

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter contained research background, problem identification, limitation of the study, research questions, research objectives, research significance, and the definition of key terms.

### 1.1 Research Background

In Indonesia, the changes in the social and political structure logically led to changes in the school curricula (Ashadi, 2015). Two curricula in English Language Teaching (ELT) were now being taught in Indonesia which are the 2013 curriculum and Merdeka curriculum. The learning process standard used in the 2013 curriculum is scientific approach, while Merdeka curriculum emphasizes on students' talents and characters (Efriza et al., 2022). English teachers needed to be aware of the appropriate teaching strategies that supported the development of the four English language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) in accordance with the learning process standards for the curriculum. Being an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Indonesia could be called a long-life learning experience. It was related to the Indonesian national curriculum's transition that presented English teachers with new challenges in the field of ELT (Sofiana et al., 2019). These challenges necessitated on-going adaptation and improvement of teachers' skills, making it a lifelong learning experience. Teachers could not remain stuck to a specific pattern and teaching style since the art of teaching demanded constant struggle and advancement.

A good EFL teacher should be excited about technological improvements because visual resources helped students to relax during the class (Sakkir et al., 2021). The use of technology in

English language teaching was not new. It was emphasized that technology became increasingly important in education in the twenty-first century (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). The raised standards of EFL teachers drove them to work harder. Teachers were demanded to be up-to-date and always developed their skills, knowledge, and attitude. To meet these demands, EFL teachers had to be motivated to engage in on-going and career-long learning which facilitated sustainable, intellectual, and profession-oriented maturation (Bhatt, 2021). The tremendous advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in recent years led to a broad search for potential ICT applications in educational settings. Many teachers around the world, especially English language teachers, were now taking bold measures to incorporate technology into their classrooms (Inderawati, 2017). Language teachers had a wide range of options for incorporating technology into their classrooms. There were several ICT applications for enhancing English skills that English teachers could employ in their classroom activities. However, not all EFL teachers took advantage of the ICT in EFL teaching programs that were available. Furthermore, not all teachers who used ICT applications did this effectively (Yermekkyzy, 2022). In Indonesia, teachers could take advantage of professional development options called Teacher Professional Development (TPD). One-time seminars, in-service short courses, or workshop training were the most general TPD programs (Rahman, 2021). TPD that was internet-based could be an invaluable tool in boosting teachers' technological skills via internet networks. The efforts to increase teachers' competence through internet-based training could help teachers advance professionally and personally (Ghassani & Sugandi, 2023).

In the TPD journey, teachers who had received regional and/or national training must share their acquired knowledge and skills through several learning activities in their districts and schools in order to create sustainable knowledge transfer skills among local teachers. These

chances enabled teachers to network with other teachers, share ideas and best practices, and keep up with the most recent teaching approaches and technologies. However, high TPD involvement did not always imply a development in teachers' teaching quality (Rahman, 2021). Therefore, self-directed professional development could be an option to help teachers in developing their own qualities (Lan, 2022). Self-directed professional development could be defined as a field in which teachers examined themselves and stressed the areas they needed improvement and direction, and then taught themselves how to overcome those challenges. Through self-directed professional development, teachers took the initiative for their professional growth which was more effective than other instructed methods (Bhatt, 2021).

In Indonesia, a female teacher typically had double responsibilities by being a wife or mother in their family and a teacher in school. Female teachers faced more challenges in enhancing their career as professional teachers (Rashid & Maharashi, 2015; Limbong, 2019; Hendriani et al., 2022). One of the biggest challenges was that female teachers' career progress had been limited by family issues (Maharjan, 2021). The National Commission on Violence against Women revealed that the opportunities for female teachers to access further education or capacity building were often limited because of their reproductive function (Komnas Perempuan, 2021). This situation led to other challenges in job promotion, so that the number of females who could occupy the position of head of an education unit was not much and the number was even smaller at higher levels of education.

