



A NARRATIVE OF AN INDONESIAN PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHER'S EMOTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL TEACHING PRACTICUM

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abstract

International teaching practicum (ITP) has gained more popularity since it is considered as a way of improving teachers' quality not only in terms of the pedagogical competence but also the intercultural one. Despite the growing body of research on emotions of pre-service English teachers as well as on ITP experiences, little attention has been given to the role of emotions particularly in pre-service teachers' ITP experiences. Therefore, drawing on the notion of structures of feeling by Williams (1977), the present study attempted to explore an Indonesian pre-service English teacher' emotions during her participation in an ITP program in Thailand. The narrative of the pre-service teacher was collected through semi-structured interviews, follow-up conversations and online correspondences. Thematic analysis was then conducted to analyze the narratives. The result of this study shed light on how interaction with students and co-workers as well as with sociocultural differences affected the participant's emotions and how emotions shaped her thoughts, beliefs, and actions as teachers. The implication of this study is also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching practicum has been a common practice in teacher education. In this program, pre-service teachers implement their knowledge and skills obtained during the coursework in real-life teaching situations. With the increase of international mobility and multinational cooperation especially among ASEAN members as well as neighboring countries, teaching practicum has been increasingly conducted not only in pre-service teachers' home countries but also overseas. International teaching practicum (ITP) exposes pre-service teachers to cultural differences not only in teaching and learning processes but also in daily lives. With such challenge, international teaching practicum is perceived to be beneficial for pre-service teachers in improving professional and personal development (Kabilan, 2013; Ateskan, 2016) as well as enhancing the adaptability to face any classroom contexts (Mahon & Cushner,

2002). Especially for the context of EFL, Kabilan (2013) pointed out that ITP could enhance pre-service teachers' English skills and confidence in using the language.

The growing body of research conducted in various contexts of ITP has demonstrated that pre-service English teachers underwent transformation in various aspects, including professional development (Kabilan, 2013; Ateskan, 2016), identities (Kong, 2017), and language use (Prasetya, 2021). In addition to the above-mentioned aspects, another aspect in ITP that has recently gained more attention is emotions.

In a teaching process, emotions play an important role. Song and Park (2019) has argued that emotions are a principal aspect in becoming a teacher because it helps teachers have a deeper understanding of themselves in relation with values and beliefs in their teaching contexts. Such phenomenon is best described using the notion of Structure of Feeling (Williams, 1977). Williams (1977) asserted that Structures of Feeling was a way of representing a human being lived experience more completely by viewing emotions as dynamic and intertwined with various aspects in human lives, including social relationships, institutional values, and history instead of fixed and unchanging. Conversely, emotions are closely linked to experiences. When an experience is recalled, it is reconstructed according to the positivity or negativity of the emotions (Egloff & Souvignier, 2019).

Since the emotions of teachers have regularly been considered as a challenge to classroom practice and to professional development (Song & Park, 2019), a few studies have been conducted to gain a better understanding of how emotions play their role in teachers. Cowie (2011) pointed out that emotional support by the surroundings could have a great impact in the development of a teacher. In addition, Golombek and Doran (2014) found that emotions were basically shaped by social activities, namely interaction with students and other teachers. Hagenauer & Volet (2014) highlighted that culture also played an important role in teacher emotions. In short, emotions are not unidimensional. Instead, they are intertwined with and as important as many different aspects. Even, the emotional connection when the teacher teaches is dominant and controls what a teacher does in determining what kind curriculum to choose and apply (Hargreaves, 1998).

A few studies on emotions of pre-service teachers have been conducted in the past five years. Teng (2017) explored how six Chinese pre-service English teachers navigated their emotions during their teaching practice in schools and pointed out the interconnectedness of emotions and identity construction. Teng (2017) also highlighted that a hierarchical structure

and a lack of mentor support made those pre-service teachers to encounter a negative emotion and that they attempted to gain acknowledgement and support from students to create a positive emotion. Similarly, Anttila, Pyhältö, Soini, and Pietarinen (2016) reported that 19 Finnish pre-service primary teachers experienced negative emotion from the relationship between them and their supervisors, while positive emotion came from the result of enjoyment in working with students. Meanwhile, Pappa, Moate, Ruohotie-Lyhty, and Eteläpelto (2017) revealed that thirteen Finnish English teachers experienced both negative (mostly stress, frustration) from the institution curriculum and issues of time and positive emotions mostly acquired from students' engagement and involvement during the learning process.

