

Creating Inclusive Spaces: A Narrative Inquiry of EFL Pre-Service Teacher's Strategies to Engage Silent Students in the English Classroom

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Abstract

This research explored pre-service teacher strategies to engage silent students in the English classroom during their teaching practice. The participant of this research was a seventh-semester student who had finished her teaching practice for two months and successfully made silent students more active in the classroom. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke (2006) six thematic analyses. This research resulted in the pre-service teacher making silent students more active in the classroom by using several strategies and knowing the difficulties during her teaching practice. The strategies are building the teacher's personality, making a good rapport, and using various learning activities in the classroom.

Keywords: Classroom engagement, pre-service teacher, silent student, teaching difficulties, teaching strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Current improvements in education have raised a demand for teachers who fulfill the requirements expected to become competent instructors. These competencies can be achieved by providing pre-service teachers with teaching experience. The teacher's preparation to teach is supported by an environment that can stimulate the potential of pre-service teachers; thus, professional teachers can be formed (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Arista et al., 2022). A Pre-service teacher would get experience of real teaching when carrying out field experience practice activities. When teaching students at school, there are difficulties experienced by practicing teachers because there are students with various characters in the classroom especially silent students. In EFL context, the pre service teacher has another difficulty when teaching English, that is lack of student's English background. As a teacher, have a role to deliver the material to the students and ensure they are engaged in the class.

Previous research has revealed that teacher should be proficient in designing methods for teaching. For instance, students should be able to communicate before engaging in the second language (L2) interaction process, which is regarded a crucial precondition for pre-service teacher communication (Tuyen & Loan, 2019). Furthermore, this cannot be overlooked by teachers; if students are able to communicate in the classroom, an active classroom atmosphere will be established. Nababan and Amalia (2021) revealed some challenges faced by a pre-service teacher during their teaching practice, such as difficulties in selecting appropriate teaching materials and the lack of students' motivation to learn English. It should be overcome by the pre-service teacher with selecting and implementing appropriate strategies to the students.

Weizheng (2019) examined fundamental interactions in EFL classroom from the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) viewpoint. EFL teacher should be trained on how to use various strategies to facilitate effective interaction in the classroom. A broadly similar point has also been made by Harumi (2011),

who revealed several strategies to teach silent student. The teacher could start with building students' confidence by giving simple questions that could lead students to an awareness of how to respond to questions.

Thus far, very little attention has been paid to the pre-service teacher's strategies to engage EFL silent students. Few previous studies use narrative inquiry design. This research focused on strategies used by pre-service teacher to deal with silent student in class and get them involved during the learning process.

The present studies attempt to answer the following questions

1. To what extent are the difficulties experienced by EFL pre-service teacher in engaging silent students in the classroom?
2. How do EFL pre-service teacher use strategies to build interactions with silent students?

METHOD

Design

This research used a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry design. According to Clanddinin and Connely (2006), using narrative inquiry, "human beings both live and tell stories about their living." This design follows the topic to be studied because participants can share personal experiences that they have had during teaching practice. Another reason for using this design is that it can explore participants' experiences more deeply regarding adjustments to the teaching place, obstacles faced, and teacher's efforts to get students involved in the classroom.

Participants

The participant in this study was a seventh-semester student in the English Education Department at a private university in Malang, East Java, who had finished teaching practice activities. The indicator for recruitment participant was a pre-service teacher who successfully made silent students active in the class. Ida was a pre-service teacher's student at the university who had completed teaching practice at a state junior high school for approximately two months. Previously, she had teaching private lessons at her home for elementary school children about two years. But she has never taught students in a formal school. However, this teaching practice program activity was a direct experience to become a teacher with a prominent role in controlling the class, especially in the EFL context.

Data Collection

The data was collected using face-to-face interviews and utilized audio recordings during the session. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian to avoid participant understanding errors and facilitate researcher data interpretation. Previously, the questions were validated by an expert in the field, and she is the researcher's English mentor at the school where the researcher did the teaching practice. Several questions are addressed to participants, with several interview questions created by the researcher and adapted from (Dao,2020):

- a. What strategies have you used when interacting with silent students during learning?
- b. How do you feel about applying strategies to deal with silent student?
- c. What do you prepare before teaching practice activities?

- d. What are the factors that cause students to be silent when learning English?

