

## Teaching Reading Practice Amid Covid-19 Pandemic Era: Indonesian Pre-Service English Teachers' Experiences

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### Abstrak

Mengajar membaca di masa pandemi telah menjadi pengalaman yang penting untuk situasi masa depan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman guru bahasa Inggris pra-jabatan dalam mengajar pemahaman membaca di era pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dan naratif inkuiri sebagai desain penelitian. Dua (2) guru bahasa Inggris pra-jabatan di sebuah universitas di Karawang, Jawa Barat, Indonesia berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur. Peneliti menggunakan analisis tematik dalam menganalisis data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru pra-jabatan melakukan persiapan yang matang terhadap materi dan media sebelum mengajar, menggunakan pendekatan berbasis genre sebagai pendekatan yang disukai, dan memberikan evaluasi dan umpan balik setelah proses pengajaran. Ditemukan juga bahwa siswa mudah bosan, sulit memahami teks, dan keterbatasan waktu dalam belajar dan tidak efektif. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi tolak ukur pengajaran pemahaman membaca selama masa pandemi. Peneliti - peniliti selanjutnya dapat mengeksplorasi lebih detail strategi – strategi yang digunakan dalam pembelajaran pemahaman membaca di masa pandemi.

**Kata kunci:** *Mengajar membaca, membaca komprehensif, pembelajaran online*

### Abstract

Teaching reading during the Pandemic has been a pivotal experience for the future situation. This study aims to explore the experience of pre-service English teachers in teaching reading comprehension during COVID-19 Pandemic era. The research used qualitative research and narrative inquiry as the research design. Two (2) pre-service English teachers at a university in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia participated in the research. Data collection techniques are carried out through semi-structure interviews. The researchers used thematic analysis to analyze the data. The finding showed that the pre -service English teachers conducted critical preparation on the material and media before teaching, used the genre-based as the favorable approach, and gave evaluation and feedback after the teaching process. It is also found that students easily got bored, difficult to understanding the text, and got limited and ineffective learning time. This research is expected can be a benchmark to teaching reading comprehension in online situation. Future researchers can be more detail in explore strategies of teaching reading comprehension during pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Online learning, reading comprehension, teaching reading*

### INTRODUCTION

In the globalized era, people need to get themselves literate. To be literate people need to improve their reading proficiency. Accordingly, it takes a central role to increase people's literacy. Therefore, students need to endorse to get increased of their reading proficiency. Since its importance, the students need to mastering reading skills. In other words, the ability of good reading is currently a highly valued skill in society. When the students read a text,

they will gain new either information or knowledge. Akbar, Sahin, and Yaykiran (2016) argue that students can achieve a good appreciation if they have a good reading ability. There are other reasons why reading is important in students' lives. Goodman in Burt, Peyton, and Adam (2003) argues that by reading students can export each word to get information from the text so reading can develop knowledge, especially in thinking skills.

In social life, reading skill is also a central factor for the student's future. Harmer (1998) maintained its importance. The first, reading makes students explore language acquisition. By reading, the students will find new words repeating vocabularies that have been encountered so that over time students will remember the vocab well. The second, reading text provides a good model for English writing. That way, when the students learn writing later they are familiar with the structure of a good and correct text. The third, reading provides opportunities for students to learn languages such as vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation as well as how to structure sentences, paragraphs, and texts. Finally, reading can be a tool to introduce interesting topics which stimulates students to start discussing the description of the contents of the text.

During this pandemic, schools are closed and teaching and learning activities have been suddenly switched to online learning, so the students don't have to come to school, they just need to learn from home. Based on the preliminarily observation found in the field, during this pandemic atmosphere the teachers were often confused in implementing the material, including in implementing reading comprehension. The teachers often provide photos of material from books, provide other people's YouTube links to be accessed, or even ask students to search independently for material to be studied via the internet without being reviewed by the teacher. After that, the teachers give assignments in which the teachers rarely give feedback to their students. They just give a mark without telling faults made by their students.

