



# Exploring Pre-service EFL Teachers' Experiences in Lesson Planning

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**Abstract.** Lesson plan is a set of class plans that include guidelines for a teacher about what type of learning resources to use and how to use them. Moreover, teachers are required to design a lesson plan related to the course that they will apply in the classroom. However, designing a lesson plan may be challenging for pre-service English teachers (PSETs). This research used case study to know the obstacles faced by PSETs in designing lesson plans and to know the strategies that the PSETs used to overcome the obstacles in designing lesson plans. Interviews with four PSETs and PSETs' Internship reflection were used to collect data in this study. As a result, there were six findings related to the obstacles such as lack of experience, difficulties in arranging the learning activities, lack of time, difficulties in arranging the learning evaluation, difficulties in understanding the students' needs, and difficulties in arranging the materials. Furthermore, there were four findings related to the strategies such as doing an intensive coaching, doing more practice, managing the time, and choosing the appropriate materials for the students.

**Keywords:** pre-service English teachers · lesson planning · case study · obstacle · strategies

## 1 Introduction

A teacher is a professional who directs students through the learning cycle to be effective in a school. Some teachers are supposed to have a high degree of professionalization by holding the necessary qualifications or skills. As stated in the Act of Republic Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, teachers are required to make a lesson plan as their guide in the student teaching process. Furthermore, teachers must create a lesson plan relevant to the course that will be used in the classroom.

A lesson plan is one of the main elements of the pedagogical process. Sesorina (2014) stated that teachers are involved in a series of formal instructions on which they are going to accomplish in a classroom named a lesson plan. By creating a lesson plan, their teaching and learning process can be more systematic based on how they implement it. The lesson plan describes the goals and lessons learned throughout the curriculum. Besides, Brewster et al. (2004) added that a great lesson has clear objectives, capabilities,

and a variety of exercises, resources, and interests. The lesson plan is designed to help teachers arrange the teaching and learning process. It can be effective for students in the learning process because the lesson plan has a crucial role to guide teachers while teaching the students.

Moreover, lesson plan is an art because teachers can implement some activities and use the media as creative as they can. As Petty (2004) claimed that lesson planning is not a science, but it is an art. It means that there is no ideal lesson to achieve any given set of objectives. As stated in the Act of Republic Indonesia Number 55 of 2017, one of the requirements of teacher education standard is to follow the *Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan (PLP)* which demands the students to design a lesson plan or *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* in their school. This PLP program was held when they were still a university student and became the Pre-Service English Teacher (PSET) in their internship program.

Based on the researcher's experiences as a PSET, in designing a lesson plan, the researcher faced several obstacles. It is in line with Sahin (2017) who explored the pre-service primary schoolteachers' perspectives on lesson planning. He demonstrated that constructing lesson plans is difficult for pre-service teachers since they do not have a chance to learn about their students' interests, personalities, and teaching strategy.

In conducting this study, the researcher focused only on the PSETs' experiences in designing lesson plan during the internship program. From a preliminary observation towards the implementation of practicum and informal conversation with some PSETs, there were many PSETs faced obstacles in designing a lesson plan because they have to manage their time while doing the college activities. When creating a lesson plan, teachers may be concerned about what they will present to their learners and worry if they do not have the information they should provide to their class (Clements 2017). As discussed in the background, most of the PSETs in a teacher training institution in Yogyakarta found many obstacles in designing the lesson plan. Even though the PSETs just design a lesson plan without any teaching practice, the lesson plan will be scored by the mentor-teachers. It was one of the university's requirements in order to make students graduate. In line with background and the problems, the researcher has two research questions which are presented as follows:

1. What are the obstacles encountered by PSETs in designing lesson plan?
2. What are the strategies to overcome the obstacles in designing lesson plan?

## 2 Literature Review

Lesson planning is an important process prior to teaching and learning. As Coppola et al. (2004) stated that the lesson plan is the main foundation of teaching and learning structure and it is the core of education. It can be said that without teaching preparation, both the teacher and the student would consider that the lesson is not valuable and important. Furthermore, Setyono (2016) indicated that developing lesson plan is a hard and complex process which implicates an understanding of content and pedagogical knowledge, as well as the ability to use critical thinking skills. Thus, PSETs should be well-prepared before planning a lesson.

