



THE NOVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE: PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The aims of this research are to reveal how the novice English teachers deal with the teaching and learning process. The challenges faced by novice English teachers in their teaching practice are discussed as well. This is a narrative research design. The researcher employed observation and interview as the research instruments. Two novice English teachers in two boarding schools were involved as research participants. The results of this research show that the novice English teachers' teaching practice is still not maximal since they faced several challenges, such as they have difficulty in: arranging and implementing the lesson plan, motivating the students, interacting with colleagues and students' parents, managing the time, and controlling their emotion. But, in practice, the teachers have fulfilled the characteristics of the good teachers since they teach with a good personality, good communication skill and extensive knowledge of ICT.

Keywords: Challenges, Novice English Teacher, Practices.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher is an important part in education. Teacher has a big responsibility in determining the fate of the nation in the future. Teacher has a role to decisive students success or failure in learning process. Teacher also become a factor to support a good education since teacher could assist the students to have a good life skill and have a credibility to be a competitor in a globalisation era. Good education commonly produce a good quality of human resources (Uygun, 2013). Meanwhile, Indonesia still faced the challenges especially in education and human resources (Tanang & Abu, 2014). Thus, the best strategy for developing high quality human resources is to care for and invest in education.

In the meantime, the globalization era makes English as the lingua Franca since it is mostly used to communicate with other people around the world. However, learning English is uneasy process, especially in Indonesia. It might be a long and complex process to learn, it should be learnt from the basic, such as learn about new culture, the way how to doing and thingking of something considering the culture (Widiati, Suryati & Hayati, 2018).

Unfortunately, teaching English is not easy, mainly for novice teachers. Farrell (2012) says that there is no clear definition about novice teacher, but he then defines that novice teachers is someone who teaches the students for the first time without any explanation how

many years novice teacher can stop their title as novice teachers. Meanwhile, Karatas & Karaman (2013) mention that the experiences of novice teacher only have less than two years. Widiati, et.al (2018) define novice teachers is someone who has finished pre-service teacher education with three years experiences. In addition, Kim & Roth (2011) *define a novice teacher as any teacher with 5 years or less of experience.* Considering the definition above, it can be concluded that novice teachers is someone who entering new culture in school environment, they teach the students for the first time and they have a period on teaching during 1 until 5 years.

Since the teachers have a big role to support a good education, every novice teacher is demanded to be a good teacher and to have a good characteristic in teaching. Miller (2012) mentions ten characteristics of good teachers: teachers should have a contagious enthusiasm in teaching, they should be creative, they can add pace and humor to the class, they should challenge the students, they should be patient and never give up, they take an interest in students, they should know grammar and explain something on the spot if necessary, they give their time for students' questions, they should treat student as a person on an equal basis with all members of the class, and they should leave their emotional baggage outside the classroom.

In addition, Haider & Jalal (2018) identify there are nine characteristics of good teacher: 1) the teacher can motivate the students, 2) the teacher becomes a good listener for students, 3) teacher applies student-centered approach or democratic, 4) the teacher should give the students freedom of speech in the class, give an opportunity for students to express their views and to choose learning classroom, 5) a good teacher is a teacher who is hardworking and talented,

6) the teacher should be friendly, 7) the teacher should have good appearance, 8) the teacher should treat students with the same way, they should be honest, forgiving and fair, 9) the teacher should have a good personality, when they teach their students they should be entertaining. Khojastehmehr & Takrimi (2009) adds that the teachers should: 1) prioritize the students' understanding by clarifying the material using pantomime, picture, and easy explanation before translation, providing examples of own or others if textbook examples are insufficient or ambiguous, establishing links between language and students' needs outside classroom, communicating own expectations, designing good questions, familiarizing students with outside text suitable for the level of class, guiding and monitoring group activities in class, using simple poetry, short story, jokes or music to promote learning, applying diverse techniques in designing questions, so that students do not rely on memory to answer, promoting independent learning by encouraging dictionary use, attending to individual differences in class activities, presenting material first orally and then in written form, integrating testing into teaching, and encouraging students using sentences rather than one word answers by students; 2) have a good communication skill, such as: make students interested in the English language, cheer up the class, have a good pronunciation, keep the class orderly, show enthusiasm for teaching EFL, and have a reasonable competition with other effective EFL teachers; 3) have a good personal characteristic (flexible, supportive toward students, kind and friendly, has a lovely character, cheerful and smiles often, fair in attending to all students, be able to communicate with uninterested students, allow mother tongue use when it facilitates student participation); 4) have a lot of knowledge, such as: uses

computer and educational software in teaching, uses the internet to improve own teaching methodology and/or consulting with peers, speaks the language fluently, studies about new teaching methods, and implement a good teaching in the classroom.

