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## Exploring Preparation of Pre-Service Teachers' English Proficiency and Pedagogy: Stories from an EFL Teacher Education Program

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## Exploring Preparation of Pre-Service Teachers' English Proficiency and Pedagogy: Stories from an EFL Teacher Education Program

### Abstract

Many English teachers today are non-native speakers of English graduating from Pre-service English Teacher Education (PETE) programs in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. They undertake their teaching career in a strategic but challenging linguistic and educational situation. This paper reports findings from such a situation based on a qualitative case study of a PETE program at an Indonesian university that aimed to explore the nature of curriculum provision in preparation to develop pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. Data were collected from pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and program administrator using interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations. Results of data analyses revealed a nature of curriculum provision that is inadequately supportive in preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. It is represented in three emerging themes: inadequacy of English proficiency in learning to teach English, lack of balance between theory and practice, and inadequate facilitation for contextual and integrated learning experience.

### Keywords

Pre-service Teachers, English Proficiency, Pedagogy, Teacher Education Program, Qualitative

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# Exploring Preparation of Pre-Service Teachers' English Proficiency and Pedagogy: Stories from an EFL Teacher Education Program

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*Many English teachers today are non-native speakers of English graduating from Pre-service English Teacher Education (PETE) programs in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. They undertake their teaching career in a strategic but challenging linguistic and educational situation. This paper reports findings from such a situation based on a qualitative case study of a PETE program at an Indonesian university that aimed to explore the nature of curriculum provision in preparation to develop pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. Data were collected from pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and program administrator using interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations. Results of data analyses revealed a nature of curriculum provision that is inadequately supportive in preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. It is represented in three emerging themes: inadequacy of English proficiency in learning to teach English, lack of balance between theory and practice, and inadequate facilitation for contextual and integrated learning experience. Keywords: Pre-service Teachers, English Proficiency, Pedagogy, Teacher Education Program, Qualitative*

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## Introduction

Preparing teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in an expanding circle country is a challenging enterprise. Unlike in inner circle countries (Britain, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand,) where English is a primary language of communication, or in outer circle countries (i.e., India, Singapore, Nigeria) where English is widely used as a second official language, in expanding circle countries such as Indonesia, China, and Egypt English is usually considered a foreign language (Kachru, 1985). In these countries, English is also not related to historical linguistic heritage as embedded in the past colonial relation between the inner and outer circle countries (Kachru, 1985; see also Jenkins, 2015). Thus, one of the challenges in preparing EFL teachers in expanding circle countries relates to the limited functional role of English in government and in socio-cultural interactions among people living in the countries (Kachru & Nelson, 2006). Consequently, there is absence or lack of immediate need to use English, which can be detrimental to prospective teachers' motivation and efforts in learning to teach the foreign language. It is a linguistic and educational situation that requires well-planned and well-coordinated efforts to ensure that EFL teacher education programs in expanding circle countries are equipped with all the preconditions to produce qualified and professional English teachers.

Richards (2017) emphasizes the importance of adequate English proficiency prior to teaching English. However, he also warns that native-like English proficiency is not a requirement in order to be able teach English. Considering that up to 80 percent of English teachers worldwide are non-native speakers of English (Canagarajah, 1999) and that there are

more speakers of English from the expanding circle than those from the inner circle (Canagarajah, 2005; Kachru & Nelson, 2001), requiring non-native speaker teachers of EFL to achieve native-like proficiency is logically irrelevant. What is of high importance for EFL teacher education programs in these countries is to ensure that non-native English speaking pre-service teachers develop their English proficiency to a level that allows them to use English intelligibly both for general communication and, more importantly, for effective classroom teaching (Renandya, 2018; Richards, 2017).

This context of EFL teacher education illustrated above indicates the crucial roles of pre-service EFL teacher education programs in the expanding circle of English. They are in a strategic, but at the same time also challenging, position of ensuring that education of their pre-service English teachers is a process that empowers them to develop their English proficiency and pedagogy to a level that is supportive for EFL learning in schools. Nunan (2003), for example, has long called for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to revamp their English teacher education programs by ensuring that pre-service English teachers are equipped with adequate proficiency in English and pedagogical skills to teach it.

A number of studies have examined practicing English teachers' proficiency and pedagogy in the expanding circle countries such as Butler's (2004) and Yook and Lee's (2016). Likewise, analyses and commentaries on this issue have also been published, which include among others the work of Susilo (2015)—a critical description of EFL teacher education curriculum in the current context of Indonesian Qualification Framework—and Al-Hazmi (2003) on EFL teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia. However, only a few studies have explored the nature of curricular provision of English proficiency and pedagogy to pre-service English teachers in the expanding circle countries. Recently, aside from studies by Nguyen (2013) and Sulistyono (2015), little to none is known about the real nature of curricular provision of English proficiency and pedagogy to pre-service teachers by EFL teacher education programs in the expanding circle countries. This lack of data-based research on the nature of EFL teacher education programs in their curriculum provision of English proficiency and pedagogy to pre-service teachers in these countries may hinder efforts to improve English communication skills of people from parts of the world with very significant number of population, economic growth, political influence, and socio-cultural resources.

It is important, therefore, to explore the extent to which EFL teacher education programs in the expanding circle of English have aligned education of their pre-service English teachers, particularly in terms of improvement of their English proficiency and pedagogy. How have the EFL teacher education programs responded to the challenges of learning English and learning to teach it in such a foreign context? How has the increasing role of English as a global language been considered in developing pre-service teachers' command of the English language and the pedagogy to teach it? In the context of the expanding circle of English such as Indonesia—where data for this study was gathered, these are important questions that require further empirical exploration.

