PIONEER

LEARNING TO TEACH: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE TEACHING PRACTICUM PROGRAM AMIDST COVID-19 OUTBREAK

[1]Yuli Yana Hardiyanty
[1]Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin, Indonesia
[1]*ylynhrdynty@gmail.com*

[2]Supiani*
[2]Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin, Indonesia
[2]*supiani.uniska@gmail.com*

[3]Iwan Perdana
[3]Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB Banjarmasin, Indonesia
[3]*iwan.uniska@gmail.com*

*Corresponding author: supiani.uniska@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study explores pre-service EFL teachers' experiences in learning to teach English at the teaching practicum program during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study adopts a qualitative narrative inquiry to capture the pre-service EFL teachers' events or stories experienced in their learning to teach at schools. Drawing on semi-structured interview data, we found that the majority of the pre-service EFL teachers forced themselves to understand digital literacy and be able to adopt various learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Youtube, Zoom meeting, and Whatsapp in the online teaching at the practicum program during COVID-19 Pandemic. They supposed that those ways were effective enough to deliver learning materials, interact with their students and achieve learning goals. However, during online teaching at the COVID-19 Pandemic, the teaching practicum program did not run well because during the process of online teaching the pre-service EFL experienced various challenges: poor internet connection, lack their participation, and negative attitude. Therefore, the strategies they employed to overcome the teaching challenges were creating a comfortable learning atmosphere by using certain learning platforms, communicating actively with the students' parents to encourage their online participation, and growing their self-confidence and motivation.

Keywords: experiences, pre-service efl teachers, teaching practicum program

INTRODUCTION

Field experience or students' teaching practice plays an important role in teacher preparation programs (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014). Teaching practice is the main activity of the teaching practicum program, where students are directly involved in the teaching and learning process to gain direct experience in teaching and learning activities at the class (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012). A teaching practicum provides students with authentic and hands-on experience in classrooms. The previous studies reported that teaching practice is essential to teacher education programs worldwide (Zhu, Mena, Worldwiden, 2020). The teaching practicum program provides real experience for pre-service teachers about actual events in the school environment, like problems that may occur when they become real teachers and interact with schools' staff.

One of the most influential components of teacher education is teaching practice because teaching practicum describes life in the real school environment (Becker, Waldis, & Staub, 2019). In addition, it develops understanding and relationships between students and co-workers. Yet, many pre-service teachers find it challenging to teach at the teacher education program. It is because pre-service teachers may lack confidence in overcoming challenges in the school environment, such as teaching problems in the class and relationships with co-workers.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 virus appeared in China. This disease has spread worldwide, including in Indonesia, so it impacts negatively on all sectors. One of the negative effects of this disease was that all private and public or state schools were forced to be closed and required to transform from the face-to-face learning process to be online learning. This became the main challenge for student teachers conducting the teaching program, especially because they had to adapt their traditional teaching to online modalities and maintain educational goals. This online learning utilizes multimedia technology, voice messages, online texts, virtual classes, e-mail, and telephone, which can be done with an unlimited number of participants, can be done for free or paid. Moreover, virtual class learning is an effective effort to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Baloran, 2020). Although the use of technology is not new in the field of education, and even it is often used as a blended learning system, this is certainly not easy to adopt because online learning requires understanding the technological literacy, quotas, and strong internet connection or access. In addition, the delivery of learning material and the

limitations of communication between students and student teachers also play an essential role in maintaining the effectiveness of online learning. As reported by Harrison, Robinson, and Rawlings (2018) that although students are already skillful with technological tools, the internet connection is the main problem, especially in certain areas due to geographical location and quotas. Therefore, this study explores how English student teachers experience learning to teach English at the teaching practicum program during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In addition, this research is also to investigate the challenges they faced when following the teaching practicum and the ways of them to overcome in the critical time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pre-service Teachers

Pre-service teachers are the ones who benefit from practicum, which gives them hands-on experience with the realities of teaching in schools. Although preservice teachers are not always aware of the issues that they may encounter when teaching in schools, they eventually become aware of them (Mukminin, Kamil, Muazza, & Haryanto, 2017). They are required to deal with such issues as they emerge throughout the practicum. Pre-service teachers are frequently helped by school-based teacher mentors and university-based teacher educators in dealing with the unanticipated problems of teaching in schools during the practicum. Pre-service teacher concerns during their practicum are important because it helps them develop their understanding of teacher practice. It aims to identify pre-service teachers' concerns, fears, beliefs, and feelings concerning their teaching practice. Pre-service teachers receive the opportunity to build reflective skills with the help of mentors and tutors as they address the processes of professional practice that teachers face on daily basis, as well as to (re)construct their identities as teacher practitioners (Wang & Clarke, 2014)

