EXPLORING THE DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVES OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS ON INNOVATIVE TEACHING APPROACHES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CIREBON

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Article Information	ABSTRACT (11 pt)
	This study explores the dynamic perspectives of pre-service English teachers on innovative teaching approaches in English language education in Cirebon, Indonesia. With the increasing demand for 21st-century skills and the global shift toward student-centered and technology-integrated instruction, this research investigates how future educators perceive and implement innovation during their teaching practicum. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis involving three pre-service teachers from Syekh Nurjati State Islamic Cyber University. Thematic analysis revealed that participants highly value innovation—particularly project-based learning, gamification, and technology integration—as effective means to promote engagement, creativity, and communicative competence. However, several challenges emerged, such as lack of technological infrastructure, limited training, and difficulty managing classroom behavior during innovative implementation. These findings underscore the need for teacher education programs to provide more practical training and institutional support to empower future educators in adopting adaptive and innovative pedagogical practices.
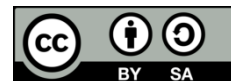
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, English has become an essential global language, supporting international communication, access to knowledge, and employability (Augustin, 2015). This global role of English has intensified the demand for innovative and responsive English language teaching that goes beyond rote learning and grammar translation. Education systems are now under pressure to align with digital advancements and student-centered learning paradigms, ensuring that learners can actively communicate, collaborate, and critically engage with information in global contexts. As a result, teachers are increasingly expected to design learning experiences that are dynamic, interactive, and technology-rich.

In Indonesia, English education has been undergoing a gradual pedagogical transformation from traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more interactive, learner-driven models (Iriance, 2016). These changes reflect global educational trends that prioritize active learning, collaboration, and digital literacy. However, achieving this

transformation is not merely a matter of changing classroom routines; it requires teachers to master pedagogical content knowledge while simultaneously integrating modern tools, digital platforms, and innovative strategies into their instructional practices. This shift demands both technical proficiency and pedagogical creativity.

Despite the urgency for change, pre-service teachers often face significant barriers when attempting to adopt innovative approaches during their professional training. Common challenges include insufficient technological infrastructure, such as unstable internet connections or limited access to digital devices in schools. Many also struggle with limited practical exposure to real classrooms and the difficulty of bridging theory with practice (Ucar & Bozkaya, 2016; Tarajová & Metruk, 2020). Without opportunities to apply innovative approaches in authentic settings, pre-service teachers may find it challenging to translate their academic understanding into effective classroom action.

Another critical challenge is the complexity of classroom management when using innovative methods. Approaches such as gamification, project-based learning (PBL), and digital media integration require careful planning, differentiated support, and proactive behavior management—skills that novice teachers may not have fully developed. The lack of experience in orchestrating student-centered learning activities can lead to frustration, improvisation, or a reversion to safer, teacher-dominated methods. This situation risks producing graduates who are technically aware of innovation but lack the confidence and competence to implement it effectively in real-world classrooms.

The role of pre-service teacher education is therefore crucial. Bedir (2019) highlights that teacher preparation programs represent a critical phase in shaping competent and adaptive educators. Modern teacher development is increasingly viewed as a dynamic and reflective process, where teachers must continuously adapt to social, technological, and pedagogical change (Fatahillah & Afadh, 2022). English teachers are now expected to act not merely as knowledge transmitters but as facilitators of learning, capable of designing meaningful activities, accommodating diverse learner needs, and leveraging technology to foster communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Yet in Indonesia, traditional, exam-oriented instruction still dominates, and institutional support for pedagogical innovation remains uneven.

Research on innovative teaching approaches—including task-based language teaching, problem-solving projects, and blended learning—has consistently shown their positive impact on student engagement, motivation, and communicative competence (Bhandari, 2020; Charkas, 2018). However, successful implementation of these strategies requires more than theoretical familiarity. Teachers need hands-on teaching experience, ongoing mentorship, and a supportive school environment that encourages experimentation, reflection, and professional growth (Cirillo et al., 2020; Kartal & Bektas, 2020). Without these structural supports, even well-prepared graduates may feel constrained to adopt innovative strategies in practice.

