

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Teaching practicum is a crucial part of any teacher preparation program. It provides a chance to build links between theory and practice and to apply academic knowledge (Nemtcinova, 2018). In the English language teacher education program, teaching practicum also plays a vital role. It gives pre-service English language teachers an excellent opportunity to bring the pedagogical content knowledge they have received through the coursework into practice by teaching real students (Koşar, 2021). A successful teacher education program is indicated by the success of teaching practicum (Köksal & Genç, 2019). A teaching practicum is one of the courses that will make the student teachers get authentic and hands-on experience for teaching in the classroom (Kim, 2020). Thus, student teachers are required to take a teaching practicum course to practice teaching in the real school context.

In the Indonesian context, teaching practicum is included in the teacher education program, commonly known as *Praktik Pengalaman Lapangan (PPL)*. It is a mandatory subject for pre-service teachers who are in their final year at universities (Shalawati & Hadijah, 2018). Before the pre-service teachers have their teaching practice in real school contexts, they will get a Microteaching course. It promotes them to implement the theories of teaching they learn in the previous semesters in the small scope of class-based practicum (Iswandari, 2017). Megawati & Astutik (2019) stated that in several universities, microteaching is involved in a teaching practicum, which is called teaching practicum I. They are also mentioned that the microteaching course is designed to prepare the pre-service teacher to deal with real school experience in the classroom.

During the teaching practicum at school, pre-service teachers have to follow the school policy including the regulation of the teaching-learning process. In common, the pre-service teachers do the teaching practicum for around 960 hours or six months (Gustine, 2021). They have to come to school on working days. The pre-service teachers not only teach in the classroom but are also obligated to participate in other non-teaching activities, such as following a morning flag ceremony, participating in extracurricular activities, and helping the administration officers (Afrianto, 2017). During the practicum, the pre-service teachers will be helped by mentor teachers or cooperating teachers (Makmur et al., 2013). In Indonesia, mentor teachers or cooperating teachers are known as *guru pamong*.

However, in March 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, Nadiem Makariem, issued a Circular Letter Number 4 year 2020 about the implementation of Educational policies in the emergency period of the Coronavirus outbreak (Pusdiklat, 2020). One of the policies

is to conduct online learning during the pandemic. All schools and universities were closed and did online teaching-learning. As a result, the teaching practicum had to follow the school regulation. The pre-service teachers who were implementing a teaching practicum have to switch from learning how to teach English face-to-face in a classroom to online mode during the practicum. Gustine (2021) stated that pre-service teachers, most of whom have no teaching experience are forced to teach online.

The change from the traditional face-to-face into online learning during pandemics becomes a current issue in teaching practicum. Nel & Marais (2020) stated that the teaching practicum is likely to be significantly impacted because it coincides with the pandemic. They explained that in South Africa the universities are discussing eligibility and safety for placing the pre-service teachers in schools for their practicum. Meanwhile, Nasri et al. (2020) mentioned that Malaysian pre-service teachers must shift their teaching practicum to be online but were disappointed because they did not prepare well for online teaching, so they could not develop their skills.

The issue of shifting from teaching face-to-face to online has also been experienced by Indonesian pre-service teachers who should be taking a teaching practicum during the pandemic. According to Gustine (2021), pre-service teachers expressed their negative feelings about online teaching and learning during a pandemic. First, they were confused, worried, and panic about how to teach online because they had never learned it at university. They were confusing to choose the right methodology to teach students online. Furthermore, they did not understand how to give students online assessment because they could not meet the students directly.

However, online learning has benefits for students and teachers. First, it is flexible to use. The students and teachers are able to attend the course everywhere and every time (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). Landrum et al. (2020) stated that the flexibility makes them do the course at home. They do not need to commute or even relocate for their education (Groton & Spadola, 2020). Second, female students and teachers are able to balance out the obligations of the family (Groton & Spadola, 2020). Third, the students' and teachers' digital competence can be improved by the use of technology in learning (Evens et al., 2017).

In online teaching, the combination of asynchronous and synchronous might be adopted but might have various challenges. Moorhouse (2020) identified the differences between asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous online instruction is where the teacher distributes the module, the slide of PowerPoint, learning video, quiz, assignment, and do the forum discussion on the LMS (Learning Management System). In the previous study, Gustine (2021) stated that the pre-service teachers used WhatsApp and LINE to communicate with the students.

Meanwhile, synchronous online teaching implicates one-hour long real-time live session conveyed through Video Conferencing Software (VCS), such as Zoom Cloud Meeting or Google Meet. In synchronous online teaching, the pre-service English language teachers should use various

online synchronous meeting tools (SMTs) to facilitate student learning (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). In the context of teaching the English language, the teacher needs to analyze whether the platform they choose is suitable for teaching four English skills: reading, listening, speaking, or writing. Kohnke & Moorhouse (2020) reviewed Zoom to teach the English language. They said that it can support synchronous online learning and the features are beneficial for the students to develop their communicative competencies.

