

## HELPING THEM TO BE GOOD TEACHERS: HOW COMMUNITY SERVICE EQUIPS PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TO TEACH ENGLISH

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Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: March 2023 Revised: April 2023 Published: April 2023	<i>Investigating pre-service teachers' beliefs gives tremendous advantages for their future career development. This study was conducted in the context of elementary education. It focused on investigating the pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English and how the teacher's reflections changed their initial beliefs. We examined nineteen sophomore students who participated in community service to teach English at a public elementary school. A qualitative design was applied and reflections were carried out. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and direct classroom observations. The result generates that many preservice teachers hold their prior beliefs about teaching from their student experience. Teaching reflections facilitate these pre-service teachers to realize their gaps in teaching skills. The finding suggests that teacher training faculty need to add more practical courses to nurture teaching skills. The findings may be useful for a larger population where English was taught as a foreign language for pre-service teachers and elementary school students. This study concludes that real teaching experience develops pre-service teachers' professionalism. It impresses upon them that teaching needs comprehensive knowledge and skills.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> Pre-service teachers' beliefs; teaching English; reflection; university service;	
<b>How to cite:</b> Yoedo, Y. C., & Puspitasari, D. (2023). Helping Them to Be Good Teachers: How Community Service Equips Pre-Service Teachers to Teach English, <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i> , 11(2), pp. 328-337. DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v%vi%i.7529">https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v%vi%i.7529</a>	

### INTRODUCTION

Abundance works of literature have shown that preservice teachers perceive their own beliefs about ideal teaching (Lasley, 1980; Teo et al., 2008; Wang, 2002). Literature has recorded that pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching significantly influence their teaching practices (Belbase, 2015; Funkhouser & Mouza, 2013). Students enrolling in teacher training programs usually have initial beliefs about teaching, which inspire them to be teachers. Thus, it is essential for a teacher education program to always seek and understand the student-teacher's former beliefs on teaching. This deliberate effort will help us improve our curriculum and prepare them to be great educators.

This study is purposefully designed to seek an understanding of how pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English. Previous studies have investigated pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching math using technology (Belbase, 2015); technological use and their self-esteem (Han et al., 2017); integration of technology into a lesson plan (Kovalik et al., 2013). Moreover, countless studies have investigated pre-service teachers' beliefs about English language teaching (Subekti, 2021; Yalcin Arslan, 2019; Yang et al., 2021). Studies show that inviting pre-service teachers to their beliefs about teaching after actual classroom teaching with students is an eye-opening experience. It helps them cope with technological updates to their student's level and identify the problems in the classroom (Kovalik et al., 2013).

Teachers' beliefs are important because they shape their thinking which, in turn, guides instruction (Fives & Buehl, 2012). The study has indicated that there is a connection

between teachers' educational beliefs and three teaching approaches: an inquiry-based approach concentrating on honing students' skills in real problem solving, a conservative approach viewing students as passive receivers, and a liberal approach highlighting students as active meaning makers (Knowles, 2017). Teachers' beliefs can impact classroom decision-making and teaching practice (Graham, 2018; Fives & Buehl, 2012, 2014; Pajare, 1992). Besides gaining knowledge, students grow particular beliefs through directions, cooperation, comments, and guidance at school (Graham, 2019). In other words, beliefs are built on their learning experiences (Lortie, 2020).

Pre-service teachers bring their personal beliefs and attitudes when they enter university. They may have negative attitudes due to their teachers' adverse treatment (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011). Shifting to positive beliefs and attitudes needs these three fundamental approaches: the seriousness of teachers' self-reflection, positive experiences, and the university instruction strategy (Fleckenstein et al., 2015). In addition, teachers' belief is also endorsed by media, literature, and popular folklore (Lasley, 1980).