In the Indonesian context, the gap between teacher education and classroom realities remains a pressing concern. While universities increasingly expose pre-service teachers to contemporary methods and educational technology, school contexts often remain resource-limited and tradition-bound. The mismatch between what is taught in coursework and what can realistically be applied during practicum creates a confidence gap, leaving some novice teachers uncertain about how to implement creative and technology-enhanced learning while meeting school expectations.

Another layer of complexity lies in institutional culture and policy support. Some schools encourage experimentation with digital tools and student-centered models, while

others prioritize exam results and curriculum compliance over pedagogical innovation. This inconsistency in support systems affects how far pre-service teachers can go in adapting modern strategies. Without clear mentoring and structured feedback, they may default to conventional, safer approaches rather than risk trying new techniques in unsupportive environments.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the dynamic perspectives of pre-service English teachers at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon regarding innovative teaching approaches. Specifically, it explores how these novice teachers define, apply, and reflect on pedagogical innovation during their practicum and the challenges they encounter in the process. By employing a qualitative case study design, the research aims to provide rich, context-sensitive insights into the realities of innovation in teacher preparation programs. Findings from this study are expected to inform curricular improvement, mentoring practices, and institutional policies that can better equip future English teachers to thrive in 21st-century classrooms.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the dynamic perspectives of pre-service English teachers on innovative teaching approaches. A qualitative case study was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of complex, context-bound experiences and provides a rich, holistic understanding of how novice teachers perceive and enact pedagogical innovation (Yin, 2018). The case focused on a single institutional setting to capture contextual realities, including available resources, school culture, and curricular expectations that influence the adoption of innovative strategies.

The research was conducted at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Indonesia, targeting the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department. Participants were three final-year pre-service English teachers who had completed their teaching practicum (PPL) in local partner schools and demonstrated active attempts to implement innovative instructional strategies such as project-based learning (PBL), gamification, and technology-enhanced instruction. The selection process applied purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018), as the researcher sought participants with relevant, information-rich experiences rather than random representation. Initial outreach was made to 34 students through an online questionnaire designed to map their teaching experiences, use of innovative strategies, and perceived challenges. Based on the responses, three participants who showed notable engagement with innovative practices and were willing to reflect deeply on their experiences were invited for in-depth interviews.

The data collection spanned two months and utilized three complementary sources to achieve methodological triangulation:

a) Online questionnaires distributed to 34 pre-service teachers to obtain an overview of innovative practices and self-reported challenges.

b) Semi-structured interviews with three selected participants, each lasting 45–60 minutes, conducted via secure online video platforms. Interview questions explored their understanding of innovation, experiences applying methods such as PBL and gamification, integration of digital tools, classroom challenges, and reflections on their professional identity development.

c) Document analysis, including participants' lesson plans, reflective journals, and teaching artifacts (e.g., digital materials or student project outputs), to validate and complement the self-reported accounts. This multi-source approach was intended to increase the credibility and richness of the data.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). This involved three cyclical stages: data condensation (transcribing interviews, coding meaningful units, and summarizing document content), data display (organizing codes and themes visually in matrices and tables), and conclusion drawing and verification (interpreting patterns and confirming emerging themes with the data corpus). Coding began with open coding, followed by grouping into categories aligned with 21st-century learning competencies—creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). An iterative process was applied to refine and merge codes into broader themes representing pre-service teachers' perspectives and challenges.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study implemented triangulation across data sources (questionnaires, interviews, documents) and applied peer debriefing with two senior ELT lecturers to verify coding and theme development. Member checking was conducted by sharing synthesized interview summaries with participants to confirm accuracy. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, protecting confidentiality through pseudonyms, and securing digital data storage to maintain privacy. These procedures align with qualitative research ethics standards (BERA, 2018).

The methodological rigor and context-specific approach enabled this research to generate rich, credible insights into both the readiness and challenges faced by pre-service English teachers in adopting innovative teaching practices. By combining self-reported experiences, documentary evidence, and reflective analysis, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical innovation is navigated in real classroom contexts, informing the development of teacher education programs that better bridge the gap between theory and classroom practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the dynamic perspectives of pre-service English teachers on innovative teaching approaches in the context of English language education in Cirebon. The findings show that participants generally perceive innovative strategies—such as project-based learning, gamification, and technology integration—as effective in improving student engagement, motivation, and communicative competence. This directly addresses the first research question regarding which innovative approaches are perceived to be the most effective. These results affirm Trilling and Fadel's (2009) emphasis on integrating the 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration) into classroom practices as essential for 21st-century learning.

