

Challenges of Pre-Service EFL Teachers in Community Service Programs: Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract: Pre-service teachers with limited teaching experience and varied assignments often faced challenges in implementing teaching services. The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges and to describe the strategies by pre-service EFL teachers in teaching English. The participants in this study were two pre-service teachers, this study used semi-structured interviews and observation for data collection in this study. Based on the findings of this study using thematic data analysis techniques, four themes were identified regarding the teaching challenges of the pre-service teachers. These challenges were; 1) the lesson planning process and implementation, 2) challenges in classroom management, 3) improved student motivation, 4) and teacher skills. Then each part of the challenges faced by pre-service teachers was identified as a strategy for how they cope with the challenges that arose when they performed teaching services. This research has implications for teacher education programs in preparing more effective training to face or overcome the challenges of teaching English.

Keywords: Pre-service EFL teacher, Pre-service teacher experience, challenges, Narrative Inquiry

INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teachers who have limited teaching experience and varied assignments often experience challenges in implementing teaching services. Pre-service teachers are often faced with several complex challenges in teaching, so they need to be prepared to face these challenges. Pre-service teachers need willingness and readiness to carry out their role as teachers, both emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and so on (Arista et al, 2022). Facing real classroom situations, intermingling with community institutions, teaching practices that are different from what they have learned or differences between theory and real practice. The challenges faced by teachers are not only background knowledge, methods, and even experience in English teaching and learning strategies but also other problems. These challenges arise from students, teachers, and schools as stated by Songbatusim (2017).

Facing various challenges experienced by pre-service teachers during the service program, the strategies they use can help resolve existing challenges and make the teaching service process go well. Teaching strategies play an important role in the teaching and learning process and can help teachers

achieve learning objectives (Suwartono et al., 2019). To achieve a satisfactory teaching service, the teaching strategies applied can vary widely and can be adapted to the needs and learning styles of individual students or groups. These strategies are approaches that teachers use to facilitate student learning and make the process more effective and interesting. Teaching strategies can help students learn by doing, prevent boredom, and contribute to the success of their learning goals (Hayati et al., 2021).

Previous research has examined the challenges faced by pre-service EFL teachers or English language teachers. such as research conducted by Marzulina et al (2021), found challenges in teaching English at Islamic boarding schools. In summary, there are several challenging factors in teaching English such as increasing student motivation, managing teaching time, schools having inadequate facilities and so on. Another study with the same results was conducted by Pertiwi et al (2022) shows that the obstacles faced EYL teachers are that teachers face various challenges in carrying out their teaching, such as teacher knowledge, lack of motivation, limited time to study English, speaking anxiety, and classroom management. According to the findings of Mekie et al (2022), the findings also show that secondary EFL teachers feel that the professional development programs implemented in their teaching schools have never been implemented to help EFL teachers develop as teachers.

In another study that revealed the challenges faced by EFL teachers, Chakyarkandiyil et al (2023) revealed the obstacles experienced by EFL teachers when teaching. The findings revealed that generally, 63% of the challenges perceived by teachers were caused by teachers' teaching knowledge and proficiency, learner challenges, learners' initial presentation to active learning, curriculum, administrative challenges, and lack of professional development programs. Similar research has been undertaken to find out the challenges faced by pre-service English teachers, Ag-Ahmad et al (2023) focused on the challenges associated with pre-service English teachers in Malaysia, the disparity between theory and classroom practice, classroom management, and the transition phase of becoming a teacher. Similar research regarding the challenges faced by prospective teachers by Syamdianita et al (2021), there are several challenges that prospective teachers still face, such as low computer skills, lack of knowledge about teaching content using technology, and media availability. Moreover, technology currently plays a very important role and has become a trend in the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum).