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using six thematic analyses. First, the researcher familiarized with the data by transcribing audio recordings into written form. The researcher read the transcript multiple times and ensured the audio recording was accurate. Then, the researcher generated initial codes. In this phase, we proceeded to examine the data by highlighting parts that might be relevant to be coded and that could potentially become themes. Third, searched for themes. This step involved an analysis of all codes that are relevant to themes. The process could group codes with the same features in common to reflect and describe coherent and meaningful patterns in determining themes. Next, potential themes are reviewed by re-reading all the extracts collected for each theme and checking whether the themes have formed a coherent pattern. Fifth, refined themes. When examining each theme, it was essential to look at its embedded narrative. Finally, defining and naming themes. At the end of this phase, the themes were clearly illustrated.

Trustworthiness

Participants used member checking during the data transcribing process to ensure the study's trustworthiness. After completing the transcript, the researcher gave the results back to the participants to check for anything that needed to be revised, then asked again if there was information that wanted to be added or changed, and agreed on the transcript results.

FINDINGS

There were found five themes from the results of the data analysis, namely the pre-service teacher's background in teaching, the obstacles faced by the pre-service teacher when teaching, the strategies used by the teachers to involve the silent student in the classroom, the steps in implementing strategies to involve the silent student in the school, the sustainable plan in using effective strategies.

Difficulties Experienced by Pre-Service Teacher to Engage Silent Student

The pre-service teacher had a number of challenges during the interview when attempting to establish rapport with the silent children in the English class.

Less Teaching Experience

For the pre-service teacher, it was her first time teaching a variety of students, therefore the teaching experience was really different. She had previously only studied college teaching theory.

My first experience was teaching formally during teaching practices. Previously, I had just received the background of knowledge in micro-teaching courses. It gives tips on preparing for our teaching needs, and we had to act like a teacher. But the context is different; the students are our classmates. During my practice teaching experience, it was like my first experience, facing students directly in class with many very different characters.

It was the first experience of a pre-service teacher to teach in a formal school. Before the teaching practice, she had the experience of teaching in a shadow school in her house and teaching her classmates during micro-teaching courses.

Big Class Capacity

When teaching, a pre-service teacher had difficulties to engage silent students because of the large class capacity. A class consists of thirty students; therefore, appropriate strategies must be used to focus on silent students.

The silent students are still difficult to work closely with because there are many students, one class of 30 students, so I have very little time with the character of students like that, and the background knowledge of English is still primary. It is one of the difficulties for me.

Students Had No English Background in the Elementary School

Their earlier background in learning English is also one of the things that a pre-service teacher must consider before teaching. Therefore, the pre-service teacher must start from the basics so that all students know the basics of English learning.

Most did not have English courses in elementary school, so they had no English background. There are thirty students in the classroom, and those who get it are probably only a minority scale; around eight students had received English in elementary school.

Students in the Transition Phase from Childhood to Adolescence

Handling seventh-grade students with a variety of characters is not an easy thing for pre-service teachers when teaching. In this seventh grade, students are in transition from children to adolescents. It takes much effort to interact with them when the pre-service teacher starts to teach for the first time.

Seventh grade is a transition period from children to teenagers; their characters are still not as mature as eighth or ninth-grade students who are prepared to learn in junior high school. Seventh graders are still very young; they first feel shocked and have to learn a lot.

The Stigma that English seems Difficult

Then, the following external factors are the thought that English is difficult. The students already have the assumption, and the suggestion is carried over during learning activities.

The stigma is that English is difficult, especially since they are new to learning English, so the main factor is that they don't understand or know English.

Such thinking will affect students' learning activities in class so that they will find it difficult to receive the material. Therefore, teachers must instill from the beginning of the lesson that learning English is a fun lesson.

The Use of Monotonous Teaching Methods

The teacher's teaching method also makes students more silent in class. In the previous lesson, the teacher did not focus on students with silent characters, so no special approach was taken. Even though silent students need more intense attention, they want to interact and engage in the English classroom.

Next is the application of methods and approaches from the teachers. Maybe the teachers from the school do not use technology that is satisfactory enough, so they are not interested in learning English.

Pre-Service Teacher's Strategies to Engage Silent Students in The Classroom

After understanding how to control students in class, the following section discusses a more specific part: the pre-service teacher's strategies to engage students.

Developing Pre-Service Teacher's Personality

The first strategy pre-service teacher use is to build personal branding through having a good personality by showing their readiness to teach in terms of mental and material. It will increase the pre-service teacher's confidence when teaching.

Firstly, building personality. When I already have a good personality that makes me assertive. For example, I am active and friendly to students. Finally, my personality as an English teacher will be more respected by students. I delivered how I conveyed and had insight into the material. When I already have excellent personal branding, students will automatically be enthusiastic and respect me more.