The way the teachers teach reading motivation of students in learning. Students also become bored more easily and not enthusiastic about learning. In addition, this also triggers the lack of interaction between teachers and students, as well as students and their friends. Thus, some students who do not master the material or find it difficult to understand the material are reluctant to ask questions. This proves that teachers' skills are needed in utilizing and operating online learning platforms (Awoyini, Matabene, and Ogbonnaya, 2020). Since when technology is used properly, the teaching and learning process will become more innovative (Naah, 2020).

There are several researches conducted by some researchers related to this study's topic, such as the performance of Saudi English language teachers in reading comprehension classes (Masadeh (2015), the implementation of the genre-based approach in teaching reading at senior high school (Anggraeni and Rozimela, 2020), students' problem of reading comprehension during online learning in the period of COVID-19 pandemic (Badriyah et al, 2020), students' Perception on Reading Comprehension Problems in Narrative Text (Santihastuti, 2020) and the last is to examining the effect of reading modality and passage genre on reading comprehension in middle school students (Meisinger, 2017).

Even though the issue of teaching reading comprehension has been studied by some researchers, there is little research focusing of a study regarding the teachers' strategies to teach reading comprehension implemented by pre-service English teachers during the pandemic. Therefore, this research is aimed to fill the gap by exploring the pre-service English teachers' experience in teaching reading comprehension and the challenges of teaching reading in the Pandemic Covid-19 era.

## **METHOD**

This research aims to explore pre-service English teachers' experience in teaching reading comprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic era. To get the answer to the research question, this research used narrative inquiry as a research design since this research explores the participants' experience as a story (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). In

addition, the researcher explored stories from participants' life experiences by conducting a semi-structured interview with the participants. The participants of this research are two pre-service English teachers who taught English at a school whose cooperation with the campus. The student-teacher taught reading comprehension in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in their proficiency training program. There are several reasons why the researcher took the data from them, such as their willingness to be interviewed, they have finished their proficiency training program and they taught about reading comprehension virtually. To collect the appropriate data, the researcher applied the interview. In conducting the interview, the researcher underwent the procedures modified by Cresswell (2013). The interviews used by the researcher were semi-structured interviews. Using this interview model, the researcher could develop the questions based on the participants answer.

The data then analyzed used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis consist of six step, the first step of this phase is familization with the data which the researchers understood the data collected by reading the interview transcript repeatedly until the researcher understood the contents of the transcript. The second step is generating initial codes, in this step the researchers determined the data or interview transcripts become the main idea determined the data or interview transcripts become the main idea. The third step is searching for themes, which the researcher combined the meaningful chunk that had been used as open coding into several appropriate categories. Then, the researcher combined these categories into themes. The fourth step is reviewing themes, the researchers make sure that all the codes have chunks that related to the themes. The fifth step is define themes, is this step the researchers must make sure that between codes and themes had a correlation to each other. Then, the last step is the researchers wrote down the result.

In conducting the research, the researcher used instruments as a tool to facilitate research. In this study, the instrument used by the researcher in the interview guideline contains the questions asked during the interview. In addition, the researcher also used a digital platform, namely a mobile phone that used to record video during the interview.

## **FINDING**

The findings of this research would be presented refering to the research objective. In collecting the data, the researcher had proposed two issues which were informed by participants about their experiences while teaching reading comprehension in the context of the pandemic, such as 1) The pre-service English teachers implementation strategies in teaching reading comprehension during COVID-19 pandemic era 2) Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension during COVID-19 Pandemic Era.

### **The pre-service English teachers implementation strategies in teaching reading comprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic era**

#### **Preparing the teaching material**

Before starting teaching-learning activity, pre-service English teachers indeed prepared their teaching materials. The participants said that they were asked to doing teaching practice in 12th grade. The kind of text used by the participants was procedure text, news item text, and caption text.

At that time I taught class 12. The type of text used was news item text, caption text, and procedure text (P1)

(Vignette 01)

The kind of texts are procedure text, news item text, and caption text.

(Vignette 02)

The participants also explained that the materials or teaching materials they received came from textbooks available in the school library. In addition, participants also complete the material by searching for additional information from the internet.

