

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter elaborates the research foundation emphasizing the professional identity construction among English pre-service teachers during teaching practicum concerning their struggle in the teaching field. In particular, section 1.1 explains the background of the research which consists of issues related to professional identity development of pre-service English teachers in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the importance of professional identity for pre-service English teachers, previous research studies on professional identity, and the present research position among the previous research studies. Then, section 1.2 presents the research questions. Next, section 1.3 describes the research objectives. Section 1.4 states the contribution of the research. Section 1.5 provides the clarification of key terms utilized in this research.

### **1.1 Background of the Research**

Learning the English language does not simply focus on language skill mastery, but it is more complex since it leads the learners to experience a gradual process of identity construction. The language learners can easily follow or imitate the ways of Native English Speakers (NES) or start to recognize their identities as nonnative English Speaker (NNES) and their significant participation in the learning environment. According to Block (2007), identity is constantly changeable and contextual. Moreover, it is consistently linked to the result of interaction as language learners should negotiate their status, personality, intellectuality, and many other aspects of life whenever they are situated in certain learning circumstances. Briefly, each language learner experiences a multi-layered process of constructing their identity in response to the diverse situation and personal knowledge base.

Pertinent to the previous explanation, it is worth pointing out that language learners, mainly those who pursue their studies in teacher education program, will consider teaching as their future career. The journey of language learners to be professional language teachers must be challenging and meaningful for their identity construction. Regarding the shift position of language learners to teachers, professional identity ultimately emerges as an accompanying term. Teacher professional identity is not stable (Sachs, 2005) since negotiation comes first to be fitted in the workplace and accepted by the community. Thus, professional identity points to both interrelated aspects, namely personal and professional (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), as it refers to how teachers construct their identity based on the experience and the “sense that is made of that experience” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15).

Related to the ongoing process of language learners becoming professional teachers, they must pass the prep program when studying in the teacher education program. The prep program is a teaching practicum program. Commonly, they participate in this program in the final stage of their study. Teaching practicum provides EFL pre-service teachers opportunities to gain meaningful experience professionally in their preparation phase (Agudo, 2016). During the ongoing program, they will implement the pedagogical knowledge base they have learned in the college classroom into the authentic teaching context (Cheng, 2013; Danyluk et al., 2015; Gebhard, 2009).

Certainly, the interaction between these pre-service teachers and the community at the assigned schools contributes to the construction of professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In response to the new learning environment and community, teaching practicum is highly anticipated by pre-service teachers as it challenges them to put theory properly into the real teaching setting, adapt to the community they work with, lead the classroom, invest time and energy purposefully in relation to the pedagogical practices, and envision their future-self based on the professional learning to teach experience they have.

Within a teaching practicum context, a variety of competencies being implemented and the involved multi-aspects are crucial to the construction of EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity. Their agency then becomes the

important aspect to exercise, so that each moment spent throughout the teaching practicum will lead them to be more independent and sensitive towards their teaching and teaching context. Thus, EFL pre-service teachers' readiness serves as the source of psychological and emotional strength while participating in teaching practicum is essential to assist them in determining whether to stay or leave the teaching profession.

Regarding the importance of teaching practicum and its influence on professional identity construction, especially in Indonesian teacher education institutional settings, it is expected that the English competence of the graduates improves sustainably, so they will be professional in playing their roles as "a model language user, a model language learner, a task designer, and a learning facilitator" (Musthafa et al., 2018, p. 182). The graduates of the English department are expected to have a variety of competence that distinguishes them from other professionals and strengthen their identity as individuals who are qualified in terms of knowledge, skills, and members of an academic community. In addition, the perspective of language learning for student teachers does not merely stand at the core of language skills mastery, yet it also takes the further steps of preparing them to be autonomous, adaptable, negotiable towards the classroom situation or learning environment, and accepted in the new environment when they do teaching practicum. Thus, the language learning trend has altered from cognitive to social (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

The shift has been triggered by the scholars who conducted their studies on successful language learners who are not fully viewed from mental processes but also from the access they have got to various communication through the existing communities (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Toohey, 2000). This framework is constructed in alignment with the interconnectedness of learners' learning methods, strategies, or techniques with the situated context that includes different societies, cultures, language proficiency, agency, investment, and other contributing factors, e.g., their previous learning experiences (Freeman, 2013). Accordingly, the shift of perspective in language learning results in great attention to "the role of identity ...[mainly]... in the nature of teaching and teacher learning"

(Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 6). In addition, Singh and Richards (2006) emphasized that identity plays a special role in language teaching because, in content-delivery, teachers are not merely related to their knowledge and skills but are also expected to understand "what it means to be a language teacher." The complex combination of skills, knowledge (e.g., discipline, pedagogy, context, etc.), identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016), and its connection to the characteristics of the discipline simultaneously are claimed to provide professional teachers (Pennington 1999 cited in Pennington, 2014).

Concurrent with the high interest and the need for teacher identity investigation, various studies of identity in educational settings have been conducted. First, the notion of identity is used as an analytic lens to examine particular issues related to theory and practice in the educational field (Bennison, 2015; Gee, 2000; Goos, 2013; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Van Zoest & Bohl, 2005). Second, identity and professional development are interactively related. It is worth pointing out that teachers' identity influences their commitment to teaching (Lipsey, 2013), lecturers' teaching competency development and response to the challenges in research and publishing (Teng, 2019), and the personal and external factors (Day et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2010; Morrison, 2013; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Judyth Sachs, 2001; Sharplin, 2002; Teng, 2019) contribute to identity development which results in professionalism. Third, scholars also explored teachers' perceptions of their identity (Beijaard et al., 2000; Ezer et al., 2010; Xiong & Xiong, 2017). Fourth, a review of scientific writings about identity has also been conducted to discover the interrelation between identity and professionalism (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). Fifth, identity development deals with autonomy as well. It means that teachers with a sense of autonomy may perform successfully in classroom practices (Caprara et al., 2006; Watters & Diezmann, 2015). Sixth, identity is importantly discussed because of its connection with socio-political issues (Jenkins, 2005; Norton, 1997; Norton & Costa, 2018; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Torres-Rocha, 2019).