Within the context of ITP, emotions can be closely linked to culture shock. As pre-service teachers encounter unfamiliar circumstances, culture shock may occur. Madrid, Baldwin, and Belbase (2016) has pointed that emotional discomfort may arise when a teacher is exposed to cultural differences, not only in the teaching context but also various aspects outside the class, such as values, social practices, daily routines etc. With such challenges, negative emotions are likely to occur, and it may be more intense for English teachers who are non-native speakers (Wolff and De Costa, 2017).

However, despite the growing body of research on emotions of pre-service English teachers as well as on ITP experiences, little attention has been given to the role of emotions particularly in pre-service teachers' ITP experiences. Therefore, focusing on emotions as the central point, the present study explored a narrative of an Indonesian pre-service English teacher who participated in an ITP program in Thailand. Emotions were chosen as they were inseparable part of human beings no matter what they do. The data were collected through four individual semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically using the lens of Structures of Feeling by Williams (1977). This study is expected to shed some light on the role of emotions and their interplay with other aspects in pre-service teachers' experiences in ITP, which may be helpful for understanding the current practices of ITP in the context of this study.

METHOD

Research Design and Steps of the Research

The participant of the study was Nana (pseudonym), a fourth-year students of a private university in Yogyakarta. She was a student of English language education program. She

grew up in Banten, Indonesia, and Bahasa Indonesia was her first language. She participated in an ITP program in Chiang Rai, Thailand for a month. Previously, she participated in another ITP program in Australia for teaching Bahasa Indonesia for two weeks. Her experiences in joining two ITP programs were the main consideration for her involvement in the present study.

To collect her narrative, four individual semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each interview was conducted face-to-face in the previously agreed-upon locations, ranging between 20 and 40 minutes. Follow-up conversations were also conducted for obtaining further specific information. Then, three online correspondences with the participant were conducted for clarification and verification of the data and the research result. The narrative was coded and analyzed thematically to find identifiable themes and patterns from the participant's experiences in ITP. The data interpretation had been checked and confirmed by the participant.

The data analysis was conducted by referring to the notion of Structures of Feeling (Williams, 1977). In this way, the participant's emotions were analyzed not in isolation. Instead, emotions were explored by taking into account their interconnectedness with other aspects in ITP, including cultural values, social interaction practices, professionalism and academic traditions, and self-development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Emotions and Cultural Differences

In dealing with the cultural differences, Nana mostly experienced the emotions of surprise and anxiety. She stated that she was excited but worried when she knew that she would go to teach English in Thailand, an EFL country with presumably the same level of average proficiency as Indonesia. She felt that the people were generally nice just like Indonesians. However, she expressed her amazement with the fact that Thai people were nice to everyone, unlike the people in her home country who usually demonstrated politeness particularly for the elders. She narrated,

“It turned out that they [Thai people] were polite when they met each other. Whoever it is whether young or adult human-being.” (coding num.21)

Still, the nearly similar characteristics between Thai people and Indonesian people made her more familiar with the surroundings, so she did not experience much of culture shock like her previous international teaching experience. Such realization helped her enact the experience for her personal growth in developing intercultural competence (Williams and Grierson, 2016).

However, Nana was shocked with the timeliness in her school where she practiced teaching. The class started exactly at 10 o'clock, and it was beyond her expectation. Being on time was not common in Indonesia, and it had already become a bad habit. It caused a sense of guilt because she exceeded a limit of about five or ten minutes due to her lack of class management at the first meeting.

“There was a case when I arrived at 10:05 and all the equipment was not in place, then I had to put it right and it was time consuming. Then I realized that I should arrive earlier.” (coding num. 86)

The experience made her reflect on her own concept of time, and it led her to better prepare herself in the next meetings. As Mahon and Cushner (2002) asserted, in an international teaching context teaching preparation becomes the process of reflecting on an individual's background.

Outside the classroom, Nana encountered unexpected situations that generated her anxiety concerning her identities. Being around people with different physical appearances, religious practices, and societal structure posed a difficulty in regulating to a new cultural setting and resulted in a negative emotional response due to her cultural identity threatened by a new environment. As Yeh and Inose (2003) stated, cross-cultural differences may come up with acculturative stress. Despite the tolerance from her surroundings, becoming a Muslim in a predominantly non-Muslim community led Nana to experience minority stress. Minority stress may occur due to salient physical appearance differences or other preferences like physically hard to discover the place of worship (Meyer, 1995).