### **EFL Teacher Education for Non-Native Speakers of English**

Studies in the area of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) for non-native English speakers (Braine, 2004; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2009; Lee, 2004; Seidlhofer, 1999) have indicated that both NESs (Native English Speakers) and NNEs (Non Native English Speakers) can become successful and effective EFL teachers, and that NESs do not necessarily have greater opportunities to develop their skills purely because of their native proficiency in English. Other work in this area also suggests that both NESs and NNEs encounter challenges in their journey to become accomplished EFL teachers and that

their SLTE experience can be enhanced through collaboration between NES pre-service teachers and NNES pre-service teachers (e.g., de Oliveira & Richardson, 2004; Mahboob, 2004).

Researchers and practitioners in the field have proposed new ideas about how NNESs can be better prepared to become successful EFL teachers. Lee (2004) introduced four strategies in the preparation program of pre-service Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in a Hong Kong university. These include encouraging reflection, capitalizing on the strengths of NNESTs, reinforcing the need for ongoing language improvement, and using NNEST educators as role models.

Although employing Lee's four strategies might be effective in raising and increasing NNES pre-service teachers' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, further studies are needed to explore whether similar strategies will result in accomplished teaching performance. Lee's (2004) four strategies were implemented within the scope of "a compulsory course called 'Subject Curriculum Teaching' (SCT)" (p. 236) and not in a comprehensive PETE in EFL context. Thus, it is sensible to believe that more significant impact can be expected if the four strategies above are employed within a larger systemic context such as PETE programs in EFL context.

Previously, Kamhi-Stein (1999) and Liu (1999) responded to the needs and background of NNES pre-service teachers in such a larger context. Kamhi-Stein argued that courses in the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) curriculum need to incorporate issues that are relevant to NNES pre-service teachers. Similarly, Liu (1999) maintained that TESOL teacher education programs in English speaking countries have failed to address issues related to the needs and background of NNES pre-service teachers. He argued that the provision of TESOL courses is heavily western based and proposed that the TESOL courses be contextualized according to the needs and background of NNESTs and students learning English in EFL contexts. He observes that the new orientation benefits both native and non-native English-speaking pre-service teachers who plan to teach in EFL contexts. This proposal by Liu is confirmed in a recent study by Inoue and Stracke (2013) which highlights the importance of incorporating the issues of non-nativeness and EFL context in SLTE.

The work of Kamhi-Stein (1999) and Liu (1999) provides insights on how English teacher education programs can better accommodate the needs and background of NNES prospective teachers. However, it did not adequately represent the EFL context embedded in the expanding circle of English and was not situated within a whole institutional context of a PETE program. Considering the significant number of pre-service English teachers educated in EFL context and the strategic role of PETE programs in their teacher preparation, research is warranted to explore this issue in the context of SLTE programs in EFL setting. Without such studies, provision of more germane education for NNES pre-service teachers in EFL setting remains at the periphery of SLTE literature. Besides, strategies or proposals to improve the quality of a teacher education program require support from all key players of the program, rather than from an individual within the program, otherwise their effectiveness and relevance will be of minor and temporary significance.

### **Curriculum Provision and Pre-Service Teachers' English Proficiency and Pedagogy**

One way of understanding the nature of the preparation of pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy is by referring to approaches to SLTE. As shown in Table 1, the nature of the three approaches to SLTE—training/behaviorist approach, development/humanistic approach, social constructivist/sociocultural approach (see Johnson, 2006, 2009; Richards, 1989; Roberts, 1998) — may be observable in the curriculum

provision for developing prospective teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. Table 1 shows that the nature of prospective teachers' preparation in an SLTE program is not necessarily exclusive to one approach, but rather indicates the possible pervasiveness or integration (signified by the dotted lines) of the three approaches.

**Table 1: Approaches to SLTE and the Nature of Curriculum Provision for Developing Pre-service Teachers' English Proficiency and Pedagogy**

Approaches to SLTE	Nature of the Approaches Potentially Observable in the Preparation of Student Teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy
Behaviorist/Training Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigid/inflexible ==&gt; in the process of learning to teach</li> <li>• Prescriptive/Theory-driven ==&gt; in presentation or instruction</li> <li>• Top-down ==&gt; in teacher educator-student teachers relation</li> <li>• Pre-determined ==&gt; in program's orientation</li> </ul>
Developmental/Humanistic Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective and Collaborative ==&gt; in the process of learning to teach</li> <li>• Discovery-oriented/Inquiry-based ==&gt; in presentation or instruction</li> <li>• Bottom-up ==&gt; in teacher educator-student teachers relation</li> <li>• Enabling/Empowering ==&gt; in program's orientation</li> </ul>
Social Constructivist/Sociocultural Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective, Collaborative, and Contextual/Socially Grounded ==&gt; in the process of learning to teach</li> <li>• Constructively Prescriptive/Guided leading to Inquiry-based ==&gt; in presentation or instruction</li> <li>• Interactive (top-down and bottom-up) ==&gt; in teacher educator-student teachers relation</li> <li>• Enabling/Empowering ==&gt; in program's orientation</li> </ul>

Based on Johnson, 2006, 2009; Richards, 1989; Roberts, 1998

This view of pervasiveness in SLTE curriculum is supported by Trappes-Lomax (2002) who argues that the preparation of pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy needs to accommodate the interrelatedness of language use, language acquisition, and language objectification within the language teacher education world, and not view them as separate to one another. This view is also in line with Darling-Hammond's (2006) finding on the importance of building strong coherence and connection among the courses offered to pre-service teachers. It is important to note, however, that the preparation of pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills need to be understood not only through their permeable nature, but also

through their social and empowering nature as situated within the relevant contexts and realities of schooling, society, culture, politics, education, and government policies (Johnson, 2006).