Teachers ' strong personalities are also believed to bring a better classroom atmosphere, and students will become more respectful of their teacher.

Building Good Rapport

The second strategy pre-service teacher used to engage silent students in the classroom was building. This technique aims to identify the characteristics of these students and use appropriate learning methods.

The second is face to face approach. Firstly, I find out what kind of the student's character and the method of learning that works for them, so I develop different strategies, especially for silent students.

However, before knowing the appropriate learning method, the pre-service teacher starts the strategy by prompting silent students to explain or ask about their understanding of the material

Using Various Learning Activities

The pre-service teacher also uses various teaching methods to reach all types of students in the class. When using only the lecture method, students would get bored quickly and could not maximize reaching all students.

There are times when I want to teach self-introduction material. I used a lecturing technique to deliver the material. However, silent students do not prefer the technique. They prefer to learn using audio-visual techniques.

Another way to deal with these challenges was for the pre-service teacher to insert ice breaking at the beginning before learning, especially when students have started to lose focus when the pre-service teacher will also be flexible with learning.

I have to give icebreaking before I start explaining the material. Because if I suddenly start the lesson immediately, the students will not focus and be interested in learning.

Pre-Service Teacher' Steps in Implementing Strategies to Engage Silent Student in the Classroom

Firstly, to build a good personality, you must prepare everything needed for teaching the next day. Prepare learning support materials and tools, prepare learning methods that will be used, and learn learning materials.

The first step I take to build my personality before going to school is to study the material that will be taught well at night or just before entering the class, and then I prepare the methods that will be used, such as what the tools are and then the materials that will be taught must be carefully prepared.

Secondly, a pre-service teacher prepared different learning methods, such as using videos, playing games, and PowerPoint presentations as learning media to convey the material thoroughly to all students and not get bored while learning.

I applied that during the teaching practice, so the material must be prepared. Whether you want to use what media there will be games or not it should be prepared because if it is not prepared, just using what school facilities are only boards, it is very lacking to attract students' enthusiasm for learning English so sometimes it's complicated for me to prepare videos, right, PPT, then games, what tools and materials are what you want to use, right, then that must be prepared first and practice for sure.

The next strategy is building good rapport with students. First, the pre-service teacher effort to involve the silent student in the class is to recognize the students' names to make it easier for the teacher to know each character that belongs to each student.

I have attendance, so I know the names of the students first, and then their habits, so their habits in class are like paying attention or not. Sometimes they are, and sometimes Andi is silent, right? But we can't guess where his mind is going right, so we as teacher also pay attention to her habits and how he is during the lesson we know the strategy to be applied. Sometimes, it might change through approaches that yesterday if after being invited to talk about it.

Second, interact more often with silent students inside and outside the classroom. The more often they invite him to interact, the more comfortable they feel in the learning process.

Maybe outside of class, I can talk to them like that. I can also do that, and it can impact students later in class.

Finally, the pre-service teacher final phase offers technology-based assignments for students to increase student's enthusiasm for completing task activities, such as Quizziz, Liveworksheet, and Wordwall media.

Different types of media are used; some are print-outs, and some are digital. For example, a digital worksheet and quiz are typically provided, while Worldwall and Padlet are used for reflection exercises.

The Most Self-Perceived Effective Strategy

Some strategies must be the most effective to implement with this silent student. When asking about the most appropriate strategy to use, according to the pre-service teacher, the most effective strategy was to approach.

I think the most effective is when I ask directly. When I ask directly, I ask face-to-face first.

Implementing this strategy impacts the initial efforts to involve silent students in the classroom. Approached the silent student during the learning process by asking them about their understanding or difficulties in understanding the material.

I don't ask them to go straightforward. They will be under pressure. I implemented this by moving and talking directly to them face-to-face.

The pre-service teacher believes silent student in class cannot be directly appointed to come forward, even if they are just doing exercises. Therefore, when teaching in class, pre-service teacher often goes around students so they don't just stand around explaining in front of the class.

The Effect of Implementing the Strategies

Over time, pre-service teachers can determine the types of students and strategies suitable for the classroom, especially for silent students. Applying these strategies has turned out to have an influence or change on silent students. Changes in these silent students were seen gradually during the pre-service teacher teaching in the class.

You can see the impact of using the strategy on the silent student. He became more willing to interact and participate in class, especially in English lessons.

