# ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR PREPAREDNESS IN DOING ONLINE TEACHING

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*Abstract*
*The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 made students and teachers teach and learn from home. The teaching and learning experience changed to an online environment. This research was intended to explore the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students' preparedness doing online teaching and their challenges in doing so. This research employed the mixed method strategy. The instruments were questionnaires and interviews. The participants were 68 ELESP students from batch 2017 in Sanata Dharma University. There were 4 participants involved in the interview. The findings of this research showed that the ELESP students perceived that they were prepared to do online teaching. The students perceived that the lessons they got in their study program were adequate to prepare themselves to conduct online teaching. However, the students were faced with some challenges in preparing for online teaching. This research concluded that technical problems, difficulties in creating a supportive environment for learning, and adapting to an online environment were the challenges that the ELESP students faced in their experience during the PLP-PP program.*

*Keywords: preparedness, online teaching, pre-service teachers.*

## INTRODUCTION

All levels of education are required to conduct online teaching and learning activities because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Online learning is defined as learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments utilizing various devices with internet connections. However, it is a challenge for teachers to move from offline to online environments. (Dhawan, 2020). For that reason, students in ELESP of Sanata Dharma University have to prepare for the new teaching environment.

Teachers must be prepared to ensure that students get better educational outcomes. According to Kariuki, Njoka, & Mbugua (2019), teachers' professional preparation affects the academic success of their students. However, the use of technology in fully online teaching was not yet part of the curriculum. As a result, pre-service teachers learn to teach from the beginning while doing their PLP-PP. Those create challenges that were in agreement with the findings of Prabowo et al. (2020), who stated that various factors influence instructors' preparation, including training effectiveness, self-confidence, and time management.

The purpose of this research is to understand the students' perceptions. According to Allen (2020), "perception is true beliefs that was formed by one mind that then count as their understanding to understand the relationship to the real world" (p.645). Accordingly, students' perception is a way to associate the knowledge that they have before to help them understand the world better. The students' perception of the online environment affects the decision of shaping lesson plans in the classroom for the students.

Several previous studies were used to add limitation to this study. The first study is from Ardiyansyah (2021) that discussed pre-serviced teachers' perceived readiness in teaching online in an international internship program. The findings were described in four

parts. The participants were provided with the proper equipment and equipped with good quality technical skills. The participants were confident with their ability for teaching online.

The second study, by Kusumaningrum (2018), explains how pre-service teachers' perceptions about teaching future EFL students are weak when compared to classroom implementation. Pre-service teachers, for example, believe that good knowledge of the materials, proper classroom management and a dependable teachers' attitude are indicators of effective teaching and learning environment. However, in fact, the pre-service teachers lack mastery of the materials, struggles to maintain class focus, and treat their students as peers, making it difficult to serve as a role model to them.

The next research is about teachers' perception of the pre-service English teacher's competence from Andani (2019). The researchers was interested in learning about the pedagogical and professional competency of pre-service teachers throughout their teaching practice at Muaro Jambi's Islamic Junior High School. The study revealed that pre-service teachers had strong pedagogical competence but lacked classroom management skills and material mastery.

The focus of this thesis is to understand the students' perceptions. According to Allen (2020), "perception is true beliefs that was formed by one mind that then count as their own understanding to understand the relationship to the real world" (p.645). Accordingly, students' perception is a way to associate their prior knowledge to help them understand the real world. Their perception of the online environment determines their decision in shaping their lesson plan in the classroom.

Teaching is the main objective the ELESP graduates have to master. In this modern and ever-changing era, the students of ELESP or any Education Study Program have to understand their responsibility. Smith (2018) says that, by definition, teaching is the process of fulfilling people's needs, as well as experiences and also feelings, then intervening, so they learn certain things and hopefully go beyond what is given. The intervention may take the form of questioning, listening, providing information, or explaining some phenomenon. Other than that, demonstrating a skill of process, testing their understanding and capacity, and facilitating learning activities are also examples of fulfilling people's needs.