### **Context of the Study**

This study is situated in the context of pre-service English teacher education in Indonesia where I have been teaching English and pre-service English teachers for more than fifteen years. It is part of a doctoral study exploring the curriculum of two PETE programs in a central Sumatran province in Indonesia. I conducted the study within the context of a common public perception that many English teachers in the country are not adequately qualified to teach the language, which poses questions on the nature of teacher preparation implemented by Indonesian PETE programs (see Renandya, 2018). This question of the nature of Indonesian PETE programs is further prompted by the unsatisfactory English proficiency and communication ability of Indonesian school students as indicated in studies by Bradford (2007), Cahyono & Widiati (2004), Dardjowidjojo (2000), Jazadi (2000), Lengkanawati (2005), Madya (2007), Marcelino (2008), Sadtono (2007), and Yuwono & Harbon (2010). Recent survey by EF EPI (2018) also shows that Indonesia is in the low English proficiency level internationally. While many factors can be attributed to this unsatisfactory result of English education, the role of pre-service English teacher education—because of its indirect impact, has often been sidelined as a contributing factor. Questions on the nature of how pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy to teach it have been provided in Indonesian PETE programs, therefore, constitute an area of educational research that deserve a further exploration.

As a former English teacher and currently as a teacher educator in one of Indonesian PETE programs, I have experienced and observed that the importance of teachers' role and of the nature of their pre-service teacher education is often overlooked in government's initiative to improve the quality of English education in Indonesian school system. Despite the central importance of proficiency in English and the pedagogy to teach it (see Renandya, 2018; Richards, 2017) in the realities of schooling faced by English teachers, the nature of Indonesian PETE programs in developing these qualifications for their prospective teachers remain largely unknown. By conducting this study, I attempt to provide empirical descriptions of the nature of an Indonesian PETE program in Sumatra in developing its pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy and to explore factors contributing to the emergence of such descriptions. Insights from the findings are potentially invaluable for development of PETE programs that are relevant to meet the current realities of English education in Indonesian school system. Besides, through findings of this study, I attempt to shed light on the importance of research in promoting evidence-based educational planning and policy-making that reflect awareness of the central role of pre-service teacher education in impacting the quality of learning in Indonesian schools.

### **Methodology**

As previously implied, the guiding research question for this study, therefore, is: What is the nature of curriculum provision for developing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy in a PETE program of a public university in a central Sumatran province, Indonesia? In order to explore the answer to this research question, I conducted a qualitative case study at the PETE program involving participation of pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and program administrators affiliated with the program. The justification for employing the qualitative approach and case study research design is discussed below.

The use of a qualitative approach in this study was driven by the study's aim to generate in-depth and holistic findings regarding the nature of curriculum provision for developing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy within the context of a PETE program in an Indonesian public university. It is a relevant research approach because this study involves exploration as a process to generate deep understanding of the nature of curriculum provision (see Creswell, 2012). In other words, the study does not aim to make any statistical generalizations to support its findings, which is relevant to Patton's (2002) "Themes of Qualitative Inquiry" (p. 40).

In term of design strategies, Patton's (2002) themes of qualitative inquiry include three characteristics of qualitative study, namely naturalistic inquiry, emergent design flexibility, and purposeful sampling. This study constitutes a naturalistic inquiry in that it attempted to investigate the nature of the curriculum provision in its natural settings without any manipulation or control of any aspects of the research objects. It also reflects the second characteristic—emergent design flexibility—as I was open to any issues emerging during the research and responded to them adequately, abandoning any irrelevant predetermined plans as the research continued. Finally, I employed purposeful sampling in this study because in-depth exploration of the nature of the curriculum provision was only possible by purposely focusing the research problem on a single case of PETE program. It was beyond my ability and resources to conduct a study using a random sample of similar programs throughout Indonesia. Besides, it is insights on the issue that I was aiming at, and "not empirical generalization from a sample to a population" (Patton, 2002, p. 40).

The appropriateness of case study research in this study can be justified by the nature of the research question formulated. The study aims to seek answers to the "what" question on the nature of curriculum provision for developing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy without any manipulation or control. This is deemed an appropriate decision according to Ellinger et al. (2005) who mentioned that "[c]ase study research is most appropriate when the researcher is interested in 'how,' 'what,' and 'why' questions" (p. 330). Yin (2009) also argues that the "what" question is appropriate in exploratory case study research.

This use of case study is also a response to Bjork's (2005) observation that there is too much reliance on statistical and quantitative approach in understanding educational development in Indonesia. This qualitative case study is an effort to provide depth to generate the full picture of the educational issues being investigated. The use of qualitative case study design is, thus, relevant to Bjork's (2005) call for more emphasis on employing qualitative data, and not solely on quantitative data, in understanding Indonesian education and teacher education.

## **Participants and Data Collection**

After obtaining approval for the conduct of this study from Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Sydney, I began collecting all relevant data from different groups of participants using multiple methods to allow triangulation of data at both the data collection and data analysis stages (Yin, 2009). I collected data from pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and program chair using interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions.

Data collection from pre-service English teachers took place in two phases. The first phase involved data collection using classroom observation technique to gather relevant data through observation of the performance and participation of preservice teachers and their teacher educators. I conducted six classroom observations, which include observations of teaching and learning process in the following courses: Curriculum and Material



Development, English Phonology, Introduction to Linguistics, English Grammar, Students Learning Development, and Sociolinguistics. The pre-service teachers participating in these classroom observations were in the second, fourth, and sixth semesters of their study. During the observations, I took descriptive and reflective field notes. After obtaining consent from the teacher educators and pre-service teachers observed, I also video-recorded the teaching and learning process for the purposes of complementing and rechecking the accuracy of my field notes.