However, previous research discusses the challenges faced by EFL teachers from several points of view. Despite the challenges, there is not too much research that discusses the challenges faced by pre-service EFL teachers in the context of community service programs using the Narrative Inquiry method which focuses on the stories told by participants. Narrative can be a term given to text or discourse, or, perhaps text used in the context of a mode of inquiry in qualitative research (Chase, 2005), with a particular focus on stories told by individuals (Polkinghorne, 1995). The research uses

data collection through interviews, observations, aims to find out the challenges faced by pre-service English teachers while carrying out community service programs and the strategies offered. Two research questions are addressed in this study :

1. What challenges do the EFL pre-service teachers face in the Community Service Program?
2. How do EFL pre-service teachers cope with the challenges in the Community Service Program?

Regarding the challenges of pre-service English teachers, several factors contribute to the challenges of beginning teachers in teaching, Korukcu, S (1996) found that teaching method, classroom organization, lesson plans, and motivating students are the main problem areas for English language teachers. Similarly, Copland et al (2014) mentioned that there are three typical challenges in teaching English, viz: a) teacher capability b) classroom organization or management c) curriculum. Sali et al (2018) explain the challenges perceived by beginner EFL teachers, challenges related to classroom management include supplying and sustaining classroom discipline, determining the role of the teacher, building good relationships with students, lesson planning and lesson management. There are challenges for pre-service teachers in teaching English as a second language. In the context of community service, pre-service teachers are required to become professional teachers in many literatures, teachers are required to be competent, perform well, actively engage in professional development, engage knowledge of current topics, perform ethically, and demonstrate commitment or accountability in teaching practices in schools. Pre-service teachers are also required to be involved in learning opportunities in their professional development such as workshops, mentoring, and training to support their role (Tanang & Abu, 2014). Community service activities are teaching and practice approaches that provide opportunities for students in teacher education to participate and benefit from activities that are expected to meet the needs of the community and are relevant to curriculum content and reflect on activities that have been carried out according to experience.

METHOD

Following the purpose of this study, a qualitative method using the narrative inquiry approach was deemed most appropriate to use in this study. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain that a qualitative approach using the narrative inquiry method is the study of how humans experience the world. The researcher chose only two pre-service teachers as participants, Vanka and Mardova are fictitious names in this study. The researcher chose the two pre-service teachers because; 1) participants have never taught directly in a real class, 2) both participants taught in different classes and the researcher observed them while teaching, 3) the researcher was assisted by a mentor teacher to obtain the

performance of the two participants who had different challenges in mastering their abilities as teachers, 4) both participants received an A (satisfactory) grade 5) the strategies used implemented by successful participants to help their performance as teachers. To obtain stories related to the teaching experiences of pre-service EFL teachers and answer the research questions above, this research used semi-structured interviews and observation as data collection. The researcher used thematic analysis data analysis as a way of analyzing data to identify patterns or to find themes through the data that had been collected by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To organize the data into manageable themes and subthemes, to find similarities and dissimilarities among the narratives, and to connect the findings with existing literature and related research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The two research questions are used as the basis to present the results of this study. The first research question concerns the challenges that pre-service students experience during the service program. The themes and codes obtained from the thematic analysis are described in Table 1.

TABLE 1
THEMES AND CODES PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH

No	Themes	Code
1	Lesson planning process and implementation	a. Understanding of the concept of an independent curriculum b. Creating engaging activities c. Inadequate facilities
2	Challenges in classroom management	a. Overcrowded classrooms b. Passive classroom atmosphere c. Time management
3	Improve student motivation	a. Negative student perceptions of EFL b. Passive students c. Students' ability lags behind
4	Teacher skills	a. Teaching anxiety b. Lack of mastery of the material c. Speaking skills

Lesson planning process and implementation

Based on the results, this finding is in line with previous research by Syamdianita et al. (2021), Arista (2022) It was found that many teachers were not able to compile lesson planning properly, so training was needed for them. The curriculum in Indonesia often

changes, therefore some pre-service teachers are still confused about the concept of the curriculum itself, Ndari et al. (2023) found that some teachers were not ready for the Merdeka curriculum and still taught with lectures and learning was not all student-centered. For example, Vanka said: *"I mean the challenges are like our understanding as pre-service teachers who are not deep enough about the new curriculum, especially since it is for high school equivalent and requires students to be more active than the teacher".*

pre-service teachers is preparing materials and creating interesting learning activities. Mardova: *"The challenges experienced are preparing the material in lesson planning the sequence of what to do when teaching in class so that the lesson hours can be used as well as possible and the subject matter can be conveyed properly."* Facilities in the classroom that cannot be used are a challenge when pre-service teachers teach. Yangambi, M. (2023) Infrastructure in schools is an important condition that must be considered for every school provided for students.. Vanka: *"Sometimes if the facilities in the classroom cannot be used due to power outages or damage, I have to use the old method of explaining and writing on the blackboard."*