As mentioned before, online learning is a form of distance learning or distance education (Nguyen, 2015). Therefore, online learning is not different from traditional learning other than the fact that they cannot see the students physically. Online learning has become the first and most used choice to keep education going. Students are prohibited from coming to school to reduce the spread of the pandemic. Online learning, according to Dhawan (2020), is defined as "learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere, independently, to learn and interact with instructors and other students."

Many students experienced the unreliability of internet connections when thousands of students are simultaneously connected as well as the lack of technological devices (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020). According to Dhawan (2020), "there are *n* numbers of technologies available for online education but sometimes they create a lot of difficulties." Dhawan continued with, "These difficulties and problems associated with modern technology range from downloading errors, issues with installation, login problems, problems with audio and video, and so on."

Online learning demands more from the students, for example, learners had to be independent. Online learning forces the learner to be able to manage and solve their problem (Ramadhani, 2020). However, students in an online environment procrastinate more on their assignments (Yilmaz, 2017). This behavior reflects on the neglected students' discipline. Teachers need to focus on students' participation in class because participation in the class is closely related to their discipline. It can be difficult for teachers to maintain a strong social presence in an online environment (Dyer, Aroz, & Larson, 2018). Furthermore, Xie, Han, Zhang, Gao, and He (2021) said that online courses are not just online versions of offline courses since not all course components are suited for online classes.

Pre-service teachers' preparedness is the focus of this research. According to Kiamba and Mutua (2017), teacher preparedness relies on the teacher's education which refers to the specific programs that help the teacher in developing teaching quality and effective strategies in teaching. Furthermore, the preparation also functions as a way to encourage the teacher in teaching a class. The pre-service teacher gets the teacher education to help them relieve any fear as teachers (Kiamba & Mutua, 2017).

In creating an effective learning experience, the teacher needs to involve media in their lesson plan. Several discussions of the importance of multimedia representation, video-based assignments, and social presence in an online classroom have been made (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). Using several media in a classroom helps the teacher to create a pleasant learning experience.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed the mixed method strategy to collect and analyze the data to answer the research questions. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), the researchers in mixed-method research collects and analyzes data in response to research questions, integrates data and the results, organizes and frames the procedures within theory and philosophy (p.10)

The research was conducted in the ELESP of Sanata Dharma University in the year 2020. The questionnaire was distributed through a *WhatsApp* group among the students of batch 2017. The interview was done via *WhatsApp* messages. For this research, the researchers selected ELESP students from the 2017 batch. There were 68 ELESP students who responded to the questionnaire. According to Creswell (2009), the sequential explanatory strategy is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in a second phase to build on the results of the initial quantitative results.

The researchers used a questionnaire to the participants to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire was composed using the Likert scale to rate the participants' answers. Joshi, et. al. (2015) explains that "Likert scales are the examples of such scales in Psychometrics used widely in social and science & educational research." The scale was "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", and "strongly agree". The data from the questionnaire was used to answer both of the research questions. The researchers wanted to know if the programs that they took in ELESP were enough to help them prepare and conduct online teaching in school during the *PLP PP* program. Also, the questionnaire asked the participants whether they were afraid to teach online. Also, the questionnaire asked the things they needed to prepare for the online teaching. The questionnaire also asked the devices that the participants use and the applications and websites that they use to conduct online teaching. The questionnaire was in the form of *Google forms*.

To gather the data in qualitative form, the researchers conducted an interview with 4 selected participants. The participants for the interview were selected by a purposive sampling method. The interview questions were about their perception of preparedness and their challenges in online teaching.

