

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The chapter discusses the concepts of emotion regulation and Gross's (2015) theoretical framework on emotion regulation, as well as the emotional challenges faced by EFL teachers in junior high schools. In addition, relevant studies that can be used as references are presented to show that research on emotion regulation at the junior high school level is still limited. The research gap forms the basis for the study.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

##### **2.1.1 Emotion Regulation**

Emotions refer to a person's feelings that arise in response to certain situations. In line with Ke Lomi (2022), emotions have been defined as the feelings that a person feels in certain situations or activities where the individual's social environment can influence the development of these emotions. These feelings have a major influence on how a person thinks, acts, and interacts with others. As such, understanding how emotions function in social settings can provide important insights into interpersonal relationships and human behavior. In the context of this study, emotions are the result of the interaction between teachers and their teaching context, including their feelings about themselves, their colleagues, their learners, classroom activities, and the context of teaching materials (Richard, 2020). Therefore, in this context, the classroom environment affects the emotions of EFL teachers.

In the teaching process, there are two kinds of emotions: positive emotions and negative emotions. Positive emotions refer to a teacher's good feelings, such as happiness, satisfaction, or calmness (Ching & Chan, 2020). Effective positive emotion regulation strategies have been linked to increased positive affect, helping teachers reduce stress and enhance student engagement (Tsujiimoto et al., 2024). Conversely, negative emotions such as

anger or anxiety can reduce motivation to learn and create an unsupportive environment (Kozubal et al., 2023). In the context of this study, at the junior high school level, the ability of teachers to regulate these two types of emotions is crucial to the success of teaching and learning. It has been crucial because emotion regulation maintains teachers' emotional stability and creates a supportive learning environment (Gkonou & Miller, 2023). Therefore, teachers who regulate their positive and negative emotions effectively are crucial in the teaching process.

In the context of learning, teachers' emotions and the process of learning English in the classroom influence each other. Teaching involves not only the transfer of knowledge, but also emotional interactions between teachers and students, which means that successful learning depends not only on pedagogical competence, but also on EFL teachers' ability to manage their emotions to deal with classroom dynamics (Chen, 2020; Gkonou & Miller, 2023; Li & Lv, 2022). These emotions experienced by teachers while teaching can influence how they teach, respond to challenges posed by students, and create a supportive or unsupportive classroom atmosphere. According to Gross (2015), emotional regulation allows teachers to control how emotions arise and are expressed. Thus, EFL teachers can adjust their emotions to stay positive during the teaching–learning process. Additionally, Valente et al. (2022) emphasize that teachers' ability to regulate emotions is crucial in building healthy social relationships with students and creating a supportive learning environment. Thus, emotions and the teaching-learning process have a strong relationship.

In the context of this research, EFL teachers are required to be able to regulate their negative emotions while teaching. As stated by Ke Lomi (2022), teachers are expected to be perfect in their teaching, mainly when they regulate their emotions. Emotion regulation is recognizing emotions and applying strategies to control or adjust effectively. However, in Indonesian junior high schools, these demands are even more complicated because teachers must also contend with the emotional dynamics of teenagers, in

addition to their academic responsibilities. As a result, Ke Lomi's statement offers a starting point for comprehending why junior high school teachers' emotion regulation requires more investigation. According to Qu and Wang (2024), emotion regulation refers to the process an individual uses to manage their emotions effectively. Emotion regulation also means that the different ways we react to emotions may change the way emotions progress. In addition, the process of managing emotions can be automatic or controlled, realized or unrealized, and can have an impact on one or more aspects. For example, a person may feel their heart pounding or their muscles tightening, even though they are not exhibiting any obvious outward reaction.

Several other theories also explain emotion regulation. Lazarus (1991), through Cognitive Appraisal Theory, emphasizes that emotion regulation arises from an individual's interpretation of a situation; therefore, EFL teachers' emotional responses to the challenges while teaching depend on how the situation is assessed. Thompson (1994) views emotional regulation as an intrinsic and extrinsic process of monitoring and modifying emotions to achieve goals, which, in the context of EFL teachers, includes managing the intensity, duration, and expression of emotions to regulate their emotions while teaching. Meanwhile, Pekrun (2006), through Control-Value Theory, explains that emotional regulation is related to control over emotions and the assessment of the value and meaning of academic activities, such that EFL teachers' emotions are influenced by their perception of classroom control and the meaningfulness of English language learning. Overall, these theories suggest that EFL teachers' emotion regulation is influenced by cognitive appraisals, emotion management strategies, and perceptions of control and meaning in the learning context.