Knowledge of classroom management and knowledge transfer is essential, but teachers' beliefs are much more influential on their classroom performance. As their beliefs impact all aspects of their classroom performance, including relationships with students, understanding of learning, learners, and themselves, it also impacts the methods and techniques they bring to the learning context. Also, a teacher's identity and beliefs impact student interactions, affecting the learning process (Burden & Williams, 1997).

Belief about teaching is commonly known as one's preferred teaching method (Teo et al., 2008), and it strongly influences teachers' teaching practices daily (Lasley, 1980; Wang, 2002). Studies have shown that investigating pre-service teachers' beliefs are beneficial to understand their current view on teaching and the reason behind it (Belbase, 2015; Zhao et al., 2013). It is essential to dig deeper into their beliefs about teaching before sending them out to schools to serve as teachers.

As we know, some pre-existed beliefs about teaching are derived from their experience as learners or student-teachers themselves. Thus, education faculty should build a strong foundation as the front line that exposes and prepares them to be educators. The study showed the significant impact of a field trip program in shaping pre-service teachers' beliefs on teaching (Kovalik et al., 2013; Nelson & Hawk, 2020). The actual encounter with students in a real classroom context enables the pre-service teacher to be involved using a teacher's glasses, not as a student.

These pre-service teachers also expect some feedback from their instructors and peers to improve their teaching skills (Yang et al., 2021). The input from others will benefit their professional life in the future. Thus, this study investigates pre-service elementary teachers' belief in teaching English and how community service as a university service program helps them reflect on their teaching process. English is taught as a supplementary subject in the Indonesian elementary educational system. We seek a deeper understanding of how real teaching experiences with students help this pre-service to be better teachers. There are two research questions: 1. What are the pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching English? 2. How did the teaching's reflections change their initial beliefs?

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Research in this area was conducted in quantitative (Nelson & Hawk, 2020) and qualitative (Kovalik et al., 2013) approaches. This study employed a qualitative design and implemented reflections through the interview and observation as the main tools to gather data. Studies in this field are mainly conducted with a small number of participants as it benefits digging deeper into the individual (Martell, 2017; Tanase & Wang, 2010). The participants were nineteen sophomore students from a private university in East Java. These

pre-service teachers took an English teaching course for elementary students delivered by the first author of this study. This study took about two months in total. The course instructors assigned students into five groups of three to four students. During the interviews, all participants were informed that they were part of research and the data gathered will be displayed anonymously to protect their privacy.

These pre-service teachers were sent to a local public elementary school nearby the campus to teach English for four consecutive weeks as part of the course program. They have obtained some pedagogical principal from the previous courses and English language teaching for kids in this course. Each group had to conduct an observation followed by designing a lesson plan and classroom activity before teaching. They taught students in the third and fourth grades as recommended by the school.

During the observation process, the course instructor held an online discussion through google meet. All the meetings were recorded, which later be used for data collection. The data were gathered through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the instructor, and classroom artefacts such as lesson plans and teaching props. These students were monitored through classroom observation when they were teaching. Each group also had an after-class meeting with the instructor to evaluate their teaching. Besides direct feedback on their teaching process, students also received evaluations on their lesson plans and teaching materials they used in the class. During the online meeting, students were given guided questions to reflect on their performance, such as: What did you learn from your experiences? Do you find any challenges while preparing the lesson and teaching in the class? What do you suggest to yourself to improve your teaching quality?

These processes help students recall their performance and receive feedback from instructors and peers. During the online interview, the course instructor as the first author, also showed the researcher's notes to get validation from students. We ensured their statements were accurately documented in the researcher's note for further analysis. Through these sequence reflections from the first to fourth week, we gathered data about their initial beliefs on teaching and reflection on their teaching performances. In total, twenty interview transcripts were gathered as data in this study. Later, we coded the discussion into the transcript and analysed data through data reduction and conclusion drawing. We categorized the data into two categories: pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching and their reflection.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

This section is divided into two main parts. The first part is pre-service teacher beliefs which consist of English teaching, confidence in teaching, classroom management, and teaching preparation. The second part is the pre-service teacher beliefs after reflection which also consist of the same dimension. Table 1 records the frequency of dimensions that most frequently occur in the data and becomes the conclusion. After carefully assess all the data, we present in table 1 the most repeated theme by participants. As a matter of fact, we found there are many more minor findings, thus due to the word limit we display the findings as shown in table 1. Later, we explain in detail for each dimension from prior beliefs and beliefs after reflections.

