Pre-service Teachers' Experiences in Handling Reticent Students During Teaching Practicum: Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the experience of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers handling reticent students during their teaching practicum. Reticent students are characterized by reluctance or hesitance to participate or engage in classroom discussions and activities actively. Teaching practicum is a hands-on educational experience that allows pre-service teachers to apply classroom theories and teaching strategies in real-world settings, fostering their professional growth under the guidance of experienced educators. Previous studies have explored teacher perceptions and strategies for addressing student reticence, but less attention has been given to pre-service teachers' experiences. The study employs a qualitative research design, conducting semi-structured interviews with five pre-service teachers who have completed their teaching practicum. The interviews explore the participants' experience focusing on the challenges and strategies in handling reticent students. The findings revealed common challenges faced by the participants and the strategies employed to handle reticent students. Based on the findings, recommendations are made for teacher education programs and mentor teachers to better prepare pre-service teachers in handling reticent students. Finally, the study implied some limitations and provided recommendations for future research.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, challenges, strategies, reticent students.

INTRODUCTION

In recent educational settings, fostering active student participation and engagement is recognized as a crucial element of effective teaching and learning (Blieck et al., 2019). Teachers have an active role in engaging their students to be active participants in the teaching and learning process inside the classroom (Aziz & Kazi, 2019). However, a significant number of students, particularly those identified as reticent, often exhibit a reluctance to participate in classroom discussions and activities actively. According to Bao (2015), Reticent is characterized as being hesitant or reserved in communication. Bao explains that when someone is reticent, it is often seen as a disadvantage because it suggests they may be shy or have difficulty expressing themselves, resulting in learners not feeling confident or comfortable expressing themselves. Furthermore, reticence can be a problem for language learners. It can make it harder for them to participate in class discussions, respond to questions, or understand the meaning of what others are saying (Limbong, 2020; Tuyen, 2018). Because of that, reticence can hinder learners from achieving proficiency in the language they are studying, making it an obstacle to their progress. This challenge is particularly significant for pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum, as they often lack experience dealing with reticent students.

As mentioned earlier, student reticence in the classroom is characterized by a reluctance or hesitance to actively participate or engage in classroom discussions and activities and stems from various underlying reasons. These reasons encompass a range of individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors (Aghazadeh & Abedi, 2014; Wu, 2019), all contributing to the complex nature of student reticence. A lack of confidence or self-esteem is a significant source of student reticence (Zafarina, 2022). Some students experience inadequacy or self-doubt, diminishing their willingness to contribute to class discussions. They worry about making mistakes or appearing unintelligent in front of their peers and teachers, leading them to retreat into silence. This lack of confidence is rooted in previous negative experiences, such as receiving criticism or feeling judged for their ideas or abilities (Aripin & Umam, 2019). Furthermore, students feel an overwhelming pressure to live up to certain expectations or standards set by themselves, their teachers, or their peers (Yu, 2016). This external pressure further erodes their confidence and willingness to speak up, as they fear not meeting those expectations and facing potential judgment or rejection.

Moreover, the classroom environment and dynamics, including the teacher's teaching style, the overall atmosphere of the classroom, and the quality of teacher-student relationships, play a crucial role in student reticence (Murad & Jalambo, 2019; Rohi & Muslim, 2023). An authoritarian or overly critical teacher can create an intimidating environment where students feel reluctant to express their thoughts or opinions. Similarly, if

students perceive a lack of respect, inclusivity, or fairness within the classroom, it undermines their confidence and willingness to engage (Riadil, 2020). Students need to feel supported, encouraged, and valued to overcome reticence and actively participate in classroom activities (Soo & Goh, 2013). Another significant source of student reticence is the fear of social judgment or rejection. Students often experience peer pressure and a desire to fit in with their classmates. The fear of being mocked, ridiculed, or excluded by peers leads students to remain silent and avoid drawing attention to themselves (Zare-ee & Shirvanizadeh, 2014). This fear of social consequences is particularly prevalent during adolescence when social acceptance is highly valued. Students choose to stay reticent to protect themselves from potential negative social experiences or to maintain their social standing within the peer group.

