

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to investigate the experiences of EFL novice teachers during online learning in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter will depict crucial aspects of this research such as the background of the study, the scope of the study, the research question, purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 brought unprecedented disruptions to educational systems worldwide and forced an abrupt shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to online and remote learning environments. In many countries, including those where English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL), this transition created significant challenges for both teachers and students, as they were compelled to adapt to new instructional practices in a relatively short amount of time. The pandemic not only transformed the educational landscape but also redefined the role of teachers as facilitators of learning through digital platforms, requiring the mastery of various technological tools, online pedagogical strategies, and new forms of assessment. While experienced teachers may have been able to rely on pedagogical mastery and existing classroom management routines, novice teachers—those in their first years of teaching confronted an even more demanding situation as they lacked

both professional teaching experience and familiarity with online instructional modalities.

Novice teachers in the EFL context typically face challenges related to classroom management, lesson planning, instructional decision-making, and building confidence in their identity as educators. These issues are commonly addressed through mentoring programs, peer support, and gradual professional development experiences in conventional settings. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these support structures and created additional layers of difficulty. Many EFL novice teachers were required to teach online immediately after attaining their degrees, often with insufficient preparation for virtual pedagogical practices. In addition, they faced pressure to develop technical skills to operate platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, WhatsApp, Edmodo, Microsoft Teams, and various Learning Management Systems (LMS). The sudden reliance on technology not only challenged their instructional capabilities but also influenced their motivation, psychological well-being, and professional identity formation.

Furthermore, the shift to online learning exposed inequalities in technological access, digital literacy, and student engagement. In many regions, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas, unstable internet access and limited availability of digital devices hindered the effectiveness of online instruction. This situation significantly affected EFL novice teachers' ability to conduct speaking practice, provide immediate feedback, and monitor learner progress. As a result, teaching English skills especially speaking and listening,

which rely heavily on interaction became extremely difficult to carry out in remote learning environments. Consequently, many novice teachers reported feeling overwhelmed, underprepared, and professionally isolated as they attempted to navigate their instructional duties without adequate institutional guidance and technological support.

Despite these challenges, the pandemic also opened new opportunities for growth and innovation among novice teachers. Many of them developed adaptive strategies, explored digital learning resources, and cultivated creativity in lesson delivery to sustain student interest and participation. The pandemic also accelerated the professional development of novice teachers in terms of technological literacy and digital pedagogy, which are increasingly essential competencies in 21st-century education. However, research on how EFL novice teachers experienced this process, the types of challenges they encountered, and the coping mechanisms they adopted remains relatively limited. Previous studies tend to focus more on experienced teachers, student learning outcomes, or general implementation of online learning rather than specifically examining the experiences of novice teachers in EFL contexts.

This gap underlines the need to investigate EFL novice teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic to gain deeper insights into their challenges, strategies, emotional struggles, pedagogical transformations, and professional identity development. Understanding their experiences is particularly important because novice teachers represent the next generation of educators who will shape the future of language teaching. Their ability to adapt and thrive in

times of crisis may influence not only their personal career trajectories but also the quality of English language education in the post-pandemic scenario.

Therefore, this study aims to explore EFL novice teachers' experiences in teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the difficulties they faced, the instructional strategies they employed, and the forms of support they received from institutions and peers. By documenting their lived experiences, the research intends to contribute to the understanding of how novice teachers develop resilience, pedagogical competence, and professional identity in the face of global educational disruptions. In addition, the findings of this study are expected to provide valuable implications for teacher education programs, school administrators, and policymakers in improving teacher training, mentorship models, and crisis-responsive instructional planning.

In recent years, new beginnings might be something frustrating or promising for several people (Sali & Kecik, 2018). Some universities or schools have been experiencing an unprecedented massive "migration" from traditional in-class face-to-face education to online education (Bao, 2020). In a short time period, millions of lecturers and teachers started to teach in front of a computer screen, and their students have to stay at home and take the courses online.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly transformed the global education system, leading to the unprecedented suspension of face-to-face instruction and the rapid adoption of online learning. Schools and universities worldwide were compelled to implement emergency remote teaching (ERT) to ensure the continuity of learning. While this shift enabled educational activities to

continue, it also introduced significant challenges, particularly in contexts where technological infrastructure and digital literacy were limited. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the sudden transition posed complex difficulties, as language learning heavily depends on interaction, communication, and immediate feedback.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the educational landscape and posed significant challenges for EFL novice teachers, making their experiences a vital subject of academic inquiry. Investigating these experiences can enhance our understanding of the complexities of language teaching in times of crisis and provide insights that may guide future innovations in teacher preparation and professional development. Through this research, it is anticipated that practical recommendations will emerge to better support novice teachers in both current and future learning environments, ultimately contributing to the advancement of English language education in a rapidly changing world.