The source of the material is from books provided by the school, the books are from the Ministry of Education and Culture, and there are additional searches on the internet (P1)  
(Vignette 03)

The source of teaching materials is from book and the internet (P2)

(Vignette 04)

After that, the participants prepared teaching materials by adjusting the material to the syllabus first, then the participants made lesson plans. After that, the participants looked for the texts that match the theme of the material to be taught and then made a PowerPoint containing the material to be discussed in class.

First, I looked at the syllabus what the material was about. Then I looked in the book. Then I made a lesson plan. After that, I looked for a familiar text. So they already know what text will be explained. After I found the text, I made a PowerPoint which contains orientation, generic structure, etc (P1)

(Vignette 05)

Based on the mentioned result interview, it is shown that pre-service English teachers prepared their teaching material well before starting the teaching-learning activity in the online class.

### **Preparing the Media**

In teaching reading comprehension, the participants used PowerPoint as a media to presented the material and had face-to-face virtually through Google meetings with students. After adjusting the material with the syllabus, I made material PowerPoint for presentations in the class. Because in the school, teachers had to teach use Google Meet, not only use google-classroom, because sometimes students do not necessarily understand clearly] (P2)

(Vignette 06)

Based on mentioned interview transcription, the participants used PowerPoint and Google meetings to decrease students' misunderstanding in teaching-learning. It is also hopefully could give discussion room to the students, when they do not understand enough, they could be asked the teacher.

### **Using Genre-Based as Approach**

The approach used during teaching reading comprehension was the Genre Based Approach, where the Genre Based Approach is a learning approach that helps students become more competent in the language, able to communicate through mastery of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

[I used a genre-based approach because I taught several types of texts. So, the students focus on the main purpose of a text or focus on what the text discussed] (P1)

(Vignette 07)

[At that time, I used genre-based approach as a teaching approach] (P2)

(Vignette 08)

In applying the genre-based approach, the participants choose a text with familiar language to find out the extent of the schemata that students already have and background knowledge about the text to be discussed.

For example, when I was teaching news item text, at that time I chose the text about Didi Petet's death. First, I asked 'who knows Didi Petet?' Then the students will answer 'Oh I know Miss, Didi Petet is a comedian Miss, Didi Petet is an artist Miss, Didi Petet is a blablabla' and so on. (P1)

(Vignette 09)

When I started the lesson, I asked them first as a warm-up, for example, asking for news that is hot news but still relates to English and their lives. Then, for example, I want to discuss news items, I ask 'do you like reading the news?' 'Have you ever read English news?' The point here is that it's like ummm building their background knowledge. (P2)

(Vignette 10)

After that, the participants read the sample text, then modeling of the text. At this stage, the discussion was directed at all aspects of language that make up the text as a whole. Participants also told the structures contained in the text, explained the tenses, and told the linguistic elements of the text.

When I read the text I'm all modeling, like 'this part is called orientation. The use of orientation is for blablabla'. Then in the procedure text, it is like telling them that this is the step, these are the ingredients, so students know that each part has its purpose. (P1)

(Vignette 11)

After that, I'm modeling of the text, it is like taught the structure of the text to students. (P2)

(Vignette 12)

In teaching, the participants used the first meeting to explain the important points contained in the text by presenting the material that had been prepared in PowerPoint. Then the participants displayed the text to be studied and the participants asked several students to volunteer to read and translate the text per paragraph. Participants will review students' understanding of the text at the second meeting.

The text is displayed then students read just like read aloud and translating together. Ooo then, I did one material for two meetings, so at the first meeting I taught the material of the text, then at the second meeting I reviewed the material in the first meeting and I prepared several questions to check their understanding. (P1)

(Vignette 13)

Referring to the interview result, it was shown that genre-based was a proper approach to teaching reading comprehension. Because in genre-based, the students are invited to involve their background of knowledge to understand the text. Besides, these several types of texts had different functions and structures. In genre-based, there was a modeling step where the participant explained the purpose and the structure of the text so that the students could understand the differences well.

### **Doing Evaluation and Giving Feedback to Students**

In doing the learning, of course, there is an evaluation or feedback section. In this section, participants provide feedback by asking questions related to the text and also confirming the pronunciation when students mispronounce the vocabulary.