Additionally, cultural and linguistic factors contribute to student reticence. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds face challenges in adapting to different communication norms or expectations, especially within intercultural classrooms, which often reveal tensions between students from another culture and their peers due to different classroom participation expectations and perceptions (Wang & Moskalb, 2019). Language proficiency also plays a role in students' reticence, as non-native speakers of the English language are hesitant to express themselves due to concerns about being misunderstood or judged for their language skills (Ahmad, 2021; Bahar et al., 2022). Cultural diversity can also give rise to distinct communication styles that impact student reticence. For instance, certain cultures in Asian regions, like Japan, China, Pakistan, and Indonesia, often prioritize active listening and observation over frequent speaking and active participation (Amri, 2020; Bao & Ye 2022; Chang, 2011; Liu, 2005).

Recognizing the importance of addressing the difficulties of EFL pre-service teachers in handling reticent students, the researchers then undertook this study to understand the experiences of EFL pre-service teachers, especially the challenges and strategies in handling reticent students during their teaching practice. Several studies have been done to look at teacher perceptions of reticence students and give several strategies to cope with the issue. Kandilla et al. (2021) explored teachers' perceptions of students' silence in EFL classrooms, identifying factors like low motivation and confidence. Strategies recommended include game-based learning and positive teacher-student relationships. Nyborg et al. (2022) studied how Norwegian elementary-school teachers alleviate anxiety in shy students, finding consistent and helpful strategies, though with short-term benefits. Meanwhile, Ashraf et al. (2018) investigated in-service and pre-service teachers' strategies for assisting shy students, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive environment and praising efforts for effective support.

As mentioned in the paragraphs above, existing research explores the causes of students' reticence, in-service teachers' perceptions toward reticent students, and strategies and interventions to address student reticence, less attention is given to pre-service teachers' experiences handling such students. During their teaching practicum, pre-service teachers encounter diverse classroom dynamics and face the task of encouraging active participation among all students (Macías, 2018), including those who are reticent. It should be noted that pre-service teachers may be unfamiliar with handling reticent students as they are still starting to develop their teaching style and need help from other professional teachers (Méndez López, 2020; Yayli, 2017). Understanding pre-service teachers' experiences in dealing with reticent students is crucial for their professional development and the future effectiveness of their teaching practices. Therefore, this study aims to look at pre-service teachers' experiences, focusing on the challenges and strategies in handling reticent students.

The research questions guiding this study are: What are the challenges faced by pre-service teachers in handling reticent students? And; What are the strategies pre-service teachers use to elaborate reticent students' participation in their class? By conducting this study, the author hopes to contribute to the existing knowledge base on addressing student reticence and provide insights to teacher education programs on effective strategies for preparing future teachers to handle this issue. The research findings have the potential to enhance teacher preparation and facilitate the creation of inclusive learning environments that encourage all students to participate and engage in classroom discussions and activities actively. Ultimately, this research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by examining pre-service teachers' perceptions of handling reticent students, thereby contributing to the field of education and promoting the professional growth of future educators.

METHOD

This qualitative research aimed to investigate pre-service teachers' perspectives on handling reticent students during their teaching practicum. The study, employing purposive sampling with five participants, explores challenges and strategies faced by these pre-service teachers, providing valuable insights to inform teacher education programs and develop effective classroom strategies for addressing student reticence. The participants, three females and two males, had completed their teaching practice programs at either secondary or tertiary levels, contributing diverse experiences to the research.

To maintain the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to each individual, denoted as P1 and P2 for undergraduate students, while P3, P4, and P5 were for master students. The participants' information is presented in Table 1. This approach ensured confidentiality while enabling a comprehensive exploration of the research topic from various perspectives. The diverse composition of the participants, with a combination of undergraduate and postgraduate students and their different levels of teaching practicum experience across secondary and tertiary education, contributed to the richness and depth of the study's findings.

Table 1:
Participants' Data Information

Participant's Initials	Educational Background	Levels of students taught
P1 (Female)	Bachelor of Education	Secondary Level (Junior High School)
P2 (Male)	Bachelor of Education	Secondary Level (Junior High School)
P3 (Female)	Post-Graduate Student	Tertiary Level (University)
P4 (Female)	Post-Graduate Student	Tertiary Level (University)
P5 (Male)	Post-Graduate Student	Tertiary level (University)

The main instrument for the present study was semi-structured interviews. According to Ruslin et al. (2022), adopting the semi-structured interview can enhance the quality of qualitative research and improve the chances of achieving meaningful and reliable results. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of pre-service teachers' experiences and provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the challenges of handling reticent students. Additionally, this research sheds light on the various strategies pre-service teachers consider when facing those challenges.