The second phase comprised focus groups involving two groups of five to seven pre-service English teachers. Initially, I intended to conduct three focus groups in order to represent three classes of sixth semester pre-service English teachers that existed during the period of this study. Unfortunately, none of the pre-service teachers in one of the three classes were available to participate in the planned focus group. The sixth semester pre-service teachers were selected because they had experienced almost all of the components of the PETE curriculum. Besides, only a few of the eighth semester pre-service teachers were around during the data collection. Some of them have completed their study, and some others who had not graduated were focusing on completing their final project paper.

In each focus group, I asked the pre-service teachers to respond to how their experience in learning to develop their English proficiency and pedagogy was similar to or different from description of the following three different natures of curriculum provision in teacher education programs (see Johnson, 2009; Richards, 1998; Roberts, 1998):

- (1) a pre-service teacher education program adopting behaviorist / training approach
- (2) a pre-service teacher education program adopting developmental / humanistic approach
- (3) a pre-service teacher education program adopting social constructivist / sociocultural approach.

I provided every pre-service teacher in the focus groups with written descriptions of each type of pre-service teacher education program and read each description out loud before asking them to respond. All focus group discussions with the pre-service teachers were carried out in either a classroom or a room in the library at their university's campus and took place between 60 to 90 minutes. With consent from all participants, I video-recorded the focus group sessions to facilitate transcription and analysis of the focus group data.

Data from teacher educators were also obtained in two phases, first through classroom observations and later through interviews. The classroom observations are the same ones as described previously for data collection from pre-service teachers and were intended to gather data on the nature of curriculum provision from the context of teacher educator's classroom practice. There were two classroom observations which were specifically conducted to gather data regarding the nature of curricular provision to develop pre-service teachers' English proficiency (English Grammar) and pedagogy (Curriculum and Material Development); however, relevant data from the other four classroom observations were also included to support exploration of nature of the PETE curriculum provision. All classroom observations were carried out before interviews with the teacher educators in order that their teaching performance was not influenced by themes discussed in the interviews. There were eight teacher educators interviewed, including two teacher educators whose class was not observed and taught general educational courses in Indonesian. The interviews were conducted either in an office room at their university's campus or in the teacher educators' place of residence. These interviews generally lasted from 40 to 60 minutes. After obtaining their written consent, the interviews with the teacher educators were also audio-recorded.

In order to obtain data about the general direction and principles of curriculum of the PETE program as well as its implementation and evaluation, I conducted an in-depth and unstructured interview with the Chair of the PETE program as the program administrator. The program Chair's responses in this interview provided the basis to further exploring the nature of curriculum provision in the PETE program in developing their pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. The interview took place between fifty to sixty minutes, and with the consent of the program chair, I audio-recorded the interview.

## Data Analysis

I began the data analysis in this study by first transcribing audio and video recordings of data gathered from classroom observations, focus groups, and interviews. I then organized all the transcribed data together with data gathered in the form of field notes from classroom observations according to each group of participants—namely pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and program chair. I entered data obtained from pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and program chair into N-VIVO software under separate categories to facilitate coding and categorization. I finally searched and identified patterns and made synthesis through iterative readings of data coded across the three different groups of participants. These were a process which involved “organization, classification, categorization, a search for patterns, and synthesis” (Schloss & Smith, 1999, p. 190). Essentially, I referred to data analysis procedures called “constant comparative approaches,” as presented in Schloss & Smith (1999, p. 192). Constant Comparative Approaches include the following procedures:

- (1) Collect data from several cases [one case in this study].
- (2) Identify important issues and recurring events; use them to create categories.
- (3) Collect additional data to provide many examples for each category. Elaborate on the dimensions within any given category [because the data were sufficient, no additional data were collected in this study].
- (4) Write about the categories and describe how they can account for all events you have documented. Reformulate some categories and delete others as the data dictate.
- (5) Identify patterns and relationships.
- (6) Develop a theory by continuing to collect and compare data and refining categories and relationships.

In line with the procedures above, the data analyses were conducted recursively to until data saturation was reached so as to facilitate the construction of findings as subsequent pieces of data were reviewed. In other words, the analyses were carried out by iteratively identifying recurring events, which later were categorized, confirmed or triangulated with results of data analyses from different sources to generate findings that reflect the nature of curriculum provision for developing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy in the case study PETE program.

## Findings

Analyses of data from all the different sources and methods described above resulted in the emergence of three themes reflecting the nature of curriculum provision of English proficiency and pedagogy to pre-service English teachers in the Indonesian case study PETE program. These are:

- (1) inadequacy of English proficiency in learning to teach English,
- (2) lack of balance between theory and practice in learning to teach English,  
and
- (3) inadequate facilitation for contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experiences

Evidence based on analyses of relevant data sources supporting the emergence of these themes is presented in the following sub-sections.

### **Inadequacy of English proficiency in learning to teach English**

The first theme to emerge was the pre-service teachers' experience of learning to teach English with inadequate English proficiency. This finding suggests that the PETE program in this study failed to provide adequate learning support to pre-service teachers in improving their English proficiency as part of their preparation to become English teachers. Evidence supporting this theme was drawn from analyses of data obtained from interviews with teacher educators and the program chair, focus groups, and classroom observations.

