

“Let Me Tell You My Story about Teaching Practicum during the Covid-19 Crisis”: An Ethnographic Study

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ABSTRACT

Reflective teaching practicum is a basis for enhancing the initial professional level of pre-service teachers and has placed crucial roles and priorities for teachers' professional development (TPD). This auto-ethnography (Hayano, 1979) explores EFL pre-service teacher's teaching practicum experiences during the Covid-19, as means to reflect teaching practice in promoting pedagogical competencies and improve the quality practice. In this auto-ethnography, the researchers employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to explore one of the author's teaching practicum experiences as the first person reflecting through dairy journals. Finding confirms obstacles in this auto-ethnography, as reflection for tutor in preparing English education students for sustained learning. Conclusion, limitations, and recommendations were also provided.

Keywords: *ethnography; EFL pre-service teacher; reflective teaching practicum*

INTRODUCTION

As a basis for enhancing the initial professional level of pre-service teachers, a reflective practice or reflective teaching has placed crucial roles and priorities for teachers' professional development. Reflective teaching is crucially needed to train teachers' critical thinking, develop their pedagogical competencies, and stimulating them to be a teacher-researcher in their own classroom (Salifu et al., 2017). Dewey (1993), in Azimi et al. (2019), defines reflective teaching as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.

Teaching practicum facilitates beginning teacher or pre-service teacher for their continuation professional development and devotes their competence to develop lesson plans, teaching skills, classroom management and maintain professional and personal qualities (Michalak, 2008). This assists pre-service teachers in training their professional development (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019) and stimulate them as reflective practitioner and classroom innovators (Azimi et al., 2019). During practice, they are demanded to make a decision with complications merged in the classroom atmosphere during teaching for period of time (Lawson et al., 2015), such as students' discomfort specific learning needs (McGlynn-Stewart, 2015); clueless of subject (Abongdia et al., 2015); and classroom management and observation (Foncha et al., 2015). Through this practice, they are highly expected to possess those skills (e.g., attitudes, values and beliefs) in accordance with the education demands (Michalak, 2008).

Teaching practicum during Covid-19 outbreak has become a serious challenge for both pre-service teacher and teacher mentors, particularly in EFL domain. Many academic literatures have conducted deep research about teaching practicum in various countries, such as Australian (Bach &

Hagenauer, 2022; Jin et al., 2020; Jones & Ryan, 2014), China (Aghabarari, 2020), England (Foncha et al., 2015), Ethiopia (Birbirso, 2012; Tadesse Degago, 2007), Finland (Tiainen & Lutovac, 2022), Indonesia (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Hendriwanto, 2021; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018), Iran (Azimi et al., 2019), Israel (Dubiner, 2018), Italy (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017), Korea (Yin, 2019), KSA (Altalhab et al., 2021), South Africa (Foncha et al., 2015), Spain (Saiz-Linares & Susinos-Rada, 2020), Turkey (Demir, 2017), and USA (Kim, 2020; Zhu, 2011). However, research involving EFL pre-service teachers' reflective teaching practicum as participants are still rarely undertaken in Indonesia, particularly during the Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, this study aimed to undertake EFL pre-service teacher teaching practicum' reflection during Covid-19. The contribution of this study will assist pre-service teachers as practical implications for them in preparing and improving teaching quality. Hereinafter, the findings used as empirical evidences for research in Indonesia. Thus, the research question guided in this study is “How did the pre-service teacher reflect her teaching practicum experience during Covid-19?”

METHODS

Research Design

Drawing upon constructivism paradigm (Creswell, 2018), we employed an ethnographic qualitative research design (Hayano, 1979) to explore the researcher's personal experiences as the first person through essay, journal, or short stories (White & Seibold, 2008). Hayano (1979) argued that ethnography written by researchers who has a part or master status and who well-known the particular activity to be explored. In 1990, ethnography as an exceptional method for analyzing personal experiences and illustrating to examine cultural experiences within communication (Adams et al., 2017), foreground the relationship and cultural-personal interaction in constructing identities (Anderson, 2006). This ethnographic study is therefore appropriate to investigate the researcher's teaching practicum experiences in this current research, and allows the researcher becomes the research subject, as also recommended by Pinner (2017). In this instance, the researcher has placed the central position of inter-involvement of cultural influences (Yazan, 2019), and belongs to the auto-ethnography types, such as the researcher as pre-service teacher who has carried teaching practice in the specific period of time.