The data collection procedures for this research involved the following steps. Firstly, participants were selected based on their completion of the teaching practicum. The researcher contacted them individually to request permission to participate in the study. The next step was to schedule the interviews. To accommodate the busy schedules and time constraints of the participants and the researcher, the interviews were conducted online via Zoom meetings, allowing individual interview sessions with each participant. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian and lasted approximately 10 to 20 minutes. To ensure accuracy and ease of transcription, the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. This approach allowed for the collection of factual evidence and facilitated the subsequent transcription process. The participants were

informed about the recording and provided their consent, respecting ethical considerations and ensuring transparency throughout the research process. The recorded interviews were securely stored for later data analysis.

The interviews were guided by a set of basic questions with additional follow-up questions based on each answer. The questions can be found in Appendix 1. These questions served as the basis for the interviews and were designed to gather information on the challenges faced by the participants and the strategies used to encourage student participation. Then the roles of supervisors and mentors in addressing issues caused by these students. Moreover, the participants' perspectives were sought regarding the need for faculties or study programs to provide specific guidance or materials on handling introverted students and students with special needs. Additionally, the participants were asked follow-up questions based on their answers to gain more detailed information and insights. By incorporating these basic or core questions and the follow-up questions, the interviews aimed to elicit detailed answers from the participants, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of their experiences and insights.

The data analysis procedures for the recorded information involved a three-step process. First, the collected data were transcribed in Indonesia and then translated into English, following specific translation rules adapted from Sari (2021). These rules encompassed: (a) excluding any information irrelevant to the research questions, (b) incorporating key points deemed significant in terms of content, (c) abstaining from incorporating personal opinions or judgments, and (d) striving to retain the participants' original statements as closely as possible. Second, an inductive approach was used to summarize the extensive and diverse raw data into a concise and condensed format, as suggested by Thomas (2006). This step aimed to capture the data's essential information and key findings.

Following the data summarization, the third step was the analysis that focused on two main aspects: the challenges faced by participants and the strategies used in handling reticent students. The challenges were identified by examining the summarized data and categorizing them based on the experiences shared by participants. This involved identifying common themes and patterns related to challenges faced by participants. Additionally, the strategies used by participants were analyzed based on the summarized data. This analysis involved identifying the different approaches employed by participants in addressing the challenges posed by reticent students.

Graphic 1:
Data analysis procedure
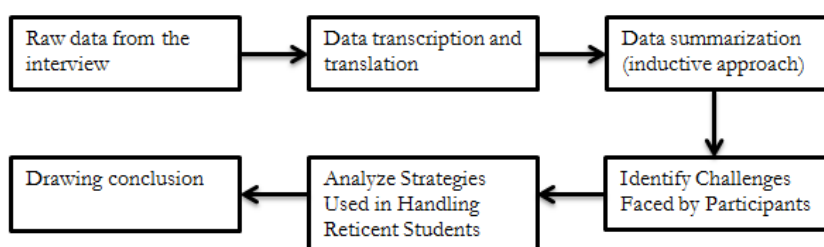
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers present the results of their data analysis, which are categorized into two interconnected parts. The first part explores the challenges encountered by the participants in their teaching practicum. Meanwhile, the second part delves into the strategies employed by the participants to effectively navigate and overcome these challenges, particularly in their efforts to engage and support reticent students within their educational contexts.

1. Challenges Face by Participants

The data analysis found that all participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5) had experience dealing with reticent students, indicating a common challenge in their teaching roles. The data were presented in Table 2.