Challenges in classroom management

Pre-service teachers have challenges when teaching in classes that are not conducive or overcrowded. Similar findings to the previous study, by Marzulina et al., (2021) which found difficulties in managing crowded classes and limited time management. Serliana et al. (2021), many students have a bad attitude and are disrespectful to their teachers and become provocations so the class becomes unconducive. Vanka said:

"such as messy seating and if I as a pre-service teacher organize the class too much and move students who are too clustered, I'm afraid they will feel uncomfortable and dislike me."

After that, the pre-service teachers' challenge in organizing the class is to make the students active and focused on learning English. Mardova said:

"It can be said that if the student is after a lesson that might have been hard before, their concentration is already broken or they feel tired because they are full day. Then when the material is a bit difficult or boring, students are not focused and lazy to learn, especially classes that have no interest in learning English."

Pre-service teachers also struggle to manage the limited time they have to teach. When teaching English, pre-service teachers are faced with lesson time that is almost over. Valizadeh (2021), some teachers complain that they do not have enough time and facilities to meet curriculum requirements. Mardova said:

"Hmm, sometimes I am also rushed by the end of the lesson while students are still working on problems." Vanka agreed with the statement, *"Sometimes when I'm in class when*

teaching, the time is still long or there is a lack of time for students to complete class assignments."

Improving Student motivation

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted, preservice teachers during the service program have challenges in building motivation to learn English for students who are mostly not interested in English in class. In line with previous research, Pertiwi et al. (2022) found students who lack motivation to learn English because they have a negative perception, that they feel English is difficult to learn. Like Mardova's experience:

"Yes, some students don't like English, so to build motivation you have to be extra"

Then some learners who are not active in class, the results of the observation show that some students are too shy, the material is difficult for students, and students do not like English. Akbari et al. (2020) found that most of the current teaching crisis in the classroom is caused by low self-confidence which causes several students to participate less. Vanka said:

"Moreover, this is a large class, and not all students have the same ability, those who are left behind sometimes feel less confident and they are shy to ask so I cannot monitor all students and give them the attention they need."

Based on the observations, students who are not active in class are students who are shy and do not want to open up. Prasthaa et al (2022) found that differences in student abilities are often found by teachers when teaching, students with lagging abilities are rather difficult to follow the lesson and will be silent during the lesson. Even though according to Yunus et al. (2021) reading involves thinking skills as evidence that the text being read is understood with a deeper understanding in the reading process Mardova said:

"Then if learners are shy to ask questions or embarrassed when asked to read sentences in English because they are afraid of making mistakes."

Teachers skill

Another challenge experienced by English teachers during the service program in addition to the three barriers mentioned above is that researchers found that when teaching in class, teachers did not seem confident with the material presented or the delivery of the material was not clear. Similar to the previous study, Ag-Ahmad et al. (2023) Pre-service English teachers in Malaysia experience issues and challenges in terms of their teaching skills and the disparity between theory and practice. of Li, et al. (2023) anxiety triggers come from fear of negative evaluation, low self-perception of language ability, and lack of teaching experience. Pre-service teachers feel nervous when entering a new class and lack material preparation due to sudden orders. Mardova said:

"the feeling of excessive nervousness when I teach talking or delivering material too quickly and stammering even though I can but I can't so I don't focus on teaching and sometimes there is subject matter that I don't master".