All theories are crucial to emotion regulation. Although these theories make important contributions to understanding emotion regulation, this study uses Gross's (2015) framework as its primary model because it provides more systematic and applicable categories of strategies, especially in the context of EFL classroom dynamics. This model does not negate other theories, but was

chosen because it best suits the research objectives, which focus on identifying specific strategies used by EFL teachers in managing challenges.

Emotion regulation is useful in educational contexts, especially in foreign language teaching, which helps EFL teachers prevent negative emotions. In line with this, emotion regulation helps teachers prevent negative emotions, increase positive emotions, and promote the process of teaching English (Thuy, 2021). Therefore, mastering emotion regulation strategies is one of the key skills that support teachers' success in teaching practice, especially teaching English as a foreign language. As stated by Gross (2015), emotional regulation is a strategy that influences how a person experiences emotions, how those emotions are felt, and how they are expressed. He is categorized into five types: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. This classification is crucial because it provides a clear, systematic, and relevant framework for understanding how EFL teachers regulate their emotions in managing challenges. These five strategies are widely used in psychology and education to understand how individuals manage their emotions (Gross, 1998; Gross, 2015). The emotion regulation by Gross (2015) is based on the following theoretical framework:

#### 1. Situation Selection

Situation selection refers to the choices to engage in or avoid situations that are expected to produce pleasant emotional experiences. These represent the choice to engage in or avoid certain people, places, or situations based on the expected emotional impact. Situation selection is a strategy to regulate emotions before they fully appear. In a teaching context, they can lead to the selection of helpful situations, such as preparing before entering the class, changing class schedules, and continuing the class even though it is challenging (Chahkandi et al., 2016). Teachers can do activities that promote positive emotional states based on their choice to avoid difficult situations.

## 2. Situation Modification

Situation Modification is about modifying external situations to influence how they affect a person's emotions. Situation Modification must focus on changing the physical environment, even though "situations" can be internal or external. In this context of teaching, teachers should directly modify the situation to a better one to change the emotional impact, such as telling a joke or funny stories, adjusting teaching tempo, changing class layout, game, and songs (Chahkandi et al., 2016; Akbari et al., 2020). Additionally, to modify one situation, the teacher can effectively create a "new" situation when the teacher is already emotionally drained (Gross, 2015). To avoid unexpected emotional responses and be able to face challenges during English teaching, teachers can modify their teaching methods to foster a better situation than before.

## 3. Attentional Deployment

Attentional deployment is a strategy that involves shifting or focusing attention on specific aspects of a situation to reduce or change the perceived emotional impact. In this context of teaching, this strategy refers to focusing attention on enjoyable things, such as allowing students to perform simple tasks to divert attention from stressful challenges or simply paying more attention to student progress (Chahkandi et al., 2016). Teachers can maintain their emotions by shifting attention away from emotionally draining challenges.

## 4. Cognitive Change

Cognitive Change is about changing how to see things or perspective to reduce their emotional impact. In line with Aldrup et al. (2023), cognitive changes lead to reinterpretation and acceptance. In this context of teaching, Cognitive Change involves thinking of the positive side of a thing, reflecting on issues, changing opinions about student learning, and asking for advice from others (Chahkandi et al., 2016). This strategy can be defined as thinking of the positive side of a thing, such as looking at the diversity of students'

English abilities and challenges as opportunities for professional development. It is about rethinking the situation to reshape our emotional response. Rather than perceiving teaching as a challenging job, EFL teachers might view it as an opportunity for professional growth.