Table 2:
Challenges Faced by Participants When Handling Reticent Students

Challenges Face by Participants	Participants Who Faced The Challenge
Finding problems in assigning group work	P1
Being uninterested in the teaching materials and topics	P4
Dealing with reticent students with various language proficiency levels	P3, P4, P5
Facing heterogeneous students' backgrounds	P4, P5
Lack of guidance and support from the mentor teacher	P1, P2, P3, P5

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a. Problems in Assigning Group Work

Related to this challenge, only P1 expressed her difficulties in assigning group work, while the remaining participants (P2, P3, P4, P5) did not encounter this particular challenge. P1 explained that she usually preferred to let students form groups by themselves. However, one occasion, she randomly assigned the groups through a lottery. One student was unhappy with the group she was assigned to and started crying. P1 explained further, as seen in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1:
"In class, I usually prefer to have students work in groups where they can choose their own group members. However, there was a time when I decided to assign the groups randomly through a lottery. Unfortunately, one student who was often silent in class was unhappy with the group she was assigned to and started crying. I was completely unsure about how to handle the situation and felt confused about what to do next." (Interview with P1, 28 June 2023)

The situation posed a challenge for P1 in several ways. First, P1 mentioned feeling unsure about how to handle the situation. The emotional reaction from the student likely caught P1 off guard, and she might have been unsure of the appropriate response to address the student's distress. Second, P1 expressed feeling confused about what to do next. This confusion could have stemmed from the fact that she had limited encounters in a similar situation before and needed a predefined plan or strategy to manage such incidents. The unexpected nature of the student's reaction and the lack of prior experience may have left P1 uncertain about how to proceed effectively.

This challenge highlighted the importance of considering students' emotions when assigning group work. P1's experience served as a reminder that not all students felt comfortable or happy with randomly assigned groups, so it was essential to consider their emotional reactions. P1's experience might have led her and other teachers to rethink their approach to group work and find alternative ways to form groups that better suited students' preferences and minimized adverse reactions. In a study by Forsell et al. (2021), teachers also reported facing challenges due to limited time and resources, making it harder to assess group work consistently and accurately. Therefore, they also mentioned that it was crucial to prioritize students' emotional well-being and create better conditions for practical group work assessment in classrooms.

b. Feeling Uninterested in the Teaching Materials and Topics

In this challenge, only P4 was mentioned as having faced it in her teaching-learning process. She explained that her students were reticent due to their lack of interest in the materials and the topic. Her students became reticent and disinterested and disliked her teaching material and topic. She

mentioned that her PowerPoint slides and topic choice might have contributed to her students' reticence in the class. She assumed that her PowerPoint slides contained colorful and cute images, which could be perceived as childish by university students. Additionally, P4 used deep sea creatures as a way to explain the concept of the simple present, which might not have been well understood by her students. This is clarified in Excerpt 2:

> Excerpt 2:
> "Well, I think it might have been because of the teaching material and the topics I presented. Initially, I thought the material was too simple and not challenging enough. The theme I brought up was about the deep ocean, sea creatures, and similar topics that seemed more suitable for kindergarten children. We discussed simple present tense, and I wanted them to write descriptive texts about deep sea creatures. However, maybe my PowerPoint slides and topic were too basic or not suitable for college students, so they got bored and thought, "What is this?" or something like that." (Interview with P4, 1 July 2023)

In the interview, P4 shared her perspective on the challenge. She realized that the teaching materials and topics she presented might have needed to be more complex and challenging for her students. Although intended to teach the simple present tense and prompt students to write descriptive texts, the deep ocean and sea creatures theme seemed more suitable for kindergarten-aged children. P4 acknowledged that her choice of PowerPoint slides and the topic itself might have led to boredom and disengagement among her college students, causing them to question the relevance of the content.

This challenge underscored the significance of selecting appropriate teaching materials and engaging topics relevant to the target audience. It served as a reminder that content should have been customized to the student's level and interests to maintain their engagement and active participation in the learning process. Similar statements were also mentioned by (Mohaideen et al., 2020; Namaziandost et al., 2021); they mentioned that utilizing texts or material aligned with students' context enhanced their comprehension and engagement. Insights from an interview with P4 highlighted a significant revelation that poorly designed lesson plans might contribute to students' reticence, as it was yet mentioned in the introduction. Therefore, P4's experience encouraged educators to reflect on their teaching strategies and ensure that the materials and topics chosen were suitable for the intended audience, creating a more effective and captivating learning environment.

c. Various Levels of Language Proficiency

Another challenge was mentioned by P3, P4, and P5. Their students became reticent mainly because they had varying levels of language proficiency. P4 highlighted that students with varying levels of language proficiency may become disinterested or reticent in learning English due to different educational backgrounds and majors. P4 further asserted that the difference in language proficiency might affect their active participation and engagement in the classroom. This is explained in Excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3:

"Oh, yes. During teaching practice, some students were indeed reticent during our teaching-learning process. It may be because they had limited English language proficiency since they came from different faculties, and their major was not English. That was why they had different proficiency levels in English." (Interview with P3, 1 July 2023)

The findings from P3, P4, and P5 highlighted a notable challenge related to student reticence and varying levels of language proficiency. According to P4, students with different educational backgrounds and majors had different levels of English language proficiency, which could lead to disinterest or reticence in learning English. P4 also emphasized that these differences in language proficiency could impact students' active participation and engagement in the classroom. This finding is related to the *silent period theory* proposed by Krashen in second language acquisition. Harris (2019) mentioned that the silent period theory suggests that when students are in the early stages of learning a second language, they go through a phase of being hesitant or silent as they focus on comprehending the language before actively producing it. During this period, students felt more comfortable listening and observing rather than speaking or participating actively in the classroom.

In the given context, the reticence experienced by students with varying levels of language proficiency can be seen as a manifestation of the silent period. These students felt less confident in expressing themselves in English due to their limited proficiency, which resulted in their reluctance to engage in oral communication or active participation in the classroom. According to Juma et al. (2022), understanding the silent period theory could help teachers recognize and address the challenges faced by students with varying language proficiency levels. It underscored the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encouraged students to gradually overcome their reticence and develop their language skills at their own pace.

d. Students' Diverse Backgrounds

For this challenge, most participants (P1, P2, and P3) did not face the challenge of handling students with diverse backgrounds. However,

participants P4 and P5 did encounter this challenge in their teaching practice. This challenge can be attributed to the fact that P4 and P5 classes involved teaching general English to students from various study programs such as economics, technology, and agriculture. P4 stated that the focus of these study programs was not solely on the English language. Therefore, students might have needed more motivation to engage in the teaching-learning process actively. This is stated in Excerpt 4:

> Excerpt 4:
> "Yes, perhaps that was also because it was a basic course. Additionally, most of the students in my class came from the Faculty of Agriculture, Economics, and Technology. They might have been thinking, 'Why should we learn English? Isn't it not directly related to our study programs? Why are we required to take English classes?' Consequently, they tended to be less interested, resulting in their reticent and perceived English lessons as limited to their respective courses." (Interview with P4, 1 July 2023)

P4 mentioned that the study programs in which her students were enrolled focused more than just the English language. As a result, the students might have needed more motivation to engage in the teaching and learning process actively. P4 expressed that some students in their class, predominantly from the Faculty of Agriculture, Economics, and Technology, questioned the relevance of learning English to their specific study programs. This perception led to their reduced interest and reticence in participating in English lessons, as they perceived the lessons as limited to their respective courses.

The findings highlighted the impact of students' perceptions and motivations on their engagement and participation in the English language classroom. When students failed to see the direct relevance of English to their chosen fields of study, their interest and active involvement in the language learning process decreased. Related to this challenge, Azar & Tanggaraju (2020) emphasized the need for educators to address students' concerns and demonstrate the practical applications and benefits of English proficiency across various academic disciplines and future career paths.

e. Lack of Guidance and Support from the Mentor Teachers

A significant challenge most participants faced was a lack of guidance and support from mentor teachers. Participants P1, P2, P3, and P5 expressed their struggles in this case. P3 highlighted her experience of not receiving support from her mentor teacher during the teaching-learning process. Her mentor teacher's involvement was far from being optimal. The involvement was limited to reviewing lesson plans and giving feedback without actively assisting in classroom engagement or addressing specific challenges, such as dealing with reticent students. This limited engagement from her mentor teachers could be a possible reason for the participant's P3

lack of support in addressing issues like students' reticence in the classroom. P3 stated this in Excerpt 5:

> Excerpt 5:
> Researcher: "Did he help you in class?
> P3: No, he just sat there quietly. He only checked the lesson plans and provided feedback. But he did not actively participate in the classroom let alone help me." (Interview with P3, 1 July 2023)

The excerpt from the interview with P3 further highlighted the mentor teacher's approach. When asked about the mentor teacher's involvement in the classroom, P3 mentioned that the mentor teacher primarily focused on checking the lesson plans and offering feedback. The findings underscored the importance of effective mentorship in teaching, particularly in providing guidance and support to novice teachers. Participants experienced limited involvement and assistance from their mentor teachers, which could have impacted their ability to effectively address classroom challenges and engage students.