Analyses of data from interviews with the teacher educators, for example, indicated that four of the six teacher educators were not content with the pre-service teachers' level of English proficiency. One lecturer stated that:

They do have knowledge...but I think it's not adequate. When they want to teach and to prepare the lesson plan etc., they do not have the knowledge needed [to teach]. So, what will they teach? Because at the same time, they themselves still make grammatical mistakes, mispronunciations, they still don't know the words. Generally, they still have to translate from Indonesian into English.

The concern of the teacher educators, along with the uncertainty of the Program Chair, corresponds with the pre-service teachers' response. Analyses of data from focus group discussions with the pre-service teachers indicated that they were not content with the ways their English proficiency was developed. A pre-service teacher said:

I think the foundations of our English proficiency have not been developed properly. Lecturers assumed prospective teachers to have had good English proficiency. Thus the English proficiency was never "polished." I was hoping that, in semesters 1 and 2, my English was developed properly. Lecturers always neglected [the importance of] courses [offered] in the early semesters.

Reflection of the pre-service teachers above, along with evaluation of the teacher educators, represented a nature of inadequacy in the PETE program's curriculum provision in ensuring adequate improvement of their English proficiency. Data from the teacher educators resonates the tone of blaming the senior pre-service teachers for their inability to use English at an adequate level of proficiency. This unfortunate reality is confirmed by the pre-service teachers who indicated that, despite the fact that their teacher educators taught courses to improve their English proficiency, they did not do it in ways that were supportive for them to achieve adequate level of proficiency to teach English to school students. Supported with similar data obtained from the program chair interview and classroom observations (which, due to limited space, cannot be presented here), these accounts from both the teacher

educators and pre-service teachers reflect the need for a PETE program to regularly evaluate the adequacy of their efforts in improving pre-service teachers' English proficiency.

### **Lack of balance between theory and practice in learning to teach English**

The next theme that emerged as the second finding of this study was "lack of balance between theory and practice in learning to teach English." Unlike the first finding which revealed the nature of inadequacy, this finding reflects an imbalanced nature of the PETE program's curriculum provision both in terms of development of pre-service teachers' pedagogy and English proficiency. Indication of more theoretical and less practical provision in their teacher education emerged from analyses of three data sources: interview with the program chair, focus groups, and classroom observations.

Analysis of interview data obtained from the program chair indicated that inadequate availability of facilities hampered the intention to provide sufficient practice to pre-service teachers. The program chair explained that "implementation of the new curriculum, in which practical learning experiences were included, is still supported by old...[and] outdated facilities. ...this has resulted in inadequate provision of practical learning experiences" (Interview with the program chair). This was a challenging reality in enacting the PETE curriculum, and contributed to pre-service teachers' experiencing learning to teach with an approach that was detached from the contexts of the real usage of English and its teaching in schools due to inadequate availability of facilities such as language laboratory and teaching media.

Different evidence indicating provision of more theories and less practice to pre-service teachers emerged from analyses of focus group data. The pre-service teachers from both focus groups indicated that provision of learning to teach was too theoretical and was not followed by practical examples of how the theories could be practiced. In one of the focus group discussions, a pre-service teacher commented that "teacher educators have presented that the teaching methods should be such and such...But that's only in theories. ... [we were] not given the real examples of the teaching methods."

The pre-service teachers also lamented the lack of exemplary classroom practices by their teacher educators. In one of the focus groups, a pre-service teacher explained that:

In my opinion, someone who teaches about good teaching methods should demonstrate good teaching too. But I do not see that teacher educators demonstrate such good teaching. They just teach as they like. What is that like for a pre-service teacher? That's the example for teaching university students. But teaching school students requires more attention than teaching university students.

The above accounts from interview with the program chair and focus groups—supported by similar details from classroom observations, revealed a traditional nature of curriculum provision, in which mastery or provision of theories is believed to result in good practice. As implied in the accounts of the program chair, development of pre-service teachers' teaching skills requires availability of supporting learning facilities, which in the case of the PETE program was limited. This was further worsened by teacher educators' inability to practice what they preached when teaching courses to improve pre-service teachers' pedagogy and English proficiency. This finding sheds light for every PETE program that sufficient proportion of practice needs to be made available to facilitate pre-service teachers in learning to teach English.

### **Inadequate facilitation for contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experiences**

The theme “inadequate facilitation for contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experiences” emerged from data analyses as the last finding in this study. It represents a different dimension of inadequacy in the nature of the PETE program’s curriculum provision, namely its inability to provide adequate context, relevance, and integration in the pre-service teachers’ learning experience. The theme was revealed from analyses of data obtained from interviews with the program chair and lecturers, focus groups, and classroom observations.

The first evidence supporting this finding was reported by the program chair. When asked whether teacher educators in his PETE program have attempted to facilitate contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experience to the pre-service teachers, he responded:

In order to be able to do that, it’s more possible for the young lecturers. The senior lecturers do not change much. And that is natural. The innovation is always initiated by the young. ...but the innovations [by the young lecturers] are not guided. We want it to be guided. The teaching approach is still up to their individual understanding.

The above response from the program chair suggested that there were efforts to facilitate prospective teachers to experience contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experiences—particularly by the young lecturers. However, these lecturers still worked individually or not collectively in a team of lecturers who had shared beliefs and common vision about the education of their pre-service English teachers.