The path to be EFL professional educators was not simple because the teachers should be committed, reflect, and persevere (Yumarnamto, 2017). To be well motivated in self-directed professional development, teachers need grit. Duckworth (2007) investigated grit to determine how people moved beyond motivation and into grit, which was far more likely to survive over

time. Grit was more than just a motivation; it was the commitment to any endeavor one wishes to reach and the cultivation of greater discipline. Grit was the quality that allowed people to work hard and remained committed to their settings of long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016). Grit was defined as a strong desire to achieve long-term goals, no matter how hard the challenges were (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Grit made a considerable contribution to effective outcomes in many sectors, particularly education (Christopoulou et al., 2018). Regarding gender, female teachers appeared to be grittier than male teachers in the perseverance of effort (Argon & Kaya, 2018). Another study found female pre-service teachers performed much better on grit subscales than males (Kaya & Yuksel, 2022). Unfortunately, ICT tools and applications were disproportionately used by male teachers rather than female teachers in the classroom due to the limited participation in ICT courses for females (Manyilizu & Gilbert, 2015). Female teachers might experience discrimination while teaching technology-related courses, which caused feelings of loneliness and a sense of inferiority. Moreover, female teachers exhibited significantly poorer self-perceptions of their digital teaching skill than male teachers did, as well as less willingness to use technologies (Trigueros & Aldecoa, 2021). Therefore, this present study promoted teachers' participation in self-directed learning where it was mostly dependent on a combination of teachers' internal motivation to learn and gain the strength to control their learning experiences (Lan, 2022).

The researcher did a pre-observation in early October 2023 to some female EFL teachers with double responsibility (wife/mother and professional teacher) in Central Java, Indonesia. Mostly the female teachers revealed about her challenges during her professional career such as difficulties in managing time between work and caring for family, home, and children. Even more in the post pandemic era, the government issued a national policy where Indonesian schools

expected teachers to include technology into their lesson plans (Mali, 2023). Thus, they mentioned to experience burning out, thus it could negatively impact both her professional life and personal life. However, it was still unknown how Indonesian female EFL teachers with a double responsibility develop grit and face challenges to develop their self-directed professional development of ICT context. This study topic had the potential to offer important insights into the bigger picture of ICT integration in ELT and self-directed professional development. Prior research mostly concentrated on the impact of grit in teachers' experiences generally. Hence, the data regarding Indonesian female EFL teachers who had double responsibility was scarce. Therefore, the researcher conducted a narrative inquiry study to explore the experiences of female EFL teachers' grit in their self-directed professional development of ICT context.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

Based on the previous studies and preliminary observation, the researcher identified some problems concerned with the EFL female teachers' grit in the self-directed professional development in the ICT context. There were several ICT applications for enhancing English skills that English teachers could employ in their classroom activities. However, not all EFL teachers took advantage of the ICT in EFL teaching programs that were available. Furthermore, not all teachers who used ICT applications did this effectively. More research on ICT utilization in EFL classrooms was needed. High TPD involvement did not always imply a development in teachers' teaching quality. Therefore, self-directed professional development could be an option to help teachers in developing their own qualities. Through self-directed professional development, teachers took the initiative for their professional growth which was more effective than other instructed methods. More study on teachers' self-directed professional development was needed. The existing studies mostly found in Indonesia were about teachers' motivation and their journey

of professional development, and not a lot about grit. Unlike motivation that was considered easily fading, grit was something bigger than motivation. It was a commitment to pursue whatever people wanted to achieve. More study of teachers' grit was needed. Females frequently confronted personal obstacles such as taking care of family at home that made it difficult for them to advance in their careers. Investigating the grit of female EFL teachers could help us better understand the challenges that they encountered and how they overcame them. By studying the female teachers' grit, it led to role models for the students regardless of gender and challenges they faced. Considering the identification of the problems above, investigating the grit and EFL female teachers' grit on the self-directed professional development in the ICT context was needed. Female teachers might experience discrimination while teaching with technology-related courses, which caused feelings of loneliness and a sense of inferiority. Therefore, female teachers exhibited significantly poorer self-perceptions of their digital teaching skill than male teachers did, as well as less willingness to use technologies. The findings of this research were anticipated to provide information about EFL female teachers' grit in Indonesia and how it contributed with the self-directed professional development in the ICT context.