Teaching Practicum Program

The importance of specific aspects of teaching practice that will enhance the teaching experience has long been emphasized in the literature, namely the need to build partnerships between schools and universities and the involvement of all stakeholders in practicum (Kim, 2020). Mauri, Onrubia, Colomina, and Clara (2019) stated that the benefit of

practicum teaching had been extensively examined. For the first, student teachers have the opportunity to learn about future teaching requirements, create a pedagogical, and form a professional identity. Second, teaching practicum significantly boosts student instructors' confidence and readiness to teach. Third, by involving teaching practice experience, teaching practice can change responsibilities. Overall, practicum has been described as a mix of theory and practice to improve skills, confidence, and mastery (Portman & Abu Rass, 2019).

Affordances and Constraints of Teaching Practicum

There have been some criticisms about teaching practicum (Grant-Smith & Gillett-Swan, 2017). Student teachers are entangled in an ethical dilemma regarding their roles and responsibilities, and once the practicum begins, student teachers often feel incompetent (Deng et al., 2018). Faced with these obstacles, university supervisors, mentor teachers, and Student teachers work together to optimize the efficacy of teaching practicum by coordinating professional relationships and organizing student teaching components.

There are still contradictions in teaching practice, such as theory and practice are still considered separate, the interaction between school teachers, new teachers, and teachers is still small, teaching practice, in general, does not contribute to schools, and student teachers are not involved in innovation (such as curriculum redesign). Teacher-students are trained and exposed to real-world classroom teaching at this stage to become ready and competent teachers (Saariaho et al., 2016).

Student Teachers' Strategies in Online Classroom Activities

In the online learning process, student teachers are required to master technology and teach students as teachers must create a learning process that builds interaction, provides clear instructions, and builds a spirit of collaboration. Stone (2019) explains that careful preparation, communication that builds interaction, and learning engagement need to be considered in implementing online learning. According to Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) stated that in Indonesia, fully online learning began in March. Online learning is expected to be a solution for education amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. During the online learning process, student teachers are expected to be able to assist students in carrying out

online learning. Rapper and Brown (2020) emphasize that the role of teachers in helping students in online learning is by providing online learning that is easily available to students.

METHOD

A qualitative narrative research design is adopted in this study to obtain in-depth information about the experiences of the English student teachers' teaching practice. Narrative design is considered as combining a set of events or stories related to people's experiences in their lives. Due to the spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic, all Indonesian schools are physically closed and recommended by the government to go online to teach and learn every subject.

In this respect, all teachers included English student teachers who wanted to take the teaching practicum program at schools, are required to adopt various teaching platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom to teach, instruct lessons, and give the tasks to students. Most of them use Google classroom to upload learning materials, ask students to submit their tasks, and interact with each other. Meanwhile, the use of the Zoom platform is used widely for synchronized face-to-face communications. The use of this Zoom platform aims to provide verbal interaction on teaching the lesson and give feedback on the questions and answers sessions for students. In this case, this present study attempts to describe how English student teachers' experiences in teaching English subjects to students at the schools during the teaching practicum in the COVID-19 outbreak and identify their challenges faced by them in the worrying time.

Five EFL students are participating in this study. Their names are under the pseudonym namely Nunug, Moci, Uut, Mimin, and Komeng, and they are studying at a private university, Banjarmasin city, South Kalimantan province, Indonesia. The five participants consist of three female students and two male students with ages ranging from 20 to 21 years old. The three participants come from Banjarmasin city, South Kalimantan province; the rest are from other districts out of Banjarmasin city. They are undergraduate English students from the study program of English language education. Now they are sitting in the seventh semester and taking the program of teaching practicum at the semester. The teaching practicum program is one of the requirements or compulsory courses for English student teachers to complete the bachelor's degree. These participants are recruited voluntarily to tell their experiences regarding teaching practicum to be an English teacher

at the schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The only main criterion to recruit the participants in this study is that there are closeness, intimacy, and emotional relationship among us because we have made friends so long since we had studied this undergraduate program in 2017.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

