

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study method. A case study is appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore a real-life phenomenon in depth and within its natural context (Yin, 2014). The purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of the first-year teaching experience of fresh graduate English teachers in school, focusing on the challenges, adjustments, and reflections encountered during this initial stage of professional teaching.

The descriptive qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for rich, detailed descriptions of the subject's lived experiences without manipulating variables or applying pre-defined categories (Sandelowski, 2000). This approach is particularly suitable when the researcher aims to understand a phenomenon as it naturally occurs from the subject's point of view.

The data are collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via WhatsApp chat. This method was selected due to its flexibility, accessibility, and comfort for the subject. As O'Connor and Madge (2017) highlight, online interviews using messaging platforms such

as WhatsApp allow for asynchronous communication and enable subjects to respond in a more reflective and relaxed manner.

Thus, the qualitative case study design, supported by digital communication tools, provides an effective framework to explore the real-world experience of a novice teacher in a way that is contextually grounded and ethically sound.

Research procedure:

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. The procedure of the study involved several stages, namely: preparation, data collection, data organization, data analysis, and conclusion drawing.

1. Preparation Stage

At this stage, the researcher selected a suitable subject—a fresh graduate English teacher who had just completed her first year of teaching at a junior high school. The researcher also designed interview guidelines based on the research questions and conducted ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent from the subject to ensure voluntary participation and data confidentiality.

2. Data Collection Stage

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via WhatsApp chat. This method was chosen to accommodate the subject's schedule and provide flexibility in responding. The interview process took

place over several days to allow the subject sufficient time to reflect and provide detailed responses. The researcher maintained the authenticity of the data by storing all chat transcripts securely.

3. Data Organization Stage

After the data were collected, the researcher organized the WhatsApp chat transcripts chronologically and categorized them based on emerging themes. The data were then compiled into a document for ease of analysis.

4. Data Analysis Stage

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, where the researcher identified patterns and themes related to the teacher's first-year teaching experience. The analysis focused on challenges faced, strategies applied, emotional responses, and personal development. The process involved reading and re-reading the transcripts, coding significant statements, and grouping codes into broader themes.

5. Conclusion Drawing and Verification Stage

Based on the thematic analysis, the researcher drew conclusions that addressed the research questions. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher conducted member checking by sharing the preliminary findings with the subject for confirmation and clarification.

Throughout the research procedure, the researcher acted as the key instrument and ensured that interpretations remained grounded in the subject's authentic experience.

B. Research Setting

This study was conducted in an online setting, as the data were collected through a WhatsApp chat interview. The subjects, fresh graduate English teachers, were teaching at school, during their first year of teaching.

Due to geographical distance and time limitations, the researcher and subjects communicated via WhatsApp, which allowed for flexible and asynchronous responses. This online environment provided a convenient and comfortable platform for the subjects to reflect on their personal teaching experiences.

Although the researcher did not visit the physical school environment, contextual details were obtained through the subject's narratives and descriptions shared during the interview sessions. The use of WhatsApp as the primary medium was not only practical but also aligned with the ethical considerations of maintaining subjects comfort and confidentiality.

C. Subjects

This study involved three subjects, all of whom are fresh graduate English teachers in their first year of teaching. The inclusion of multiple subjects was intended to enrich the data and capture a broader range of teaching experiences, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

The criteria of subjects were selected based on the following criteria: (1) they graduated within the last two years, (2) they currently teach English in formal schools, and (3) they are in their first year of teaching or have recently completed it. This selection ensured that all subjects had relevant experiences aligned with the study's objectives.

All three subjects were from different schools and geographic locations, allowing for variation in teaching contexts. Due to geographical distance, the interviews were conducted online via WhatsApp chat, enabling the researcher to collect detailed accounts of their teaching experiences while maintaining flexibility in scheduling.

These subjects were chosen because the first year of teaching is a critical period in shaping a teacher's professional identity, particularly for new graduates. Focusing on three subjects allowed the researcher to explore the experience in depth and within its real-life context.

