experiences and his self-reported strategies during his study in the English education program.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

1.6.1 EFL Pre-service Teacher with Emotional Dysregulation

A university student in his fifth semester of the English Education program who experiences difficulties in managing emotional responses adaptively. This condition can lead to significant impairments in daily academic functioning and social interactions within the university environment.

1.6.2 Emotion Regulation (ER)

The intrinsic and extrinsic processes for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions. In this research, the focus is on how the student attempts to influence which emotions he feels and how he expresses them as he navigates the demands of his academic journey.

1.6.3 Emotional Struggles

The internal affective difficulties and patterns of emotional experiences that interfere with the student's goal-directed activities. These struggles include language-processing barriers and anxiety that challenge the student's stability during his studies in the English education program.

1.6.4 Professional Aspirations

The student's future-oriented goals and idealized visions of his career after completing the English education program. These aspirations serve as a motivational shield, helping him overcome current emotional setbacks and persist in his studies.

1.6.5 Narrative Inquiry

A qualitative research framework that focuses on the lived and storied nature of human experience. In this research, the study explores how the participant constructs participative meaning from his complex emotional journey as a prospective teacher over time.