No	Name	Gender	Age	University	Period of Teaching Practicum	Semester	Place of Teaching Practicum
1	Nunug	Female	21 years old	Private University, Banjarmasin city, Indonesia	4 months	7	Public Junior High School, in East Banjarmasin
2	Moci	Male	21 years old	Private University, Banjarmasin city, Indonesia	4 months	7	Public Junior High School, in East Banjarmasin
3	Uut	Female	20 years old	Private University, Banjarmasin city, Indonesia	4 months	7	Public Junior High School, in East Banjarmasin
4	Mimin	Female	20 years old	Private University, Banjarmasin city, Indonesia	4 months	7	Public Junior High School in Beruntung Baru
5	Komeng	Male	20 years old	Private University, Banjarmasin city, Indonesia	4 months	7	Public Junior High School, in AluhAluh

To collect narrative data, the research employs a semi-structured interview is undertaken in this study to obtain information about participants' experiences in taking part in the practicum teaching and find out their challenges during the practicum teaching the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Harrell and Bradley (2009) argue that interviews can be conducted face-to-face or the telephone to obtain the required data. Before having individual interviews, the researcher negotiates with participants via texting in WhatsApp about the time and the place of the interview. After the participants deal with them, after that the researcher uses a Zoom meeting to interview each of the participants individually due to the spread of the corona virus pandemic.

Interviews are taken approximately 30-40 minutes using the Banjarese language because all the participants are from the Banjarese ethnic of South Kalimantan province and their indigenous language is Banjarese language. Generally, the interview process is carried out in the afternoon and evening. The interviews are taken in a comfortable place so that participants can provide detailed information to obtain the required data. In addition,

research permission to record conversations or answers from participants using the audio-video recorded feature as a tool to collect information from the participants (Widodo, 2014).

All the interview sessions were recorded so that each data could be replayed many times. Moreover, the results of the interviews were transcribed and translated into the English language to ensure the accuracy of the interview data. Harvey (2015) argues that checking the interview data (member checking) can build data reliability.

The researcher transcribes the interview data for data analysis. In analyzing the data, the researcher uses a thematic inductive approach in this study. Braun & Clarke (2011) explain that thematic analysis is an approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting thematic data. All interview results are transcribed and translated into English. After that, the research and the participants read the transcript to get accurate data. Checking the interview data (participants' responses to the study data) can build data reliability (Harvey, 2015). The data collected are coded and classified. Then, the data is interpreted to get the meaning conveyed by the participants. Creswell et al. (2007) explain that the emerging of data can be analyzed by coding and organizing it into categories.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

This study resulted in three findings; (1) English student teachers' experiences in learning to teach English at the program of teaching practicum amidst COVID-19 outbreak; (2) pre-service EFL teachers' challenges faced in learning to teach English at the program of teaching practicum during COVID-19 Pandemic; and (3) their strategies to overcome the main challenges in learning to teach English in the teaching practicum programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

English Student Teachers' Experiences in Learning to Teach English at the Program of Teaching Practicum amidst COVID-19 Outbreak

The spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia since March 2020 created different experiences from the five participants who were carrying out a teaching practicum program in teaching English at the schools in the COVID-19 outbreak. With this very worrying COVID-19 situation, the Indonesian government tried to force all schools, either private or public, to apply online learning. This made the pre-service English teachers, especially in

this present study which carried out online teaching practicum programs, must conduct learning virtual systems under school policies. Most pre-service English teachers had to equip themselves to understand and be able to employ the virtual systems in the online teaching programs so that they were able to deliver learning materials to their students, interact directly with students and achieve the learning goals. Therefore, to teach English effectively at the program, they attempted to facilitate the students through various online platforms such as Google Classroom, Youtube, Zoom Meeting, and Whatsapp so that the program could run well. This is narrated by participants in the data as follows.

> *My teaching practicum used an online system due to a pandemic situation. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, **I used Google Classroom to teach English** in the 7th grade of junior high school. **I made the material in the form of a video**, then **I uploaded it to Youtube and shared the link to Google Classroom**. After that**, I also asked them some questions using Google Forms**.* (Komeng, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021)

> *Because the teaching program coincided with the COVID-19 Pandemic, I taught my students online. I taught specifically for grade 10 of science and social class. **Every week the media that I used to teach was different due to the school regulation so that there was variation in teaching. There are four applications that I utilized to teach English during this Pandemic, which was: Whatsapp, Zoom, Google Classroom, and Google Form*** (Uut, Whatsapp Interview, 30 July 2021)

According to the results of the interview, the participants explained that they delivered the material in the form of a video that they made themselves with different material and duration. However, some participants preferred to explain the learning materials directly or through text and applied a discussion system in each lesson. This is described in the data as follows.