Table 1  
Findings of Each Dimension from Prior Beliefs and Beliefs after Reflections

Prior beliefs	Frequency	Beliefs' after reflection	Frequency
English teaching	25	English teaching	29
Confidence in teaching	25	Confidence in teaching	26
Classroom Management	20	Classroom Management	45
Teaching Preparation	28	Teaching Preparation	32

## **Pre-service Teacher's Prior Beliefs**

### ***English Teaching***

Regarding the beliefs about English teaching, fourteen out of nineteen pre-service teachers believed that all students had basic English knowledge. The pre-service teacher named Eni said:

*"In my opinion, all students have basic English knowledge because they have studied English for about two years." (Eni)*

Hence, the pre-service teachers believed students were familiar with words such as: sit down, silent please, come here, and ready. That is why they practiced teaching in English after the course instructor asked the pre-service teacher to teach in English. They believed that students would understand their simple sentences. Nine pre-service teachers were optimistic that teaching aids promoted comprehension. The pre-service teacher named Mary said,

*"I will look for creative ideas to make teaching aids that are not easily damaged and can be used by many students." (Mary)*

Some other students thought teaching aids needed to be excellent and exciting to attract students' attention. The pre-service teachers were enthusiastic about making their teaching aids since the department provided financial support. Two pre-service teachers believed that students did not like studying English. The pre-service teacher Yusuf said he thought English was too difficult for the students.

*"Students are not enthusiastic about learning because the subject we teach is English." (Yusuf)*

### ***Confidence in Teaching***

There are twenty-five statements concerning confidence in teaching. Sixteen statements state that elementary school students do not like university students to teach them. A pre-service teacher named Darso gave the following reason:

*"The students surely do not want to be taught by university students.' All pre-service teachers called themselves 'kakak' instead of 'Bapak' or 'Ibu'". (Darso)*

Eight statements raised the idea that teaching English is scary. One statement mentions that teaching English is easy. Two pre-service teachers, Dewi and Ela, viewed teaching English differently. Dewi thought teaching English was scary as she said:

*"I feel afraid because I have to teach English." Ela considered teaching English enjoyable: "It is easy to teach English to Elementary school students because we use simple English and speak slowly."*

Only Ela was not afraid of teaching English since her English levels of competence were high, and her public speaking skills were good.

### ***Classroom Management***

There are twenty statements regarding classroom management. Eight statements mention that elementary school students will respect the pre-service teachers. One pre-service teacher named Darman said, "I think the students will listen and obey us." Nine statements mention that elementary school students will focus on the lesson. "The students will enjoy the material and participate in class, said Mini. Three statements indicate that pre-service teachers will be able to handle disruptive students. Tini confidently said, "I feel easy to handle students who like to play pranks on their friends." All of them sound positive.

### ***Teaching Preparation***

There are twenty-eight statements concerning pre-service teachers' beliefs on teaching preparation. Seventeen statements show the expectation that their group would cooperate reasonably. Brando said, "I assume my group can work well together to finish our task." He was confident because he chose the members of his group. The course instructor let the pre-service teachers choose their group members. Nine statements explain that the teachers were not cooperative with the pre-service teachers. For example, Dewi informed, "The teacher looks cynical." Two statements affirm that their teaching aids were easy to make. Mira said, "I think we can make teaching aids easily and according to plan."