#### 5. Response Modulation

Response modulation is the process by which someone regulates their feelings and responds to them once they arise, particularly when negative emotions have been felt. Following habitual responding, response modulation takes place late in the emotion-producing process. The strategies are like faking the expression of positive emotions, where the teacher displays enthusiasm or spirit even when feeling unpleasant or stressed, to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere (Xiyun et al., 2022). Despite internal emotional discomfort, display patience and support by using nonverbal cues like smiling or nodding and by maintaining a calm tone. As stated by Chang & Taxer (2021), the teacher who faces an arousing event in the classroom chooses to suppress emotions and pretend to be calm. During challenging circumstances, teachers can also use physical techniques like deep breathing, relaxing for a while, or short pauses to recover their feelings (Chahkandi et al., 2016). The strategy follows habitual responding, which affects the learning environment.

The theoretical framework is directly relevant to the research objectives, which are to find out the emotion regulation EFL teachers implement in managing challenges while teaching English at a Junior High School.

#### **2.1.2 EFL Teacher Emotions**

In the teaching English process, EFL teachers experience a range of emotions, such as positive or negative emotions. Teachers may experience happiness, enthusiasm, and satisfaction when students understand the material. Conversely, teachers may feel stressed, anxious, and disappointed with their lack of effort when students struggle to understand the material (Ke Lomi, 2022). Additionally, teachers may start yelling, frowning, scolding, or

simply looking them in the eyes when negative behaviors or emotions appear in students (Chahkandi et al., 2016). In line with Keller et al. (2020) stated that during teaching, teachers' emotions are often triggered by students' misbehavior, as the main source of these negative emotions, such as anger and frustration. This directly reflects the teacher's emotional response, which, if unregulated, can result in an unsupportive learning environment and decrease students' motivation to learn, which in turn will interfere with teaching and learning effectiveness.

Emotion regulation is crucial for teachers to regulate negative emotions and guide students to regulate their emotions in the right way. As stated by Gaunt and Karpel (2024), teachers can help students learn to appropriately regulate their emotions, with the aim that they can use replacement behaviors, such as self-calming techniques, when they feel anxious or angry, rather than engaging in challenging behaviors. It confirms that emotion regulation plays a crucial role in helping teachers regulate their negative emotions while teaching English.

### **2.1.3 Teaching English in Junior High School**

The context of this study is EFL teachers who teach junior high school students as young learners. Linse (2005) explains that young learners are usually children aged 7-15 years old who learn foreign languages through active participation and repetition, rather than through abstract grammar rules. At the junior high school level, students are aged 12-15 years old, which falls into the category of young learners. They have shorter attention spans, are highly dependent on visual and physical activities, and learning must be interesting, enjoyable, and emotionally supportive for the process to run smoothly. As Linse said, young learners' language acquisition is closely related to their emotional and social development. This means that emotional expression and encouragement from teachers play a crucial role in maintaining students' motivation, abilities, and good behavior in class.

In the context of teaching English at the junior high school level, teachers' emotion regulation plays a crucial role in sustaining effective instructional interactions. As cited in the study by Archad and Chen (2009), Vygotsky (1978) stated that young learners' abilities develop in two stages: first through social interaction, then as personal abilities, which is a process that takes place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Within this zone, teachers function as more capable others who provide guidance, scaffolding, and emotional support during instruction. However, the realization of teaching within the ZPD is often constrained by challenges, such as differences in students' English abilities, low learning motivation, and students' misbehavior, which can disrupt interaction, trigger negative emotional responses from teachers, and weaken the quality of scaffolding provided. Therefore, teachers' ability to regulate their emotions becomes essential, as emotion regulation enables teachers to adjust instructional support and sustain constructive interactions despite challenging situations. Through effective emotion regulation, EFL teachers are better able to manage teaching demands and continue facilitating learning processes that align with students' ZPD.

While teaching English, EFL teachers face diverse external challenges that require emotion regulation to maintain a supportive learning environment. Each teacher has different experiences and challenges in teaching students with diverse English language abilities, which may influence their emotional stability (Chen, 2020). What becomes more challenging and affects teachers' emotions is when they have a strong expectation that all their students should be able to understand English or complete the task. A supportive learning environment can lead to positive teacher emotions, which result in good student learning effort and the academic achievement that teachers expect (Wijaya, 2021). Emotion regulation enhances teaching effectiveness by enabling teachers to focus on learning objectives and adapt to various teaching methods, thereby enabling the overall quality of teaching practice (Wang et al., 2023). Therefore,

emotion regulation is crucial for managing challenges such as diverse English abilities and teachers' expectations, which ultimately creates a more effective and positive learning environment.