> *I was teaching for grade 7 of Islamic middle high school (MTS), with the **subject matter was still in the form of basic material, such as singular and plural terms**. **I made a video with a duration of about 15 minutes,** and the next day **I just shared the link to the Whatsapp group**. I gave them 20 minutes to watch the video. After they finished watching the video**, I explained a little about the material through a Whatsapp group chat, then opened a question and answer session and then practiced questions that were collected via Whatsapp as well.*** (Mimin, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021)

> *The material **I was teaching was about 'procedure text,' so I explained the definition and the subs. I explained material about 'procedure text,' so for the PPT, I used pictures of food and equipment at home**. **I made the material in the form of a video, and the duration of the video was approximately 10 minutes, then I uploaded it to Youtube and shared the link to Google Classroom. After that, I also asked them some questions using Google Forms.*** (Komeng, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021)

> ***I taught was about the use of the term 'so, very, too.' For the Biography Text material, I explained the definition of function and structure, while for the Recount***

*text material, I explained more about examples. When I used the Whatsapp and Google Classroom applications, **I explained the material via text chat then continued it with a question and answer session/discussion**. By Zoom, **I explained directly, and after they read the material**, they continued to answer the questions that I have made by Google Form. **I used the discussion system during the PPL program. Sometimes there were individual question and answer sessions and several group discussion meetings.*** (Uut, Whatsapp Interview, 30 July 2021)

According to the finding of the interview, the pre-service EFL teachers received guidance from the supervisor or the lecturer and practicum mentor while teaching English at the teaching practicum program. They got guidance in terms of selecting materials, making lesson plans, how to teach, and provisions for making learning videos. However, some participants did not receive guidance from the supervisor lecturer or tutor teacher for several reasons. For example, the age factor, the practicum mentor who has never mentored an English student teacher, and a supervisor/lecturer who left all decisions to the pre-service EFL teachers. This was explained in the following interview data.

> ***I hardly get any guidance from my supervisor lecturer. There may be guidance when choosing a place for the teaching practicum program. And when I consulted with him, he just replied, "it is up to you." If the practicum mentor gave me directions on how to teach, gave guide book and examples of lesson plans***. (Mimin, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021)

> *For **guidance, I communicate more with the supervisor lecturer about how to assess and how to teach during the teaching practicum program in teaching English**. While from **the tutor teacher, she did not guide because she had never guided the English student teacher and age factor. When I consulted with her, she was confused about directing me.*** (Uut, Whatsapp Interview, 30 July 2021)

> *I get guidance from the supervisor, lecturer, and practicum mentor. **She guided using the Zoom meeting application to discuss the implementation of the teaching practicum program and using Whatsapp for individual consultations**. **While the practicum mentor gave routine directions every time, I   taught the lesson.   In addition, the headmaster and other teachers also gave directions while I was teaching English at the teaching practicum program.** Not infrequently, I also consult directly with my practicum mentor at her house.* (Moci, Whatsapp Interview, 31 July 2021)

The participants stated that teaching English at the teaching practicum program during the COVID-19 outbreak gave an impression on their teaching experience and provided a challenge to be more creative when teaching. However, some participants felt that teaching English during the COVID-19 Pandemic gave a bad impression because learning was not delivered properly, and students were not focused on learning. All participants stated it in the following interview.