### **1.3 The Scope of the Study**

In investigating grit and self-directed professional development, this study was limited to Indonesian female EFL teachers who taught in Indonesian senior secondary schools. Investigating a small sample enabled the researcher to concentrate on gaining a thorough grasp of a specific social and cultural environment, which was typically not achievable when investigating bigger samples (Subedi, 2021). Therefore, this study recruited 3 (three) female teachers in Central Java province as the research participants. Culture played an important role in the perspective of career women. In Javanese culture, there was a saying that said women only had 3M (*macak, manak,*

*masak*) duties (Stefanie et al., 2022). This saying gradually shaped the understanding that women's duties were limited only to dressing up, giving birth, raising children, and cooking. Sometimes the culture viewed career women negatively as if they did not care for their family well. In fact, many career women still pursued themselves to carry double responsibilities as wife/mother at home. This study only focused on the grit of female EFL teachers who were already married and had children. There were two kinds of teachers who were involved in this study, which were experienced English teachers (more than 6 years teaching experience) and novice English teachers (minimum 1 year teaching experience). Some experienced English teachers might be not familiar with the most recent technology and fear employing them in the classroom, while novice teachers might lack experience in both teaching and using ICT applications (Yermekkyzy, 2022). Therefore, the present study recruited both novice and experienced English teachers for the context of self-directed professional development in the ICT utilization in classrooms. The purpose of this criteria was to explore deeper stories from both types of teachers in the same secondary school level.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the background of the study above, the research questions were formulated below:

1. How do female EFL teachers with double responsibilities (wife/mother and professional teacher) describe their grit in self-directed professional development in the ICT context?
2. What challenges do female EFL teachers face in constructing grit while pursuing self-directed professional development in the ICT context?

## 1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the statements of problems, this research objectives were:

1. To explore how female EFL teachers with double responsibilities (wife/mother and professional teacher) describe their grit in self-directed professional development in the ICT context.
2. To explore what challenges female EFL teachers face in constructing grit while pursuing self-directed professional development in the ICT context.

## 1.6 Significances of the Study

There are 2 (two) types of significance presented in this section, namely theoretical significance and operational significance as detailed below.

### 1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The findings were expected to provide contribution in the educational science of EFL teaching-learning in Indonesia. The study provided information about how female EFL teachers described their experience of being a wife and/or mother at home and a professional teacher in school. The study contributed to the grit theory in education setting, particularly a narrative description of female EFL teachers' grit level and how they constructed their grit while pursuing self-directed professional development of ICT context at the senior secondary school level. In addition, it also provided theoretical steps in promoting narrative inquiry research in the topic of female EFL teachers' grit in the self-directed professional development in the ICT context.



## 1.6.2 Practical Significance

The research findings contributed to some parties such as teachers, students, and other researchers. For teachers, particularly female EFL teachers in Indonesia, the result of the study promoted the importance of teacher' grit in self-directed professional development in ICT context. In addition, the findings were expected to encourage teachers in applying ICT in the EFL classrooms effectively and identifying any challenges that might happen. For students, the findings were expected to maximize the EFL teachers' potential in applying effective language classrooms through ICT which led to the advancement of students' learning goals. For other researchers who were interested in female EFL teachers' grit in self-directed professional development of ICT context, the research findings could be used as a reference to research more on those topics.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid confusion and provide clear understanding of this present study, there were 2 (two) definitions of key terms as followed:

### 1.7.1 Conceptual definition

The conceptual definition was the theory-based definition, and it served as the fundamental theory for the development of research instruments and data analysis.

