

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology used to conduct this study as well as the context in which this study takes place. It covers the research design, justification for research site and participants, elaboration of data collection techniques, and discussion of data analysis.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The present study employed a narrative-based case study to explore two university EFL novice teachers' identity construction during the COVID-19 pandemic context. A case study is an empirical inquiry about a phenomenon or a case set within the real-world context (Yin, 2009, as cited in Hamied, 2017). It is a qualitative approach in which "the researcher explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The study fits within a case study framework, as it examines a bounded system (Creswell, 2013), i.e., the experiences of two participant teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic context.

A case study as a method gave the perspective to understand the context and the process of context transition (Sunday et al., 2020). However, a case study design alone did not provide the understanding and meaning behind the experiences being told by the teacher regarding identity construction. In order to look into the teachers' lived experiences and to understand their lived realities and the social settings in which their identity was constructed, another methodological approach was needed. Using narrative inquiry as a merged methodological framework helped shape the understanding of the teachers' stories (Sunday et al., 2020). The stories are one of the data sources that are used to extract the theoretical constructs that made up the case of teachers' identity construction during online teaching.

A narrative has been considered the most appropriate and effective way of representing and understanding the experience of identity construction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1995; Leigh, 2019). In this study, narratives were employed to gain insights and understandings into how the participants perceive themselves as a teacher and the pathways they take individually as they shape their identities in teaching. Moreover, narratives were used in this study to understand the experience of the teachers through three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). These spaces included a reflection on the teachers' past, present, and future experiences, including their thoughts, attitudes, feelings, opinions, and experiences in shaping their identity. This design revealed how the teachers see themselves as teachers, how they (re)construct their teacher identity when teaching online, and how the shift from face-to-face to online teaching affects their identity development and teaching practice. In this regard, this methodology was well suited to provide an understanding of the experiences of the EFL novice teachers regarding their professional identity.

### **3.2. Research Participants**

This case study involved two university EFL novice teachers, Dilla and Tasya (pseudonyms), from two different Islamic universities. This small number of participants was chosen so I could focus in capturing the personal dimensions of the teachers' experience over a period of time, with an aim to highlight the relationship between the participant and their journey (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001). The findings in this study were constructed through stories of the participants' experiences. It was facilitated by in-depth study of their journey through the beliefs, values, and experiences that guide their story and the descriptions of their identity construction and reconstruction.

Regarding the selection criteria of the participants, novice teachers were chosen since they are very likely experiencing challenges as they navigate the complexity of their professional identities transition from being a student to a teacher (Alsup, 2006; Diasti, 2021). Because the study was conducted in the context

of the COVID-19 pandemic, another criterion that was set in recruiting the participants was having no prior online teaching experience, which would be helpful to see how they adapt to the transition from face-to-face to online teaching and to see how the shift affected their identities as teachers. They were also chosen purposefully because they are willing to share their lived experiences in teaching. Creswell (2013) recommended that “In a narrative study, one needs to find one or more individuals to study, individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored” (p. 147). The participant teachers’ demographic information is presented below.

Table 3. 1

*Teachers' Demographic*

Name	Sex	Age	Highest Level of Education	Teaching Experience	Educational Background	Category of Teacher
Dilla	Female	30	Master degree in Linguistics	5 years	Master Degree	Novice
Tasya	Female	31	Master degree in English Education	4 years	Master Degree	Novice

Dilla is a 30 years-old EFL teacher with 5 years of teaching experience at a private Islamic university in Bandung. Her first language is Sundanese. English is her foreign language which she studied since grade four at elementary school. She graduated from English Education Department in an Islamic University in Bandung, and she took a master degree majoring Linguistics with the concentration

in English language. Before teaching at the university, she had some teaching experiences in all level, from primary to secondary level.

Tasya is an EFL teacher in a state Islamic university in Bandung. Her first language is Sundanese. English is her foreign language which she studied since grade four at elementary school. In 2013, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in English Education from an Islamic University in Bandung. She gained her master degree majoring English Education in 2017, and she began teaching at the university in 2018.

Dilla and Tasya teach at different Islamic university. The difference in the university they teach could imply the different settings or contexts they experienced. Different settings, environments, and contexts could result in different challenges and processes of negotiation in constructing their teacher identity (Hsiao, 2018; Pennington & Richards, 2016). For this reason, involving these two participants from different universities added more information on the teachers' identity constructions in different contexts.