This personal experiences need to be implemented on purpose to clarify and investigate (grapy) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices (Adams et al., 2017; Sparkes, 2020), and enact identities without allowing others' representation (Canagarajah, 2012). This ethnography carried out by giving the entire author's consciousness and use him or herself in relating personal knowledge to the culture studied Pelias (2003), and bridging the theory and practice (Yuan & Lee, 2014).

Data Generation and Analysis

In this ethnographic study, we explored one of the researcher's personal experiences as the first person in teaching practicum through her dairy journals. Her narratives focused on how she, as the pre-service teacher, reflected her teaching practicum experience during Covid-19. To generate the data, we adapted by Yung (2020), such as (1) I wrote a dairy journal and personal reflection, (2) collected data through participation of mentoring from supervisor 1, (3) interviews with supervisor 2 (English teacher), (4) I analyze my teaching practical note from students and feedback from supervisor 1. These steps are as an initial for developing self-narratives. We employed thematic

analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for data-gathering procedures to explore such issues in details. The data collected procedures included these following steps: (1) familiarizing the data (2) generating initial codes (3) searching for themes (4) reviewing themes (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level 1: My self-narrative story about my English background

I was born in the village in Indonesia. I grew up speaking Bahasa Indonesia. I started receiving English instructions to read the texts, having conversation from the texts, listening stories, and writing sentence by sentence in the secondary school in English subject. However, I never use English for conversation for purpose in my life. English is considered as first foreign language for me. Later on, I would be introduced further about English in college as an EFL learner in English education program. My decision to study English was fueled by my interest, curiosity, and passion about the intriguing interplay between English as foreign language and teaching-learning. As I considered my career options, I constantly motivated that underscored the importance of English along with the computer skills for profitable job prospects as an options of English teacher was overload.

English foreign language teacher background has highly significant effects on students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English. Pae (2017) found that students' has high motivation and positive attitudes, and strong desires and intentions toward learning English from native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) rather than non- native English-speaking teachers (non-NESTs). Still at the earlier source, there are significant differences on the teachers' self-perceptions of their teaching method in practical English between NESTs and non-NESTs. There is a direct influence on EFL learners' integrative and instrumental motivation affected by non-Nests' English proficiency and knowledge (Zhang & Zhang, 2020).

Native English-speaking teachers and non-native English-speaking teachers' language background not only influence their teaching behavior, it also directly merges on their qualification and teaching knowledge. This situation in line with several studies by Árvá & Medgyes (2000); Chun (2014); Lasagabaster & Sierra (2002) demonstrate that there are high meaningful distinguishes on several aspects, such as language target, mastering grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, learning strategies, instructional competences, as well as stages and teaching performances. More specifically, native English-speaking teachers are able to use English language spontaneously in communication situations to teach reading, speaking, and pronunciation as that they have affluent linguistics competence rather than non-native English-speaking teachers (Árvá & Medgyes, 2000; Chun, 2014). Still at the earlier source, their linguistics directly influence their conversation capacity that non-native English-speaking teachers less of innovation, flexibility, and casualty than native English-speaking teachers (Árvá & Medgyes, 2000). By contrast, non-native English-speaking teachers are able to design lesson plan more realistic and detail (Árvá & Medgyes, 2000) and they have high sensitivity on learners' obstacles and problems as the same foreign language learners (Chun, 2014).

Level 2: I am so stressed

As an undergraduate of English education program, teaching practicum is as a compulsory subject training teacher's professional development and constructing their acceptance and pedagogical insight (Mtika, 2011). Before carried out teaching practicum, I have received material about English

language pedagogy. I learnt many English courses such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and corpora, English linguistics, and grammar. However, I encountered many obstacles to master them all. For example, when the lecturer instructed me to do the grammar quizzes focusing on error correction types, I frequently confused to choose the appropriate answer. Consequently I received a grade “E” at semester 2. This has significantly effects on my writing assignment. I was able to accomplish the writing subject before the due date and received satisfaction grade, however, sometimes I confused on my grammar in structuring sentences. This also happened for my listening and speaking skills.

Grammar difficulty is also experienced by other student-teachers of English. (Graus & Coppen, 2015), for example, found that some undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers’ of English have difficulties on grammar features, more specifically on several tenses and article. The most factors influence their grammatical difficulty is the tense use. This grammatical difficulty also affected by the learners’ characteristics, in particular their first language (L1) background, motivations toward learning English, proficiency level, language aptitude, and teachers’ language instructions.

