

“Content And Practical Knowledge of Effective English Foreign Language (EFL) Lecturers as Perceived by Pre-Service Teacher Students”

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Abstract

In the era when English takes an important part as international language, effective EFL (English Foreign Language) teachers are needed to help students achieve success of learning a foreign language. An effective teacher might possess some certain characteristics that make them different from teacher of other fields. The aim of this study was to explore content and practical knowledge as the characteristics of effective EFL lecturers. In depth interview was used to obtain data from four pre-service teacher students in year four of undergraduate study in English Language Education Department in a private university. The results of this study shows that characteristics of effective EFL lecturers' content knowledge included that teachers; give clear explanation, have up to date information, upgrade subject matter knowledge, answer students' questions with clear and satisfy explanation, studied in English speaking country, have good speaking and communication skill, use English language when teaching, adjust the vocabularies they use with students' level, and have good writing skill. Then, the characteristics of effective EFL lecturers' practical knowledge are; lecturers give clear instruction, provide well planned learning activities, create creative teaching, engage all of the students' to participate actively, have good time management, can fix unpredictable situation in the classroom, implement chronological concepts, teach moral values, give some opportunity for all students, have certain teaching strategies, and create enjoyable classroom situation.

Keywords: EFL teacher effectiveness, content knowledge, practical knowledge, pre-service teacher students' perceptions

1. Introduction

Teachers are being the main aspect of educational system because they are the one who conduct teaching and learning process. It is in line with Shishavan and Sadegi (2009) who said that to gain efficient functions of educational system and to enhance the quality of learning, an '*effective*' teachers are becoming the fundamental need of EFL class. Effective teacher are needed because they are taking a role in the success of students' learning process and their outcomes. In terms of learning Foreign Language, teachers might posses some certain characteristics that differ them with teachers from other field. Ideal EFL teachers place a substantial role in ELT because they facilitate the students in achieving proficiency in the target language not just the subject of English. EFL teachers should have broad knowledge of the subject-matter that they teach and be able to help students understand, by explaining concepts deeply and able to answer all questions from the students accurately (Zamani & Ahangari, 2016, p. 73-74). Referring to Bashdash (2016), more effective EFL teachers are able to communicate using target language fluently and having proficiency of the subject-matter knowledge of target language. In this study, the terms "content knowledge" was used to define the teachers' subject-matter knowledge and teachers' English language proficiency.

In addition to mastering content knowledge, an effective EFL teacher should also possess the classroom management skills such as their techniques and strategies in the classroom. Smith (2009) mentioned that many pre-service and in service teacher education argue that teachers' content knowledge directly and positively affects both classroom practice and student learning. If the classroom management runs well, the students will reach the goal of learning English. In this study, the terms classroom management skills was used by the researcher to define teachers' practical knowledge. It was because teachers' practical knowledge is about teachers' implementation of teaching in the classroom.

Some studies have researched the characteristics of an EFL teacher in a general way. Richards (2001) describes the teacher's characteristics into six core components: practical knowledge, content knowledge, contextual knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, personal knowledge and reflective knowledge. In Indonesian context, there is limitation of previous study which discusses teachers' content and practical knowledge as the characteristics of effective EFL teachers whether it is perceived by students or teachers.

Moreover, there are still many EFL teachers who are less competent in terms of English language mastery such as making error in pronunciation and do not consider grammatical form when speaking.

This study aims to explore pre-service teacher students' perception of content and practical knowledge of effective EFL lecturers in an English Language Education Department in a private university. In this study, pre-service teacher students not only attend classes in ELED, but they also doing internship program in the same time. So, their perspective is affected by both experiences, but mostly pre-service teacher students' perception is based on their experiences during attending the classes in ELED. Exploring pre-service teacher students' perception of how effective EFL lecturers possess content and practical knowledge is needed to know what students expect about the lecturers and the teaching process. This will ease the lecturers to reflect themselves and improve their teaching quality to meet the students' need.

2. Literature Review

Characteristics of Effective EFL Teachers

Various research about the characteristics of an effective English Foreign Language teacher in different context and areas have been published. In English language teaching, an effective teacher may differ in various ways such as pedagogical skill, personal skill, their proficiency or even social skills. A thesis study of Badshah (2016) revealed that some characteristics of effective teachers are universal, but others are domain-specific. In the same way, he stated that there are certain characteristics and requirements which EFL teachers could take care of in order to be effective in their EFL pedagogy. The other study conducted in Thailand revealed some same characteristics which are categorized into some aspects. According to Wichadee (2010) the qualities of effective English Language Teachers based on the four categories of (1) English proficiency, (2) pedagogical knowledge, (3) organization and communication skills, and (4) socio-affective skills. All the studies mentioned different characteristics of the effective EFL teacher. Both female and male students rated teacher English proficiency as the highest important aspect effective EFL teachers should have. In the other hand, organization and communication skills, socio-affective skills, and pedagogical knowledge were placed under the English proficiency. In the other way Richard (2001) ,categorized some component that effective EFL teacher should have. Those components are Practical knowledge, Content Knowledge, Contextual Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, Personal Knowledge, and Reflective Knowledge.