### **3.3.Data Collection**

To collect stories of EFL teachers' experiences, issues in teaching practice, and their self-identities as a teacher in the online learning context, I collected multiple sources of information. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary technique for gathering participants' life history. Adopting an in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed me to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the teachers' lived experiences as they related to the construction of their professional identity. In addition, Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) suggested that the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the participants' points of view, unfold the meaning of their experiences, and uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. In addition, to supplement the data from the interview, I collected the data from online classroom observation and documents in the form of lesson plan and photovoice. Document could be a valuable source of information (Creswell, 2013) in supporting the data from the interview.

In qualitative research, using multiple data sources is important in terms of increasing the validity of the research findings (Mathison, 1988). Each technique of data collection is described in the following section.

### 3.3.1. Interviewing

Interviewing was done with the teacher participants to understand how they make meaning of their interactions and constructs their professional identity in the online setting. Interviewing is considered powerful as its purpose is to explore in-depth the things that cannot be observed, such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Thus, interview questions provided sufficient coverage for the aims of this research study and draw out teachers' understandings and current reflections on their teaching practice and perceptions about themselves. In this respect, to triangulate the data, a number of interviews with different purposes was included in this study. Conducting a sequence of interviews can help me enrich the data by collecting both retrospective and contemporary accounts of the participants (Barkhuizen, 2014). Moreover, Cohen et al. (2002) stated that the uses of the same methodology on different occasions can help the researcher to validate the data as it is considered methodological triangulation. Each session, different interview questions was given to explore the participants' experiences and perspectives in relation to their professional identity construction. The interview questions proposed to the participants were adapted from various sources and can be seen in Appendix 2. The type, the purpose, the time and duration of the interviews are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3. 2

#### *Types of Interviewing*

Types of Interviews	Purposes of the Interview	Time of the Interview	Duration	
			Dilla	Tasya
Initial Semi-structured Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To learn the participants' backgrounds</li> </ul>	December 2022	36.24 minutes	26.24 minutes

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Semi-structured Interview Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish rapport with the participants</li> <li>• To have an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and feelings throughout their teaching practices</li> </ul>	December 2022	40.57 minutes	63 minutes
Semi-structured Interview Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explore the participants' online teaching experiences</li> </ul>	January 2023	68 minutes	48.20 minutes
Follow-up Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To cross-check the researcher's interpretation is in line with the participants' experiences</li> </ul>	January 2023	31 minutes	46.02 minutes

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The first interview focused on getting to know the participants and establishing a close and respectful rapport by allowing them to talk about their educational experiences as students, professional experiences of their previous career and being language teachers, and their recent experiences as a teacher. The second interview centred on how the participants make meaning of their experiences as they revisit their initial perceptions in the first interview. This interview also explored challenges the participants have faced, professional development activities, peer collaboration, views on administration, and their emotions throughout their teaching practices. The questions were chosen to embrace professional and personal elements of the identity and reveal the participant's teacher identity formation process. The third interview was mainly on online teaching experiences, comparing and contrasting with face-to-face and

online teaching. This interview looked into the effect of the transition on the participants' teaching practices. Finally, a follow-up interview was conducted to ensure the researcher's understanding of the data aligns with what the participant wants to express.

### **3.3.2. Online Classroom Observation**

An online classroom observation was employed to complement the data from the interview and to gain non-verbal presentations of the participants' feelings and experiences related to their professional identity construction. Observation is one of key tools in validating research data (Cohen, 2018). It can provide rich contextual information, allow for the collection of first-hand data, reveal regular routines, and give opportunities to document verbal, non-verbal, and physical aspects (Clark et al., 2009; Creswell, 2014). Another advantage of observation is that it provides a reality check because what people do may differ from what they say they do (Robson, 2002). In this regard, conducting observation might add deeper insight into how the participants construct their identity as EFL novice teachers.

I joined the online classroom once for each participant to investigate the participant teachers' feelings, experiences, and teaching practices. The observations were employed in online classes via Zoom meeting because the participant teachers still conducted online teaching. The length of observations ranged from one hour to two hours. The data that I collected was in form of field notes. I looked for the evidences of experiences related to the participant teachers' professional teacher identity perception by comparing what the participant teachers said about themselves in the interviews and their stance as a teacher in the classroom. During the observations, I asked for permission to the teacher to record the whole activities and interactions. In each classroom, descriptive and reflective notes were written. For descriptive notes, classroom events were noted minute by minute. Simultaneously, I reflected on teachers' behaviors and try to capture the feelings of the participant teachers in order to compare the data presented in the interviews. I

watched, listened, and took notes about what the teachers said and did and extensively noted how they interacted with the students as well as how the teachers utilize technology during online teaching. The recorded meeting was watched after each observation to check if I had missed any important information.