On the other hand, EFL teachers must deal with students' lack of motivation. In their teaching practice, EFL teachers face a variety of challenges, most of which arise from external factors such as lack of motivation and students' misbehavior, which results in poor academic achievement (Nurpadilah, 2023; Hulu, 2024). These conditions often affect teachers' emotional state because they have to deal with learning situations that do not meet expectations. As stated by Oktavia (2022), EFL teachers are also expected to support young learners in learning, and they have to be able to motivate their learners. Since teachers expect all of their students to be highly proficient in English, but there are differences in motivation that impact the results, they must not only increase students' motivation to learn but also regulate their emotions when they are triggered by students who lack motivation to learn the language. Thus, teachers' ability to build students' motivation as well as regulate emotions appropriately is key in dealing with external challenges that affect the effectiveness of English language learning

Besides diverse English abilities and motivation, the next challenge faced by all teachers in regulating their emotions is students' misbehavior. When dealing with junior high school students in the adolescent transition period, teachers require the ability to regulate their emotions. According to Harmer (2007), adolescents are in a transition period towards independence, which often poses challenges in the classroom. They may show disruptive behavior, but on the other hand, they also have the potential for creativity, enthusiasm, and high commitment if learning can attract their interest. This situation illustrates that teaching at the junior high school level requires teachers to play a role not only in delivering language materials but also in regulating their emotions and creating a supportive learning environment to allow the students' positive potential to develop.

The students' misbehavior requires teachers to regulate their emotions continuously. In carrying out their role, teachers are required to actively control negative emotions such as anger and anxiety, and express positive emotions such as calmness and pride to overcome negative emotions triggered by students' misbehavior (Chang & Taxer, 2021). According to research by Arbai (2024), students' misbehavior, such as falling asleep during class, ignoring instructions, or showing a lack of motivation in completing assignments, often leads to emotional responses from teachers. This challenge ultimately shows how challenges in the classroom can be both a trigger and a means for teachers to strengthen their emotion regulation.

Still in the same context, in teaching practice, one of the most challenging factors for teachers is managing challenges such as students' misbehavior. Students' misbehavior that disrupts the teaching and learning process, hinders learning, and affects the classroom environment, thus needs to be responded to appropriately by the teacher to keep teaching and learning activities running effectively and create a supportive classroom environment (Chang & Taxer, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to regulate their negative emotions when teaching English, especially in dealing with students' misbehavior, to create a supportive learning environment. In the context of this study, such challenges were also observed during the preliminary stage at the selected junior high school, indicating the need for effective emotion regulation strategies.

## **2.2 Study of Relevant Research**

Some studies have examined the EFL Teachers' emotion regulation in teaching English. Firstly, Li and Akram's (2023) research shows that strategies such as Situation Selection and Response Modulation can help EFL teachers regulate their emotions and develop professionalism, but the study focuses on higher education. Secondly, a study by Thumvichit (2023) found that EFL teachers in Thailand often use situation modification, cognitive change, and response modulation. Those strategies are to deal with stresses like low student

engagement, low self-esteem, and poor student motivation, but the context is in university lectures. In addition, Heydarnejad et al. (2021) compared high school and university teacher strategies, finding that high school teachers used Situation Selection and Response Modulation more frequently. Although those studies' findings may not fully reflect the unique emotional challenges at the junior high school level (but in higher educational levels), they do suggest that further investigation is needed to determine whether similar strategies are used by junior high school teachers, whose students are at a more sensitive developmental stage.

Based on a review of previous theories and research, EFL teachers' emotional regulation plays a crucial role in maintaining emotional balance during the learning process. As Gross (2015) stated, emotion regulation helps individuals control their emotional experiences and expressions to remain adaptive to stressful situations. In the context of teaching, this is relevant because teachers face various challenges, such as differences in student abilities, low motivation to learn, and student behavior that can trigger stress (Chen, 2020; Valente et al., 2022). Therefore, this study combines Gross's (2015) theoretical framework with previous research findings to broaden the understanding of how EFL teachers' emotional regulation strategies are applied in the junior high school context. This study not only fills a gap in the literature but also contributes theoretically and practically to improving teachers' emotional well-being and classroom learning effectiveness.