Content Knowledge

To define content knowledge, some experts have different opinion about what means by content knowledge of a teacher. Richard (2011), said that content knowledge refers to what teachers need to know about what they teach (rather than what they know about teaching itself), and understand knowledge that would not be shared with teachers of other subject areas and in language teaching has traditionally been drawn from the discipline of applied linguistics.

Tsui (2003) also convinced that content knowledge refers to subject matter knowledge or knowledge of a discipline. In her study about EFL teacher's knowledge of vocabulary instruction which investigated university students' in China, the findings revealed that the main components of EFL teachers' knowledge is content knowledge. She also categorized into three broad components of content knowledge which are English proficiency, the language system and the language learning system, and supplementary content knowledge. The data in her study suggest that all of the seven participants suggested content knowledge to be the first and important component of EFL teacher knowledge. Specifically, in answering the question of what qualities a qualified EFL teacher should have, all the participants said content knowledge as the teacher's most important quality.

Moreover, other researcher Roberts (1998) as cited in Banegas (2009) pointed out that having content knowledge means that teachers show knowledge of the systems of the target language and competence in it. According to Banegas (2009), teachers will present a pedagogical construct of the language as a real entity, which should not be equated to the language as experienced by its native speakers. Referring to Richard (2001) one of the characteristics of effective teacher in EFL context is content knowledge which define as the teachers understanding of the subject.

Practical Knowledge

Qian, Xiao-fang & Jiang (2013) argue that teacher practical knowledge is an idea that has been created by teachers in their teaching practice to match with particular work settings. The characteristics are personalized, context-specific, and action-guided. It has known as the valued prize of countless hours of practice, trial and error, and reflection during teaching. They define teacher practical knowledge as the knowledge of a teacher where in this case they are implementing what the have been learned. Teacher practical knowledge deals with the classroom matters and the implementation of teaching in the classroom. Richards (2001)

define practical knowledge of teachers as the teachers' repertoire of classroom techniques and strategies. Furthermore, according to Chen (2009) Teacher Practical Knowledge is interpreted in the form of teachers' gestures, expressions in their eyes, lingual style, enthusiasm, artistic pause, and wisdom which called as "the essence of class".

In summary, teacher practical knowledge defines as the implementation of teaching in the classroom. It consists of how teachers possess management classroom such as teachers' wisdom in managing the classroom, the strategies they used in the class and also the techniques to manage the classroom.

Related Previous Studies

Many studies have been conducted in exploring the characteristics of become effective EFL teachers from the perspective of teachers, students and university stakeholders. One comes from Arikan & Caner (2013) entitled *In the Eyes of Turkish EFL Learners: What Makes an Effective Foreign Language Teacher?*. The study aims to see the qualities of a successful English language teacher based on the survey among 998 undergraduate students' at a state university in Turkey. The survey includes 37 items and the data collected via a Likert type scale. Based on the survey, detailed information of how university-level Turkish students perceive an effective English language teacher, consists their views of the importance of pedagogical and content knowledge, personality traits, professional skills and teachers' classroom behavior. The results in his study reveal that Turkish students expect their teachers to have a sound knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. However, ability to teach pronunciation, speaking and writing skills well place higher rank as the characteristics of become effective EFL teachers. Moreover, Turkish students agree that effective EFL teachers are being good at classroom management, able to reduce student anxiety and also incorporate technology and visual materials.

Shisavan & Sadeghi (2009) also conducted similar topic entitled *Characteristics of an Effective English Language Teacher as Perceived by Iranian Teachers and Learners of English*. This study attempts to find out qualities of an effective English foreign language teacher (ELT) as perceived by Iranian teachers and learners. The results show that there are significant differences between teachers' and learners' perception on some characteristics of effective EFL teachers. Based on the finding, teachers agree more strongly than students that effective English language teacher should assign homework and integrate into the classroom.

Another significant different is their opinion about preparing the lesson well, using lesson plans and assessing what students have learned. Students agree more than teachers that effective EFL teachers teach English subject matter in Persian (first language of the learners). Moreover, EFL teachers are they who master the target language, having knowledge of pedagogy and use particular techniques and method when teaching. It also reveals that effective EFL teachers should have good personality and student-teacher relationship.