However, one subject did not complete the full set of interview questions within the data collection period, which lasted from September 9 to October 10, 2025. Therefore, only two subjects were included in the final analysis. The interviews were concluded asynchronously through WhatsApp chat, allowing the subjects to respond based on their availability teaching schedule.

The two subjects who completed the interviews are described as follows :

Teacher N

Teacher N is a fresh graduate English teacher who has been teaching for one year at Miftahul Ulum Junior High School in Central Kalimantan. As one-year teacher, Teacher N has experienced various academic and non-academic responsibilities that shaped her early teaching journey.

Teacher D

Teacher D is a fresh graduate English teacher who teaches English at an elementary school in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. Compared to Teacher N, Teacher D has only been teaching for a few months, representing an earlier stage of first-year teaching. Teacher D's experience provide insight into the initial adjustments faced by newly hired teachers.

Together, these two subjects offer diverse but complementary perspectives on the challenges, adjustments, and developmental processes experienced by fresh graduate English teachers during their first year of teaching. The experiences shared by Teacher N and Teacher D are directly relevant to the purpose of this study, which is to explore the first-year challenges, adaptation processes, and professional identity development of fresh graduate English teachers. By examining their responses, we can see how real classroom situations, school environment, and personal

motivations influence their early teaching experiences. This connection ensures that the data collected is meaningful and closely aligned with the research questions.

D. Data

1. Primary Data

The primary data in this study consisted of qualitative information obtained from three fresh graduate English teachers who were in their first year of teaching. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via WhatsApp chat. The interview questions were designed to elicit detailed narratives about the subjects' first-year teaching experiences, including the challenges they faced, the strategies they implemented, and their reflections on their developing professional identity.

The subjects' written responses served as the main source of information for analysis. These responses provided rich, descriptive accounts that allowed the researcher to explore both the external realities of teaching and the internal processes of professional identity formation.

2. Supporting Data

In addition to the primary data, supporting data were also collected to enrich the findings. These included contextual information about the schools where the subjects taught, such as the type of institution (junior high school, senior high school, vocational high school), student

demographics, and teaching conditions. This contextual information was obtained from informal communications with the subjects and, where available, from publicly accessible school profiles.

The supporting data helped the researcher better understand the teaching environment of each subjects and provided background that informed the interpretation of the primary data.

E. Technique of Data Collection

In this study, data were collected using qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews conducted via WhatsApp chat. Given the nature of the research — a case study focused on an individual teacher's first-year teaching experience — this method was considered the most appropriate for enabling in-depth exploration while maintaining flexibility and accessibility.

The subjects were fresh graduate English teachers working in school in Indonesia. Due to logistical constraints and the subjects schedule, data collection was conducted asynchronously through chat-based interviews. This approach allowed the subjects to respond thoughtfully in their own time, which is particularly useful when exploring reflective experiences and emotions. Although conducted in text format, the interviews followed a semi-structured guide, ensuring consistency across thematic areas while still allowing for spontaneous elaboration.

The interview questions were developed based on the study's two main theoretical frameworks:

- (1) Reality Shock Theory (Veenman, 1984), which helped explore the challenges and mismatches between expectations and classroom realities; and
- (2) Teacher Professional Identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), which provided a lens for understanding the subject's internal reflections and identity development.

The interview protocol was divided into three main sections:

1. Professional Background & Preparation – covering educational background, teacher training, and expectations prior to entering the field;
2. Classroom Experience & Challenges – focused on day-to-day teaching experiences, difficulties encountered, and coping mechanisms;
3. Personal Reflection & Identity Formation – exploring how the subject viewed their role as a teacher and how her identity evolved over time.

To ensure data accuracy, follow-up clarification questions were sent when needed, and all chat transcripts were saved for analysis. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation were strictly followed throughout the process.

F. Research Instrument

In this qualitative case study, the researcher served as the primary instrument in the data collection and analysis process. As the main instrument, the researcher was directly involved in gathering, interpreting, and analyzing data based on the subject's narratives.