For the evaluation, I have prepared several questions about reading comprehension, for example, 'What is paragraph 1 about?' or 'what is the main idea from paragraph 2?'. Then

they answered, or I chose a student to answer. Because it is read aloud, I also correct students' pronunciation when they misread the vocabulary in the text. (P1)

(Vignette 14)

The interview transcription showed that the participants helped the students to improve their pronunciation through fixing the students' mispronounce and helped the students to truly understand the text by giving the questions related to the texts.

### **Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension during COVID-19 Pandemic Era Students Easily Feel Bored**

In implementing Reading Comprehension the participants experienced several obstacles such as students easily feel bored because they only read text from the screen and learn from their homes. To overcome this obstacle the participants took the initiative to overcome this obstacle, the participants took the initiative to did an ice-breaking. Reading means they have to understand the text, the problem is that the students sometimes get bored when they just read the text. So, to get over the boredom, I've used ice-breaking, play tongue twister. (P1)

(Vignette 15)

Based on the interview result, the participants tried to make the learning atmosphere more fun to decrease the students' boredom and keep the students' focused.

### **Students' Difficulty in Understanding the Text**

In addition, the participants also experienced problems where students did not understand the texts they had read. This is because students do not know the meaning of the words in the text. To overcome this, participants used to do text translation activities after reading together.

We (preservice English teacher & students) discussed together, discuss the main idea of the text. Oh, we also discuss unfamiliar vocabulary. (P1)

(Vignette 16)

Sometimes even though they have finished reading, they do not understand what the text talking about. So they only really read it. That's why after reading I always asked for a translation. Because this was also the way to knew, whether the students understand or not. If they did not understand, I would help translate. Sometimes there were also unfamiliar words and they did not know the meaning, so I helped translated them too. (P2)

(Vignette 17)

The interview transcription showed that the participants helped the students to understand the texts through translating the vocabulary together.

### **Limited and ineffective learning time**

The participants also said that they had difficulty implementing independent construction because of the lack of time and the ineffectiveness of learning with the online learning system. This causes the participants to decided to focus more on the joint construction of the text

It turns out that when teaching reading online, the independent construction part was hard to be implemented. Because learning online has very limited time. In addition, students were not on time to join Google meet. So I decided to more focus on the joint construction of the text and discussed it with the students. (P1)

(Vignette 18)

Based on the interview transcription, it is shown that the Participants had difficulty implementing independent construction because of the lack of time and the ineffectiveness of learning with the online learning system. This causes the participants to decide to focus more on the joint construction of the text.

## DISCUSSION

The pre-service English teachers implementation strategies in teaching reading comprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic era. This research discusses and explores the implementation and challenges in teaching reading comprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic era which aims to be a reference for English teachers to make a benchmark of teachers' teaching ability when the conditions are forced transition and as an evaluation to improve their teaching ability.

This research found that pre-service teachers taught students the steps in reading to achieve reading comprehension (*see vignette 09,10,11 and 12*). Reading comprehension means understanding the text clearly to get the important point or information from the text Nuttal (2000). Pre-service English teachers have implemented reading as what Nuttal (2000) states, they did reading activity then they discussed together to found the main idea and understanding what the text talking about. Then, pre-service teachers used a genre-based as approach to teaching reading comprehension (*see vignette 07 and 08*). This is because pre-service teachers taught several texts that have different functions. The same results showed by research reviews from Santihastuti et all (2020) and Meseinger & Dickens (2017) which implemented a genre-based approach in their reading comprehension research.

In this study, pre-service teachers also considered the topics to be discussed (*see vignette 05*). Pre-service teachers chose familiar topics to students easier understand by related their background knowledge. In addition, Santihastuti et all (2020) also stated that the teacher has a responsibility to chose reading topics in order to they can adapt to students' background knowledge. Activating students' background knowledge is one of the strategies in teaching reading comprehension Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016). Activated students' background knowledge at least made students could imagine what would be explained in the text. It would be ease teachers in the teaching-learning activity.