More specifically, the pre-service teachers also reported that they did not experience pedagogical learning that is adequately contextualized into the realities of ELT in Indonesian schools. In one of the focus groups, one pre-service teacher commented that “the [educational] courses were all important. However, the lessons presented by the teacher educators were never related to our roles as English teachers later. That’s what made them irrelevant.” A more critical comment was made by a pre-service teacher in the other focus group. He said:

We need to know that classroom situation is very different out there. In this city [of Xxx], we find that schools are different. There’s school using Singaporean-based curriculum, national plus schools, etc. We are not taught that they are different, and that students are different to each other. Students in the past are different from students in the current era. We are also not taught Educational Psychology. ....I can say that lecturers here do not teach us in ways that prepare us to teach out there.

Accounts from focus group data above are in line with data from all classroom observations. The data showed that the core idea of the PETE curriculum—educating pre-service teachers to become English teachers in Indonesian schools—was almost non-existent in the teaching and learning processes of the courses observed. For example, a classroom observation field note for an educational course reads:

the topic of the class discussion about teenagers’ psychological development was presented and discussed by both the teacher educator and the pre-service teachers in general terms. There was no mention about how the topic is related

to preparation to become teachers or English teachers, and none was about learning English as a foreign language by teenagers.

All of the accounts from different sources above evoke a curriculum provision that was fragmented and detached from the ultimate goal of the program, that is, to prepare the pre-service teachers for a career in teaching English in Indonesian schools. Data from the program chair indicated that there was limited attention in the PETE program toward the importance of providing contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experience to the pre-service teachers. What happened at the level of curriculum implementation, as revealed from focus group and observation data, corroborated this unfortunate reality of pre-service English teacher education. There needs a deeper awareness by teacher educators and administrator of the PETE program that inadequacy in contextualising pre-service teachers' learning experience contributed to lack of relevance and coherence in their preparation to become professional English teachers.

### Discussion

It was argued earlier in this article that preparation of pre-service EFL teachers in the expanding circle of English is situated in a strategic but challenging linguistic and educational context. Findings from this case study reflect quite clearly the challenging nature in preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy, which is potentially related to lack of immediate need to use English within such a context (see Kachru & Nelson, 2006). The findings also show that the curriculum provision demonstrated by the case study PETE program in preparing their prospective teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy did not indicate readiness to respond to Nunan's (2003) call to improve the quality of EFL teacher education in the Asia-Pacific region. As presented in the previous section, there is convincing evidence from this study that the PETE program did not do enough "to ensure that [prospective] teachers are adequately trained in language teaching methodology ..., that [their] own language skills are significantly enhanced, ..." (Nunan, 2003, p. 610). In sum, data from this study indicate that the nature of curriculum provision in preparing prospective teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy in the PETE program is not supportive of efforts to teach non-native English language learners to become intelligible users of English both within and outside of the expanding circle of English. More detailed discussion of each finding from this study is presented in the following sub-sections.

#### **Learning to teach English with inadequate English proficiency**

This first finding provides an extent of empirical justification of Renandya's (2018) analysis on the English proficiency of the majority of Indonesian EFL teachers which "probably fall in the lower intermediate range, possibly in the B1-B2 levels on the CEFR [Common European Framework of Reference] scale [for foreign language learning proficiency]" (p. 4). This is generally considered a level of English proficiency that is insufficient for teachers to perform effective foreign language teaching in their classrooms (Renandya, 2018; Richards, 2017). These data on the nature of curriculum provision in preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency for this study also resonate with Renandya's (2018) observation that some EFL teacher education programs in Indonesia overlook the importance of ensuring pre-service teachers to achieve sufficient proficiency to teach English in schools.

The finding that pre-service teachers learned to teach English with inadequate English proficiency echoes similar findings in Lamb's and Coleman's (2008) study in Riau (the

province in which this study was conducted). Lamb and Coleman found that, aligning their findings with those of Nunan's (2003), lack of teachers' English proficiency contributed to what they called "a state education system struggling to provide the basic requirements for developing literacy in English" (2008, p. 196). This unfortunate situation, however, does not seem to be typical of the case study PETE program or English education in Riau Province. Recent studies and evaluation of English education and teacher education in Indonesia (see Ariatna, 2016; EF EPI, 2018; Fadhilah, 2018; Imperiani, 2012; Larson, 2014; Renandya, 2018) imply that nationally there are considerable number of English teachers who graduated from PETE programs with inadequate English proficiency and pedagogy.

This finding shows that, after six semesters in the EFL teacher education program, the pre-service teachers still lacked in the adequacy of their English proficiency to perform an effective foreign language teaching. It is a clear indication that new curricular innovations are needed in order to increase the adequacy of pre-service teachers' English proficiency. This is not to suggest that adequate English proficiency, let alone native-like proficiency, is a guarantee for effective English language teaching in this expanding circle of English, but rather as a crucial foundation for developing pre-service teachers' pedagogical skill (see again Renandya, 2018 and Richards, 2017). Among the possible options for curriculum innovations are (1) enacting curriculum provision that allows integration and interconnectedness among courses within the areas of English proficiency, knowledge about language and pedagogy as suggested by Trappes-Lomax (2002) and (2) emulating the administration of English proficiency assessment for English teachers as required to pre-service English teachers in Hong Kong (Coniam, Falvey, & Xiao, 2017) as a mandatory curricular requirement for graduation. By improving curriculum provision to achieve the level of adequacy in their English proficiency, it is more possible for pre-service teachers to graduate as novice English teachers who are proficient in English and competent to teach it.