Later, the EFL pre-service teachers’ obstacles in language target are relate to a study by Basyurt Tuzel & Akcan (2009) claimed that some EFL pre-service teachers frequently difficult in structuring grammar, adapting language to students’ levels, as well as accuracy classroom language. This situation extremely required to provide language awareness schooling for pre-service teacher earlier before they receive real teaching practice in the school. Basyurt Tuzel & Akcan (2009; van den Broek et al. (2022) encounter that, given language awareness training is able to improve their awareness-raising in the learning environment and language component, and gain confidence, because it leads them to improve their target language implemented in the classroom and explores language points for teaching purposes, as well as promote them to be more sensitive to students’ needs in language target. Gage (2020) states that teachers’ language awareness development is substantially assist them to prevent linguistic parochialism and prejudice.

Further, I received several English pedagogical courses, such as English curriculum design, instructional design, micro teaching, teaching English as foreign language (TEFL) methodology, and language testing and assessment. For pedagogical subject I had many obstacles in many areas, such as structuring lesson plan, conducting micro-teaching, designing the material, and assessing the students’ products.

More specifically, in structuring the lesson plan, I have difficulties to create interesting and interactive learning activities, because I confused to choose the appropriate learning objectives, methods, techniques, and strategies. This substantially influenced by many variety of methods, and there is a gap in understanding the example between compulsory book, teacher, and current mandated-curriculum. For micro teaching I have obstacles in presenting, communicating, and delivering materials to the students. These difficulties include error in pronunciation the words to make them understand the materials and transfer it to their real life. In this regard, it has a profound effect on my confident, because it is highly required for me to pronounce the words correctly. Also, it is too difficult for me to design the materials creatively to invite their attention, because I confused to develop the materials, this affected by my less prior knowledge. I spent hours to design the assessment rubric to assess the students’ products, but still inappropriate.

Student teachers’ subject-matter knowledge and skills in lesson planning as well as teacher classroom behavior have extremely powerful for maintaining the instructional quality (Yurtseven,

2021) having a significant effect on the education results and quality (Shavelson, 1983). Yurtseven (2021) found that some student teachers' have difficulty in choosing the appropriate method, although they have prepared many projects concerning planning. Still at the earlier source, it is deeply hard for them to create the perfect match about learning activities and learning objectives. Furthermore, transferring knowledge to the students became the most demanding for them. Ansyari (2018) discover that some pre-service teacher has obstacles in creating the appropriate learning objectives, appropriate pedagogical techniques, learning activities, and assessing students' product. Particularly, most pre-service teacher writing learning objectives focus on students' cognitive aspects. They still adopted a teacher-centered approach without analyzing the content being taught. For learning activities, they difficult to determine the students' need, learning format, limited opportunities for students' language practice and production. There is a discrepancy of skills in learning objective and assessment, and also inappropriate content and validity.

In addition, another study by Buyukkarci (2014) found that some non-native English speaking as pre-service teachers have anxiety on their foreign language before and during their micro-teaching. Particularly, their anxiety affects their performance, such as they were lack to manage lesson activities and could not answer students' questions. Bach & Hagenauer (2022) reveal that the pre-service teachers' anxiety influences their ability to resolve classroom problems and implementing their own instructional strategies for students' learning. Furthermore, during practicum pre-service teachers also realize that they have some grammar and pronunciation mistakes during transferring the materials to students (Buyukkarci, 2014). To respond those phenomena, developing pedagogical content knowledge in EFL pre-service teacher is highly demanded. This reason in link to Gess-Newsome et al. (2019) argued that train pre-servicer teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is able to measure their accuracy into content knowledge, connecting teaching strategies to students' learning, and understanding students' prior conceptions. They also is required to received language awareness (Basyurt Tuzel & Akcan, 2009; van den Broek et al., 2022), as previously mentioned to ensure their readiness in English language pedagogy skills and competence during in the university course earlier of their real teaching. This reason in accordance with Yin (2019) revealed that connecting theory and practice to pre-service teacher before received teaching practical had become a motivating factor. More specifically, they were able to realize what they need on their learning activities in lesson plan, determine the crucial aspects should be included in their teaching.

Level 3: My Reflective Teaching Practicum Experiences during Covid-19

In the beginning, I wanted my students to learn the materials via video and PPT slides. Unfortunately, there was no LCD projector to present the materials. To respond this situation, I decided to print the materials and shared to students. At this situation, I had to exemplify the correct pronunciations of the words in the materials. However, it was less effective because they were unable to directly hear the pronunciation form native English-speaking teacher as like in the video leading them to mispronounce the words as I still often pronounce the English vocabularies incorrectly and less accuracy in both stress and intonation.