3. Research Methodology

This study is qualitative research which use case study as the research design. According to Yin (1994), case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not proven clearly. The phenomenon happen in the real context of this study is EFL teachers have different levels of content and practical knowledge. This study is conducted in ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It is necessary to conduct the study in this department because after knowing the pre-service teacher students' perception about effective EFL lecturers, then it can be a guideline for the department to improve the qualities of teachers by providing some professional development program. The findings of this study can also be beneficial for the lecturers to become self-reflection and evaluation during their teaching. Four students from all classes of year 4 are going to be the participants in this study. The researcher choose participants who have passed all the pedagogical courses, having good understanding in pedagogical courses and included as active students in each classroom. It hoped that they can give broad information regarding to content and practical knowledge.

4. Findings and Discussion

Pre-service teacher students' perception on general characteristics of effective EFL teachers

The aim of this study is to explore pre-service teachers' voices on the characteristics of effective EFL lecturers in terms of their content and practical knowledge. In this study, the researcher provided preliminary interviews which discussed about the general characteristics to becoming an effective lecturer. Preliminary interview consisted of introductory questions that were given before the main questions which mentioned in the interview guideline. The findings from preliminary interviews revealed that all of the participants agree that having good teaching preparation such as creating a syllabus and lesson plan before entering the

classroom is an indication of an effective EFL lecturer. Besides, effective EFL teachers can be seen through their personality. EFL lecturers are they who care to all of the students and help each student to face learning difficulties.

Content Knowledge of Effective EFL Lecturers Based on Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions

There are nine points declared by the participants regarding what classifies a lecturer as an effective EFL lecturer which are presented below:

Explaining topics related to subject matter. The first point raised by three of the participants is about the way the lecturers explain the subject matter that they teach. EFL lecturers who master the subject matter knowledge can explain the materials in line with the lesson and deliver it clearly.

Giving clear explanation. Another finding suggests that participants called their EFL lecturers as effective lecturers are when the lecturers can give clear explanation when teaching. This finding is supported the study conducted by Kourieos and Evripidou (2013) who investigated students' perceptions on effective EFL teachers in Cyprus. Their findings revealed that students expect their EFL teachers to have good English proficiency and subject matter knowledge. Therefore, giving a clear and to-the-point explanation about the materials is included as one of the content knowledge characteristics of effective EFL teachers.

Having up to date information. Based on the participants' perspective, another trait that shows EFL lecturers' effectiveness can be seen through their subject matter knowledge mastery. Two participants deliver the same point about the lecturers' knowledge regarding the lesson that they teach. Both of them agree that lecturers should always have up-to-date knowledge or information about what is being taught. Research conducted by Kwangsawad (2017) in Mahasarakham University of Thailand found that having a thorough understanding of their subject area is an opinion that is shared between 94.12 % of 100% of the students as a feature that indicate a good EFL teacher.

Answering students questions clearly. A number of two participants said that effective EFL lecturers who master the subject matter knowledge are they who can answer the students' question about the materials. According to Hajinazer (2014) who do survey among students about characteristics of effective EFL instructor, teacher's Capability to answer student questions' is important aspects that teacher should have.

Studying in English speaking country. According to pre-service teacher students' perspectives, effective EFL lecturers can be identified through background of the studies. It is

found that effective EFL lecturers are the lecturers who have experience study English Language Teaching in English speaking countries.

Having good speaking and communication skills. Most of pre-service teacher students argued that effective EFL lecturers should be able to speak and communicate using English language fluently. The first opinion raised by participant mentioned the importance of having a good communication skill for the effective EFL lecturers is because they are the role model in the classroom. The lecturers who have good communication skills can engage students to be active and can motivate their students. Some of participants said that effective EFL lecturers' speak use native-like accent and correct pronunciation and vocabularies.

Using English language when teaching. Another finding of this study revealed that effective EFL lecturers are those who use English language fully during teaching activities in the classroom. According to participants' opinion, lecturers who teach use full English motivate students to learn the language and help students to acquire vocabularies.

Adjusting the vocabularies with students' level. Two participants believe that effective EFL lecturers should be able to adjust what vocabularies they use when teaching the students who have different levels of knowledge. Both of them agreed that EFL lecturers should use comprehensible vocabularies when teaching in the classroom. . This finding also supported a study conducted by Hajinazer (2014) that investigate students about characteristics of effective EFL instructions. It is found that majority of students (83%) believed that an effective teacher's accuracy of vocabulary is very important.

Having good writing skill. According to the finding, effective EFL lecturers should have good writing skills to be called that the lecturers master language proficiency. The lecturers should be able to correct every student's writing errors, including their grammatical errors. Another writing skill aspect that should be mastered by effective EFL lecturers is how to write good content and the structures of a good paragraph in writing.

