

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, which includes the phenomenon and importance of emotion regulation for EFL teachers at a junior high school, as well as the research question, operational definitions, aims, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, junior high school teachers face challenges while teaching. Based on preliminary observations at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya, EFL teachers often encounter students' difficulties in learning English as a foreign language and identify three main challenges in the classroom: students' differences in English language abilities, low motivation to learn, and students' misbehavior. Moreover, each teacher has different experiences and challenges in teaching students with diverse English language abilities, low motivation, and students' engagement, and students' misbehavior, which influence their emotional stability (Chen, 2020; Nurpadilah, 2023; Hulu, 2024). These challenges frequently require various emotional responses that demand appropriate emotional regulation to stabilize their emotions. Previous research has shown that emotion regulation is crucial because such challenges can become an emotional drain for teachers (Chen, 2020; Chang & Taxer, 2021), but in-depth studies at the junior high school level remain limited. Therefore, teachers' ability to regulate their emotions remains a crucial aspect in teaching and learning processes at the junior high school level.

In addition, teaching English at the junior high school level is challenging because it is a transitional period for students to become independent and organized individuals, and difficulties young learners experience in learning English also affect the emotions of EFL teachers. As stated by Oktavia (2022), young learners require more attention and support in learning English because they often lack knowledge of the language and their abilities, which makes EFL teachers impatient,

disappointed, and even angry. In addition, they frequently act according to their own preferences and experience unpredictable emotions because they are in a transitional period towards independence, which often poses challenges in the classroom (Harmer 2007; Oktavia, 2022). Therefore, the ability of EFL teachers to regulate emotions is a crucial aspect of maintaining emotional stability and ensuring that the learning process continues to run effectively despite facing these challenges at the junior high school level. Effective emotion regulation enables EFL teachers to respond effectively to every classroom challenge, creating a supportive learning environment and maintaining student motivation in learning English.

Emotion regulation is an individual's ability to recognize, manage, and adjust emotions to remain stable in various situations. As Gross (2015) states, emotion regulation is a strategy that influences how a person experiences emotions, how those emotions are felt, and how they are expressed. In the context of this study, this regulatory ability is crucial for EFL teachers because emotions have a major impact on the teaching and learning process. Effective emotion regulation supports teachers' professional development, maintains teaching quality, and creates a supportive learning environment (Gkonou & Miller, 2023). However, teachers can experience stress and fatigue if they are unable to regulate their emotions effectively, which ultimately interferes with their teaching effectiveness and reduces student engagement in the learning process (Valente et al., 2022). Therefore, emotion regulation is a fundamental skill for every teacher. It supports the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Previous research has examined the strategies teachers use to regulate their emotions. A study by Thumvichit (2023) on EFL teachers in Thailand also found emotion regulation strategies such as situation modification and cognitive change, which were effective in managing stress due to low student engagement and motivation. Research by Li and Lv (2022) reveals that EFL teachers in higher education used situation selection, attention deployment, and cognitive change to regulate their emotions and develop professionalism. Another study by Heydarnejad et al. (2021) focused on the comparison of emotion regulation applied by EFL teachers in high school and college. The result is that university teachers

tend to use cognitive change and attention deployment, while high school teachers more often use situation selection and response modulation.

The three studies have primarily focused on emotion regulation among teachers in higher education settings. The study addresses a gap by examining the emotion regulation strategies of EFL teachers at the junior high school level. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by employing a qualitative case study method to explore the emotion regulation strategies used by an EFL teacher at the junior high school level, which present challenging and unique characteristics. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of emotion regulation in teaching and offer practical strategies for EFL teachers facing similar challenges.

Based on the above description, this study aims to determine the emotion regulation strategies employed by EFL teachers in facing classroom challenges when teaching English in junior high schools, which often trigger emotional responses among EFL teachers and require emotion regulation to maintain emotional stability and ensure a supportive classroom environment. Through a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the emotion regulation strategies employed by the three EFL teachers in responding to these challenges. Although these challenges are commonly found in English classes, the focus of this study is not on these classroom challenges themselves, but on how teachers regulate their emotions to maintain English teaching in this context. To gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, the study examines three EFL teachers who have encountered a range of teaching situations and long-term teaching experiences.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The formulation of the problem in this study is “What emotion regulation strategies are used by EFL teachers when managing classroom challenges at junior high school?”

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the study, the researcher provides some definitions related to the study.

1.3.1 Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is the strategies EFL teachers use to effectively manage their emotions when facing challenges in the classroom, such as differences in students' understanding, motivation, and behavior. It involves recognizing emotional responses and applying various strategies (e.g., situation modification or cognitive change) for a supportive learning environment.

1.3.2 EFL Teachers

EFL Teachers are educators who teach English to students in countries where English is a foreign language. Their profession is not only teaching foreign languages academically to students, but also understanding that emotional connections are part of their work; therefore, emotion regulation strategies are crucial for EFL Teachers.

1.3.3 Teaching English

Teaching English involves providing and guiding students with the basic knowledge (such as vocabulary and grammar) and simple communication skills as per the national curriculum, especially in junior high school. However, teaching English requires teachers to employ emotion regulation strategies that contribute to a supportive learning environment for students.

1.3.4 Managing Challenges

Managing Challenges is the ability of EFL Teachers to face and overcome various teaching challenges. In this study, these challenges were identified through pre-liminary interviews with participants, which included three main challenges: differences in students' English abilities, low motivation, and students' misbehavior that can disrupt the teaching-learning environment. These challenges require teachers to apply effective emotion regulation strategies to maintain emotional stability and create a supportive learning environment.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The research aims to identify the emotion regulation strategies that EFL teachers employ in managing challenges while teaching English at a Junior High School.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

The study contributes by providing information about the theory of emotion regulation for teaching English as a foreign language, especially in junior high school. The results of this study offer a theoretical framework for understanding how EFL teachers regulate their emotions during the teaching process. The findings of this study also enrich the literature by highlighting the importance of emotion regulation in supporting teachers' teaching process.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

Practically, the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of emotion regulation in teaching and offer practical strategies for EFL teachers facing similar challenges. Additionally, it becomes a reference or reflection for teachers in regulating emotions while teaching English. The results can also inform administrators and policymakers to pay more attention to professional development programs that emphasize emotion regulation for teachers.

1.4.3 Empirical Significance

Empirically, the study enriches the literature on EFL teachers' emotion regulation strategies at the junior high school level, a topic that has received limited research attention. The junior high school context has unique characteristics because students are in the sensitive and impressionable early adolescent phase, requiring appropriate emotion regulation strategies. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for further studies in similar contexts.