### **Teacher's Reflection after Teaching**

#### ***English Teaching***

The nineteen pre-service teachers found that most students had no basic English knowledge. The students could not understand simple English instructions, such as: 'Sit down,' 'Silent, please,' and 'Come here.' They also could not understand a simple question, 'Is it true?' Moreover, the simple words 'ready,' 'finish,' 'try,' or 'plane' was too difficult for them. The students were unfamiliar with the word 'ready' because the teacher asked in Indonesian, 'Sudah siap?' instead of 'Are you ready?' The teacher also preferred to say 'coba' instead of 'try.' On another occasion, she said, 'Kalimat yang pertama coba, Karlin.' Instead of 'Try the first sentence, Karlin.'

The English teacher mostly communicated in Indonesian in her English class. In return, her students did the same thing. Students were not motivated to communicate in English. When the course instructor asked a student, "What is your name?" The student responded, "Hah?" The course instructor repeated, "What is your name?" Then, the student said, "Namaku Selmi." Instead of "My name is Selmi." The student understood the question after the course instructor repeated her question. Although the student understood the question, she did not respond in English. She was not accustomed to speaking English.

The teacher preferred to ask her questions in Indonesian and then repeat the question in English. Once, she said, "Ulangi ya, once again." When the teacher asked, 'Is it true?' nobody responded. The teacher translated her question into "Apakah ini benar?". The English teacher also made some mistakes. She wrote on the whiteboard, 'It is a train. It is the bus. It is a car' instead of 'It is a train. It is a bus. It is a car'. She also mispronounced the words 'six,' 'answer,' and 'question' 'She apologized for making some mistakes to the course instructor at the end of the class. Her low levels of competence made her feel insecure being observed by the course instructor and the pre-service teachers.

These students' low English competence surprised the pre-service teachers. They prepared to speak only English as suggested by the course instructor. When they spoke only English, the students did not understand their message. Hence, they used both English and Indonesian. One pre-service teacher told the course instructor, "Mam, their English is poor. They did not understand when we spoke English all the time." Another pre-service teacher apologized. "I am sorry, mam. We also used Indonesian."

#### ***Confidence in Teaching***

There are twenty-six statements about confidence in teaching. Ten statements prove that students like the pre-service teachers to teach them. Darto said, "Ternyata mereka menerima kita dan bahkan minta kita untuk mengajar lagi. (Apparently, they accepted us and even asked us to teach them again.)" He was surprised that this reality contradicted his prior belief.

Two statements show that teaching English is scary, and nine mention the opposite. Debi's prior belief was that teaching is scary, but then she changed her mind. She said, "Setelah mengajar saya merasa senang karena mereka mudah sekali memahami materi. (After teaching I feel happy because they easily understand the material)". Teaching English is scary

because students are not interested in the teaching aids. It means that they cannot teach as planned. Teaching English is no longer considered scary due to their success in teaching. Five statements show that teaching English is not easy. Other reasons are the uneasy game to play, their difficulty speaking loudly, and the absence of a team member and speaker sound from the field.

*“I cannot teach easily because many students talk to themselves, pay less attention, and are less eager to study” (Dina).*

### ***Classroom Management***

After the teaching activities, there are forty-five statements regarding classroom management. Twelve statements deal with the student’s willingness to obey the pre-service teachers. Only four statements prove that the students obeyed the pre-service teachers. The other eight statements show the forms of disobedience. Twenty-two statements are about the students’ ability to focus on the lesson. Seven statements mention that students can focus on the lesson. Fifteen statements describe that students find it challenging to focus. Instead of asking about the lesson, a male student asked a pre-service teacher named Rini, ‘Kakak punya pacar? (Do you have a boyfriend?).’ Eleven statements concern pre-service teachers’ capacity to control disruptive students. Four statements show that pre-service teachers can control disruptive students. Seven statements mention that pre-service teachers fail to handle disruptive students well. The reality is not the same as what the pre-service teachers imagine. There are problems and challenges that pre-service teachers have to face.