*In my opinion, there was an impression during the teaching practicum that the English teaching program was in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak because **we were the first generation to implement the teaching practicum program during the Pandemic. So, I think this adds to my experience in teaching**.* (Nunug, Whatsapp Interview, 20 July 2021)

*In my opinion**, the impression is not good when teaching English online because it makes students not focus on learning and minimizes student responses**. So, in my opinion, teaching English in the teaching practicum program during the COVID-19 outbreak gives a bad impression.* (Mimin, Whatsapp Interview, 21th of July 2021)

*I have teaching experience in the fifth semester. At that time, I was teaching offline in class. **I think teaching during this Pandemic has challenged me because I only have offline teaching experience. So the impression for me, I feel challenged to be more creative in delivering the material** and how with a video that lasts about 10 minutes, all the material can be conveyed well and can be understood by students.* (Komeng. Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021)

Challenges Faced by the English Student Teachers in Learning to teach English during COVID-19 Pandemic

The narrative findings of the five participants involved in this study revealed that the challenges faced by English student teachers in learning to teach English at the teaching practicum program during the COVID-19 Pandemic were low internet connection, lack of understanding of digital, or technological, and negative attitude. The biggest challenge faced by the participants in this study was a low internet connection.

The participants thought that low internet connection hindered the learning process. Therefore, internet access was a fundamental aspect that was very much needed in online learning in the COVID-19 pandemic situation. As stated by one of the English student teachers was in the following data.

*The problem was the lack of interaction from students, so they did not focus on learning. Only certain students were active, who are smart, so they were the ones who responded a lot. **They also had difficulty accessing the internet because there were students whose homes were in remote areas.*** (Mimin, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021)

Two participants gained difficulties learning to teach at the program in terms of lacking students' participation and negative attitudes of the students. This they narrated in the interview as follows.

*To be honest, when I taught online, **the student response was minimal**. **For the assignment given for one week, of a total of 30 students, only a dozen students worked on it**. In addition**, the internet and cellphone quota became problems**. Thus, **some students did not do assignments because they did not have cell phones.*** (Nunug, Whatsapp Interview, 20 July 2021)

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There were many obstacles that I experienced when implementing PPL during this COVID-19 Pandemic. The first obstacle was the bad signal that made it difficult for students to access Zoom for the teaching process. Second, students sometimes skipped school and took the assignments given for granted, so they ignored the assignments I gave them. Third, students were only active when using certain applications and did not focus on the online learning process because they were doing other activities such as eating, playing games, and lying down. In addition, they also found it difficult to understand the material taught online. (Uut, Whatsapp Interview, 30 July 2021)

One of the participants also explained that the pandemic situation required students to study online; there were still students who did not understand how to use technology. This is revealed from the following interview data.

They also had difficulty accessing the internet because there were students whose homes were in remote areas. There was one more problem. At first, I asked to teach using the Zoom application, but it was rejected because the students did not understand how to use the Zoom application. (Mimin, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021).

The Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Strategies to Overcome their Main Challenges Learning to Teach English at the Practicum Programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 crisis, participants faced various challenges when learning to teach English at the practicum programs. As a teacher, participants had their strategies so that they could continue to carry out the teaching process. Even though they face many obstacles in learning to teach English, they still try to make the learning process run well. For this reason, the participants tried to create a comfortable learning atmosphere so that students enjoyed the learning process even though they were online. This was narrated by the participants in the following data.

Before officially teaching there, I first entered their Whatsapp group and paid attention to how my tutor teacher taught. I also made some approaches to them so that they felt comfortable and enjoyed when I taught. I did it by creating a learning atmosphere that was not always serious, making some little jokes, so the materials I taught were more interesting and easy to understand. Therefore, while outside class, our status as friends and brothers-sisters so that they felt close to me. The point was to make them feel comfortable with me. (Uut, Whatsapp Interview, 30 July 2021)

Parents also play an important role in the education of their children, so they must participate in directing and motivating their children to encourage their children's enthusiasm for learning in this crisis. It meant that the pre-service EFL teachers used to communicate with their parents to support their children in learning English. This was effective enough to ask the students to take part actively in online learning, so it enabled the

pre-service EFL teachers were able to optimize their teaching at the online class. This was one of the pre-service EFL teachers' strategies to support the online learning process by involving their parents. This was stated in the following interview.

> *The way to deal with it was to make more effort to find the person and chat, including chatting with their parents.* **I contacted the students' parents to give them an understanding of their children. So, it is hoped that parents would participate in their children's education and could motivate their children to study hard even in this critical situation. I also employed a feature to enter a code in a video I made for students to watch the video in its entirety.** (Moci, Whatsapp Interview, 31th of July 2021)

The participants or the EFL student teachers also had to be able to adapt to students' abilities to assist students in the learning process during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This was explained by one of the participants in the interview as follows.

