

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1. Background of The Study**

Teachers' identity can be defined as the way teachers understand and see themselves as a teacher. But how or in what way they do that could be different from one another. That is why this research conducted, to find out one way of seeing teachers' identity develop during certain teaching career. At a senior high school in Ciamis, West Java, there is one EFL teacher. We may call her Nofilea. She is known well for her friendly demeanor and warm personality among her colleagues and mostly her students. They certainly adore her and often keep in touch even long after graduation. As for her, the connection between teacher and student is more than just a professional obligation; it is an essential aspect of her teaching career and a cornerstone of her identity as a teacher.

Reflecting on her experiences and interactions with students, Nofilea understands that her identity as a teacher has been constantly evolving. Teng's (2019) assertion that teacher identity is formed, constructed, reconstructed, and developed continuously resonated deeply with her. She had seen firsthand how her identity had become a significant factor in her effectiveness as an EFL teacher, a subject that had garnered considerable attention in recent educational research (Derakhshan et al., 2020). Recalling Corbin et al.'s (2019) proposal, developing close relationships with students is crucial for teachers' identity development. From her interactions, she knows this to be true. While on her students' perspectives, as highlighted by Martin & Collie (2018), showed that positive relationships with teachers led to higher engagement and academic achievement.

Despite the high stress levels associated with teaching, Nofilea found joy and confidence in the positive relationships she built with her students. She had experienced the emotional frustration and fatigue that Corbin et al. (2019) described when there was a lack of rapport with students. Therefore, she made it a priority to foster a positive, close relationship with each student,

understanding that it is integral to both their development and especially her own.

Nofilea actively engages in social conversations with her students outside the classroom, discussing their after-school activities and freely sharing ideas. Following Suryani's (2018) suggestions, she listens attentively to their thoughts, creating an environment where students feel comfortable and valued. This approach allowed her to understand their needs better and address them effectively.

Moreover, her friendly nature and openness makes her becoming more than just a teacher to her students; she is someone they could talk to comfortably, like a real friend. This positive closeness brought her happiness and satisfaction, knowing her students were confident enough to share everything with her. In turn, this closeness helped her improve her professional skills and strategies for creating a strong bond with her students. As Corbin et al. (2019) noted, closeness, not conflict, is significantly linked with a teacher's sense of personal accomplishment especially from the students.

Understanding the importance of teacher identity through the lens of teacher-student relationship, Nofilea was guided to explore into the theories surrounding its construction and development. According to Ohlen and Segesten in Kayrayici (2020), teacher identity comprises three dimensions: personal (skills and abilities for the profession), interpersonal (interactions with students and colleagues), and socio-historical (the image of the profession). Using these dimensions, she explored her experiences by also being led by Martin & Collie's (2018) theory on how teacher and students connect in three ways which are interpersonally (via teachers' warmth), substantively (via task giving) and pedagogically (via teaching method) as part of her identity development during her teaching career.

As she continued her journey as a teacher, Nofilea remains committed to nurturing her identity and fostering meaningful relationships with her students. Each interaction, each shared story, and each moment of connection

contributed to her growth and development, shaping her into the teacher she aspires to be.

## **1.2. Formulation of the Problem**

One research question is addressed in the present study. The researcher interrogates, “How does teacher-student relationship influence an EFL teachers’ identity development?”.

## **1.3. Operational Definitions**

The researcher provides two definitions related to this study to avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study as follows;

### **1.3.1. Teachers’ Identity Development:**

A continuously process of a teacher about how she/he sees him/herself during career stages where the process indicates certain changes in positive way which impact on jobs’ decision such as teaching method choice, classroom management skill, etc.

### **1.3.2. Teacher-Student Relationship:**

The connection or bond between a teacher and the students which is built through inside and outside classroom interaction. For instance having conversations about lives outside the classroom, listening to each others’ thoughts, being cooperative inside the classroom, etc.

## **1.4. Aims of the Research**

According to the research question, this research aims to investigate how teacher-student relationship influence an EFL teachers’ identity development.

## **1.5. Significances of the Research**

### **1.5.1. Theoretical Significance**

This research will expand the understanding on how teacher-student relationship influence the development of an EFL teachers' identity.

### **1.5.2. Practical Significance**

Practically, this study can be used as a reference in understanding how teacher-student relationship influence the development of an EFL teachers' identity.

### **1.5.3. Empirical Significance**

This study will give insight into how teacher-student relationship influence the development of an EFL teachers' identity.