

University Teachers' Beliefs about the Characteristics of Effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers

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Abstract

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are always seen as the ones who have the characteristics of effective EFL teachers. This research points out three of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers namely pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, and interpersonal knowledge. The aims of this research are to know English university teachers' perception the characters of pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, and interpersonal knowledge and the contribution of those characteristics into their professional life as effective EFL teachers. The findings showed that pedagogical knowledge as perceived by these participants were the knowledge on how to teach, understand students, and assess students. Their personal knowledge manifested to the way they regarded themselves as teachers and their action as responsible university teachers. The participants also agreed that interpersonal knowledge was the knowledge on how to interact with people, such as students, other university teachers, and also employers. Most of all, the findings showed that those characteristics had appreciable contribution towards their effort in being effective EFL teachers.

Keywords: Effective Teachers, characteristics of effective teachers, pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, interpersonal knowledge

Approval Page

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Introduction

In English as Foreign Language (EFL) field, many scholars try to define beliefs both from teachers' and students' perspectives. Bernat and Gvosdenko (2005) argued that beliefs are central construct in every discipline that deals with human behavior and learning. In addition, from learner side belief, it is defined as the person thoughts and feelings about their learning (Bernat & Gvosdenko, 2005). The aspect that can support teachers' professional growth is providing effective teaching.

Due to the importance of providing effective teaching, teachers should always build the characteristics to be effective teacher. There are several researches (Brown, 2000; Arikan, Caner, and Celik, 2013; Ramzani, 2014; Richard, 2001; Wichadee, 2010) that have discussed the characteristics of effective teachers. Unfortunately, the research was conducted in other countries such as in Iran, Thailand, and Turkey, and this issue has not been explored yet by many Indonesian researchers. There is one research under this topic done by Indonesian researcher, Murtiningsih (2017) found an interesting result in the study that one of the factors that can ruin the characteristics of effective EFL teacher is being a moody teacher. Thus, this study tries to explore on the characteristics of effective EFL teachers to see the perspectives of Indonesian teachers on the contribution of characteristics of effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers to their real life teaching as effective EFL teachers.

To the researcher, teachers' beliefs are related to the characteristics of effective EFL teachers because beliefs sometimes are shown in teachers' practices in the teaching and learning process. According to Chan (2008), teachers' beliefs are transformed into attitudes which in turn influence intentions, with intentions becoming the bases for decisions that lead to action. For example, teachers who have beliefs that students will effectively collect vocabulary by reading will use reading as the main activities in the classroom. To improve their teaching about reading,

teacher should learn how to do it effectively. By doing that, teachers unconsciously develop their pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge is one of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers.

Literature Review

Teachers' Beliefs

Area of teachers' beliefs has been widely explored by many scholars. In this section the researcher reviews several definitions of teachers' beliefs from some literature. Beliefs are seen to be an important component of teachers' teaching and learning process (Borg, 2011). Teachers' beliefs will influence their performance in the classroom. EFL teachers, for example, who believe that English class is a place where they only transfer their knowledge will only food-feed the students, but those who believe that their role is to facilitate students they will probably let students explore more on the target language by giving them sources to study. This is supported by Zheng (2009) who mentioned that people hold different conceptual orientations towards teaching and about the role of teachers.

Pedagogical Knowledge

According to Bawadi, pedagogical knowledge refers to teachers' knowledge about the basic teaching and learning matters such as learning theories, teaching approaches, curriculum designs, evaluation techniques, and relevant managerial issues. On the other hand pedagogical performance refers to teachers' teaching/learning practices and activities inside and outside the classroom such as lesson preparation, lesson delivery, teaching/learning materials manipulation, test preparation and correction and IT utilization. From this research, it can be concluded that pedagogical knowledge refers to something that is unseen by teachers performance since it deals

with the theories, concepts, and managerial issues done by the teachers. This is in line with Mullock (2006) that stated research into teachers' pedagogical knowledge is based on the assumption that what teachers do in the classroom which has its origins in thought or mental acts. Both thought and mental acts have been shaped by attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs through years of being a student and a teacher.

Personal Knowledge

As the definition by Richards (2001) that personal knowledge is the teachers' personal beliefs and principles and their individual approach to teaching. Brown (2000) as mentioned above in previous sub-chapter stated that Personal qualities means teachers have to be well organized, conscientious in meeting commitments, and dependable, flexible when things go awry. This means that personal knowledge deals with teachers' individual preference that they bring to teaching and learning process. Referring personal knowledge as intrapersonal knowledge, Collinson (1996) argued that this knowledge emphasizes understanding of oneself and the capacity for introspection and reflection. He added that by having intra-personal knowledge perhaps EFL teachers represent individual ways of thinking and ways of being. The points raised by Collinson (1996) that there are two main aspects in personal knowledge namely ethics and dispositions. The ethics of cares that teachers should have to be effective teachers are caring or compassion, respecting for self and others, understanding self and others, giving to and receiving from others, and courage. Work ethics such as pride of effort, dedication or perseverance, doing one's best are also needed to be possessed by effective teachers. Meanwhile, dispositions like curiosity, creativity, risk taking, problem finding and solving, responsibility and flexibility, are also considered as personal knowledge that have to be developed by effective teachers (Collinson, 1996).

Interpersonal Knowledge

The last characteristics that will complete this chapter is interpersonal knowledge. Collinson (1996) argued that interpersonal knowledge refers to people skills but it is more complex than simple set of people skills because it involves maturity and wisdom. Interpersonal knowledge is the way teachers create successful communication with students, and the local community. To a broader definition, Collinson (1996) argued that interpersonal knowledge is defined as a concept of teachers' ability to interact and have positive relationship by working well with stakeholders (e.g., open-mindedness, empathy and honest communication). Collinson (1996) also added teachers who develop their interpersonal knowledge learn to think in an ever expanding scope of professional community.