“They are tolerant, they are giving me a special occasion to pray at these hours but still, being a minority is difficult to look for a mosque with sort of limited time.” (coding num. 29)

Besides the difference in religions, different sexual orientations became another trigger for Nana's anxiety. Since she grew up in a community where homosexuality was not acceptable, Nana was anxious about interacting with people around her.

“the problem with homosexuality and so on, if we take a thread in Indonesia, it categorized that ‘thing’ as a taboo things and if you saw it, you will feel like... it is so weird. But yeah, that’s their culture and anyway one of them is my school mentor, so yeah.. I can not do anything about it.” (coding num.10)

As Scandurra, Picariello, Valerio, and Amodeo (2017) have argued, a lack of previous encounter with people with different sexual orientations may leave an individual scared of interacting with these people. However, Nana found that the direct interaction between her and her supervisor, who was a gay, had reduced her stigma of people with different sexual orientations, who were considered gender minorities in her home country. Also, the frequent interaction changed her perception by increasing her knowledge and empathy towards people with different sexual orientations. This experience is necessary since it allows an individual to acknowledge a profoundly new atmosphere, perceiving confidence while working with others who are different in terms of race, culture, and sexual orientations (Williams & Grierson, 2016).

Emotions and Social Interactions

Nana considered language barriers as the biggest obstacles in interacting with the students in the beginning of her teaching practicum.

“Then, with such an experience like that assists me to have a perception that the challenges of teaching the English language in Thailand is a language barrier.... This language barrier is situated when they cannot understand English language. Meanwhile, what I taught is an English lesson so as an intermediate language. Yes, that is my biggest challenge at the time.” (coding num.11 and 12)

Language barriers are very common and considered as the huge boundaries of intercommunication in ITP (Santoro, Sosu, & Fassetta, 2016). Nana reflected her feelings of frustration in the class due to the students' lack of understanding or motivation. She experienced difficulties in interacting with her students, who mostly had low-level English proficiency, not only when delivering English lessons but also in a simple conversation. She related her feelings during the beginning of her teaching practice in Thailand to her experience in another ITP program in Australia. Teaching students who spoke English as the first language made her feel unsafe because she was unable to speak English fluently. In Thailand, it was the students who lacked English proficiency, and she feared of not being understood while delivering the materials.

“My feelings are the same when each day I experience a different class. I found out that the feeling of nervousness or anxiety is still coming up even though I have already taught.” (coding num.17)

Being in a new place where the people spoke different language and had different norms from the home country intensified Nana's anxiety. Santoro, Sosu, & Fassetta (2016) had argued that this kind of circumstances may lead to some communicative risk because of being unable to communicate and failing to gain the meaning of conversation due to communication barriers.

To overcome her negative emotions in teaching, she provided translation from Google and made the PowerPoint materials bilingual so her students could understand the lessons. Translation was helpful for helping pre-service teachers delivering materials in ITP, especially if teachers and students do not share the similar language (Prasetya, 2021). In addition to providing translation, she was also accompanied by her supervisor to support her for what she could not do in class. Nana felt safe whenever her supervisor accompanied her in class activities because she felt like she had a backup. Unlike the findings of Anttila, Pyhältö, Soini, and Pietarinen (2016), Nana's experience indicated that the presence of supervisors or school mentors could create a feeling of being safe.

In another occasion, when she was tasked to teach a science class, Nana felt shocked, but the fact that the students were more proficient in English could made her less nervous.

“Indeed, the sense of nervousness has a bit decreased.” (coding num.17)

Besides language differences, Nana mentioned that student engagement highly influenced her rate of nervousness. When the students made good eye contact, showed interest in learning, gave quick responses, and participated in class discussion well, Nana felt that she was more ready to teach. In contrast, low-motivated students made Nana feel under pressure because she had to think hard about how to start a class properly. Nana narrated that she was overwhelmed when explaining materials to the latter students and she felt that she could not control the situation.