Effective EFL lecturers' Practical Knowledge Based on Pre-service Teachers'

Perception

Richards (2001) defines a teacher's practical knowledge as the teachers' repertoire of classroom techniques and strategies. From these references, the following findings discuss about practical knowledge that deals with how effective EFL lecturers manage the classroom during the teaching and learning process. It also explores EFL lecturers' performance in the classroom. The findings about lecturers' practical knowledge are presented below:

Giving clear instruction. The finding presents that effective EFL lecturers should give clear instruction during teaching in the classroom. Some participants argued that the lecturers should be able to give proper activities and clear instruction during teaching in the classroom.

Providing well planned learning activities. Characteristics of content knowledge of effective EFL lecturers also can be seen through what they did during teaching in the classroom. Based on the participants' perception, effective EFL lecturers can provide well-planned learning activities such as prepare all the necessities of the activities they will conduct beforehand. Moreover, the lecturers should be able to adjust classroom activities that are appropriate with the goals of learning. This is in line with the study conducted by Huang (2010) who investigated successful EFL teachers in a Chinese University. In his study, it is evident that successful EFL teacher chose the appropriate materials for teaching and plan classroom activities that involve all the students' participation in the class.

Creating creative teaching. Pre-service teacher students as the participants argued that EFL lecturers' effectiveness identified through the way they create teaching. They argued that effective EFL lecturers should be creative in providing classroom activities. Creative teaching means that lecturers can create learning activities which build students creativity and critical thinking.

Engage all students' to participate actively. Moreover, three participants agreed that in order for a lecturer to become effective in the classroom, said lecturer should be able to convince students to actively participate. It is also stated that good EFL lecturers should invite students to participate like through peer or group discussion. Norris (1999) said that being able to engage students in the language learning process is as important as the capacity to create student-centered learning contexts.

Having good time management. It is also found that effective EFL lecturers should have good time management in conducting teaching and learning process. Pre-service teacher students argued that effective lecturers are having good time management where they can separate every part in teaching like pre-activity, whilst activity and post-activity. The finding about having good time management has supported the study conducted by Hajinazer (2014). In his study that investigate students' perception through administered 58 items questionnaire, it is reveals that using class time wisely is mark very important aspect that effective teachers should do.

Able to fix unpredictable situation in the classroom. Another finding presented by pre-service teacher students regarding their perspective of practical knowledge, it reveals

lecturers should be able to solve unpredictable situation during teaching. One of the participant said that effective EFL lecturers who have good classroom management can solve unpredictable situation in the class.

Implementing chronological concepts. Practical knowledge of effective EFL lecturers can also be identified through the way lecturers formulate their teaching process. Based on the finding, effective EFL lecturers use chronological concepts during teaching. It means that the lecturers teach students step by step and begin with the easier step.

Teaching moral values. Another point based on participants' perspective is about content of teaching materials. An effective EFL lecturer should be able to include moral values during teaching some topics.

Giving some opportunity for all students. Furthermore, the participants mentioned that effective lecturers also give opportunities for students to take part or be involved in the class activities, so the lecturers have more to do than just lecturing.

Having certain teaching strategies. The next finding indicates that effective EFL lecturers should have certain teaching strategies. According to the findings, effective EFL lecturers can decide which teaching strategies are appropriate to the students' need. Some of pre-service teacher students argued that effective EFL lecturers are they who can use student centered learning in the classroom because it make the lecturers more flexible to explore students' creativity.

Creating enjoyable classroom situation. Another finding defines effective lecturers' practical knowledge as the way lecturers create the classroom's atmosphere. The participants prefer to have lecturers who are not too serious and can create an enjoyable classroom situation during learning process.

5. Conclusion

This research attempted to find out pre-service teacher students' perception at English Language Education Department in a private university toward content and practical knowledge of effective EFL lecturers. In this study, the content knowledge limits into subject matter knowledge and English language proficiency of effective EFL lecturers. In addition, practical knowledge refers to implementation of teaching included how EFL lecturers manage their classroom. The results indicated that according to pre-service teacher students, the features of effective EFL lecturers are: give clear explanation, have up to date information, upgrade subject matter knowledge, answer students' questions with clear and satisfy explanation, studied in English speaking country, have good speaking and communication skill, use English language when teaching, adjust the vocabularies they use with

students' level, and have good writing skill. Then, the characteristics of effective EFL lecturers' practical knowledge are; lecturers give clear instruction, provide well planned learning activities, create creative teaching, engage all of the students' to participate actively, have good time management, can fix unpredictable situation in the classroom, implement chronological concepts, teach moral values, give some opportunity for all students, have certain teaching strategies, and create enjoyable classroom situation.

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