Based on the studies mentioned above, each scholar has contributed significantly to the development of research on pre-service and in-service teacher

identity. There has been an increase in research studies concerning the issue of identity in Indonesia (e.g., Gandana & Parr, 2013; Hapsari & Ena, 2019; Kuswandono, 2014; Nur'Aini et al., 2018; Riyanti, 2017a, 2017b; Susilowati, 2014; Wirza, 2018; Zacharias, 2016). More specifically, scholars investigated the notion of identity with regards to the teacher's beliefs on English language and its culture within the introduction of Intercultural Communication subject that indirectly challenges her to translate and deliver the content of subject without automatically conforming the "dominant narratives constructed by 'The West'" or by the educational institution where she works at (Gandana & Parr, 2013, p. 241), the polarization of pre-service teachers' positioning during teaching practice due to the teaching context and institutional influences (Hapsari & Ena, 2019), constraints experienced by pre-service teachers during their practicum learning (Kuswandono, 2014), student-teachers' identity-agency in the context of English as a lingua franca (Nur'Aini et al., 2018), student-teachers' identity development within two different practicum settings (Riyanti, 2017b), the use of switching codes during peer teaching that contributes to the way of perceiving self as the prospective English teacher in Indonesian context (Riyanti, 2017a), the process of negotiation between teachers and students which occurred through their interaction in the classroom (Susilowati, 2014), EFL learners' negotiation and development within their agency and investment (Wirza, 2018), the development of student-teachers professional identity in practicing ELF pedagogy during their campus-based practicum (Zacharias, 2016). Those empirical studies showed that English learners and pre-service teachers in Indonesia had counteracted various challenges to their identity construction.

Reviewing the previous explanation, the study focusing on EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity during the teaching practicum still requires further investigation (Raharjo & Iswandari, 2019). As far as it is concerned, many research studies have focused on the professional identity in English teacher education in Indonesia. However, few works still scrutinize EFL pre-service English teachers who had enrolled in microteaching courses and participated in teaching practicum programs at public and private junior secondary schools in the border area of

Indonesia. Notably, by conducting the study in the border area, the current condition of EFL pre-service teachers and their constraints in constructing professional identity can be well-understood.

Regarding the gap above, this study focuses on the factors, critical events, and how EFL pre-service teachers envision their future selves after participating in the teaching practicum, mainly at the assigned junior secondary schools. Further, by employing the framework emphasizing pedagogical, political-social, cultural issues, and institutional factors, it is expected that a more useful description of EFL pre-service teachers' journey in constructing their professional identity is comprehensively presented.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The present research study focuses on the issue of EFL pre-service teachers' process of constructing their professional identity as they get involved in the context of teaching practicum. Furthermore, the issue led the researcher to formulate the research questions shown as follows:

1. What are the factors involved in constructing the EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity during the teaching practicum?
2. What are the critical events in constructing the EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity during the teaching practicum?
3. How do the EFL pre-service teachers envision their future selves as teachers related to their professional identity construction?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The present research study aims to investigate pre-service English teachers' process of constructing their professional identity as they get involved in teaching practicum. The followings are the specific research objectives:

1. The research investigates the contributing factors in constructing the EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity during the teaching practicum.
2. The research investigates the critical events in constructing the EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity during the teaching practicum.

3. The research investigates the ways the EFL pre-service teachers envision their future selves as teachers related to their professional identity construction.

#### **1.4 Research Contribution**

- a. This research results theoretically expand the knowledge base about EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity construction in the Indonesian contexts. On this occasion, the present study investigates how EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity is constructed by analyzing the significant factors, critical events, and their teaching practice experiences at the partner secondary schools.
- b. In terms of pedagogical practice, this study is useful for EFL pre-service teachers to reflect on their professional identity construction and recognize and anticipate the factors, critical events, and aspects they need to consider during the teaching practicum.
- c. Viewed from the aspect of the policy, the result of this research pays out for the advancement of the English Education Department as the teacher education center by putting high consideration into the optimization of the pedagogy of particular course subjects through the development of appropriate syllabus and pedagogical practice, so the effort of promoting EFL pre-service teachers in envisioning themselves as the future teachers is well-facilitated.

#### **1.5. Clarification of Key Terms**

In order to clarify the key terms employed in this study, the definitions are described as follows.

1. EFL pre-service teachers are the student teachers who are trained and do teaching practicum in the authentic teaching context after taking all prerequisite course subjects in teacher education program.
2. Professional identity is the label resulting from EFL pre-service teachers' collective experiences of past learning, investing their time and energy,

negotiating with the contextual resources, exercising agency as the outcome of involvement in the certain environment and eventually influencing their commitment, cognitive and personal qualities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Olsen, 2008; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Sachs, 2005).

3. Teaching practicum is the site of identity construction for EFL pre-service teachers based on the collection of mentoring and networking experience in the real teaching context (Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Dewey cited in Koross, 2016; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Tony Lawson et al., 2015).