### **3.3.3. Documents**

Documents in the form of lesson plan and photovoice was used to provide secondary data to support the primary data obtained through in-depth interviews. Marshall and Rossman (2014) explained that “the analysis of documents is potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (p. 164). The documents that I collected were teachers’ personal documents, including lesson plans, photovoice, and the required English syllabi from which the teacher derived her lesson plans. Merriam (2009) suggested that collecting personal documents can provide a rich source of information for researcher. Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world. Apriliani (2020) used one particular type of documents, photovoice, to show when the teaching and learning process was running. The photovoice helped her as documentation and evidence in relation to teachers’ identity construction during teaching practicum. In addition, Gandana & Nissa (2021) drew on a number of documents including photographs, diaries, school notebooks, and social media status in helping reconstructing the participant’s narratives. Therefore, the use of documents is helpful to reflect the participants’ perspective, which is what most qualitative researcherd are seeking.

### **3.4.Data Analysis**

The approach used in analyzing the data from the interviews and classroom observations is thematic analysis. The thematic analysis process consisted of five stages: (a) organization and preparation of the data, (b) obtaining a general sense of the information, (c) the coding process, (d) categories or themes, and (e) interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014).



The organization and preparation of the data stage started with transcribing audiotapes shortly after the interview to make sense of the data from the transcripts and writing out the field notes from the observation data. Afterward, the interview transcripts and field notes were firstly read and re-read several times to get a general sense of the data and to generate preliminary codes by identifying a specific idea or topic from the interview with the teachers and the classroom observation.

The coding process was the next stage in which the data was coded. The process consisted of re-reading the transcripts and field notes and identifying recurring words, ideas, or patterns generated from the data (Patton, 2002). In other words, the data was segmented into meaningful units with a range of themes and categories identified, particularly related to the participant's identities in the online teaching context, as well as possible factors for the formation of her identities. For example, the code '*interested in English*' gained from the interview was associated with teachers' talk about their English learning experiences. The coding process resulted in descriptive codes such as *exposure to English, inspiring figure in teaching, family influence, setting boundaries, creating learning videos, and teaching as dream job*.

Following that, the emerging codes were re-examined and reassembled to form axial codes based on their interrelationships (Creswell, 2013) with the reference to the conceptual framework drawn from Yazan (2018). The process of generating open codes combining it to axial codes is illustrated in Table 3.3.

Table 3. 3

*The process of open coding and axial coding*

Open Codes	Axial Codes		Examples
	Categories	Properties	
Interested in English, exposure to English, admiring their teacher	Learning Experiences	Teachers' talks about their learning experiences as an English learner	A teacher participant shared her experiences in learning English and how she admired her teacher.

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			<i>... When it came to learning speaking and listening, I was excited because I learned more about English skills and I could practice more. My high school teacher gave me room to practice like doing role-play or being news anchor.</i>
Teacher training, teacher community, joining webinars, workshops, looking for webinar info, joining online course	Professional Development	Activities done by the teachers to support their professional practices	A teacher participant shared her experiences in teacher professional development activities.  <i>[...] the one (TPD activity) that I found very influential was when I joined a teacher development program at TB*.</i>

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The combination of these codes resulted in data grouping under larger conceptual categories (Creswell, 2013). The next stage of data analysis consisted of studying the categories and their corresponding codes to determine any overarching themes or theories that provided insight into the participants' identity construction. The process of generating themes from the coding processes is presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3. 4

*Generating themes*

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Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes	Themes
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Interested in English, exposure to English, admiring their teacher	Learning Experiences	Learning Experiences	Teacher's learning
Teacher training, teacher community, joining webinars, workshops, looking for webinar info,	Improving teachers' knowledge and ability in learning	Enforcing Teachers' Professional Development	Teacher's participation in community of practice
Support from leader, parents, supportive teaching environment, discussion with senior lecturer, sharing with colleagues,	Having supportive work environment	Social context of teaching	Contextual Factors
Adjusting topic to Indonesian and Islamic culture, starting class with prayer, inserting islamic value into topic,	Teaching at Islamic university		

### 3.5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented and discussed the research design, research participants, data collection technique, and data analysis applied in this study. This research is a narrative-based case study that involved two EFL novice teachers, Dilla and Tasya (pseudonyms). Dilla is a university lecturer that teaches at a private Islamic university, and Tasya teaches at a state Islamic university in Bandung. The data were collected through four-times semi-structured interviews, online classroom observations, and documents. The findings from the data are discussed in Chapter IV. The answers to the research questions are also elaborated in the following chapter.