Methodology

The research design used for this research was descriptive qualitative because the researcher expected to gain rich and deep data from each participant so that the results would be truthful. Sandelowski (2000) stated that descriptions always depend on the perceptions, inclinations, sensitivities, and sensibilities of the describers. In this study, the researcher seek to describe the phenomenon happened based on the perception of the participants about the characteristics of EFL teachers.

In this current study, type of the interview used was open-ended and unstructured interview to gain various data from the participants. This statement was supported by Cohen, et al. (2011) who stated that to gain unique, non-standardized, personalized information about how individuals view the world; qualitative, open-ended, unstructured interviewing was conducted. In addition, Cohen et al. added that unstructured interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom. One of the benefits of using unstructured interview is that the researcher

will be able to use words flexibly. According to, Kerlinger as cited in Cohen et al. (2012), although the research proposes govern questions asked, their content, sequence and wording are entirely in hand of the interviewer.

Findings

There were two points discussed in this finding classified into the pedagogical knowledge's definition and contribution towards teachers' effort to be effective teachers as perceived by the participants. Some related scholars' arguments were provided in the discussion part to support the findings. In the pedagogical knowledge's part, there were some findings that could not be supported by any scholars or any studies, and it could be determined to be new finding under this topic.

Some scholars, Collinson (1996), Chen and Li (2009), and Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) argued that this particular knowledge is the knowledge on how to deal with the way they understand themselves as teachers so that they can maintain self-confidence and bring it into professional environment. Moreover, Collinson (1996) added that personal knowledge includes teacher's work ethics such as pride of effort, dedication, doing one's best and teacher's dispositions like doing problem finding and solving, and responsibility. From there, the following finding discussed participants' perspectives on the way they see themselves as effective teachers and teachers' responsibility to see their effort to fulfill their work load.

Interpersonal was the last main finding of this study. In this finding, the researcher classified the findings into five subchapters namely the definition of interpersonal knowledge as perceived by the participants, the implementation of their interpersonal knowledge to their students, colleagues and employers, and the contribution of their interpersonal knowledge for

being effective teachers. As well as previous findings, this part of chapter was also supported by some scholars' opinion.

Discussions

From the data obtained, the researcher found various findings that contribute to answer the research question of this study. The first finding was about the definition pedagogical knowledge. Based on the participants' perception, pedagogical knowledge could be defined as the knowledge of teaching, planning and implementing the lesson plan, assessing students, and understanding students. By understanding the definition of pedagogical knowledge, the participants demonstrated the benefits of having pedagogical knowledge. They agreed that pedagogical knowledge contributed toward their professional life as effective teachers. Also, they described that pedagogical knowledge supported them to have effective teaching and understand students.

The following finding was about teachers' personal knowledge that they carried into their professional life as university teachers. The statement is presented by three participants about the way they see themselves as effective teachers that they have different feelings about being effective teachers. The feelings mentioned by the participants were like it is not easy being a teacher in university, believing that the participant is not an excellent teachers yet that bad, and feeling of it is needed to improve the knowledge on some aspects. Having those various feeling does not affect them to fulfill their responsibilities as effective teachers. The participants always do the responsibilities such as; doing teaching, research, and community service. The good thing of fulfilling the responsibilities is that they improve their teaching skills, learn something new from the research and community service. From the interviews, the researcher also found that personal knowledge contributed towards their effort to be effective EFL teachers.

The last characteristics of effective EFL teachers, it became the foci of this study was interpersonal knowledge. In the finding, it discussed about interpersonal knowledge and the participants agreed that interpersonal knowledge was the knowledge in building good interaction with students, other university teacher or colleagues and their employers. They added the way they interact with students in the classroom and outside the classroom, the way they communicate with other university teachers or colleagues and their employers. From the explanation, it can be concluded that they try to build good interaction to each stakeholder as best as they can. Their effort in building good professional relationship with the stakeholders lead them to be effective teachers. They demonstrate without having interpersonal knowledge, they might not have comfortable workplace, good teaching environment and good deals with the stakeholders regarding their work loads.

Conclusion

It can be implied that all teachers might have different perception of the characteristics of effective English as a Foreign Language Teachers. In addition, even though teachers might have different perception on their pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, and interpersonal knowledge, every characteristic of effective EFL teachers has appreciable contribution to their being effective teachers. For example, even though Retno is not confident about her personal knowledge and about her ability as a university teacher that does not mean she is not an effective teacher because she has other two characteristics of effective EFL teacher, namely pedagogical and interpersonal knowledge.

Recommendation

This study will give benefits for the teachers, the students, the policy makers, and the other researchers. **For the teachers.** This study can be additional information for the teachers to

improve their ability on how to be effective EFL teachers in terms of pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, and interpersonal knowledge in order to educate their students better.

Moreover, this can be a useful source to know how their characteristics work in the teaching and learning process. **For the students-teachers.** As pre-service teachers, the students should learn how to equip themselves with the skills that need to be possessed as effective language teachers.

This study can be used as one of the learning sources to master those knowledge, especially about pedagogical, personal and interpersonal knowledge. **For the policy makers.** As the ones who run the rules of an institution, the policy makers should know their colleagues' performance especially university teachers. This particular research provides the information of university teachers' characteristics as effective EFL teachers such as pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge, and interpersonal knowledge. Those characteristics are considered as the way they perform as professional teachers in the university. This research is hoped to give them information about their colleagues' performance. **For other researchers.** This study can be a source for other researchers who tend to research on the same field, especially in Indonesian context.

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