In many developing regions, including Indonesia, the implementation of online learning during the pandemic exposed systemic inequalities in access to technology and internet connectivity. Teachers and students alike encountered obstacles such as unstable internet networks, limited access to digital devices, and insufficient familiarity with online learning platforms. These challenges affected the effectiveness of English instruction and required teachers to rapidly adapt their teaching practices without adequate preparation or support.

Among those most affected by this transition were novice EFL teachers. Novice teachers, generally defined as educators with limited professional teaching

experience, are still in the process of developing pedagogical competence, classroom management skills, and professional identity. Under normal circumstances, novice teachers already face various challenges in their early careers. The sudden shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges, placing novice teachers in an unfamiliar and demanding instructional environment.

Teaching extends beyond the simple transmission of knowledge from instructors to learners; it inherently involves continuous interpersonal interaction throughout the teaching–learning process. As a result, teaching is fundamentally emotional in nature (Hargreaves, 1998; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). These ongoing relational dynamics demand significant emotional engagement from both teachers and students, leading scholars to conceptualize teaching as a form of emotional work (King, 2016). Empirical evidence suggests that teachers frequently experience considerable stress, particularly when attempting to maintain student discipline, yet they are often expected to suppress their genuine emotional responses to sustain students’ attention and classroom order (Loh & Liew, 2016). Similarly, Song (2021) notes that school cultures implicitly prescribe appropriate emotional displays for teachers such as calmness, empathy, and kindness while discouraging expressions of anger, anxiety, or vulnerability, which are perceived as detrimental to effective instruction.

Consequently, when educators regulate or alter their authentic emotions to align with institutional expectations, they engage in emotional labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Emotional labor refers to the intentional regulation of emotional

expressions, including suppressing, exaggerating, or fabricating emotions to meet situational demands (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). Emotional regulation is widely regarded as an essential professional competence for teachers (Hargreaves, 1998; Sutton, 2004), highlighting the importance of examining teachers' emotional experiences and regulatory practices. Hochschild (1983) identifies two primary strategies for managing emotional expressions: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting involves altering outward emotional displays without changing underlying feelings, requiring teachers to mask or feign emotions, a practice often associated with emotional dissonance and increased stress (Auger & Formentin, 2021). In contrast, deep acting entails transforming one's internal emotional state to genuinely experience emotions that align with professional expectations.

Grandey (2000) further aligns emotional labor with Gross's (1998) framework of emotion regulation, emphasizing individuals' capacity to consciously manage their emotional responses. This perspective underscores that both surface and deep acting represent forms of emotion regulation. Mastery of such emotional regulation skills is a defining attribute of effective teaching; however, these competencies remain insufficiently addressed within teacher education programs (Yin, 2016).

Although emotional labor has gained scholarly attention in education, research within the field of language teaching only began to emerge in the early 2000s (Gkonou & Miller, 2019). While existing studies have extensively documented EFL novice teachers' beliefs and instructional practices, their

emotional labor remains underexplored (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2021). Novice teachers face distinct challenges as they navigate school and classroom cultures, manage student behavior, prepare instructional materials, and respond to institutional expectations (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). Transitioning from pre-service preparation to full-time teaching is often both stimulating and overwhelming, even under typical circumstances (Moorhouse, 2021).

These challenges have been significantly intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures forced teachers to rapidly transition to online instruction, introducing new professional demands and substantially increasing stress levels (Martin & Mulvihill, 2021; Pressley, 2021). Many educators were required to adapt to digital teaching environments with minimal training or prior experience (MacIntyre et al., 2020), while simultaneously motivating students to remain engaged in virtual learning contexts (Beames et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2021). Such abrupt changes left many teachers both pedagogically and psychologically fatigued. Farley et al. (2021) identify shifts in instructional content and delivery, limited access to technology, challenges related to student engagement, and work–life balance issues as key contributors to teachers' emotional labor during this period.

Research focusing on novice teachers during the pandemic reveals heightened emotional strain resulting from rapid technological adaptation and unstable teaching conditions. Sudden shifts in instructional modalities generated feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration among novice teachers, as they confronted complex pedagogical dilemmas in unfamiliar online environments

(Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020). Moorhouse (2021) similarly reports that newly qualified teachers felt inadequately prepared for online teaching in mid-2020. Reflective accounts highlight difficulties in fostering student participation and managing learners who were disengaged or unresponsive in virtual classrooms. However, much of this research emphasizes practical challenges rather than explicitly examining novice teachers' emotional labor.