#### 1. Female EFL Teacher's Grit

Grit was defined as a non-cognitive spiritual trait which had a similar concept to intrinsic motivation (Qiao, 2022). A strong desire to achieve long-term goals, no matter how hard the challenges, was called grit (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth

& Quinn, 2009; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Academic achievement, interest, and efficiency in both general education and second language education had been linked to the concept of grit. Additionally, it had been determined that this favorable characteristic was advantageous for professional performance. Baraquia (2020) synthesized two characteristics of describing teachers' grit through her Teachers' Grit Scale (TGS), which were (1) perseverance in teaching and (2) passion and purpose in teaching. It was because gritty teachers possessed the capacity to constantly concentrate on their primary areas of interest. They similarly continued over time despite the demanding teaching schedules and significant workloads. Grit stimulated the person's efforts to achieve goals and promotes personal development (Duckworth, 2016). Female teachers appeared to be grittier than male teachers in the perseverance of effort (Argon & Kaya, 2018). Thus, the high levels of female teachers' grit helped students to perform better in school. Unfortunately, not many studies explored the female EFL teachers' grit in the ICT context. Thus, this study attempted to dig deeper on these topics.

## 2. Teachers' Self-Directed Professional Development

Self-directed professional development inspired teachers to take the initiative for their professional growth which was more effective than other instructed methods (Bhatt, 2021). The teachers examined themselves and prioritized the areas they needed improvement, and then taught themselves how to overcome challenges during the improvement activities. Generating self-initiated learning goals was the first step in the self-directed teacher learning process. Teachers who chose the substance of their goals themselves were more likely to self-identify their learning requirements

and design objectives that addressed the challenges they faced on a daily basis as teachers. This situation increased motivation and engagement of the teachers (Fransen, 2022). In the context of ICT, Thakur (2012) mentioned techniques which could be employed to successfully utilize ICT resources for teacher professional development. They were by including ICT tools in classroom activities, by applying remote learning mode, or by practicing self-leadership through Open Educational Resources (OERs). Based on the adult learning point of view, teachers had the capacity to identify their own learning requirements so they could guide their own learning (Louws et al., 2017). Therefore, self-directed professional development was needed to be promoted to teachers to improve their professional careers.

### 3. ICT in English Language Learning

ICT referred to the hardware, software, networks, media, and processes that were used to collect, store, process, transmit, and information presentation through voice, data, text, and pictures, as well as the related services including internet networks (Khaerunnisa et al., 2023). Many English language teachers were incorporating technology into their classrooms (Inderawati, 2017). ICT and English language had developed into indispensable instruments for a variety of teaching-learning activities (Ammann and Aparanjani, 2016). Therefore, the topic of ICT in ELT was always interesting to be studied.

## 1.7.2 Operational definition

### 1. Female EFL Teacher's Grit

The grit was collected from both experienced (more than 6 years teaching experience) and novice (minimum of 1 year teaching experience) female EFL teachers who were already married and have children. The teachers were limited to the female EFL teachers who were currently teaching in senior secondary schools in Central Java province, Indonesia. In this study, the researcher investigated the teachers' grit construction through interview questions inspired by the indicators from Teachers' Grit Scale (TGS) developed by Baraquia (2020).

## 2. Teachers' Self-Directed Professional Development

Considering the conceptual definition before, the self-directed professional development of the EFL female teachers in this study referred to the narrative description of their self-directed learning activities in the context of their development of ICT skills. The teachers' professional development in this study focused on female EFL teachers' independent effort to improve ICT skills without any support from schools or government.

## 3. ICT in English Language Learning

ICT in this study referred to the technology tools integrated in the EFL teaching-learning process between female teachers and senior secondary school level students. The examples of ICT integration included the use of technology-based social media, game-based application, mobile learning application, web-based application, and other learning resources which could be accessed by internet networks.