> *Initially, I wanted to use the Zoom application to teach, but the school refused because the students there did not understand how to use Zoom applications. To implement online learning activities,* **I decided to use the Whatsapp application instead of Zoom, following the school's recommendations and according to the abilities of the students there.** *(Mimin, Whatsapp Interview, 21 July 2021).*

Discussion

This narrative study discusses three findings; (1) the pre-service EFL teachers' experiences in learning to teach English at the program of teaching practicum amidst the COVID-19 outbreak; (2) the challenges the pre-service EFL teachers faced in learning to teach English during COVID-19 Pandemic; (3) the pre-service EFL teachers' strategies to overcome their main challenges in learning to teach English at the practicum programs during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In the first finding, participants explained their experiences when implementing the teaching practicum program in teaching English by utilizing various learning applications such as Google Classroom, Whatsapp, Youtube, and so on. These findings are supported by Baloran, (2020), Blankenberger & Williams (2020) explain that online learning is an effort to overcome the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Multimedia technology such as online text, virtual classes, and applications can be used as media for the online learning process.

In this study, the participants explained their challenges when learning to teach English during COVID-19 Pandemic. Many participants complained about the effectiveness of the virtual class, which was not optimal due to the lack of internet connection, low students' participation, not focusing on learning, and the difficulty of

interacting during the learning process. Sulistiyo, Mukminin, Abdurrahman, & Haryanto (2017) explained that the gap in the interaction between teachers and students is a problem online. Although all participants are proficient in using technology, some participants have to face challenges with internet connection. Also, Mukminin et al. (2017) reported that although they are proficient in using technology, geographical location affects internet connection.

In the last finding, the five participants explained their strategies to overcome the challenges that arise when learning to teach English during COVID-19 by using learning applications that are following students' abilities in terms of knowledge about technology and internet access (Heikonen et al. 2017). It was a line with Reaper and Brown's study (2020) that the role of student teachers in helping students deal with this pandemic situation by creating online learning that is easily accessible for students. Moreover, participants strive to create a comfortable learning atmosphere so that students enjoy the learning process. This finding is similar to tape previous study by Davies & Heyward (2019) that good learning creates a comfortable and conducive situation.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that most of the pre-service EFL teachers are forced to teach online at the schools and adjust digital literacy to deliver learning materials to their students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The learning platforms are adopted by them at the online class such as Google Classroom, Youtube, Zoom Meeting, and Whatsapp so that the pre-service EFL teachers can explain the lesson, interact with the students and achieve learning goals, but every participant has own preferences to use these platforms based on their interest and easiness to use. In the process of the teaching practicum program, the supervisor or the lecturer and the practicum mentor at school play an important role in providing guidance and encouraging the pre-service EFL teachers to make good lesson plans, to teach an effective online class to their students, and deliver good learning materials. The role of both supervisor and practicum mentor helps the pre-service EFL teachers learn to teach well in the real class and motivate them to be confident in teaching English although two participants in this study experienced a lack of guidance from the supervisor and the practicum mentor. Learning to teach English at the teaching practicum

program during the COVID-19 pandemic is difficult to teach virtually. The majority of pre-service EFL teachers face some challenges that make them hard to teach. The main challenges faced by them regarding the low or no internet connection in which they often get difficulty to keep in touch with the students, explain learning materials and build close relations between them and students. In addition, some of them are still lacking in understanding of digital usage or technological practice in employing at the virtual class, so they get confused first how to use the technological tools in online teaching. The negative attitude of the students towards learning English also becomes a challenge in which students suppose that online learning is not interesting and boring, so they do not pay more attention to the lesson and learning activities at the online class. Therefore, to overcome these main challenges in learning to teach English in the teaching practicum program during the COVID-19 Pandemic, pre-service EFL teachers try to create a comfortable and creative learning atmosphere so that students enjoy the online learning process, try to involve students' parents to help and support or encourage their children's learning process and adapt to the students' ability to carry out online learning during the pandemic crisis.

Suggestions

This present study suggests for pre-service EFL teachers to prepare themselves pedagogically in teaching English at the online class and the mastery of technological tools before carrying out the teaching practicum program to minimize failures in the teaching process. In addition, pre-service EFL teachers are also expected to create a learning atmosphere that builds student interaction and a spirit of collaboration during online teaching. Moreover, they have to be more active in communicating with their supervisor/lecturer and the practicum mentor in gaining guidance, support, and valuable advice for the success of the teaching practicum.

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