Previous studies have reported that novice EFL teachers experienced difficulties in designing online learning materials, maintaining student engagement, managing assessment, and integrating technology into language teaching. In addition to pedagogical and technical issues, novice teachers also encountered emotional challenges, including stress, anxiety, and reduced self-confidence. These difficulties were often exacerbated by students' limited readiness for online learning and the lack of institutional support and mentoring during the pandemic.

Although a growing body of research has explored EFL teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, many studies have focused on experienced teachers or have examined general challenges of online teaching. Research specifically addressing the experiences of novice EFL teachers, particularly in localized contexts, remains limited. Understanding novice teachers' experiences is crucial, as their early professional challenges may influence their long-term teaching effectiveness, professional development, and retention in the teaching profession.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of EFL novice teachers in teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining the challenges they faced, the strategies they employed, and the implications for their professional development, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of novice teachers' realities during emergency remote teaching. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for teacher education programs, policymakers, and future researchers in improving support systems and instructional practices for novice EFL teachers in both crisis and post-pandemic educational contexts.

However, for novice teachers, new beginnings may imply frustration and disappointment (Sali & Kecik, 2018). As widely recognized and documented in the research literature, initial years of teaching have been marked with confusions, challenges and tensions (Farrell, 2003; Farrell, 2006; Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001; Veenman, 1984). Research in the educational literature has paid considerable attention to the challenges of the first years of teaching. Veenman (1984) reported problems covering areas such as: classroom management, assessment, relationships with parents, administrators, and coworkers, heavy teaching load, knowledge of subject matter and school rules.

Furthermore, another problem that can be seen is the emergence of a pandemic that creates restrictions when teaching. Government and the Ministry of Education issued regulations for teachers, students, parents, and schools to accept a transition period, from face-to-face classes to online learning where the teaching and learning process is carried out through e-learning. Taradisa, Nidia, Jarmita,

and Nida (2020) emphasized that even though the pandemic has not been over yet, the learning system should remain effective. As a novice teacher, this is a big challenge and very new to experience at this time.

Novice EFL teachers need to shape their new professional identity while at the same time enabling their personal identity to persist. Teachers encounter challenges in navigating themselves in the journey of constructing their professional identity. The challenges cause tension, stress, or burn out. Novice teachers tend to leave the job early, since they could not alter challenging situations into positive experiences (Meijer, Graaf, & Meirink, 2011). One of the coping strategies that teachers can implement is being resilient. Understanding resilience is pivotal to rebound from a difficult situation.

The Covid-19 pandemic gives restrictions on several activities such as the economy, social distancing, and education. In education, the Government and the Ministry of Education issued regulations for teachers, students, parents, and schools to accept a transition period, from face-to-face classes to online learning where the teaching and learning process is carried out through e-learning. Taradisa et al. (2020) emphasized that even though the pandemic has not been over yet, the learning system should remain effective. Educators must make students feel comfortable in learning despite the pandemic, in students' minds education should not be ended in spite of the plague ongoing. Tanveer (2015) stated that the prospect of e-learning should be introduced with the intention of enabling each student to obtain learning opportunities in a more flexible way.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly transformed the global education system, leading to the unprecedented suspension of face-to-face instruction and the rapid adoption of online learning. Schools and universities worldwide were compelled to implement emergency remote teaching (ERT) to ensure the continuity of learning. While this shift enabled educational activities to continue, it also introduced significant challenges, particularly in contexts where technological infrastructure and digital literacy were limited. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the sudden transition posed complex difficulties, as language learning heavily depends on interaction, communication, and immediate feedback.

In many developing regions, including Indonesia, the implementation of online learning during the pandemic exposed systemic inequalities in access to technology and internet connectivity. Teachers and students alike encountered obstacles such as unstable internet networks, limited access to digital devices, and insufficient familiarity with online learning platforms. These challenges affected the effectiveness of English instruction and required teachers to rapidly adapt their teaching practices without adequate preparation or support.

Among those most affected by this transition were novice EFL teachers. Novice teachers, generally defined as educators with limited professional teaching experience, are still in the process of developing pedagogical competence, classroom management skills, and professional identity. Under normal circumstances, novice teachers already face various challenges in their early careers. The sudden shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic

intensified these challenges, placing novice teachers in an unfamiliar and demanding instructional environment.