## 2.1 Definition of the Lesson Plan

The definition of lesson plan comes from several of the theories. Spratt et al. (2005) find out that the lesson plan is a set of class plans that include guidelines for a teacher about what type of learning resources to use and how to use them. Coppola et al. (2004) stated that the lesson plan is the key pillar of the curriculum framework and the center of education. Moreover, Alanazi (2019) said that the lesson plan influences not only the instruction of the teacher but also classroom environment. It follows that organizing the lesson plan is essential for improving students' skills and managing the classroom. In summary, it can be concluded that the lesson plan is a pattern of related lessons prepared by the teacher based on the curriculum to meet the specific objectives of the curriculum.

## 2.2 Components of the Lesson Plan

Components of lesson plan are the important things to be included in the lesson plan to guide the teacher in teaching. Brown (2001) stated that there are no common models about what the lesson plan might include. Nonetheless, it is known that there are a variety of main items that will be included in the lesson plan. According to Sesorina (2014), the main items are:

### 1. Objectives

There are some activities in the teaching and learning process. According to Cameron (2001), they are obligated for students, implementation of new objects, results of learning, regular teacher observation and orally development.

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### 3. Media

During the teaching process, the teachers should provide the media as a learning tool. Media are usually made for visual and audio-visual which are related to the materials. Mutohhar (2009) argues that good media are tools appropriate for the subject, material, learners, and practical use.

### 4. Assessment

Assessment is used to measure the students' understanding about the materials given by the teacher. Based on Cameron (2001) assessment will be able to assess what is presented in the goals and how effectively the students can explain those actions.

## 2.3 The Function of the Lesson Plan

It is important for the PSETs to design lesson plan since it can be used to evaluate the learning progress. Kyriacou (2007) as quoted in Othmane (2015) listed some advantages of lesson plan that can be used to help other teachers. Firstly, it helps instructors to correctly and clearly reflect on the type of learning process they wish to implement during a class. Secondly, it allows teachers to reflect on the framework and material of

their classes. Next, it decreases the amount of thinking required by the teacher during the learning process.

In conducting this research, the researcher reviewed two prior studies. The first study was done by Alanazi (2019) with the topic: A Study of the Pre-Service Trainee Teachers Problems in Designing Lesson Plans. The purpose of this study is to examine the obstacles, behaviors and ideas of pre-service trainee teachers while creating a lesson plan. The findings of the study show that it is important for the pre-service teachers to know how to prepare well-designed lesson plan and pre-service teachers may encounter some difficulties during their planning. The second study related to the researcher's study was conducted by Gülten (2013) with the topic about lesson planning. The aims of this research are to examine the first experience of teacher trainees in the preparation of lessons and to recognize their reactions. The findings indicated that in preparing lesson plan, trainees faced difficulties such as setting goals and choosing suitable tasks at specific levels. Significant difficulties found in this study include teacher trainees' hesitations about the step, managing time, problems in sequencing and choosing exercises, having effective class and accessing source's materials.

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Design

The design of the study is a case study as a research method to give a clear explanation, description, and understanding to readers on findings of this study. The case in the present study was an internship program offered in a teacher training institution in the academic year of 2020/2021. This is in line with Geertz (1973) as cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) who clarified that a case study is appropriate to understand what is happened in a particular situation since it can obtain the close-up reality and thick description of participants' lived experiences, thoughts, ideas, and feelings for a particular situation. Consequently, this case study was reported descriptively to give a clear explanation and understanding to readers on the findings of the study. This is in line with Merriam (1998) who stated that most of the report of a qualitative study is elaborated totally in a description.

#### 3.2 Setting

This study was conducted at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. Based on the research questions, designing a lesson plan is a common activity for all the students in this university especially for those taking an education field. Besides, the ELED students were required to follow the internship program held every semester. From that, students have their own experiences when doing the internship program especially in designing a lesson-plan.

#### 3.3 Participants

The participants of this study were four students of ELED of a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta who joined an internship program in the academic year of 2020/2021.

They already have their own experience, information, and thoughts about designing a lesson plan. Moreover, in protecting the participants' identities, the researcher employed pseudonyms in collecting the data. Susanti, Riana, Aldi, and Venio were the names of the pseudonyms. Their experiences in joining the program could also be presented to portray they experience/engagement with the lesson plan.