The pre-service teachers realized that being a teacher is not easy. Preparation takes time, and students are often difficult to manage in class. One pre-service teacher said that some students in her class did not return to class after recess time. She asked a student to call them. However, that student did also not return, and this caused a female student in the class to laugh at her failure. The pre-service teacher was frustrated and said, “Mood mengajar saya langsung hilang, Ms. (My teaching mood suddenly disappeared, Ms).”

One student, Yeriko, stated that his group’s biggest problem was classroom management. His group had no problem teaching English. However, they could not manage the students as they would have expected. For various reasons, all pre-service teachers felt relieved after the community service. Firstly, they would not again meet the students who talked about them behind their backs and were disrespectful and disobedient. Also, they now had more time to focus on other tasks since they were busy preparing and doing community service. This is understandable because the pre-service teachers worked hard to make teaching aids.

There are twenty statements regarding classroom management. Eight statements mention that elementary school students will obey the pre-service teachers. One pre-service teacher named Darman said, “I think the students will listen and obey us.” Nine statements mention that elementary school students will focus on the lesson. “The students will enjoy the material and participate in class, said Mini. Three statements indicate that pre-service teachers will be able to handle disruptive students. Tini confidently said, “I feel easy to handle students who like to play pranks on their friends.” All of them sound positive.

### ***Teaching Preparation***

There are thirty-seven pre-service teachers’ statements concerning teaching preparation. Six statements indicate that their group cooperates reasonably. Eight statements note that their group does not cooperate reasonably. For example, Marko explained, “Tetapi kenyataanya kita kurang maksimal menyiapkan materi, jadwal masing-masing kadang bertabrakan untuk meet bareng, dan kita tidak ada waktu untuk Latihan. (But in reality, we are not optimal in

preparing material; our respective schedules sometimes collide to meet, and we do not have time to practice)”).

Twelve statements prove that the teacher was cooperative with the pre-service teachers. The teacher was friendly in discussing their teaching schedules. One statement mentions that the teachers were not cooperative with the pre-service teacher. Karina reported, “Ms the teacher was unfriendly. She did not respond to me in a friendly tone.” What surprised Karina was that the teacher asked about her religion and then showed an unpleasant expression after knowing the answer.

Five statements about teaching aids prove that their teaching aids were not easy to make. Four statements note that the pre-service teachers needed more time to finish. One statement mentions that the result was not as good as expected. Marko said, “Namun kenyataanya tidak sesuai harapan, alat peraganya mudah rusak/kurang kokoh itu karena waktu yang kita gunakan membuat alat peraga mepet (But in reality it is not as expected, the teaching aids are easily damaged/not sturdy because the time we used to make them was too short).

Before teaching, the pre-service teachers and the course instructor observed the English teacher who taught grades three and four. The teacher felt insecure in being observed, and when the pre-service teachers observed the teacher without the course instructor’s company, she asked them, “Apakah hanya saya yang diobservasi?” (Am I the only teacher being observed?) She looked unhappy. The teacher gave a different response when the course instructor observed her. She did not look unhappy but felt inferior. She said, “Saya minta maaf karena tadi ada yang salah. Murid-murid saya tidak sependai murid-murid sekolah swasta.” (I apologize for making mistakes. My students are not as bright as students of private schools.)

## **Discussion**

Regarding prior beliefs, sixteen statements show that elementary school students do not like university students to teach them. Nine statements mention that the teachers will not cooperate with the pre-service teachers. Eight statements explain that teaching English is scary. These statements show that most of the pre-service teachers do not have strong confidence. They are unsure about what skills they already possess. They do not realize that they have already received a good education. They are in the second year; which imply, they have made good progress in study. Previous study indicates that pre-service teachers’ confidence sharply increased after they completed teaching courses (Turgut, Sahin, & Huerta, 2016) and contributed to their teaching preparedness. Another study also reveals that their grade mainly influences their confidence in the assessment related to English knowledge and self-efficacy (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010). However, it is our task to create a classroom experience that constantly reminds these preservice teachers about their calling as educator. A recent study indicates that knowledge gain does not contribute to behavior change, but reflection significantly boost individual decisions (Weng et al., 2022). This study endorses the positive benefits of inserting reflection into classroom designs. This facilitates students to evaluate their prior beliefs and re-assess these beliefs after encountering the hands-on activity. It is expected that more courses could incorporate reflections into the activity to help learners improve their professional competency.