However, there are several reasons why pre-service teachers did not conduct synchronous online teaching practicum. Nel & Marais (2020) found that parents were not familiar with video conferencing platforms. This case has become a reason why the school did not allow the pre-service teachers to teach with Zoom or Skype during teaching practicum. Meanwhile, Gustine (2021) revealed that pre-service teachers have no experience in using video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom or Google Meet. They hoped that the school and university have a session to teach them to conduct synchronous online classrooms. Furthermore, Gustine (2021) also argued that Indonesian pre-service teachers have never prepared to teach in an online classroom at university, which makes them puzzled and anxious.

In my experience, before the pandemic, I learn how to teach in face-to-face classes. I developed lesson plans for offline teaching. I also created a teaching simulation video without any students. What I learned in the microteaching course is different from what I did in the teaching practicum during the pandemic. I had to teach English classes synchronously using Zoom Cloud Meeting. Thus, I was surprised because I have only ever used that platform several times before practicum. It is called 'reality shock' when the realization is conflicted with the implementation (Köksal & Genç, 2019). Then, the cooperating teacher suggested I join her online class which is conducted via Zoom to make me familiar with the platform.

Other pre-service teachers might also have their own experiences of teaching practicum during the COVID-19 Pandemic, especially shifting from physical into virtual classrooms. Some of them might struggle with the use of the synchronous teaching-learning mode, which is considered as a new teaching practicum method, as I experienced. Some others might have different experiences. Based on various experiences, the pre-service teachers will learn to enhance their real personalities (Aggarwal, 2003). As Hamlyn (2010) claimed that through experience, people connect what they have learned with what they have faced in reality. Therefore, this study is going to find out the experience of pre-service English language teachers teaching through the synchronous classroom during practicum.

1.2 Research Question

This study raises the research question: How is the teaching experience of pre-service English language teachers in a synchronous classroom?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study is aimed to explore the experience of pre-service English language teachers teaching in a synchronous classroom during their teaching practicum in the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Teaching practicum is the course that will give the pre-service teachers the experience of teaching in the real classroom. Meanwhile, the pre-service teachers have to switch the teaching practicum to be online during the pandemic. They might do the teaching practicum through the asynchronous and synchronous classroom. The limitation of this study is the implementation of teaching practicum in synchronous classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of this research is exploring the teaching practicum experience of pre-service English language teachers using synchronous online mode.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study consists of:

1. Theoretical Benefits

Theoretically, this research can be used as a reference for further research on the experience of pre-service English language teachers teaching in a synchronous classroom. This study also is expected to enrich the previous study related to pre-service English language teachers' experience of teaching practicum through synchronous online mode.

2. Practical Benefits

For both in-service and pre-service teachers, the result of this study is expected to be an insight to develop their pedagogical skills, especially in the synchronous classroom. It is also will help them be well-prepared and more creative in teaching online English classes. Additionally, this research can be used to review the Microteaching course to prepare pre-service teachers for both offline and online teaching practicum.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

The operational definition of this study consists of:

1. The pre-service teachers

A pre-service teacher is a student who studies in a teacher education program. As Allen & Wright (2014) mentioned that pre-service teacher refers to the student teacher. According to Nguyen (2019), pre-service teachers are the learners of

teaching. They play a basic part in the productivity of the professional learning experience.

2. The teaching practicum

Teaching practicum is one of the required courses for the pre-service teachers which can help them to practice their teaching skills. Koşar (2021) explained that teaching practicum is a platform for the pre-service teachers to get a first-hand experience of testing the effectiveness of diverse teaching methods. In the practicum, the pre-service teachers have time to spend in the classroom and they are mentored by the cooperating teacher (Lilach, 2020). Another explanation from Zhang & Parsons (2013), which stated about practicum as a contributor for the transition from students to professional.

3. The synchronous online learning

Synchronous learning in the online classroom is a one-hour long real-time live session conveyed through Video Conferencing Software (VCS) (Moorhouse, 2020). Clark & Kwinn (2007) declared that synchronous online learning is a learning environment mediated by a computer, which is participated by the students who are located in different locations. Shank & Sitze (2004) also stated that synchronous learning consists of people who used instructional materials at the same time. Another statement from Negash et al. (2008), which stated that the teachers and students do not meet physically in synchronous online learning. They only meet virtually during content delivery. In this study, synchronous online learning refers to the use of video conferencing software.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This paper consists of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the problem of the study, which is the pre-service teachers need to turn the teaching practicum from the physical classroom to the online mode. The theoretical foundation is reviewed in chapter two including the challenge of pre-service teachers to teach English in the synchronous classroom, the utilization of the platform they used, and their implementation of teaching practicum stages. The third chapter discusses the use of a narrative inquiry in this study and justifies this approach towards the setting, data collection, data analysis, and ethical consideration. The analysis of the research findings is presented in chapter four. Chapter five discusses the findings of the study. The final chapter concludes the study by giving suggestions and recommendations for further research.