Furthermore, students' academic performance is influenced by the teacher's time management. A good implementation of time management determines the future of the student to become an intelligent person for the nation (Kayode & Ayodele, 2015).

Nowadays, the novice teachers use ICT in their teaching learning process to support their teaching practices. Some research show that novice teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of ICT (Kalra, 2018; Rosa, 2016). It means that novice teachers realized the importance of ICT in teaching practice thus they apply it in their classroom. This is in line with one of the best characteristics of good EFL teacher from Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari (2015) who say that teacher also should aware the western culture, utilize the latest technology in teaching. They add that the best characteristics of good EFL teacher should solve the practical problems through conducting action research, have an acceptable appearance, have a good sense of humor, utilize the multimedia in teaching, familiar with the social and cultural background of the learners, be kind person, have the ability to help other colleagues to develop professionally, produce a humorous and exciting class atmosphere, participate in teacher professional growth events such as seminars, workshops, conferences, be actively involved in learning new skills to improve teaching, involve pupils in various activities, select appropriate supplementary materials.. (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari, 2015). Teacher also should friendly, intelligent explain the lesson well, nice,

make the lesson more interesting by giving the sense of humor in the classroom, patient, enthusiastic and like to give the students extra help, the teacher should give the students rewards, give lots of homework, challenge the students academically (Liando 2010).

Considering the explanation above, the best characteristic of the teacher is the crucial things that teachers should have by their own since it can help teachers to guide their success in teaching. The students will put their attention during learning to the teacher who has good characteristics and knowledge. Thus, the teachers' success become one of the factors to provide good human resources. However, it is undeniable that in the first year of teaching, the novice teacher may feel stress, lack appropriate support, and may feel unprepared to handle behavioral and academic issues among their students (Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Some previous study identified that novice teachers would find some challenges in their teaching experience: novice teachers, commonly, lack of the ability in pedagogical knowledge, they were not enjoying the administrative work assigned by the school, they also lack the ability in developing effective lesson plan and how to implement the lesson dealing with several characteristic and different ability of the students, novice teachers cannot create a conducive classroom and professional development, and they do not have any mentor during initial teaching experience (Widiati, Suryati & Hayati, 2018); additionally, novice teachers, generally, go through some experiences, for instance cognitively, physically, and emotionally challenging because it can be a process for novice teachers become a professional teachers (Riesky, 2013).

In terms of novice English teachers, generally, they have to deal with two group general heading of challenges (Sali & Kecik, 2018). First is challenges in

relation to foreign language pedagogy, and second is challenges in relation to form of professional support available to novice EFL teachers. Challenges in foreign language pedagogy include: 1) Classroom management, this is related to how teachers provide and maintain the classroom discipline, how teachers establish the rapport with the students, set teacher roles, instructional planning, and lessons management; 2) Foreign language learning and teaching, this area is related to lack of learners' proficiency in English, lack of learners' motivation and interest, the use of language teaching techniques and materials, how teachers teach language skills, teachers' incapability in adding variety to classes, teacher knowledge of language and teaching, how to deal with individual learner differences, how to put theory into practice, inadequacy of language teaching course books, and face the learners' parents, 3) School context, this is related to large class sizes, inadequacy of school materials, heavy teaching load, and attitudes of the school administration of language teaching. Meanwhile the challenges in professional support are school administration, colleague, mentor teacher, and teaching orientation courses. Widiati, Suryati & Hayati (2018) also explain the challenges faced by novice English teachers during the initial years of teaching: they lack of teaching practice while they were in the university; some of them considered themselves lack of confidence of the English lesson; they normally felt various emotional states such as being excited, confused, challenged, or nervous; they found it difficult to create the lesson plan and implement the lesson plan which is appropriate with the different of students' ability level; they were having difficulty in managing the classroom such as in handling a big class and creating the interesting learning; in developing their

profesionalism, they did not have any mentor.

Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz (2014) say that novice teacher faced various challenges in: managing the classroom, implementing the curriculum, arranging the administrative demands, having relationship with colleagues, dealing with students' parents, balancing the situation at home and schools.

The results of some previous studies mentioned above triggered the recent study to seek deeper about the novice teachers' teaching practice, especially novice English teachers and their challenges in teaching English in boarding schools in Majalengka. This phenomenon is interesting to study further since teaching English is challenging in EFL context moreover in boarding schools context. Boarding school is a school system with dormitories, where learners, as well as teachers and school managers, live in dormitories within the school for a period of time, usually a semester interspersed with a month's vacation until completing school (Zahra, 2008). The education system of boarding school is differ from the regular school. It means that the teachers should have differ strategies in teaching parctices.

METHOD

This research is the narrative research design since this research aims to reveal the challenges and the experiences of novice English teachers in their classroom as Creswell (2013) mentioned that narrative research, as a method, begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals. The participant are two novice English teachers age 23 until 26. They teach in two boarding schools in West Java. They had finished their pre-service teacher education. To obtain the data, the research used observation and interview

as research instruments. This research used observation sheet to observe how novice English teachers practice their teaching in the classroom. After gained the data from observation, the interview was conducted to cross-check the data. This interview provided several question to support the observation data. The second interview was conducted to gain the data about novice English teachers' challenges during their teaching. The interview was given in Indonesian to get more comprehensive data and to avoid misunderstanding. The interview was recorded. The data gained from the interview was transcribed into written form to be analyzed and narrated in narrative form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

How does the novice English teachers teach boarding school students?

Based on the data gained from the observation, the novice English teachers have already taught students well. They have prioritized the students' understanding. The ways their prioritize their students' understanding are varies:

- 1) to make their students have more understanding in the material given, the novice English teachers taught their students by using teaching media. The media used by the teachers were adjusted with the lesson. This finding was also supported by the data from the interview result.

T1: "*I often prepare the teaching media before I teach my students. The media that I prepared is always adjusted with the material. It helps students to understand more about the material given*".

T2: "*To get students' attention while teaching, I usually change my method in teaching based on the lesson. It assists students to pay their attention. I try to make them not to be bored*".

- 2) teachers used the appropriate instruction. In other words, teacher explained the material by using words that can be understood by students. It can be shown during the observation, where the students feel comfortable with their teachers while their teachers explained the material and gave them activities to be done.
- 3) in order to make all students involved in classroom activities, teachers make the class divided into group work. Based on the observation, the classroom activities involved students in individual activity and group activity. Teachers adjusted the kind of activity with the lesson. This was supported by the data from the interview:

T2: "*Group activities is conducted if the lesson discusses about text types such as narrative, descriptive, exposition and so on. Thus, the students will be divided into several groups. During group activities, I guide the students and monitor the classroom*".

T1: "*Students activities are varies. I match the activities and the task. If the task can be done individually, it will be done individually. When it has to be done as a group or a team, I will divided the class into group or team*".

- 4) teachers use the text book which is provided by the school. According to the interview, the novice English teachers also use the other sources such as internet sources as their material sources in teaching.

T1: "*If the text book does not provide enough material, I often seek the material from the internet*".

T2: "*Sometimes, the text book does not provide enough material. So, I decided to find another sources from other textbooks or from the internet*".

