

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The identity of an English instructor is not formed instantly, but rather the result of a long, complex, and dynamic process. Various factors influence this identity, including personal experiences, social contexts, and professional pressures in daily practice. Personal experiences may include a teacher's educational background, past learning history, or significant encounters with former teachers that shape their teaching beliefs (Daud, 2021; Gee, 2000). Social contexts involve cultural expectations of the community, institutional policies, and interactions with colleagues, students, and parents (Li, 2022; Martin et al., 2018). Meanwhile, professional pressures can arise from curriculum demands, workload, and the need to constantly adapt to evolving teaching methods and learner needs (Hanum & Maskhurin, 2023; Nguyen, 2021). Daud (2021) states that a teacher's identity is formed through the interaction of personal experiences and evolving external factors. This aligns with Li's (2022) view, which emphasizes that language instructor identity is a complex narrative construction continually changing. Furthermore, the formation of identity as an English instructor is also closely related to how they respond to challenges in their teaching practice. Martin et al. (2018) explain that teacher identity encompasses professional, social, and personal aspects that interact to shape their development process. Instructors deliver material and

reflectively navigate the evolving roles, expectations, and values within the teaching community (Daud, 2021; Li, 2022). In the context of language teaching, instructor identity significantly influenced how they designed lessons, built relationships with students, and created strategies to address challenges in the classroom. A well-formed identity enabled teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and adapt their approaches to meet students' needs, directly supporting their professional growth (Li, 2022; Martin et al., 2018). Identity formation also played a crucial role in shaping teachers' motivation, resilience, and sense of responsibility in responding to the demands of the teaching context (Daud, 2021; Hanum & Maskhurin, 2023). Understanding how identity evolved made it clearer how teachers developed professionally in response to personal and contextual challenges.

Tuition centers are interesting places to observe this identity formation as non-formal educational spaces. Amid the growing need for supplementary lessons, particularly in English, for young learners, tuition centers have developed into an educational alternative that complements formal schools. Sahito et al. (2017) stated that students attending tuition centers significantly improved academic achievement due to a more focused and personalized approach. Taylor (2024) also emphasized that many parents choose tuition centers to maximize their children's golden years of intensive and enjoyable English learning.

However, teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in tuition centers was difficult. Afrida et al. (2025) identified five key challenges in teaching young learners: cognitive development, attention, motivation, multilevel groups, and

evaluation. The Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) context was particularly interesting to investigate because young learners have unique developmental characteristics that require different teaching strategies compared to adults (Gürsoy & Korkmaz, 2012; Kim et al., 2024). Moreover, the growing demand for English at an early age in many Asian countries has created new expectations for instructors working in tuition centers (Nguyen, 2021). These conditions make Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) a crucial area of study, especially in understanding how teacher identity is shaped by the challenges of working with young learners.

English instructors must implement appropriate and adaptive learning strategies to address these challenges. Pebriantini et al. (2024) emphasized creating an interactive and positive learning environment to motivate young learners. This suggests that learning English for early childhood students requires approaches that are engaging and responsive to their developmental needs. Gürsoy and Korkmaz (2012) further noted that strategies effective for adult learners may not be suitable for young learners. Therefore, games-based learning, storytelling, peer collaboration, and project-based learning are highly recommended (Kim et al., 2024; Pertiwi et al., 2020). These activities help improve English language skills and create a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience for children. In this regard, English instructors act not only as teachers but also as creative facilitators sensitive to their students' unique needs.

In addition to classroom challenges, English instructors must face external expectations from institutions, parents, and the social environment. Hanum &

Maskhurin (2023) emphasize the importance of flexibility, patience, and creativity in addressing the unique characteristics of young learners. Nguyen (2021) underscores that English fever in many Asian countries has contributed to the development of tuition centers and increased demands on teacher professionalism.

Innovations in institutional management have also contributed to transforming the role of English instructors. Wei Chun and Mostafa (2021) noted that implementing digital management systems in tuition centers helps improve learning efficiency while increasing instructors' responsibilities regarding monitoring, reporting, and interacting with students and parents. In this context, instructors are teachers, class managers, and mediators who must understand the various stakeholders (Bray & Kwo, 2014; Dey & De, 2019). With ever-evolving challenges, an English instructor's identity is not fixed, but somewhat shaped through daily practice, reflective experiences, and a continuous adaptation process. Mario, a participant in this study, is a vivid example of this dynamic. He has been teaching English to young learners in a tuition center for over six years. His experiences in facing classroom challenges, building relationships with students, and adapting his teaching approach demonstrate that identity as a teacher is not static, but is constantly being formed through a living process (Li, 2022; Martin et al., 2018).

This study explored Mario's identity formation as an English instructor in the context of a tuition center through a narrative approach. By exploring Mario's journey in depth, from challenges to the strategies he developed in teaching young learners, this research was expected to provide a broader understanding of the

formation of language instructor identity in non-formal education settings (Daud, 2021; Li, 2022).

1.2. Questions of the Study

This research focused on the process of professional identity formation of an English instructor in a tuition center context. Using a narrative approach, this study explored how the teaching experiences and dynamics experienced by the participant shaped their identity as teacher. Based on this focus, the research questions were as follows:

1. How had Mario's identity formation evolved throughout his career as an English instructor in a tuition center?

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study aimed to explore Mario's experiences as an English instructor teaching young learners at a tuition center. Using a narrative approach, this study explored how Mario's professional identity was formed and developed, particularly in facing teaching challenges, adapting learning strategies, and reflecting on his practice in the context of non-formal education.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study was expected to contribute valuable knowledge for prospective young learner teachers, particularly regarding the process of identity formation for English instructors in tuition centers. By examining Mario's development from a

novice teacher to a reflective instructor, this study highlighted various challenges and strategies relevant to the context of non-formal English language teaching.

The findings also provide inspiration and practical guidance in classroom management by showing how Mario adapted his methods to students' diverse learning styles, designed engaging activities, and built a positive learning environment for young learners. For example, his strategies for maintaining students' attention and motivation in multilevel classes demonstrated how reflective teaching practices could improve classroom dynamics. His experience also illustrated how personal values and professional commitment shaped creative approaches to challenges, which could serve as a model for other instructors in similar contexts.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated how the more personalized and flexible environment of tuition centers contributed to the professional growth of instructors. Therefore, the results of this study served as a reference and motivation for prospective English instructors embarking on careers in alternative educational pathways such as tuition centers.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

This research focused on a single participant, Mario, an English instructor who taught young learners in a tuition center. The insights gained were closely tied to his experiences at a specific point in his career, particularly during his sixth year of teaching at the tuition center. Therefore, the findings reflect this stage of his professional journey and are not intended to represent teachers in different phases,

such as novice instructors who are just starting or senior educators with decades of experience.

In addition, this study centered on young learners as the target age group. As a result, the conclusions drawn were not intended to be applied to older students or adult learners. Since this study used a narrative inquiry approach, the emphasis lay in exploring one individual's story in depth. While this offered valuable, detailed perspectives, it did not capture the full range of experiences among English instructors in similar roles.