Then, this research also found where some students could play an active role when answering questions given by the preservice English teacher (*see vignette 14*). This is in line with previous research from Angraini & Rozimela (2020) and Meseinger & Dickens (2017) who said that the genre-based approach could affect students' understanding of the text and develop language skills. In addition, students also play an active role read aloud the text and translating the text together (*see vignette 13*). Angraini & Rozimela (2020) also argues that students' language skills can develop when applying the genre-based approach.

In implementing reading comprehension, pre-service teachers also did an evaluation and giving feedback to students. The way pre-service teachers give feedback and evaluation is by asking several questions related to the text and fixes students' pronunciation (*see vignette 14*). Questions-Answer Relationships (QARs) is one of strategy which implemented in teaching reading (Rizal et all, 2021). This finding is related to the statement from (Glesbers, Events, Tempelaar, and Gijsselaers: 2013) who said that online learning can help students get direct feedback. Furthermore, giving feedback activity can stimulate students' engagement in online class (Falloon, 2011; Hrastinki, 2008; Strang, 2013; Watts, 2016).

### Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension during COVID-19 Pandemic Era

In implementing teaching reading comprehension through online learning, preservice English teachers also found several obstacles in the field, the first problem was students sometimes had difficulty understanding the text. The difficulty of understanding the text occurs because students lack of knowing vocabulary so that students felt unfamiliar with the vocabulary then could not be translated and interpreted the text (*see vignette 16 & 17*). The same thing was also explained in the results of research from Badriyah et all (2020) that

students still faced the problem in teaching reading comprehension was lack of vocabulary. Mastering vocabularies are important because Jerilou et al (2016) and Harris & Hodges (1995) said that reading comprehension is a process between reader and text in order to readers understand the meaning from the text. This is shown that vocabularies are important to be mastered by students. To overcome this problem, pre-service teachers always asked students to translate the material together, if they were still confused, pre-service teachers would give a helped such as told unfamiliar vocabulary or correct the answer if students answer wrong.

In addition, the students also often discussed the material with their friends after reading and translating the text. The students discussed the main idea, the meaning of unfamiliar words, or the meaning of the text they had been read. The students do this activity to overcome their difficulties. Providing discussion activity could increase the role of students in the classroom, for example, is students' activeness in responding to learning. This is in line with a statement from Mikus and Rigo (2021) who said that teaching and learning through video conferencing provides a discussion space to reduce students' passivity during teaching-learning activities. It means that online learning which provide video conference or synchronous learning such a proper strategy in this situation. Furthermore teaching reading will be easier when teachers find the right strategies, Brown (2004) in Syafarizal et al (2020).

Another obstacle faced by pre-service teachers is they difficult to implementing independent construction because of limited time, ineffective time, and students often do not on time when joining the room at Google Meet (*see vignette 18*). Pre-service English teachers only got 90 minutes to doing teaching-learning in a week, but the students often do not on time join room. Furthermore, some students also got network problems which caused a split of students' focus. Insufficient time can hinder effective teaching-learning, especially in this online learning period where students often experience technical problems, such as signal interference, which triggers students suddenly in-out from online class and lack of time to understanding the material (Masadeh, 2015 ). Therefore, pre-service teachers choose to more focus on joining construction of the text than individual construction of the text.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the experience of pre-service English teachers in implementing reading comprehension during the pandemic era. Based on the findings and discussion, several conclusions can be drawn in this research. The findings of this study revealed that the participants had provided their experience about teaching reading comprehension during the pandemic. It was found that in their implementation, pre-service English teachers used video conferences as a teaching-learning medium. Video conferencing is proven to be able to create a discussion space and reduce students' passivity.

Through this research can be drawn that in implementing teaching reading comprehension pre-service English teachers doing several steps, there are 1) Preparing the material 2) Preparing the media, 3) Use genre-based as approach 4) Doing evaluation and giving feedback to students. But, during implementing reading comprehension during the pandemic, pre-service English teachers also encountered several obstacles, including 1) Students easily feel bored, 2) Students' difficulty in understanding the text, and 3) Limited and ineffective learning time.

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