From the description above, it can be concluded that the novice English teachers have tried to make the students take notice to the material. They tried to be creative by applying the teaching media as supporting tool for their learning process as purposed by Miller (2012) and Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari (2015) who explain that a good teachers usually use the multimedia in teaching learning to prioritize students understanding. Thus, they have already fulfilled one of the characteristics of the good teacher mentioned by Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari (2015). It also means that the teacher have prioritized the students' understanding as suggested by Khojastehmehr & Takrimi (2009). As an addition, based on the observation, it was found out that the teachers sometimes made some jokes to overcome the boredom and the students looked happy. In previous research of Khojastehmehr & Takrimi (2009), it was said that the teacher could promote English learning through jokes, poetry, short story and music. It means that, the novice English teachers in this recent study have tried to overcome the boredom through jokes and it was proved successful. When teachers can add pace and humor to the class, that means the teachers have take the suggestion from Miller (2012). The novice English teachers made students comfortable during the lesson, this shows that teachers have tried to be friendly and kind as suggested by Liando (2010). Based on the observation during the teaching process, it can be shown that the teachers taught the students with good communication skill. It was shown from the way the teachers deliver the material easier and understandable. The teachers and students were involved in a good interaction. Therefore, it can be said that the novice English teachers have good communication skill as suggested by

Khojastehmehr & Takrimi (2009). In addition, the teachers also gave the opportunity to the students to give their opinion or comment to the topic which was taught. It means that the teachers applies student-centered approach as mentioned by Haider & Jalal (2018). From the observation, it was seen that the teachers are good enough in pronouncing the English words. The teachers gave students time to ask the questions and they also treat students equally as suggested by Miller (2012).

In terms of personal characteristics, the teachers showed their patience and care to the students, especially to the lower achievers. The teachers were willing to listen students' problems and difficulties. Moreover, the teachers were often smile and friendly to the students. Those personal characteristics of the teachers are appropriate with Haider & Jalal (2018) who said that a good teacher should be a good listener for their students as well as friendly. The teachers' patience is one of ten characteristics of good teacher as mentioned by Miller (2012).

From the observation and the interview, it was found out that the teachers used ICT during teaching and learning process. The teachers' awareness in implementing technology is something important to support teachers' career.

T2: *"I sometimes use speaker or projector and application to support English learning especially in teaching listening"*.

T1: *"I search the supporting materials from the internet. I download it, and I show it to my students as media to support my teaching"*.

This means that the teacher have used the ICT to support their learning practice which in line with Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari (2015) who say that teacher also should aware the western culture, utilize the latest technology in teaching.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the novice English teachers have fulfill the characteristic of good teachers from Haider & Jalal (2018). Miller (2012) and Khojastehmehr & Takrimi (2009). In other words, the teachers teach the boarding schools' students with good personality, good communication skill and extensive knowledge of ICT.

What are the challenges faced by English novice teachers in teaching boarding schools' students?

Based on the data gained from the interview, some challenges were faced by the novice English teachers in boading schools during the teaching practice. The challenges are as follows:

1) since the teachers teach in boarding schools, the schools do not allow the students to use smartphone. The teachers faced difficulty to introduce the newest application of learning, for example *e-dictionary*.

T1: *"In another schools the students are allowed to use a smartphone to learn vocabularies from online dictionary, but not in our school"*.

T2: *"I am always interested in e-learning. There are a lot of applications an be used as media in teaching English. But, in our school, the students are not allowed to use their handphone during the learning process"*.

The limitations on the use of smartphones and supporting applications can inhibit the creativity of teachers in using ICT. This is in contrast with Miller (2012) who say that teachers should be creative in teaching and with Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari (2015) who say that teacher also should aware the western culture, utilize the latest technology in teaching.

2) regarding to classroom management, the teachers have difficulty in managing the time. Teaching and learning process in the morning faced some disturbances oftenly. In the boarding schools, students are required to clean the entiry school before the teaching and learning process begin. This activity always takes more time than it is provided.

T1: *"I teach English lesson once a week in the morning. Every week, my class always gets distraction. The time always be disturbed by 'cleaning up' session. It consumes my teaching time"*.

Another case was faced by another teacher. English lessons begin at noon. Before the learning begins, students must read the Al-Qur'an first. If the Al-Qur'an teacher does not attend the class, the students fell asleep and finally, they do not attend the English lesson.

T2: *"The English lesson begin at noon. In boarding school. It is an obligation for every student to read Al-Qur'an before the lesson begin. But, unfortunately, when the 'Guru Ngaji' does not come to the class, the students sleep in the classroom, and they missed my class"*.

Problems encountered related to time management will have an impact on the learning process and students' academic performance as Kayode & Ayodele (2015) say that a good implementation of time management determines the future of the student to become an intelligent person for the nation.