These findings emphasized the potential benefits of mentor teachers being more actively involved in supporting and guiding novice teachers. In addition to reviewing lesson plans and providing feedback, mentor teachers can actively participate in the classroom, offer practical advice, and address specific challenges faced by novice teachers. In addition, Ellis et al. (2020) also mentioned that by fostering a strong relationship and providing comprehensive support, mentor teachers can significantly contribute to novice teachers' professional development and success.

2. Strategies Used By the Participants

Meanwhile, the strategies used by participants when dealing with reticent students are presented in Table 3. The table includes a list of participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5) and the strategies they employed.

Table 3:

Strategies Used by Participants When Handling Reticent Students

Strategies Used by Participant	Participant Who Used The Strategy
Approaching the reticent students and asking about their understanding of the materials	P1, P2, P3, P4
Using interactive and engaging activities	P2, P3, P5
Motivating the students by rewarding them	P1, P2. P3

Asking for support from either the supervisor or mentor teacher	P1, P4
Using translanguaging	P3

a. Approaching Reticent Students and Asking for Their Understanding of the Materials

In this strategy, P1, P2, P3, and P4 approached the reticent students directly and asked for their understanding of the materials. They recognized the importance of initiating communication and created an open dialogue with reticent students to encourage their participation. P2 specifically highlighted his approach to dealing with reticent students in the classroom, as seen in Excerpt 6:

Excerpt 6.
"When it comes to students who were reticent or unwilling to participate in discussions or learning activities, there were very few of them, to be honest. However, I paid more attention to those students, not neglecting the others. If I were to assign a percentage, around 80% of the students actively participated in discussions and learning activities, while around 20% were reticent. So, I often asked these 20% of students directly for their opinions or understanding of the materials. Especially during material reviews, I would frequently ask them questions. Most of the time, it worked well." (Excerpts from the interview with P2, 28 June 2023)

P2 emphasized that he paid attention to those reticent students. He estimated that almost all of the students in his class actively participated in discussions and learning activities, while only a few of them were reticent to participate. To address this, P2 took a proactive role by directly engaging with the reticent students. He would ask those students for their opinions or understanding of the materials, consciously involving them in the learning process. During material reviews, P2 frequently asked those students questions to encourage active participation. According to him, this approach yielded positive results as it helped stimulate the engagement and involvement of the reticent students.

By giving individual attention and creating opportunities for participation, P1, P2, P3, and P4 were aimed to foster a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. Their strategy focused on encouraging the reticent students to share their thoughts and ideas, enhancing their understanding and involvement in classroom activities. A similar strategy was also mentioned by Kandilla et al. (2021), by paying more attention to reticent students and actively involving them through questions and discussions, educators could help stimulate their engagement and increase their participation in the learning process.

b. Using Interactive and Engaging Activities

P2, P3, and P5 used interactive and engaging activities during their teaching. P2 and P3 found that incorporating interactive elements such as mini-games into their lessons helped overcome students' reticence. As for P5, he explains explicitly that during his teaching practice, he received limited support from his mentor teacher in addressing the issue of reticent students. The mentor teacher had an inactive teaching style, primarily delivering lectures from her desks using PowerPoint slides without actively engaging with the students. This lack of interaction between the mentor teachers and the students contributed to the reticence of some students, as they felt less motivated to participate in class discussions.

Additionally, P5 mentioned that the students were also rarely assisting each other in fostering participation. This lack of support from both the mentor teachers and between students further reinforced the reticence of the silent students. As a result, P5 took it upon himself to implement strategies such as icebreakers and continuous reporting to create a more comfortable and interactive classroom environment. He allowed students to engage in small-group discussions, allowing them to speak up and share their thoughts without the direct pressure of addressing the entire class. P5 explained this in Excerpt 7:

> Excerpt 7:
> "Actually, the reason I chose to implement group work was based on my observations. The mentor teachers were not actively involved in the classroom. She mainly taught from behind her desks, using PowerPoint slides to explain the material without much interaction with the students. This lack of interaction made the reticent students even more reticent. The classmates who were supposed to assist also did not provide much help because they were from different backgrounds and did not know each other well. This further exacerbated the reticence of the silent students. Therefore, I took the initiative to employ icebreakers and continuous reporting throughout the class to encourage student interaction. I allowed them to engage in small-group discussions without me listening in. I noticed a change in their behavior. They became more active in talking to their peers, even though they remained less vocal in the overall class setting." (Excerpt from the interview with P5, 4 July 2023)