### 3.4 Data Collection Method

In this study, the main data collection method was an interview. According to Cohen et al. (2007), "interviews allow participants to explain their perceptions of the surrounding environment, as well as express how they evaluate issues from their point of view." Moreover, the researcher utilized a semi-structured interview to get detailed data about the obstacles and strategies in designing the lesson-plan related to PSETs' opinion. According to Margaret (2009), semi-structured interviews gather precise information more conversationally. In addition, the researchers used the document analysis. Document analysis is a method of gathering data to promote the interview and it was also analyzed by the researcher. Mason (2002, p.108), "I used the document of visual data as a method of data generation to validate the interview based on the documents I obtained from the interviewees". The documents have been used to determine yet if the students' responses in the interview matched the documents created by the participant.

Besides, in line with the Department of Health-and Human-Services (2009), Documentation is a method of collecting information regarding things/variables such as records, scripts, journals, and articles. In this study, the researcher used a document of internship reflection made by the PSETs as the secondary instruments. The internship reflection covered the obstacles and the strategies during designing lesson plan. It supported the interview and eased the researcher to get the data and draw up the findings.

In addition to the data collection method, data analysis should be also presented, especially on how the researchers analyzed the document; and checked to see its similarities/likeness to the results of the interview.

## 4 Findings and Discussions

### 4.1 The Obstacles of PSETs in Designing Lesson Plan

#### Lack of experience

Lack experience in designing lesson plan referred to the lack of PSETs' knowledge related the lesson plan. The first obstacle felt by the PSETs was that they were difficult to design lesson plan because previously they still did not know about the content of the lesson plan itself. Thus, the PSETs often make mistakes in the process of making lesson plans and they did not know how to organize the lesson plan. Susanti found the difficulties and felt shocked when she learned the real lesson plan. She said, "I do not have the skills or experience and also I am shocked". Moreover, Riana faced obstacles when designing lesson plan because the teacher did not explain more about the lesson plan. She stated, "My mentor-teacher did not teach us in detail about making lesson

plans, but we were told to do other activities at the school". And she added, "Lack of experience in designing lesson plan is an obstacle for me". Therefore, they had no idea how to create a well-lesson plan.

This finding is also supported by the internship report of Susanti. She experienced a lack of guidance in designing lesson plan with her mentor-teacher because the mentor-teacher in her school did not have much time to meet the PSETs. As she wrote in her internship report "The internship program was hampered by the covid-19 pandemic which required to do a class by virtual". Besides, Aldi said that his fellow PSETs distracted his focus because they asked a lot of questions, so he could not get the explanation about preparing the lesson plan well from the mentor-teacher.

Experience in designing lesson plan will certainly affect the ability of PSETs to carry out teaching practices. It is in line with Hasanah (2012) who stated that a teacher must have a competency that supports his professional roles and factors that affect the level of teacher competence. One of the internal factors is the teacher's experience in designing a lesson plan. Besides, Nilsson (2009) stated that PSETs lack experience in planning and deciding the activities.

### **Difficulties in arranging the learning activities**

All participants expressed their opinions about the challenge they had in organizing the activities in the classroom. In line with the topic, the goal of learning activities was to measure the students' understanding about the course. Almost all participants stated that organizing the learning activities was difficult. Susanti said, "I do not know what activities that I will give to the students to achieve their learning goals." Additionally, she said "I do not have an overview of learning activities that must be made in the lesson plan." According to the internship report by Riana, it is difficult to draw up the learning activities that are suitable for students in the school. It is necessary to understand the process of designing lesson plan.

Based on the responses from the participants, it is possible to determine that some PSETs were challenging to decide the learning activities. Additionally, they were unable to apply their lesson plan since what they had stated in the lesson plan different from what occurred in the reality. Furthermore, PSETs could make the activities based on the topic in their lesson plan as well and it would engage the students' attention in the learning process. Bin-Hady (2018) stated that a good lesson plan should provide activities to catch the attention of students in the teaching process.

### **Lack of time**

The next obstacle faced by PSETs in arranging lesson plan was that they did not have enough time to?. So, the PSETs are not able to arrange lesson plan optimally. Susanti said, "...when making the lesson plan it crosses with the work of college assignments and many papers so it is difficult to decide the right time to design a lesson plan because if it is postponed, I will forget." Moreover, Veno stated "Sometimes, the timing was a clash between the internship and campus activities, so I had difficulty managing the time." In accordance with the internship reports by Susanti and Aldi, "managing the time is one of the important things to do in the internship. However, I have difficulty dividing time between arranging lesson plan and completing assignments given by the

lecturers. Especially in the midst of an internship being hampered by Covid-19 which required me to study online.”