The first step to analyze the data was to prepare the data. Then explored the data; coded the data; refined the codes and develop findings from the codes; and validated the findings were the rest of the steps to analyze the data. The researchers used a transcribed data from the interviews then put it into word processing files for analysis. The next step was to explore the data. This means that the researchers identified broad trends from the database. Exploring the data means that the researchers read through all the data to develop a general understanding of the database. The researchers then made notes to determine the codes. After that, the researchers refined the codes then summarize the code to find the result and interpreted the meaning of the results. Then, the researchers represented the result of the analysis in summary in the form of statements, cited from the interview transcription. The last step was to validate. The researchers used triangulation to validate the data. The triangulation was from the questionnaire findings, the interview results, and the previous theories.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### *The ELESP Students' Perception on Their Preparedness in Doing Online Teaching*

The research tries to understand whether the pre-service teachers are prepared to teach in an online environment and to know their challenges in doing online teaching. According to the findings, the pre-service teachers perceive to be prepared in doing online teaching.

The section below presents the data from the questionnaire to answer the first research question. The result of the six questions about students' perception of their preparedness is shown in table 1.

Table 1
Students' perception of their preparedness of doing online teaching

| Statements | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The programs or courses on ELESP were enough to assist the online teaching. | 0% | 2.9% | 54.4% | 42.6% |
| 2. I was confident in my online teaching strategies. | 0% | 20.6% | 52.9% | 26.5% |
| 3. I had no fear in preparing for my online class. | 7.4% | 44.1% | 30.9% | 17.6% |
| 4. I used various technologies to do the online teaching. | 0% | 4.4% | 51.5% | 44.1% |
| 5. I used apps/websites to create assignments in my online class. | 0% | 0% | 25% | 75% |
| 6. I was comfortable in making videos to deliver my materials. | 5.9% | 20.6% | 50% | 23.5% |

The finding shows that 42.6% of the participants strongly agreed, and 54.4% agreed that ELESP's courses were beneficial in assisting them with their online teaching. For the second

statement, the majority of the participants agreed that they were confident in their online teaching strategies. However, the finding shows that 51.5% of participants disagreed that they had no fear in preparing for the online classes that they conducted.

The pre-service teacher was prepared to teach in an online environment. This finding was consistent with Kiamba and Mutua (2017)'s view toward teachers' preparedness. They said that teacher preparedness relies on the teacher's education which refers to the specific programs that help the teacher in developing their teaching quality and effective strategies in teaching. Having adequate education helped the pre-service teacher to prepare their teaching strategies, to create assignments using websites and applications, and also to assess the students.

The majority of the participants used various devices, websites, and applications in doing online teaching. All of the participants agreed that they used various websites and applications to make several assignments, materials, and manage the score of their students. The participants perceive to be comfortable in making videos. Making videos was an alternative to a virtual meeting in a classroom. The videos were made to substitute for the teacher's presence in the class.

The finding showed that most of the participants used applications and websites when preparing and doing their online teaching. This finding recognized the theory from Mehta and Aguilera (2020) about the increased social setting in the online presence. The pre-service teacher used the application and websites to their advantage.

### The ELESP Students' Challenges in Doing the Online Teaching

When doing online teaching or offline teaching, teachers must encounter any problems and challenges. The problems can be very different for online and offline teaching. This research focuses on the challenges that the pre-service teacher encounter when doing online teaching. The result of the next set of questions in the questionnaire is presented in table 2.

Table 2
Students' challenges in doing online teaching

| Statements | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Technical errors often happened when teaching. | 1.5% | 19.1% | 27.9% | 51.5% |
| 8. Internet connection was the main obstacle in doing online teaching. | 7.4% | 16.2% | 29.4% | 47.1% |
| 9. Students did not submit the online assignments or did not submit them on time. | 1.5% | 23.5% | 29.4% | 45.6% |
| 10. I had difficulties in making interactive teaching in an online classroom. | 7.4% | 25% | 35.3% | 32.4% |
| 11. I had difficulties in finding ways to teach the materials. | 11.8% | 38.2% | 39.7% | 10.3 % |
| 12. It was difficult to maintain the class focus. | 5.9% | 11.8% | 47.1% | 35.3% |
| 13. I had difficulties in creating speaking skill-based assignments. | 7.4% | 35.3% | 30.9% | 26.5% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. The materials to be taught are designed for offline classrooms. | 10.3% | 36.8% | 38.2% | 14.7% |

As shown in table 4.2, we know that 51.5% of the participants strongly agree that technical errors often happened when teaching. The challenges that the majority of the participants encountered were that of technical difficulties. As mentioned before, the fear that the participants faced other than class engagement was technical problems. On a similar topic, 76.5% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that internet connection became the main obstacle in doing online teaching.