### **Learning to teach with inadequate practical experiences**

This finding reflects another nature of inadequacy of the curriculum provision in preparing prospective teachers' pedagogy in the PETE program. It significantly relates to the inadequate institutional capacity of the PETE program and its teacher educators to provide practical experience as part of the preparation to improve prospective teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. The program's teacher educators were found to "operate from unexamined conceptions of teaching that may make it difficult for them to teach in ways congruent with the goals of the curriculum" (Graves, 2009, p. 122), which among others require sufficient inclusion of practical learning experience. Data from classroom observations and focus groups showed that not only were the teacher educators not able to include sufficient practical learning experience, but they were also unable to contextualize the mainly theoretical learning experience. For many teacher educators—including those participating in this study, assumingly, their ability to understand new notions such as experiential learning is not always at the same pace as their ability to enact them in the teacher education curriculum. For example, the notion of critical pedagogy which promotes prospective teachers to critique their teaching experiences might only be taught to them, but ironically, is not demonstrated or reflected by their teacher educators in the courses taught to them (see Lin, 2004). Graves (2009) urges that "[t]eacher educators must "practice what they preach" and hold themselves accountable to the same criteria to which they hold teacher-learners" (p. 122).

From the perspective of the PETE program's institutional capacity, this finding resonates with Crandall's (2000, p. 41) observation that practical experiences provided to prospective teachers are "often too few, too late, and not sufficiently focused on the realities

of the classroom, the program, or the school.” This second theme of the study’s finding indicates that teacher education programs need to “integrate theoretically based knowledge traditionally taught in university classrooms with the experience-based knowledge traditionally located in the practice of teachers and realities of classrooms and schools” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 99). Thus, ongoing collaborations and partnerships between university’s located teacher education programs and schools need to be developed and maintained in order to provide pre-service teachers with sustained opportunities to observe and practice teaching (Graves, 2009).

The PETE program in this case study, and others in similar situation, can emulate some practical examples generated from Darling-Hammond’s (2006) study of successful teacher education programs in the United States. They can be used as benchmarks for improving other teacher education programs with some modifications to suit the contexts surrounding their own teacher education programs. For some specific examples of practical learning experience in the successful teacher education programs in the United States, please see Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 100).

Darling-Hammond’s (2006) examples of how to integrate theories and practices by interweaving coursework and clinical work show that learning to teach through practical experiences is not a complementary part of teacher education curriculum, but rather is integral and extensive in nature as part of the curriculum implementation. This is an important reminder to teacher education programs that seem to consider provision of pre-service teachers’ practical experiences as peripheral elements loosely embedded to their teacher education curriculum.

### **Inadequate facilitation for contextual, relevant, and integrated learning experiences**

The last finding characterizes another nature of inadequacy in curriculum provision for preparing pre-service teachers’ English proficiency and pedagogy: inability to adequately induce contextual, relevant, and integrated approaches in teacher educators’ teaching practice. One unfortunate impact of such nature of curriculum provision is the use of “uninspired teaching methods” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 279). These uninspired teaching methods were evident, among others, in the observation that most teacher educators in this study took advantage of the pedagogical trend to employ student-centred approach in their teaching by spending most of the class time for students’ presentation, while they contributed only minimally to facilitate deep learning for the pre-service teachers. This nature of curriculum provision is potentially detrimental for pre-service teachers’ preparation to develop a lasting foundation for their future EFL teaching career.

Engaging pre-service teachers in learning strategies such as case methods, close analyses of learning and teaching, performance assessments, and teaching portfolios (Crandall, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Richards, 1998; see also Burton, 2009) is a step that PETE programs can do to develop a sustainable and strong foundation for their pre-service teachers’ future teaching career. Research about teachers’ learning suggests that the above learning strategies help teachers to identify alternative strategies, areas for improvement, and solutions to problems of practices for future teachings (Freese, 1999; Laboskey, 1992).

Another unfortunate impact of curriculum provision of this nature is that it leads to fragmented efforts in implementing the curriculum, which previously was also found in Luciana’s (2004) study of PETE Programs that she investigated in other parts of Indonesia, namely Bali, Java, and Lampung. She found that the PETE programs were inadequate in their efforts to develop pre-service teachers’ pedagogical competence due to “the fragmented curriculum framework and the rigidity of teaching practicum” (p. 3), as well as lack of



collaboration between universities' PETE programs and their apprenticeship schools. Another conclusion from this study is that, due to the superficial nature of collaboration between university teacher education programs and schools, teacher educators became unfamiliar with the reality of teaching and learning in schools, which makes it difficult for them to facilitate learning experience that is relevant, contextual and integrated for pre-service teachers.

In sum, an important lesson from this finding is that PETE programs need to nurture an understanding to their teacher educators and prospective teachers that teaching is "...inherently problematic, given the non-routine needs of students and the ever-expanding nature of knowledge," and, thus, needs to be viewed as "inherently collective, something to be developed with colleagues who are partners in learning and problem solving" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 109). Another important lesson from this finding is the need for PETE programs to promote an awareness that their curriculum provision for developing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy need to be situated within the multiple contexts affecting their experience in learning to teach English as a foreign language (see Johnson, 2006). These collective, collegial, and contextual views of teaching suggest that PETE program in this case study and other teacher education programs in similar situation implement their teacher education curriculum with an awareness that pre-service teachers will need to continue working with other teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners, students, and parents when they begin their teaching career (see Johnston, 2009). Collaborations are crucial in the process of learning to teach, and even more so in the actual tasks of teaching.

### Conclusion and Implication

Stories of EFL teacher education in this case study reveal the nature of curriculum provision that is inadequate in preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy. It is represented in three themes: *inadequacy of English proficiency in learning to teach English*, *lack of balance between theory and practice in learning to teach English*, and *inadequate facilitation for relevant, contextual, and integrated learning experience*. As discussed in the previous section, this nature of curriculum provision reflects resonance to the general perception, and also evidence, of unsatisfactory result of English education in Indonesia. There are a number of possible factors potentially contributing to this unfortunate result, and findings from this case study have shown that the unsupportive nature of curriculum provision in EFL teacher education, though rather indirectly, is a significant contributor. This case study has shown that the unsupportive nature of curriculum provision potentially contributes to prospective teachers' unpreparedness in terms of their English proficiency and pedagogy to enter the EFL teaching profession after their graduation.