### **Difficulties in arranging the learning evaluation**

The majority of PSETs struggled with developing the learning evaluation that should be included in the lesson-plan. Susanti said, “I find it difficult to make the learning evaluation of the lesson plan.” Learning evaluation in the lesson plan usually consists of some questions in order to measure the students’ understanding. Additionally, Veno stated that “I had difficulties arranging the questions in the evaluation section.” This finding is also supported by the internship report of Riana, she said “it is difficult to arrange the learning evaluation which can be suitable for the students’ understanding and characteristics”.

Learning evaluation or evaluation tools in lesson plan is the main component used to measure the students’ understanding about the material. According to Ariawan et al. (2016), evaluation is a process that providing the needed, presenting, and summarizing various pieces of information on the effectiveness of something so that it can then be utilized as a component in making a decision and a recommendation. Some PSETs felt difficult to arrange the learning evaluations because they have to make it well based on the students’ characteristics.

### **Understanding the students’ need**

The research demonstrated that before PSETs taught their students in the classroom, they might have known about their students’ level, background, and needs. In this situation, Susanti stated that “I find it difficult to understand the students’ characteristics inside the classroom; the constraint is because each student has a different character in the class when participating in learning activities.” Moreover, Riana said “I have to focus extra on understanding the character of students because it is closely related to the lesson plan that I made.”

According to the internship report by Susanti, she wrote “It is difficult to understand the students’ conditions and characteristics when designing lesson plan in order for students to enjoy and get the materials”. Besides, Veno stated “there are some students who do not understand the materials and they take over time to play inside the classroom with their friends. So, this also became my obstacle in preparing the lesson plan”.

The conditions and characteristics of students is one of the obstacles for PSETs in arranging learning tools. Understanding the character of the student is very important for PSETs, so that the lesson plan which has been designed can help all students in understanding the material and make students active. Fathurrohman (2016) stated that different character, level of ability, and readiness of students will become obstacles for teachers in a class. Therefore, a teacher must understand students’ characteristics to achieve the students’ needs.

### **Difficulties in arranging the materials**

According to the data interview, all of the participants had difficulty choosing on the material. Material is a tool that teachers use in the classroom to support specific learning objectives, as set out in lesson plans. These can be games, videos, flashcards, project

supplies, and textbook. Aldi stated “I am confused in compiling the learning material section.” Otherwise, Riana said that “The mentor-teacher did not explain in detail about the materials.” It means that there is nothing input from the mentor-teacher about constructing the learning materials. On another hand, based on the internship report by Venoh he wrote, “When arranging the learning material, I am confused as to what kinds of materials are suitable for the students in class in order for them to understand my materials”. In addition, PSETs can also adapt material from other references or several websites. However, most PSETs faced difficulties in arranging the materials. As stated by Clements (2017) while making a lesson-plan, the teachers are worried about what they might do with their students.

## 4.2 The Strategies in Designing Lesson Plan

### Doing an intensive coaching

The first strategy in designing lesson plans is that both the mentor-teacher and PSETs have to build communication in order to decrease the fault in designing lesson plan. Susanti said, “I asked my mentor-teacher to give me feedback about my lesson plan”. Feedback is one of the important processes in designing lesson-plan to measure the PSETs understanding”. On the other hand, Riana stated, “I consult about making lesson plan to people who are more experienced”. Another participant, Aldi also mentioned “in my opinion, communication is an important thing for designing lesson plan”.

In accordance with the internship report by Susanti she stated, “...because I faced the problem in understanding what the lesson plan is, so I texted the mentor-teacher via whatsapp to gain more information and misunderstanding when designing the lesson plan”. Moreover, Riana said that, “from all my obstacles above, I think that communication with the mentor-teacher is needed so that the activities run well. And also, by communication it can build my understanding about arranging learning material, evaluation, and good in managing the time”.

In line with the findings, communication is a crucial thing for PSETs in designing lesson plan while doing the internship program. This is in line with Yaniasti (2012) who argued that communication will create a process of interaction in the learning process. Communication and interaction play an important role in the education field. Hence, PSETs have to be active and be able to communicate with the facilitators and also their friends.