“I’m afraid of my mispronunciation...especially I often talked too fast when I got nervous...and did not pay attention to my grammar either right or not.” (coding num.28)

She then recalled her experience of teaching in Australia, in which people spoke to her at a slower rate to ensure that she could understand them. She also remembered the prominence of nativespeakerism in Thailand. As Grubbs, Jantarach, & Ketterm (2010) stated, Thai people had a preference of English native speakers to teach English solely due to the fact that English was their first language. Thus, Nana tried to imitate what so-called native speakers usually did when speaking to EFL learners, which was successful in reducing her feeling of nervousness the day after. She also avoided using complex sentences and unfamiliar vocabulary and occasionally used body languages (facial expression, hand gesture, etc.) to be able to build and maintain the communication.

However, on one occasion, Nana was faced with students who ignored her in the classroom and played music instead. She narrated,

“I am a bit annoyed when students do not follow the instructions instead of playing guitar... perhaps it is normal demeanor. But I’m a bit sad because I thought that it was my fault to not get their attention.” (coding num.181)

She was sad because she felt that she failed to fulfil her expectation of teaching them well. However, she took the time to reflect on this experience and learn to read students' responses and reactions while learning in class. Overall, Nana felt that the struggle regarding the language barriers was a positive learning experience, and it indirectly forced her to get out of her comfort zone (Regalla, 2016).

Emotions and Professionalism and Academic Traditions

Nana recounted that she was given an overwhelming workload at the beginning of her teaching practicum, different from her fellow pre-service teachers who was given fewer teaching hours per week. As a result, she felt anxious and exhausted. The overwhelming workload had also made her angry at some point.

“I'm so tired. Because I finished three classes in one day... and I have raised my voice, spoken loudly and it was overwhelming.” (coding num. 36)

Nana also expressed a confusion with her students' lack of engagement at the beginning of her teaching practicum. Most of her students were sheepish, but she was unsure whether they were really shy, or they just tried to be polite to her.

“...Thai's students were passive and afraid of speaking English, making it in lines with no output performance from students then would affect their spoken proficiency.” (coding num. 54)

Because of the students' unwillingness to share their thoughts, Nana created small groups to reduce the students' nervousness of speaking to the whole class. Nana credited the microteaching class she took in the previous semester for helping her learn various teaching strategies and approaches. She further narrated that her confusion was originated from her perception of classroom conducts in Indonesia and Thailand. She felt that it would be fine to be in control of the class in Indonesian classrooms. However, when teaching in Thailand, despite having the same level of English proficiency, Nana somewhat felt nervous and messed around with her words.

On another occasion, Nana was stressed out because of the difference in classroom planning. She recounted,

“I got stressed out because they (school policy) were too liberating in making resources..... whether you choose from book sources, internet, it is free and there is no specific guidance same with the way you teach it, it is definitely free on your own.”
(coding num. 29)

Her supervisor let her choose whatever materials to use for teaching and only gave her a big topic for each meeting. Such practice was different from the one in Indonesia, in which a supervisor usually provided close guidance and supervision to pre-service teachers. Moreover, everything in Indonesian classroom from textbooks and other materials, time allotment, assessment system, and learning objectives had been provided by the government (Churiyah, Solikhan, Filianti, & Sakdiyyah, 2020). Such situation made her frustrated because she did not know what to do exactly. Nana prepared some materials and started to think whether these materials are suitable for students or not. However, she was not satisfied with the feedback from her supervisor.

“For example, I had a consultation with my supervisor before and he just said that my material was 'okay'. He just said about PPT's color changes likewise minor revisions. Meanwhile, I need specific feedback regarding my material.” (coding num.31)

Although pre-service teachers were supposed to obey the school policy and follow the suggestion from the supervisor (Knight, 1996), the situation that Nana encountered was difficult because of the lack of details in her supervisor's feedback. As a result, Nana felt burdened because the materials had to be finished as soon as possible while she had no idea about how good materials had to be in her teaching context. As emphasized by Garza & Ovando (2012), inadequacy in content knowledge may lead to stressful teaching experiences. However, from Nana's experience, it can be inferred that the role of supervisors is vital in ITP. Valickis & Matthews (2013) pointed out that supervisors' feedback could provide different perspectives on practice and help pre-service teachers develop their reflective practices.

Despite the difficulty in planning the materials, Nana recounted that she felt more burdened with the fact that the students were not obligated to write the lessons down to their notebook.