For statement 9, the majority of the participants agreed that they were students who does not submit their assignments. Next, table 4.2 showed that 69.2% of the participants agreed with statement number 10. The majority of the participants agreed that it was difficult to create interactive teaching in an online classroom environment. However, the result of statement 11 was divided in half. Fifty percent of the participant disagree that they had difficulties in finding ways to teach the materials. The other half agreed with the statement. This shows that finding ways to teach the materials might be one of the prominent problems that the pre-service teacher perceived they had.

As much as 82.4% of the participants agreed that it was hard to maintain the class' focus. In online teaching, the students and the teacher were not physically in a classroom together. The teacher's presence in a classroom was important to retain the class' focus. For statement 13, 30.9% agreed and 26.5% strongly agreed that it was difficult to create speaking skill-based assignments. For statement 14, 38.2% agreed and 14.7% strongly agreed that the materials to be taught were designed for offline classrooms.

The challenges are grouped into three main ideas. There are challenges related to technical problems, challenges in creating a supportive environment, and challenges related to adapting to an online learning environment.

The challenges related to the technical problems were common challenges faced by the pre-service teachers. Technology created a lot of anxiety for the pre-service teachers. The participant perceived the lack of virtual presence reduced the students' engagement. A participant expressed that the availability of the internet connection, or the lack thereof, influenced the principal decision to create an asynchronous class.

> "The teacher did not provide a zoom call to help teach in the classroom. So, it's my initiative to make a video. Then, a deeper explanation will be given in the class' group chat. However, the students did not respond to my messages. I was uncertain that the student understands my explanation." (Participant 3)

When the teacher or school did not put any rules for teaching, the participants use any program that they feel comfortable with to teach. Zoom video call and google classroom were the first choices to conduct an online class. Sometimes, geographical circumstances help create rule for conducting an online class.

> "The internet connection influences the school principal to make a new rule that avoids synchronize classrooms because some students were unable to get good internet access." (Participant 1).

According to Dhawan (2020), "there are n number of technologies available for online education but sometimes they create a lot of difficulties." The pre-service teachers were having trouble with internet problems and because internet connection becomes important in an online learning environment, it becomes a problem when there were no internet connections to be used in teaching. A lot of the problems came from the students not having stabilized internet connection to continue with the learning process. The problems from the teacher came from difficulties in having the internet problem. Some of the pre-service teachers express their feeling towards the device that they have to use. The pre-service teachers felt like they need to improve their technical skills to be able to create an effective online learning experience.

A problem with the students can alter the flow of the teaching in the classroom. The first problem is the lack of participation in the teaching activity. Because the students did not participate in a classroom, the pre-service teacher was afraid to teach online. The other challenge that the pre-service teacher encounters is the difficulty of building a relationship with the students in the classroom. Having a good first impression and building a good relationship is mandatory activity at least at the beginning of a class. This shows that building relationships with the students is perceived to be very important by the pre-service teachers. In their research, Dyer, Aroz, & Larson (2018) says that having a social presence in the class is important for the teacher to control the students.

The next challenge is to adapt to an online environment. The lack of virtual meetings with students is the next obstacle. Another option was to hold the meeting through group chat with the entire class. However, the absence of video conferencing as a substitute for face-to-face meetings is considered inadequate. When there is no virtual meeting, the problem is a lack of communication. This problem is linked to a low level of student participation in class. At the very least, the teacher can ask the pupils to refocus their attention during the virtual meeting.