Those aforementioned data reflect that adequate learning infrastructure is significantly effect on learners' learning desire to learn leading them to successfully achieve their learning objectives. This finding is congruent with an earlier study claiming that the implementation of infrastructures were established in all educational setting calls teachers to modify pedagogy with technology (Jie & Sunze, 2021). This adequate learning infrastructure can also influence on creating the conducive

learning environment and proving teachers' identity as technology literate person (Lawrent, 2020). For Shirrell et al. (2019), institutions' infrastructures potentially impact on teacher's teaching and support their professional learning in providing, maintaining, and improving their pedagogical practices in his/her classroom.

Since I have only fifteen minutes for one meeting, I confused to manage the time for intended learning activities, such as to explain materials, invite them for game, request students to complete the task in group, and give feedback. I did not have sufficient time to give feedback to them. The next day, I asked some students individually about the previous lesson. I found that some of them did not get the point of the last lesson although they received acceptable scores of the task accomplished by their group. For that reason, I called them to tell their experiences when they completed the task in work group. Many students stated that they did not take a role during complete the task in group, because they still did not get the idea of the materials. Besides, some of them felt that they could understand the lesson but they were confused when the teacher gave a quiz. Therefore, they forced another member (the clever one) to complete the task.

My supervisor 1 directly evaluated my teaching practicum and found some inconsistencies in my lesson plans and poor teaching plot, particularly in designing an appropriate assessment rubric as well as selecting the appropriate operational verbs from taxonomy Bloom suited to the formulated and intended learning objectives. For my teaching plot, my supervisor warned me about my mistakes on such issues by providing constructive feedback about my teaching practices. He also gave me appropriate examples of how to (1) manage teaching time in every learning activity (2) control students' behavior in group work (3) give a clear instruction to prevent students' misbehavior, and (4) design students- centered learning effectively.

Those data analysis reflect that pre-service teacher's practicum feedback is substantially enforced to give them clear focus and direction for their future professional teaching practices. White (2008) claimed that feedback is as a powerful form enhancing learners' achievement as it can inform the students about the weakness areas they must improve so that they can concentrate on altering the learning gaps. Similarly, Moody (2009) acknowledged the provision of feedback is very helpful for pre-service teachers in particular in light of actualizing the students' evolving teaching style, clarifying areas that must be necessarily improved, and manifesting their teaching vision.

CONCLUSION

This article highlighted to undertaken an EFL pre-service teacher' teaching practicum as reflection that to examine my readiness to be a future professional teacher. By employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the findings suggest that the EFL pre-service teacher' four basis English skills, prior knowledge of pedagogical, experiences in microteaching as well as institution' infrastructures have a significant effect on my teaching practice. Among those findings, the data reflected that I frequently mispronounced the words when delivering materials leading to be imitated by her students. Consequently, it can strongly influence the students' ability to speak fluently. Further, the findings indicate that pre-service teacher's incompetency in creating lesson plan has become an influential aspect to design an appropriate lesson plan consequently leading to students' ineffective learning. My incompetency in lesson planning is affected by my less prior knowledge and experiences in microteaching as that I am actually unready to carry out teaching practicum. It was proved by my previous statement that I have many obstacles to create interesting and interactive learning activities during microteaching. In addition, I have difficulties to create appropriate

assessment rubric, that it substantially affect my assessment rubric during teaching practicum. The possible solution for these instances is that teachers should ensure student teachers' readiness and competencies during microteaching to promote positive practicum and improve pre-service teacher pedagogical development to be a future professional teacher.

This article emphasizes only on reflecting a student teacher teaching practicum experiences during the COVID-19 crisis into auto-ethnographic views. Besides, the author supposed to explore reflection during microteaching, and teacher should emphasize pre-service teachers' microteaching in training students hardly as that to generate compatible pre-service teacher before practicum. Thus, for further study we hope there will be further research on investigating pre-service teachers' teaching practicum readiness in a broader scope. Moreover, teacher should ensure pre-service teacher competencies before conduct teaching practicum. Additionally, institutions should facilitate adequate infrastructures to promote interesting and effective learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has received no funding. Also, the author would like to express his gratitude to the editor (s) and anonymous reviewer (s) for their constructive inputs on this manuscript.

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