Then the lack of English speaking skills due to lack of experience as a teacher. Hartono et al (2023) added that pre-service English teachers still have high anxiety and face problems related to idioms, proper grammar, and speaking fluency, their lecturers must design learning activities to overcome these problems. Vanka said:

"my skill is in speaking, I find it challenging and the learners also do not all understand"
Mardova agreed with Vanka's argument:

"at my KSM place or my PPL place, in the classroom when teaching it must be full English, so it's a bit difficult or I'm not very good at speaking skills"

Pre-service teachers' strategies for coping their challenges

The second research question is how English language pre-service teachers deal with challenges in teaching English, The results from the interview analysis are described in Table 2. Because the challenges in the process of creating and implementing lesson study and classroom management have strategies that can be similar or can be used by each other, researchers combine these strategies that can be used by both challenges experienced by pre-service teachers.

TABLE 2
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS OVERCOMING OR COPE THEIR CHALLENGES IN
TEACHING ENGLISH

No	challenges	Strategies
1	Lesson planning process and implementation	a Increase references b Mentor teacher advice c Interesting learning activities
2	Class Management	a Ice breaking b Punishment d Target time
3	Improve student motivation	a Support and praise b Interesting learning activities c Rewards and extra points
4	Teacher skills	a Practice and motivation (cooperation among pre-service teachers) c Mentor teacher advice

Based on the table above, English pre-service teachers have a way of dealing with challenges when they perform teaching services. One way to overcome this is that before and after making lesson plans they always ask for input from their respective assistant teachers to ensure there are no mistakes in the material and other activities. In line with the research of Goh et al. (2020) suggested that mentors play their role and support by providing correct input and feedback. Vanka said:

"For example, when I make lesson planning materials, I usually consult my original teacher or Pamong teacher at the high school before making lesson planning" Mardova agreed: *"Before making lesson planning, I also ask my mentor teacher for input"*

When observing and the classroom facilities are not working properly, such as the internet, projector screen, or audio cannot be used, the pre-service teachers will use their internet, or teach using the old method of reading and writing, and prepare question sheets for students that they have made. Vanka: *"So for example, if the LCD is not working like there is a malfunction or power failure, I always provide questions or quizzes that I have prepared on paper."*

The pre-service teacher will use a strategies of pointing out noisy students by asking questions, repeating the material presented, summarizing the material, or reading the material in front of the class, it is a form of positive and educational punishment. By warning noisy students, pointing at them, and warning students to stay focused on the subject matter (Soleimani et al. 2016). Humaeroah et al. (2022) found that punishment can help students to lean on morals. Mardova: *"Sometimes I also point out students who are not conducive to reading or answering the questions I give."*

Students who have started to get bored and do not focus on the subject matter can be refreshed by using ice-breaking. Astuti (2020), ice breakers are an effort to break or melt a rigid atmosphere like ice to become more relaxed and comfortable The pre-service teacher will play a song on YouTube and learners can follow the movements and songs. Mardova : *"Ice breaking so that when they are not conducive in class or lose focus when listening to the material I teach"*

Furthermore, the way to deal with limited time when teaching English is to target time to students, if the lesson time is tight with the change of lesson hours, the evaluation of the day's material will be discussed the next day at the beginning of the lesson. Vanka: *"So I am more targeting time to students, or if there is a lack of time, usually at the end we have to evaluate the material we taught earlier, I replace it the next day"*.

Preservice teachers also pay more attention to learners in the classroom and pay more attention to learners who are less active in the classroom. Jumiaty, et al (2023) found that teachers who can build interactions with their students and create a classroom atmosphere can improve student skills. Vanka: *"I like to motivate students that English is fun so that it is embedded in their brains that English is not difficult, not as difficult as they imagine and not boring."*

Based on the results of observations, pre-service teachers take steps learners who are embarrassed to ask the pre-service teacher can freely ask friends in their group who already understand. Mardova: *"So I apply more group discussions and I visit the group one by one if there is someone who does not understand, I direct them or provide input"*.