The data indicate that all participants actively applied collaborative and interactive methods in their practicum, aligning with the constructivist learning model. For example, participants described using group discussions, English comic projects, and roleplay tasks to create a more student-centered environment. These strategies are consistent with previous research by Bhandari (2020) and Charkas (2018), who noted that task-based learning enhances authentic language use and promotes student autonomy. The pre-service

teachers reported positive student responses, suggesting that innovative practices not only increase participation but also create meaningful learning experiences.

In addition to instructional methods, the study reveals a strong emphasis on adaptability and reflective teaching. Participants stated that they often adjusted their teaching strategies based on student behavior and classroom conditions. These adaptive practices reflect the dynamic perspective in teacher education, where continuous feedback, flexibility, and situational awareness shape pedagogical development (Fatahillah & Afadh, 2022). This also aligns with Cooper's (2014) view that innovation in education must evolve in response to technological, social, and classroom challenges.

However, the study also uncovered significant obstacles faced by pre-service teachers during the implementation of these approaches. In response to the second research question, participants highlighted limited infrastructure, lack of training, and difficulty managing student expectations regarding technology use. For instance, students often perceived digital tools as entertainment rather than learning media, creating additional classroom management challenges. These findings resonate with Ünal et al. (2017), who argued that pre-service teachers need targeted support to develop technological self-efficacy and instructional design skills.

Despite the challenges, participants demonstrated high motivation to continue using innovative strategies, driven largely by positive student feedback and personal teaching goals. This willingness reflects an internalization of innovation as both a pedagogical necessity and a professional value. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that teacher education programs must strengthen support mechanisms—including hands-on training, mentoring, and resource accessibility—to close the gap between theory and classroom reality (Cirillo et al., 2020).

When compared with prior studies, this research supports the claim that innovation in English language teaching is not only about introducing new tools, but also about rethinking teacher roles, lesson structures, and learner engagement. It confirms Kartal and Bektas's (2020) assertion that innovation requires personal investment from teachers and institutional frameworks that empower experimentation. It also expands the discourse by showing that pre-service teachers, although still in training, can become agents of pedagogical transformation when provided with adequate autonomy and reflection space.

In conclusion, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by presenting an integrated perspective of how future English teachers perceive and practice innovation. It highlights the interplay between teacher identity, institutional context, and instructional creativity. While confirming several previous findings, this study also calls for a shift in how teacher preparation programs structure practical experiences—moving toward a model that emphasizes real-world challenges, adaptive strategies, and reflective professionalism as central components of innovation in language education.

1). Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on Innovative Teaching Approaches

This section addresses the first research question: What are the perspectives of pre-service English teachers on innovative teaching approaches? The findings reveal that all participants expressed a generally positive view of innovation in English language teaching, particularly when it involves student-centered and technology-enhanced strategies. Innovation was perceived not as an optional enrichment but as an essential response to the needs of 21st-century learners. Most participants described shifting away from rigid teacher-led instruction toward more active learning models where students could explore, create, and collaborate. They believed that such approaches foster higher

engagement and deeper understanding of content. As noted by Trilling and Fadel (2009), the emphasis on creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (the 4C skills) is crucial for preparing students to succeed in complex, rapidly changing contexts—an idea that clearly resonated with these pre-service teachers.

One prominent feature of the participants' accounts was their sense of pedagogical agency in designing creative learning experiences that respond to student needs and local classroom contexts. For instance, one participant implemented a project where students created English comics, combining language practice with visual storytelling to make learning more engaging. Another incorporated interactive games to stimulate participation and lower anxiety, especially for students reluctant to speak. These practices reflect the belief that authentic, meaningful tasks can promote both motivation and communicative competence. Such findings align with Bhandari (2020), who argues that student autonomy and real-world tasks encourage active learning and ownership over language development. Moreover, the participants demonstrated reflective professionalism—they frequently adapted their teaching plans in response to student feedback or unexpected classroom dynamics, illustrating the fluid and evolving nature of teacher identity as described by Fatahillah and Afadh (2022).