### Doing more practice

As demonstrated, one of the most significant things to do to deal with the problem of the PSETs' troubles in writing lesson plans is to provide lesson plan training. Some participants said that they practice making lesson plans on the internet. Susanti argued, “I practice making lesson plan by Google source”. Riana also has the same opinion, “I practice making lesson plans on the internet as well.” It shows that the internet plays an important role in designing the lesson plan to improve their skill. This finding is also supported by the internship report of Riana she wrote, “We have to do more training with the mentor-teacher when designing lesson plan”. Aldi, stated in his internship report “to



make a good lesson plan I have to do more training. It can be searched on the internet and looking for other references about lesson plans in the school's library".

Some PSETs thought there was insufficient time or a limited period for the training they received prior to beginning the teaching practicum. Thus, when PSETs were expected to create a lesson plan in school, they may approach their mentor-teacher with any questions they had about making it. Hence, PSETs will get a better knowledge of planning the lesson. Moreover, Lestari (2020) said that experience on preparing teaching will build pedagogical knowledge. Thus, it can be concluded that more training in designing lesson plan affects the PSETs' pedagogical knowledge.

### **Managing the time**

Here the PSETs should have a good time management. All the participants in the interview have the same opinion to make a timeline. Susanti argued, "I make a timeline in designing the lesson plan so that it can be completed properly". Also, Riana and Veno said "I make a timeline or make a note in my phone". It can be concluded that time management also becomes the important thing especially when designing the lesson plan. Based on the internship report by Susanti and Aldi, they stated "because I cannot manage my time well, so I decided to make a timeline for my schedule".

By make the timeline it can ease the process and evaluate in designing lesson plan. Moreover, PSETs have lots of activities in their college life while they do the tasks in their internship program. Meanwhile, the internship program held around four months which consist of designing a lesson plan. According to Horng (2010) and Master (2013), time management is a significant factor in teachers and school performance.

### **Choosing the appropriate material for the students**

PSETs have to understand the appropriate material with the students' level before joining the class for doing the teaching and learning process. Hence, Sismiati (2012) said that the teachers may be able to promote students' knowledge development through the provided resources. All the participants in the interview argued that observation inside the classroom will ease the process of understanding the students' level. Every student had a varied level of mastery of the course material. Susanti said "doing an observation can help me in understanding the condition of each student directly". Moreover, Riana argued, "observation into the classroom helps me assess the characteristics of students".

This finding is also supported by the internship report of Susanti and Aldi, they wrote "understanding the student's condition and characteristic is an important thing when designing lesson plan. It also has the effect on the teaching and learning process in the classroom". In addition, Veno stated "...if we become a teacher someday, we have to understand the students' characteristics. Things must be highlighted, every student has a different level of understanding".

Sometimes, the PSETs could not attain the goals of learning written in their lesson plan. It caused their lesson plan was at an advanced level and did not refer to the students' ability to understand. Hence, every student has a unique ability to comprehend the lesson. According to Vygotsky (2016), as stated in Ayyub (2015), was defined as the social interaction, culture, and institution. Moreover, Razavi (2020) stated that understanding

texts based on the curriculum requires cultural background knowledge. So, the PSETs should understand more about students' characteristics both inside and outside the class.

## 5 Conclusions

English Language Education Department students as the PSETs, the sample of this study, encountered some obstacles in designing lesson plan. This is based on the little observation and informal conversations during the researcher's experiences when did the internship program. This research used a case study and multiple data collection as the criteria of case study. This case study was reported descriptively to give a clear explanation and understanding to readers on the findings of the study. The researcher interviewed four PSETs to gain the data. Besides, the researcher also looked at the PSETs' internship reflection in order to get additional information related to the research questions. Therefore, the validity of the data was rich and could be achieved.

As a result, there are six findings related to the obstacles such as lack of experience, difficulties in arranging the learning activities, lack of time, difficulties in arranging the learning evaluation, understanding the students' needs, and difficulties in arranging the materials.

Furthermore, there are four findings related to the strategies such as doing an intensive coaching, doing more practice, managing the time, and choosing the appropriate materials for the students. Moreover, the researcher found that the students who follow the coaching does not guarantee that they will not have any obstacles. Furthermore, the researcher also finds that the environment of the school can affect PSETs' performance in designing the lesson plan.

The implication of the study needs to be presented.

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