"I did not feel a burden in lesson planning because I got the presentation, practice, and production... but I felt it more in a classroom." [coding num. 35]

The differences felt by Nana as a pre-service teacher in two countries indicated that student interest in English lessons could be one of the essential factors of student motivation. In Australia where she had her first ITP program, the students were given more exposure than because they had capability to achieve learning objectives, so the teacher only acted as a facilitator for them. In Thailand, she felt that teachers had to engage students creatively so that they did not get bored with the lessons.

Emotions and Self Development

Nana recounted that she improved her teaching confidence and skills throughout teaching experience in Thailand.

“now I feel like more confident although my hours still limited but it would be okay to teach in foresight.” (coding num. 110)

Nana added that the more she met other students, the more confident she was. Being confident was such a concern for Nana because she believed that it was necessary to deal with other challenges like issues in classroom management or materials that she might encounter in the future. After successfully coping with the confusion and stress from the uncertainty in materials development process, Nana decided to make her own handout to help her during the lesson. She also offered her assistance to her supervisor in case he had any difficulties in teaching, and it unconsciously enhanced her self-confidence, making her no longer afraid of dealing with the students and encouraging herself to teach lessons and be more spontaneous in the classroom without any hesitation.

In addition, Nana was pleased to be able to learn many new teaching methods that would be useful for her future career. She recounted that she had to attend a workshop held by

the school on Thailand's lesson planning system and recommended teaching media. During the workshop, Nana got a new insight into the new lesson planning system and the effective way of conducting the 3P (presentation, practice and production) technique for teaching. Such involvement was capable of raising a sense of pride being associated with her profession and transformed each challenge in teaching into a meaningful value that resulted in a sense of job satisfaction (Avidov-Ungar, 2016).

In addition, Nana recounted that at the end of her teaching practicum she no longer felt anxious when she met her students. She was already familiar with her students' characteristics and capable of adjusting her teaching to her students' needs. Nana was pleased to learn about organizing classes and designing learning objectives and tasks, which gave her a lot of new pedagogical knowledge. At this point, Nana acknowledged that the difficulties in handling the students at the beginning of her teaching practicum was because of her lack of confidence and her doubt. Nevertheless, now she could do everything with pleasure, and she was proud to be a good teacher for them.

“Being successful as a teacher with the students becomes creative in learning when I can teach them and they understand what they do not understand, it's like the feeling of being happy, proud, that I still can't believe I did it well.” (coding num. 180)

Nana reported that her experience in ITP would be a significant part of her future career, along with other activities that she had done previously. She narrated,

“I have been following various activities, programs and it turns out to be my passion.” (coding num. 123)

Nana was hopeful that she would be a kind teacher, not a terrible one. At this end, Nana would be exploring other experiences as broad as possible because she realized that she still had limited knowledge and that it was important for her to expand her connection with others. Overall, Nana felt that being a teacher is a tremendous happiness despite the difficulties that she had encountered.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the emotions of a pre-service English teacher in her participation in an ITP program in Thailand. Drawing on Williams' (1977) structures of feeling, this study revealed that ITP played a prominent role for the personal development of the participant because it forced her to navigate her emotions and adapt with the new situations by overcoming negative emotions and creating positive ones. During the process, the participant experienced amazement with new things regarding culture and race. She also experienced fear of not being able to communicate with others, which led her cope with the language barriers. In addition, different policies regarding the educational system made the participant stressed at the beginning, but she managed to deal with them and learn new things from them.

Therefore, these findings assist us to understand more about the need of, the value of, the benefits of field experience especially in international context study. Every field experience takes part as a critical step to prepare for a better understanding of being a teacher because it is so thoughtful to be hooked with other components of teaching. The researchers sum up the spotlight of the findings upon the emotional rules in overseas teaching experiences. It is worthwhile for a preservice teacher if they could take the experience as new knowledge and skill equipped to create a conducive language learning. The study has contributed to a fuller comprehension of teacher emotion in teacher education courses especially in guiding pre-service teachers to prepare their much effort towards becoming a better teacher by means of cross-cultural or overseas teaching experiences. We put our reflection in this paper to shed light on how emotion in teachers is related in accordance with cultural background, language limitation, educational system's curriculum along with teachers' professionalism. Hence, future research is still needed to explore more in a broader context in the aspect of emotional in teacher education courses and acquire more discussion on foreign language teaching.

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