Another key aspect highlighted by participants was the integration of digital technologies to enrich instruction. Digital tools such as online quizzes, video presentations, and interactive educational platforms (e.g., learning management systems, collaborative applications) were widely used, not only for delivering content but also for assessment, peer feedback, and formative evaluation. This suggests a move beyond simple substitution of digital for traditional materials toward a more transformative use of technology that reshapes classroom interaction. However, participants also recognized that the success of technology integration is contingent on context—for example, student digital literacy levels, interest, and access to reliable internet significantly affect the impact of these innovations. This awareness echoes current debates in technology-enhanced language learning, where contextual adaptation is considered critical for effective ICT integration.

Importantly, the participants viewed innovation as a continuous and reflective process rather than a static set of strategies. Many shared experiences of experimenting with new approaches, evaluating their impact, and making adjustments to better fit learners' needs. This dynamic mindset reflects an emerging professional identity that values adaptability and lifelong learning—traits increasingly emphasized in teacher education. It also shows that pre-service teachers are developing pedagogical resilience, balancing creative experimentation with practical problem-solving when faced with challenges such as time constraints, varying student motivation, or limited school resources. Such reflective adaptability aligns with current understandings of innovative teacher identity formation, where practice is shaped through iterative cycles of planning, action, and review.

In sum, the pre-service teachers in this study perceived innovative approaches as both beneficial and necessary for contemporary English language teaching. They associated innovation with student engagement, communicative competence, and critical skill development, while also acknowledging the pedagogical challenges inherent in sustaining creativity and integrating technology effectively. Their narratives suggest that teacher education programs should not only expose future teachers to innovative methodologies and digital tools but also cultivate the reflective and adaptive mindset needed to implement these approaches in diverse real-world classrooms. By fostering both

technical proficiency and critical pedagogical awareness, pre-service programs can better prepare future English teachers to navigate the demands of 21st-century education.

2). Challenges in Implementing Innovative Approaches in ELT

This section addresses the second research question: What are the challenges faced by pre-service English teachers in implementing innovative teaching approaches? Although all participants expressed positive attitudes toward innovation, they also reported a range of practical obstacles that limited the extent to which they could enact creative, technology-enhanced pedagogies. The most frequently mentioned challenges were inadequate technological infrastructure, such as unstable internet connections, limited access to devices, and insufficient classroom equipment. Time constraints in lesson planning also emerged as a barrier, as innovative approaches such as project-based learning (PBL) or gamification require significant preparation. Additionally, participants described difficulties in managing student behavior and engagement when introducing unfamiliar tools, which sometimes disrupted learning rather than enhancing it. These barriers often forced participants to improvise or scale down their intended innovations.

A recurring and deeply felt issue was the gap between theoretical training and real classroom conditions. While participants reported being familiar with contemporary teaching models such as PBL, gamification, and technology-mediated collaboration through coursework, they struggled to apply these concepts in authentic school settings. Differences in student motivation, classroom discipline, and institutional culture often limited what they could realistically do. This disconnect echoes findings from Kartal and Bektas (2020) and Ünal et al. (2017), who argue that innovative teaching requires more than conceptual knowledge; it depends on supportive school environments and opportunities for hands-on practice. Without such systemic support, pre-service teachers often rely on trial and error, which can undermine confidence and reduce the quality of innovation.

Another notable challenge concerned students' perceptions of technology. Many learners associated digital tools with entertainment rather than learning, making it difficult for pre-service teachers to establish purposeful and focused use of ICT in class. Several participants described the need to reframe digital tools—for instance, presenting online quizzes, multimedia presentations, or video production as structured educational tasks rather than play. This required careful scaffolding and classroom management to sustain engagement and avoid distraction. Such findings are consistent with Cirillo et al. (2020), who emphasize that teacher mediation and structured guidance are essential to ensure technology supports learning rather than becoming a source of off-task behavior.

Institutional and mentoring limitations also shaped the participants' experiences. Many reported a lack of clear guidance and mentoring during their teaching practicum, leaving them unsure about how far they could experiment with nontraditional strategies. Without supervisory feedback or a supportive policy environment, participants felt pressured to conform to conventional, test-oriented teaching. Some also noted that curriculum rigidity and exam preparation priorities discouraged risk-taking with innovative methods. These structural challenges point to the need for system-level reform: teacher education programs and practicum schools should work together to provide mentoring, resource support, and curricular flexibility that enable pre-service teachers to try and refine innovative practices without fear of failure.