To support and guide the data collection, a semi-structured interview guide was developed as a secondary instrument. The interview questions were designed based on two key theoretical frameworks used in this study:

1. Reality Shock Theory by Veenman (1984), which focuses on external challenges faced by novice teachers and the mismatch between expectations and the realities of the classroom.
2. Teacher Professional Identity Theory by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), which explores the internal reflections and the identity development process of teachers, especially during their early teaching experiences

The interview guide was structured into two main parts, each addressing one of the theoretical lenses:

A. Questions based on Reality Shock Theory:

- What were your expectations about teaching before you started your first job?

- What challenges surprised you the most during your first year of teaching?
- In what ways did your academic preparation differ from the real classroom environment?
- How did you handle situations where you felt unprepared or overwhelmed?

B. Questions based on Teacher Professional Identity:

- How did you see yourself as a teacher at the beginning and at the end of your first year?
- What experiences most influenced the way you view yourself as a professional teacher?
- Do you feel that you have become the kind of teacher you hoped to be? Why or why not?
- What values or beliefs have guided your professional journey so far?

The interview was conducted via WhatsApp chat, providing a more flexible and comfortable space for the subject to reflect and respond in depth. All conversations were saved and transcribed for thematic analysis. These transcripts served as the primary data source for this research.

G. Data Analysis

The data collected through WhatsApp chat interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to

identify, analyze, and interpret recurring themes that emerge from qualitative data.

The data analysis process involved the following steps:

1. Familiarization with the Data

The researcher read and re-read the WhatsApp chat transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the subject's experiences.

2. Generating Initial Codes

Key words, phrases, or ideas related to the two theoretical lenses—Reality Shock Theory and Teacher Professional Identity—were coded systematically.

3. Searching for Themes

Codes were grouped into potential themes such as: classroom management challenges, emotional struggles, identity conflicts, professional growth, etc.

4. Reviewing and Refining Themes

The themes were checked against the data to ensure they accurately reflected the subject's experience and were relevant to the research questions.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

Final themes were clearly defined and supported with direct quotations from the interview transcript to ensure trustworthiness.

6. Producing the Report

The results were organized and written to address the research objectives, with references to the theoretical frameworks guiding the interpretation.

The analysis aimed to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of how a fresh graduate teachers experiences and navigates the early challenges of the profession. The identified themes were carefully analyzed to explore how the teacher encountered and responded to the phenomenon of reality shock, as well as how their professional identity evolved throughout the first year of teaching. This interpretative process was conducted in a rigorous and reflective manner to uncover the underlying meanings embedded in the subject's narrative. The findings derived from this thematic analysis served as the foundation for addressing the research questions.

To ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative research, this study will apply the concept of trustworthiness as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which includes several criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the research findings and how well they reflect the subject's actual experiences. In other words, it examines whether the researcher has accurately captured what the subject intended to express.

To enhance credibility, this study will use the technique of member checking. After the interview data have been analyzed and themes have been developed, the researcher will send the summarized interpretations back to the subject via WhatsApp. The subject will be asked to review the interpretation to ensure that the meaning, experiences, and expressions have been understood correctly. If the subject identifies any misunderstandings or misrepresentations, the researcher will revise the interpretation accordingly. This process not only validates the accuracy of the findings but also strengthens the relationship between the researcher and the subject, contributing to greater authenticity in qualitative research.

2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied to other similar contexts or situations. Unlike generalization in quantitative research, transferability in qualitative research relies on the reader's ability to determine whether the context of the study is similar enough to their own to make the findings relevant.

To support transferability, the researcher will provide thick and detailed descriptions of the research setting, subject background, and school environment. This includes information such as the subject's teaching status as a fresh graduate, the type of

school where the subject teaches, the nature of the challenges faced during the first year, and the socio-cultural context in which the teaching occurred.

3. Dependability

The research process was carefully documented, including the stages of data collection, coding procedures, and theme development. An audit trail was maintained to show consistency in how data were handled.

4. Confirmability

To reduce researcher bias, all interpretations were grounded in actual data. Direct quotes from subjects were used to support the themes, ensuring that the findings emerged from the subjects' own words rather than the researcher's assumptions.