By using technology, songs, story telling or making media. Learners who dislike English and find English difficult because learning activities are not fun and varied so that interesting activities can build student motivation." Vanka: *"I also like to prepare materials that are as interesting as possible or I vary my teaching methods every day."*

Sometimes the pre-service teacher will also conduct a question-and-answer activity, learners who can answer correctly will be given additional points. Some learners want to improve their practice or test scores that are less or do not meet the standards, so this activity can encourage them to learn to get additional scores. Lubis et al. (2022) found Students feel happy with good teacher expressions or words such as great, well done, happy to be rewarded, congratulations, and value-added or extra points as their reward Mardova: *"I also give rewards such as snacks or stationery supplies so that students are more motivated. I will also prepare a quiz, I usually hurry the students to answer if they are correct, I will give them additional points."*

Based on the results of interview data and observations that have been conducted, pre-service teachers have challenges in teaching skills and speaking skills that are less proficient. Pre-service teachers feel nervous when teaching so the subject matter is not conveyed properly because it is the first time facing a real class and many students. Tutyandari C. (2022) University-based supervisors, mentor teachers, peers, school students, and other school community members are people who have significant contributions to the professional growth of prospective teachers Mardova: *"For me, I have to convince myself more or motivate myself more that I can do or teach well in the classroom so that my confidence level is more stable and i asked my Pamong teacher for input. Every time after teaching we had a meeting or evaluation, while we were teaching, we were given input and advice."*

Due to the lack of English speaking skills of pre-service teachers, they often practice communicating in English with fellow pre-service teachers when performing other service tasks at school to improve their speaking skills. Vanka:

"Then the second thing for my English is that I am lacking in speaking so I have to go back to myself, I have to practice so that my English is good, it doesn't have to be fluency, the important thing is to be able to speak full English first" Mardova agreed with Vanka:

"So I also learned more when I was at the KSM place, I learned English, especially in speaking by talking to fellow PPL children who speak English."

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the first research question, the main objective of this study is to explore and investigate the challenges and experiences of pre-service teachers when teaching in community service programs. The second objective is to find out the strategies used by pre-service EFL teachers in dealing with the challenges they face during community service programs. This study explores and investigates the life stories and experiences of pre-service teachers when teaching in-service programs. Based on the results of this study taken from interviews and observations, preservice teachers experienced challenges in several aspects, namely: 1) preparing and implementing lesson planning, 2) classroom management skills, 3) improving student motivation, and 4) skills as a teacher. Then each part of the four themes will be identified as a strategy for how they cope with the challenges that arise during the service program. In general, the strategies they used were; asking for advice from mentor teachers, updating information to add teaching references, rewards and punishments that were needed, more practice, and others. Based on the results of the findings of this study, the researcher has suggestions for several people and teacher education agencies in the success of the teaching service program:

1. Pre-service teachers can seek and update information related to the development of teaching methods and activities. They can participate in organizations, communities, or events that support their teaching skills and foster a supportive environment to enhance professionalism.
2. Mentor teachers play an important role as observers and evaluators in assisting pre-service teachers to always provide direction, input, and suggestions regarding all forms of teacher activities while pre-service teachers are in the school environment. Mentor teachers serve as good models and demonstrate good teaching in the classroom and mentor teachers provide emotional support and encouragement to help pre-service teachers through difficult times.
3. Schools as facilitators should provide a conducive environment for pre-service teachers to learn and develop by providing access to resources such as books, technology, and other teaching materials. Schools should also assist in designing schedules that allow pre-service teachers to participate in a variety of teaching and non-teaching activities as well as the necessary administrative support, such as timetabling, and other logistical needs that help the smooth implementation of teaching services.

4. Teacher education institutions, such as universities or teacher training institutes, play a crucial role in supporting pre-service teachers. Teacher education institutions are responsible for providing comprehensive academic education and professional training to pre-service teachers, including theoretical knowledge, pedagogy, and practical teaching skills. Teacher education institutions are advised to frequently organize workshops, seminars, or additional training covering the latest teaching techniques, classroom management, or evaluation strategies.

Some of the above suggestions are derived from the findings of this study. Suggestions for future research could select more participants regarding pre-service EFL teachers to get an accurate understanding of their teaching effectiveness and show different experiences for their teaching service. Future research could also be investigated with similar research but with cross-gender or by taking samples from pre-service teachers who conduct teaching services in different locations.

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