The Sustainability of the Strategies

Seeing that the strategy used by the pre-service teacher was successful in engaging silent students in the classroom, the researcher asked about the continuation of the use of the strategy when the pre-service teacher had taught.

Later, I will find silent student. Maybe I will implement it again. But seeing whether the situation is suitable or not is right. So, if it doesn't fit, this means I have to reevaluate the strategy that I have used.

However, when encountering a silent student during teaching again, the pre-service teacher said she would use the same strategy. But back again, to see the student's condition, if the type is different, the strategy must also adjust to the student.

DISCUSSION

In findings revealed that the following strategies that used by pre service teacher succeed to change silent to be more active students. This discussion will discuss in detail the results of the above findings.

Understanding Pre-Service Teacher's Difficulties to Build Interaction with the Silent Students'

The pre-service teacher needs to adjust to the new atmosphere when teaching. Based on Lutovac and Flores (2021) indication of the teacher's lacking a pedagogical approach, and they remarked that this would require them to consider how they may improve their methods. The role of the mentor teacher here is very important because it is involved in every preparation before teaching. When the pre-service teacher has difficulties, the tutor helps provide suggestions and solutions that really help the pre-service teacher when teaching (Chien, 2015). Understanding why, how, when, and how long a student requires silence to support their own learning—as well as when the verbal method of learning should take over—is crucial when managing silence with students (Bao, 2020).

There are external and internal aspects that make students become silent in English class. From an internal perspective, there are two aspects, namely the lack of time to interact with silent students and diligence in teaching. Being able to get along with silent students is one of the challenges faced by pre-service teachers, because most of the silent students have a closed type. Teachers may want to foster a detailed knowledge that not all constructive silences result in speech; rather, it all depends on the availability of class time, the conditions of the classroom, and each student's decision to participate (Bao & Thanh-My, 2020).

Based on (Koçoğlu, 2011) being a teacher does not only teach knowledge but teachers can excite or boring their students, be personable or distant with parents, or believe in or distrust their peers. According to (Bao, 2020) similar to how communication needs to be guided to increase learning rather than simply social time in the classroom, silence training should involve reflectivity, attention, outcome, and avoidance of idle, unproductive times. Silent students actually need time to speak up in class. It takes an environment that can support these conditions so that silent students can become more participatory in the lesson. But when students are willing to be active in class but they are still under the stigma that English is difficult, it will become an obstacle in the process. These difficulties are typically brought on by English's irregular use of word classes and categories (Sundari, 2018.). To help overcome these stigma students can be taught to habitually watch videos, play games, read in English.

Pre-Service Teacher Strategies to Build Interaction with Silent Student in the Classroom

The first strategy applied was building good personality. It can increase the teacher's confidence when teaching in class. The concept of personality emerged in the professional world and refers to presenting oneself as an excellent entity that adds value to the intended audience (Trybulkevych et al., 2021). Second strategy was building a good rapport for pre-service teacher in the classroom. She should be recognizing the names of students in the class, especially the names of the silent student. This also makes it easy for teacher to build interactions with silent student; as the theory described by (Weizheng, 2019), English teacher strive to modify themselves to enhance effective interaction to foster an environment of respect and balance that motivates students to participate in class activities.

The last one was using technology to provide variety in doing tasks. When this information is used, the structure of learning may shift significantly, enabling students to use silence and conversation as

instruments for learning in deliberate, informed ways (Bao & Ye, 2020). This approach is the most effective strategy for engaging silent student in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of this study were to determine the difficulties experienced by practicing teacher and the strategies used to involve silent student in the classroom. The findings showed significant results, namely that the practicing teacher made silent student participate more in class. This success is due to the post-teaching evaluation carried out by the practicing teacher so that by knowing the difficulties experienced, a strategy following the situation will emerge.

Two strategies can be used to solve these difficulties that pre-service teachers face. The first step is building personality. The steps used to form a strong personality are preparing the needs before teaching and carefully choosing the learning methods to be used. The second step is building a good rapport. This approach is more done to students' character, especially to silent students, namely by inviting interaction, using moving techniques when teaching, and utilizing technology for variations in teaching.

SUGGESTION

Using a mixed-method approach for future research with similar topics would be better. Since the design will get more participants, the findings related to the difficulties experienced by teachers and the strategies used will be more varied. Later, researchers can also continue to use narrative inquiry design, especially those related to teacher or educators.

The implications of this study indicate that adaptive pedagogy's primary impact on instructors was to improve and maximize students' internal thinking processes by using appropriate teaching methods and incorporating external feedback.

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