Another issue is the ability to work in a group. In this study, the pre-service teachers could choose their team members. The choice criteria include their closeness and English competence. Some of them felt disappointed because their expectations were not met. Marina said, “Mimi is good at English, so she becomes our leader, but she is irresponsible. I am so upset and disappointed with her”. They should have recruited members willing to commit to working hard to avoid such disappointment. In this regard, we must teach students individual competencies and communicative skills. These students should be able to work

collaboratively because they will work as a team teaching in the future. These are essential skills for their professional development (Robutti et al., 2016). As education faculty, we emphasize the pedagogical competence and, most of the time, ignore the character's development. We should equip our students with organization skills about their generational standard (Patra & Shastry, 2022). In the future, they will enter educational institutions as professional and work with colleagues. Faculty of teacher education need to incorporate more collaborative projects in the curriculum; thus, our graduates will have better skills when they work in the corporate context.

Regarding making teaching aids, it is clear that some pre-service teachers did not have good time management. They did not realize they needed to provide enough time to make good teaching aids. They did not know how to prioritize. One pre-service teacher admitted that he liked to postpone doing his assignment. Sometimes, preparing teaching aids can be time-consuming, and the teacher needs to schedule it. This experience awakened them that teaching requires a time management strategy; they could not solely come to the classroom without any preparation. Teachers need more training in preparing teaching aids using the available resources (Rajapaksha & Chaturika, 2015) to improve their teaching quality. Self-discipline also important in professional life, which result in the effective work flow.

Another issue is that the homeroom teacher was reluctant to be observed by these pre-service teachers. Her reluctance turns into an example for these students. We admit that this phenomenon is beyond our control. As classroom instructors we always encourage students to be reflective learners. We believe input as constructive feedback and results in the betterment of our teaching skills. Thus, we sent students to experience real teaching through community service program. However, the homeroom teachers were not ready to be viewed by our students due to their personal reasons. To encounter this occurrence, we conduct class discussions on pros and cons visiting into that schools. Pre-service teachers were surprised that they did not prepare in handling a big classroom size. Through this experience pre-service teachers are encouraged to have better preparation including reshaping beliefs as a teacher. Teaching is not solely transferring knowledge, it is also bringing ourselves into the classroom. We let students see us in the classroom, thus individual self-control which include self-discipline and willingness to receive feedback are part of classroom management.

## CONCLUSION

Bringing pre-service teachers into community service to experience real teaching experience brings many advantages to their professional development. This study emphasizes that real encounters with students help pre-service teachers identify their beliefs about English teaching. The reflection process through interviews with the course instructor also highlights the importance of classroom management courses. Students face challenges in conducting a class with a good dynamic. They struggle to handle students when kids are creating chaos. Many pre-service students focus more on the teaching material, methods, and aids before they come to the class. Thus, they do not have a backup plan when unexpected behavior intervenes in the teaching process. Teaching practice helps these students to be adaptive educators. In other hand, participating into community service contributes to the betterment of society. We could serve under privileged community nearby through our skills in academic profession. This study encourages course instructor to incorporate their course design with practical skills in particular a community service program. As it is also a mandatory task for Indonesian lecturer to participate in these activity.

Teacher training programs should pay more attention to this topic. This study also possesses some limitations. We acknowledge that few participants are not generalizable to the more significant subject (Puspitasari et al., 2020). However, the findings are current updates on our pre-service teachers' beliefs on teaching English. We believe this can be a guideline to

conduct more studies and recruit a larger sample size to get a bigger picture of teacher education in general.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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