Despite these obstacles, the participants displayed a remarkable degree of resilience and adaptability. They expressed continued enthusiasm for using innovative methods in their future classrooms and a willingness to learn from early difficulties. This optimistic stance suggests that, given adequate training, mentoring, and systemic support, pre-service teachers can become effective agents of pedagogical change. The findings reinforce calls for teacher education programs to integrate authentic classroom exposure, reflective practice cycles, and mentorship into their design, helping bridge the persistent gap between theory and practice. Such supports would empower pre-service English teachers not only to experiment with new pedagogies but also to adapt them critically to diverse teaching contexts, ensuring innovation can flourish sustainably.

3). Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

The findings of this study highlight several important implications for teacher education programs aiming to prepare future English teachers for the realities of 21st-century classrooms. First, the consistently positive perspectives of pre-service teachers toward student-centered and technology-enhanced learning indicate that the conceptual foundation for innovation is already being built during coursework. However, this potential will only translate into effective classroom practice if teacher preparation programs provide systematic opportunities for hands-on experimentation with innovative methods such as project-based learning (PBL), gamification, and digital media integration. Structured practicum experiences that allow pre-service teachers to design, test, and refine their approaches in authentic school environments are essential to strengthen both their pedagogical confidence and adaptive problem-solving skills.

Second, the gap between theoretical training and practical implementation observed in this study suggests a need for closer collaboration between universities and practicum schools. Mentoring support must be more than supervisory evaluation; it should involve coaching, feedback cycles, and professional dialogue that guide novice teachers as they experiment with new strategies. Encouraging reflective practice, such as through teaching journals and guided discussions with mentors, could help pre-service teachers make sense of classroom challenges and transform difficulties into learning opportunities rather than discouragement. Strengthening this bridge would reduce reliance on trial-and-error approaches and enhance the sustainability of pedagogical innovation.

Third, the integration of educational technology needs to be supported by infrastructure and digital literacy training. Many participants cited limitations in internet connectivity, devices, and students' perceptions of technology as entertainment rather than learning. Teacher education curricula should therefore include practical modules on ICT pedagogy, not only introducing tools but also addressing classroom management in technology-rich environments, digital ethics, and strategies to engage students productively online. Institutional investment in reliable internet access, digital resources, and supportive policies is equally critical to enable innovation to thrive beyond theory.

Finally, this study underscores the importance of fostering a dynamic, adaptive teacher identity among pre-service educators. Innovation requires not only technical know-how but also the mindset to experiment, reflect, and adjust in response to changing classroom realities. Teacher preparation programs should therefore promote lifelong learning, critical reflection, and resilience as core professional attributes. By integrating practical experience, strong mentoring systems, and supportive digital infrastructure, Indonesian teacher education programs can better prepare future English teachers to

become innovative change agents capable of navigating the demands of contemporary education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the perspectives of pre-service English teachers on innovative teaching approaches and the challenges they encountered during implementation. The findings indicate that participants hold positive and constructive views toward pedagogical innovation, particularly in applying project-based learning, gamification, and digital integration to foster 21st-century competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Their teaching experiences reflect a strong commitment to student-centered learning and instructional creativity, demonstrating an awareness of the need to engage learners actively in the digital era.

Despite these positive orientations, the study also uncovered significant obstacles that hindered the effective implementation of innovative practices. The most pressing issues included limited technological infrastructure, unstable internet access, time constraints in lesson preparation, lack of consistent mentoring during practicum, and students' tendency to perceive digital tools as entertainment rather than learning aids. These challenges often led to improvisation or a reduced application of innovative strategies, underscoring the gap between theoretical knowledge and real classroom conditions.

The findings suggest that teacher education programs must provide more practical, context-aware training to prepare future teachers for the realities of modern classrooms. Strengthening field-based experiences, promoting reflective practice, and ensuring institutional readiness—including adequate mentoring and supportive digital infrastructure—are essential to help pre-service English teachers develop the adaptive and innovative skills required to create meaningful, student-centered learning environments.

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