3) teachers in the boarding schools must have communication with students' parents. Some teachers feel nervous when they have to interact with the students'parents. The T2 said: *"it is not a problem to interact with the*

students, but when it comes to the parents, I feel a bit nervous”.

The nervousness that is caused by the teacher in dealing with the students' parents will be an obstacle for them to become good teachers where one of the characteristics of a good teacher is that they can communicate with the students' parents.

- 4) novice teachers have difficulty in communicating with their new colleagues at the beginning of their work.

T1: *“In the beginning, it was hard for me to adapt with new environment and new colleagues. It was a challenge for me”.*

This is in line with Sali & Kecik (2018) who explained that novice teachers challenges in relation with learners' parents and colleagues. Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz (2014) also explained that the novice teachers found the obstacle in relationship with colleagues and dealing with parent of the students.

- 5) at the beginning of their teaching, they feel lack of confidence. This phenomenon is in line with Widiati, Suryati & Hayati (2018) who said that during the initial year of teaching experience some of the teachers still lack of confidence about their knowledge.

- 6) teachers faced difficulty in designing and implementing the lesson plan.

T1: *“I found an obstacle when I have to make a lesson plan. The implementation of the lesson plan also becomes a challenge because when an unexpected situation occurred, the lesson plan cannot be implemented as it was arranged”.*

Teachers difficulty in designing and implementing the lesson plan is mentioned by Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz (2014) who stated that novice teacher is

difficult in implementing the curriculum to be adjusted with students' ability.

- 7) Sometimes, the teachers faced the obstacle in motivating the students who lack of English proficiency. T1 mentioned:

“I faced the obstacle in motivating the students who lack of English proficiency. It is because English is foreign language. The students still lack of vocabularies. Thus, it is sometimes difficult to motivate the students”.

Differ with T1, T2 did not face any difficulty in motivating the students. Having difficulty in motivating the students is in line with Sali & Kecik (2018) who stated that the challenges face by novice teacher divided into three part one of them is the novice teachers' difficulty in motivating the students who lack of English proficiency.

When the teachers faced several challenges, they feel several emotions such as stress, hopeless and lack of confidence. Both of the novice teachers stated that:

T1: *“sometimes I feel challenged, sometimes I feel hopeless. It depends on my mood, when I feel challenged I am full of spirit, but when I feel hopeless, I loose my spirit”.*

T2: *“at the begining of my teaching expereince, I have to manage my time. I have to prepare myself, my knowledge and my ability before, during and after teaching”.*

Several emotions felt by novice teachers are things that are commonly felt by novice teachers as Lacy & Guirguis (2017) said that first year teacher may feel several emotions such as stress, lack appropriate support and may feel unprepared to handle behavioral and

academic issues among their students. Meanwhile Riesky (2013) stated that novice teachers generally go through some experiences, for instance cognitively, physically and emotionally challenging.

Being a professional teacher is very challenging. During the interview, both of the participants expressed their worries.

T1: "I really want to be a professional teacher. Teachers who meet the four standard of competencies. However, I think it is very difficult. But that does not mean I do not understand these competencies".

T2: "Meeting the four standard of competencies is not easy. But I will push myself to become a professional teacher".

The teachers aware about their obligation to be professional teachers since teachers has important role in determining the students' future. Professional teacher can be considered as a good way to determine the students' success in the future. This is in line with Widiati, Suryati & Hayati (2018) who explain that competent teachers are the best priority for achieving the goal in learning English.

CONCLUSION

In practice, the novice English teachers have fulfilled some of characteristics of good teacher. They are good in: communication skills, personality and extensive knowledge in ICT. But, they also faced several challenges during their first year of teaching experience, such as they have difficulty in: arranging and implementing the lesson plan, motivating the students, interacting with colleagues and parents, managing the time, and controlling their emotion. Hopefully, in the future, the novice English teachers can overcome the problems and keep learning to be a better teacher. Especially for pre-service teachers who are going to

do practical work in the field. It would be better if the pre-service teachers keep improve their knowledge and their ability in teaching English in the field. The students' success of their achievement and learning process influenced by the quality of the teachers. Thus, the teachers are demanded to have good competences: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competences. These competences should be mastered by the teacher for getting a title as professional teacher.

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