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Given the prolonged and uncertain nature of the pandemic, it is critical to foreground teachers' emotional coping strategies. Gregersen et al. (2021) argue that investigating teacher resilience during crises provides valuable insights into how educators manage emotional labor. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to explore the emotional labor experienced by EFL novice teachers as they

adapted to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Although emotional labor among teachers has been examined in prior research, most studies were conducted before the pandemic and primarily focused on experienced teachers, leaving novice EFL teachers largely unexamined.

Moreover, research on the emotional implications of COVID-19 for novice teachers remains limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. Existing studies have largely centered on teachers' and students' strategies for adjusting to online learning environments (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2021; Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021), with little attention paid to teachers' emotional labor. This study emerged from an analysis of novice teachers' reflective accounts of critical incidents encountered during their early teaching careers. Drawing on Grandey's (2000) interactive model of emotional labor, this research seeks to illuminate EFL novice teachers' emotional experiences and their strategies for regulating emotions in online teaching contexts. Specifically, the study aims to (1) examine emotional experiences that give rise to emotional labor during online teaching amid COVID-19 and (2) identify the strategies novice teachers employ to manage their emotional labor, insights that may inform teacher education programs and promote effective teaching and teacher well-being (Burić & Frenzel, 2021).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of EFL novice teachers in teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining the challenges they faced, the strategies they employed, and the implications for their professional development, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding

of novice teachers' realities during emergency remote teaching. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for teacher education programs, policymakers, and future researchers in improving support systems and instructional practices for novice EFL teachers in both crisis and post-pandemic educational contexts.

E-learning must be made more efficient, interesting and fun. Zhang, Zhao, Zhou, and Nunamaker (2004) defined e-learning as a teaching and learning activity that involves an online process due to its capability of carrying out learning activities, there could be real arguments for the growth of the field of education. This approach supports new possibilities for teaching and learning in many areas for learning the way this method works unlike conventional classroom settings.

In the world context, the researcher has discovered several kinds of research that regard about EFL novice teacher but they focus on several aspects; for example, classroom aspect (Kang & Chang, 2013; Erkmen, 2014) and reflections of a novice EFL teacher (Farrel & Avejic, 2020; Farrell & Stanclik, 2021). Also, EFL novice teacher challenges (Sali & Kecik, 2018; Amin & Rahimi, 2018). There is no researcher doing research about novice EFL teacher experience in teaching during pandemic.

In Indonesia several researchers do research about EFL novice teachers, but they focus on other aspects; investigating stress factors and perception of the use of peer assessment (Diasti, 2021). Wulandari, Purwati, Setiawan, and Anam (2021) investigate Indonesian novice EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of peer

assessment in a speaking class as well as its benefits and challenges. Furthermore, Nugroho and Atmojo (2021) examine EFL learners' perception toward the efficacy of digital learning of English activities beyond the classroom to highlight learning activities of English by means of digital devices in social distancing measures during the global pandemic. However, there is no research about novice EFL teacher experience in teaching during pandemic. In this research, the researcher attempts to know their experiences while teaching the students in online class. This study will focus on EFL novice teachers' experience in teaching English during Covid-19 pandemic. The reason is because the theory they got on campus is only how to teach face-to-face as well as when they do the PPL II. It was not online learning like the current situation today. That is why this study will focus to see what are the experiences of EFL novice teachers.

1.2 Scope of the study

This study is focused on the EFL novice teachers' experience of online learning in schools through online service during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is only involved seven EFL novice teachers who agree to be involved in this research. Moreover, this study is focus on the reflection data collected by researchers from EFL novice teachers.

1.3 Research Question

In line with the background of the study that has been described before, researchers formulated the research question on what are EFL novice teachers' experiences in teaching English during COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Based on the background above, this present study is aiming to explore the experiences of EFL novice teachers in e-learning performance towards teaching English during the covid-19 pandemic.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Directed from the purpose of the study, this study offers important insight and practical aspects. It is hoped that the finding of this study can make other pre-service teachers or novice teachers become more professional in teaching, especially through online service learning during the pandemic for situations that are rarely done.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the used terms will be defined as the following.

EFL novice teacher: is teachers' who have just graduated from college then immediately teach in schools with the knowledge that they got during PPL II or microteaching class. In this study, it focuses on EFL novice teachers who just graduate from the college in the year 2020 from one institution in Kendari where they directly teach in the school that applies online learning.

Teaching in pandemic COVID-19: is teaching using a new method, where the learning that was originally face to face learning becomes distance learning or online learning, which really requires students to always access the internet in order to carry out the learning process well. As we can see nowadays is very

popular among teachers and students are the Zoom Meeting application, which makes it easier for teachers and students to learn by online.