P5's statement revealed that the lack of interaction and support from both the mentor teachers and among students contributed to the reticence of silent students. P5 statement was similar to the statement from Rohi & Muslim (2023), where the atmosphere of the classroom and the quality of teacher-student relationships were identified as crucial factors influencing student reticence. However, by incorporating interactive and engaging activities, such as small-group discussions and icebreakers, P5 was able to facilitate a positive change in student behavior, making them more

active in talking to their peers, even though they remained less vocal in the overall class setting.

c. Motivating the Students

Motivating the students' strategies were employed by P1, P2, and P3. They understood that motivation plays a crucial role in encouraging reticent students to express themselves. Specifically, P2 mentioned that one of the strategies he frequently used was incorporating engaging mini-games and brainstorming sessions into his lesson plans to increase his students' motivation in following the teaching-learning process. Before beginning the class session, he prepared games and activities to capture the students' attention immediately. This approach was generally successful in keeping the students engaged. Furthermore, P2 mentioned that adding small rewards to the games was particularly effective. This was further explained in Excerpt 8:

> Excerpt 8:
> "Since I taught at the junior high school level, engaging in mini-games and brainstorming sessions was one of the strategies I frequently employed. Before starting the class session, I always prepared games and activities to capture their attention. Most of the time, it was successful. Especially when I incorporated small rewards into the games, it served as a way to appreciate their participation in the classroom." (Excerpt from the interview with P2, 28 July 2023)

These rewards by P2 served as a way to appreciate and acknowledge the students' active participation in the classroom. According to Phungphai & Boonmoh (2021) and Sarawati et al. (2020), the use of rewards in the classroom has several positive effects: it influences students' emotions, increases their satisfaction, promotes self-development, serves as positive reinforcement for learning behavior, and contributes to the design of more impactful activities. By integrating these motivational factors, such as rewards, P2 aimed to create a positive and stimulating learning environment, encouraging the students to actively participate and enjoy the learning process.

d. Asking for Supports from the Supervisor or Mentor Teacher

P1 and P4 sought support from their supervisors or mentor teachers. They recognized the value of seeking guidance and assistance from experienced individuals to address the challenges posed by reticent students. P4 specifically discussed the feedback she received from her mentor-teacher regarding her teaching in the classroom. This was explained in Excerpt 9:

> Excerpt 9:
> "She (mentor-teacher) observed me in the classroom during my teaching. After class, she told me that the PowerPoint slides I used and the topic were too elementary. I was talking about sea creatures. She said that it was

more suitable for kindergarten or elementary school children. She suggested that in terms of the theme, it would be better to focus on something more college-oriented, something that university students like." (Excerpt from the interview with P4, 1 July 2023)

The mentor-teacher observed P4's teaching and provided input afterward. P4 explained that her mentor-teacher mentioned that the PowerPoint slides she used and the chosen topic were too elementary for the level of students she was teaching. P4 had been discussing sea creatures, and the mentor-teacher suggested this topic was more suitable for kindergarten or elementary school children. Based on her mentor teacher's feedback, P4 learned that selecting more college-oriented themes aligned with university students' interests would be beneficial. The mentor-teacher emphasized the importance of engaging university students with content that they would find interesting and relevant.

This finding highlights the importance of seeking support and feedback from experienced individuals, such as mentor teachers or supervisors when dealing with challenges related to student reticence. P4 experience offers valuable insights and suggestions to improve teaching practices and effectively engage students. Izadinia (2018) mentioned that mentor teachers play a significant role in shaping preservice teachers' understanding of their identity as educators and their perceived capabilities. Furthermore, according to Li et al. (2021), through their guidance and mentoring practices, mentor teachers contribute to shaping preservice teachers' beliefs, skills, and confidence. The approaches taken by mentors can motivate and inspire preservice teachers to continue their journey in the teaching profession. Overall, seeking support and guidance from experienced mentor teachers on preservice teachers' development is crucial to fostering effective teaching practices and cultivating a solid teacher identity.