A closer analysis of the three emerging themes representing the nature of curriculum provision in this study indicates that there are preconditions that have to be met by an EFL teacher education program in order to generate curriculum provision that facilitate pre-service teachers to develop adequate level of English proficiency and pedagogy. These preconditions centre around three fundamental aspects of an EFL teacher education program, namely the teacher educators, the program's administration/management, and the supporting resources. It is important for an EFL teacher education program to ensure that these three important elements meet the required standards to support the realization of the program's curriculum goals.

First it is crucial to ensure that teacher educators teaching in the program are equipped with the ability and commitment to use English both for general communication and pedagogical or academic purposes. In the context of the expanding circle of English in which exposure to English communication is rare, teacher educators' ability and commitment to use

English in their interaction with the pre-service teachers, either inside or outside of the classrooms is an important resource for a supportive curriculum provision. Besides, teacher educators need to be able to provide learning experiences that are enabling pre-service teachers to face and cope with the challenges of teaching English in an expanding circle context. As foreign language teaching involves a lot of practice as well theories, teacher educators need to equip themselves with, not only the ability to translate theories into practice, but also the ability to theorize from practice. Teacher educators' ability to demonstrate this professional attribute has lasting impact as it provides good role models for pre-service teachers both during and after their EFL teacher education program. These are challenging professional commitments for individual teacher educators, which they can only fulfil with the support from the program and other fellow teacher educators.

The second precondition for a supportive curriculum provision generated from analysis of this study's findings is ability of the program to ensure that its administration and management is conducted based on knowledge, policies, and good practices of SLTE. This implies that the program is administered and managed by a team led by a program chair who is familiar with, and keen to learn about, development in SLTE. This is a crucial element in ensuring that issues and needs related to teacher educators, pre-service teachers, teaching and learning facilities and funding are managed based on an adequate understanding of the core business of the program: education of pre-service EFL teachers. This is a broad issue which space for this article does not suffice for exploration, but among others includes issues in the administration and management of recruitment of pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and administration staffs, professional development programs for teacher educators and staffs, and curriculum development and evaluation. In EFL context such as Indonesia, this is an issue that needs continuous assertion because it is not unusual that the importance of adequacy in disciplinary knowledge in SLTE is ignored in the administration and management of PETE programs. Also, placing disciplinary knowledge in SLTE as the foundation of the administration and management of PETE programs provides invaluable academic context in nurturing shared beliefs and teamwork approach among teacher educators and staffs—an important condition for implementation of an integrated, contextual, relevant, and comprehensive teacher education curriculum (see Darling-Hammond, 2006).

The last precondition for a supportive curriculum provision generated from analysis of this study's findings is the availability of sufficient resources to support the preparation of pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy and other aspects of EFL teacher education. There are certainly many types of resources needed to support the education of pre-service English teachers. However, of notable significance nowadays is the availability of information technology, which is supportive of curriculum provision not only in the process of preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency and pedagogy, but also in the administration and management of EFL teacher education programs. In term of preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency in the expanding circle of English, availability of information technology is an invaluable resource for filling the gap due to their limited exposure to authentic English communication. With the availability of relevant learning technologies, pre-service teachers can learn in more meaningful ways continually to improve their English proficiency for communication with both native and non-native speakers of English from different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds. Just as technology is an invaluable resource for preparing pre-service teachers' English proficiency, it is equally useful for facilitating development of their pedagogy to teach English in EFL context. For example, analysis of good classroom practice in teaching EFL can be conducted by playing, pausing, and replaying video recording of good classroom practice.

Findings from this case study have shown that supportive curriculum provision to prepare competent EFL teachers requires continuous professional development for teacher

educators, ongoing improvement of programs' administration and management, and sufficient investment in provision of teaching and learning resources. The findings also indicate that it is the inability of the case study PETE program to fulfil the preconditions for supportive curriculum provision, rather than challenges of learning English and learning to teach it in the expanding circle context, that inhibited the pre-service teachers to develop better in their English proficiency and pedagogy. Due to the limitation of this study as a single case study in only one country of the expanding circle of English, multiple case studies on this issue of SLTE in several different countries of the expanding circle will become significant addition for studies on EFL teacher education. Such studies will offer more comprehensive insights for policy makers, researchers, and practitioners for better English education and teacher education in this era of global economy and culture where in significant parts of the world English remains as a foreign language.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge limitations of this study. First, findings from this single case study do not necessarily suggest similar representation of all PETE programs in Indonesia due to the large number of PETE programs in the country. Besides, questionnaires could have been used to increase the depth and representation of data gathered from pre-service teachers and teacher educators. The researcher could have also invited some of the study's participants to review the data collected and requested other qualified individuals to participate in the data analyses stage to enhance the validity and reliability of the study's findings. However, these shortcomings arguably do not diminish the potential relevance of findings and insights generated from this study in the efforts to improve the quality of PETE curriculum and (English) teacher education in other Indonesian universities. This is especially true in light of similar findings from related studies in other parts of Indonesia (see Ariatna, 2016; Luciana, 2004; Renandya, 2018) and shared commonalities among Indonesian PETE programs in terms of education system, bureaucracy, availability of resources, and the role of English in the society.

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