This challenge was also experienced by participant 4. They perceived that not knowing the students was a problem. Getting to know the students is apparently an important step in the teaching strategy of the pre-service teacher.

> "I'm having difficulties when communicating with the students because we didn't have virtual meetings." (Participant 1)

Other than that, the challenge was that they did not know whether the students were following the pace of the class or not. Sometimes, the pre-service teachers could not give an explanation of the materials verbally. Therefore, they did not know if the students already understand the materials or not.

> "It became hard when I couldn't make sure whether the students were listening or not. It made me hesitate to continue my teaching flow and decrease my confidence." (Participant 3)

According to Smith (2018), the center of teaching is the enthusiasm and commitment to engage people in learning. When the students did not have the enthusiasm and commitment to learning, it becomes a problem in the learning activity. The majority of the pre-service teachers' answers are consistent with the theory from Yilmaz (2017) about students' discipline. The finding showed that students did not submit their assignments on time.

According to Yilmaz (2017), students' discipline is one of the challenges in doing online learning. Students in an online environment procrastinate more on their assignments.

The next problem was adapting to the online environment. Educators have to have a deep understanding of the subject they teach. With that said, there are times when we have to increase our knowledge as time goes. There are several ways to prepare the lessons, for example, through reading, watching YouTube videos, and looking at other resources (Smith, 2018). According to Xie, Han, Zhang, Gao, and He (2021), not all parts of offline courses are suitable for online courses. The researchers asked the pre-service about their difficulties in creating assignments and took an example of creating speaking skill-based assignments and written-based assignments. The result was not consistent with the theory by Xie, et al (2021). The pre-service teacher did not have difficulties in making speaking skill-based assignments when doing online teaching in PLP-PP program. However, the pre-service teacher perceived that the materials that they get were designed to be taught in an offline classroom.

### *The Solution to the Challenges*

The challenges that the pre-service teachers faced were met with solutions that they developed themselves. Some of the pre-service teachers consulted with the teachers at the school that they taught to relieve their fear in teaching.

> "I was afraid at first but the teacher helped prepare the students by saying, 'Your participation is important for additional scores'. This helps especially for students who were ambitious enough to get additional scores. However, I was not lucky enough to have those ambitious students in all of my classes." (Participant 2)

The pre-service teachers make the students engaged in the classroom by initiating brief conversations with the students before the class began and during the class to gain the students' attention.

> "I tried to communicate with the students before the class begin. I tried to have a conversation on *WhatsApp* Group with the students." (Participant 1)
> "I gave the students a chance to give any feedback on the way the learning goes or ask any questions that they still have." (Participant 2)
> "I appreciated my students' responses and gave them feedback to help them improve. I did these things to make the students feel cared for and joy for enjoying their class." (Participant 4)

Next, the pre-service teachers want to improve the availability of their devices to keep up with the online environment. Also, they tried to adjust their teaching flow to match the students' flow. The pre-service teacher had the need to create a supportive environment. The solution to the lack of students' participation was to create personal feedback personally to the students using the Google Classroom application.

### CONCLUSION

The result of the research suggested that the ELESP students are prepared to do online teaching. The majority of the participants stated that the ELESP courses, such as CALL, LTM, and Micro-Teaching, are sufficient to help them teach online. The pre-service teacher also utilizes several apps, webs, and devices to conduct the online teaching. They also felt

confident with their teaching strategy but are afraid to conduct online teaching in general. The fear was generated from both the inside and the outside factors. Both internal and external factors contributed to the fear. Some of the factors were technical issues, a lack of student participation in class, the anxiety of not providing an acceptable explanation, and the fear of not preparing enough.

However, the participants already had the initiative to contact the students privately and ask them if they had any problems in class. They also asked questions before the class started as an icebreaker and again in the middle of the class to keep their focus on the lesson.

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