e. Using Translanguaging

Regarding this strategy, only P3 mentioned the use of translanguaging in her classroom. This approach allowed students to express themselves in their native language while gradually incorporating more English. By doing so, P3 aimed to provide a comfortable environment for reticent students to communicate effectively. She explained further in Excerpt 10:

Excerpt 10:
"I also allow them to use the Indonesian language so that they can build confidence before attempting to use English. Even if there are mix-ups or grammatical errors, I encourage them to try using English." (Excerpt from the interview with P3, 1 July 2023)

P3 recognized the importance of providing a comfortable environment for reticent students to express themselves. To achieve this,

she allowed her students to use their native language, Indonesian, alongside English. By incorporating translanguaging, P3 aimed to build students' confidence before encouraging them to use English more extensively. She emphasized the significance of giving reticent students the opportunity to try using English, even if it involved mix-ups or grammatical errors. By creating a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere, P3 encouraged students to overcome their hesitations and actively use English as they felt more confident in their abilities.

This approach acknowledges students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and recognizes that embracing their native language can be a stepping stone for their language development. Similar findings were also mentioned by Wang (2015), where the implementation of translanguaging makes the class more communicative. By gradually incorporating more English and providing a safe space for students to experiment with the language, P3 aimed to foster a positive learning environment where reticent students could gradually become more comfortable and proficient in expressing themselves in English.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the challenges pre-service teachers face in handling reticent students and the strategies used to encourage their participation in the classroom. The research findings revealed several challenges faced by the participants, including difficulties in assigning group work, uninterested teaching materials and topics, and addressing reticent students with varying language proficiency levels, managing students from diverse backgrounds, and a lack of guidance and support from mentor teachers. On the other hand, the strategies employed by the participants included approaching reticent students and seeking their understanding of the materials, incorporating interactive and engaging activities, motivating students through rewards, seeking support from supervisors or mentor teachers, and utilizing translanguaging techniques. Based on these findings, recommendations can be made for teacher education programs and mentor teachers to better prepare pre-service teachers in handling reticent students. Additionally, from the interview, all participants have emphasized the importance of comprehensive support from teaching education programs to better prepare pre-service teachers in addressing the challenges related to reticent students. Teacher education programs should provide guidance and training on addressing the challenges identified in this study, including strategies for creating engaging teaching materials, managing heterogeneous classrooms, and effectively supporting reticent students. Mentor teachers should also actively provide guidance and support to pre-service teachers during their teaching practice, offering insights and suggestions to overcome challenges and enhance student participation. Finally, it is

essential to note some limitations of the study. The data collection instrument is limited to interviews, which may have restricted the depth of information obtained. Additionally, the study had a small number of participants, consisting of only five individuals. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to include a larger number of participants. It is also recommended that future research employ a more comprehensive range of research instruments, such as observation and questionnaires, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies of reticent students.

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Appendix 1 (The Interview Questions):

1. *Dapatkah anda menjelaskan tantangan-tantangan yang anda hadapi dengan siswa yang enggan berpartisipasi dalam diskusi dan kegiatan belajar mengajar di kelas selama praktik mengajar anda?* [Can you explain the challenges you face with students who are reticent to participate in classroom discussions and activities during your teaching practicum?]

2. *Strategi apa yang anda gunakan untuk mendorong partisipasi mereka dalam diskusi atau kegiatan belajar mengajar di kelas?* [What strategies do you use to encourage their participation in classroom discussions or activities during teaching and learning sessions?]

3. *Bagaimana peran guru supervisor anda dalam membantu anda mengatasi masalah yang disebabkan oleh siswa yang bersangkutan tersebut?* [What is the role of your supervising teacher in helping you address issues caused by the concerned student?]

4. *Bagaimana peran guru pamong anda dalam membantu anda mengatasi masalah yang disebabkan oleh siswa yang bersangkutan tersebut?* [What is the role of your mentor teacher in assisting you to address issues caused by the concerned student?]

5. *Apakah anda merasa perlu bagi fakultas ataupun program studi untuk memberikan materi atau pengarahan perihal menangani murid yang pendiam secara spesifik dan murid dengan kebutuhan khusus secara general?* [Do you feel it is necessary for the faculty or study program to provide specific guidance or instruction on handling quiet students and students with special needs in a more general sense?]