



Primary School English Teachers' Perceptions of Their Pedagogical Competency: Using Self Evaluation to Identify Teachers' Competency and Importance

Dr. Endang Asriyanti Amin Sikki

Institution of Educational Quality Assurance (LPMP) South Sulawesi, Indonesia

Email: faridraufi@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses research undertaken at primary schools in South Sulawesi exploring the central question: *'What is the self - perception of primary school English teachers of their importance and the level of their pedagogical competency?'*. The aim of the research was to explore primary school English teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competency. Two hundred English teachers were selected randomly and required to complete a detailed questionnaire self-evaluating their teaching practice. This self-evaluation identifies the perceptions of their pedagogical competency by using two criteria - level of importance and level of competence. Competency tests and open questions were also used to support the results. The test results on pedagogical competency found that fifty-two teachers (26%) were in the 'poor' category, one hundred and twenty-nine teachers (64.50%) were in the 'fair' category, eighteen teachers (9%) were in the 'good' category and only one teacher (0.5%) was in the 'excellent' category. This study demonstrates that the primary school teachers of English have poor levels of pedagogical competence below the intended minimum level. Therefore, this study recommends the continual professional development of the teachers, especially in-service training in such areas as 1) learning and teaching strategies, 2) authentic assessment, 3) students' characteristics, and 4) lesson planning. The responses to the open questions demonstrate that the teachers need to improve most aspects of their pedagogical competencies. The recommendations for the improvement of pedagogical competencies of primary school teachers of English are also provided.

Keywords: *self-evaluation, pedagogical competency, primary school English teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) has become an issue in nearly all countries where English is not the first language (L1). Many experts around the world concentrate on English language teaching for young learners. English language teaching at elementary schools in Europe began when the European Commission on Education and Culture determined that European Union citizens should be proficient in three European languages, their mother tongues and two other languages. In that sense, early learning is one of the actions promoted to achieve that objective. For example, in 1997, a conference of experts and decision-makers, "Early Learning and After" was organized in Luxembourg. European Union Education Ministers stated in Resolution 98/c/1 the necessity to foster teaching languages to young learners (Saez, 2001:6). In general, in most European countries, where English is not the first language, English language learning has been introduced at an early age.

TEYL has become increasingly important in many Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Iran, and China. Asian countries are very aware of the importance of English language education in order to make sure that their citizens can compete in the globalized economy where English has become the common international language. Taiwan government policy has introduced English in Grade 3 of elementary school (when learners are on average 9 years of age) since 2005. In 1996, English became a

compulsory subject from Grade 1 in Thailand, and in 2001 it became a compulsory subject from Grade 3 in China (Wang, 2008:1-3).

In Indonesia, teaching English for young learners has been implemented in some schools since 1992. The implementation of TEYL in Indonesia is not obligatory. English at elementary school is not a compulsory subject. It is the local content subject.

D **Sikki Int. J. Innovative Educ. Res. 6(1):113-120, 2018** sions relative to some portion of curricular space in the form of the use of some learning hours for what has become known as a local content (Musthafa, 2010:1). As a result of this decentralization policy, many districts and city governments are interested in teaching English to Young Learners (EYL) This is evidenced by increasing numbers of schools which offer English classes at the elementary school level. Teachers of English for young learners need to improve their teaching competencies. The competencies that teachers of foreign languages for young learners should have are communicative competence in the foreign language, linguistic competence, linguistic-cultural competence and didactic/pedagogical competence (Pogolian, 2008, 53).

The current issues that arise are the implementation of TEYL, the teachers' competency, and training for English teachers who teach at elementary schools. Currently, many elementary schools in Indonesia offer English as a local content starting at the fourth grade (aged nine to ten); yet many other elementary schools teach English at earlier grades. It is now becoming a trend for schools to offer English instruction before grade four.

As language policies introduce TEYL at earlier ages, educators are searching for the most effective methods to teach English to early learners. Aligned with the introduction of foreign languages to young learners has been the necessity to prepare and train teachers (Vojtcova, 2008:93). The TEYL program needs to be well prepared, organised and resourced. Qualified, well-trained and competent teachers need to be prepared for the implementation of this curriculum. There is a critical need for appropriate and effective training for teachers of English at elementary schools.

EYL teachers in Indonesia are classified into three types: 1) classroom teachers who have not been to English teaching college, 2) English teachers who attend English teaching college, but have no experience working with children, and 3) teachers who have an English teaching background and experience working with children (Suyanto, 2009, 33). Vale (2012, 6) classifies the typical issues raised by the teachers of English to children: namely 1) teachers with EYL experience, but with no experience of working with children, 2) teachers with experience teaching children, but with little or no experience of teaching EFL, and 3) teachers who are training to teach EFL, possibly to children.

The survey results from one thousand four hundred and fifteen primary school teachers of English in ten districts in South Sulawesi were revealing. The data indicated: 1) 51 per cent of the teachers have never attended English Teaching College, 2) only 21 per cent have ever attended English training, and 3) 68 per cent teachers have had English teaching experience for young learners of fewer than 5 years (author's survey, 2012).

This article explores the primary school English teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical competency by using self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is an individual's assessment of him/herself, his/her possibilities, qualities, and status among in comparison to others.

In this study, self-evaluation refers to the process in which a teacher rates the quality of his/her own work. By using self-evaluation, teachers can rate the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. Teachers can also rate their need for improvement in classroom practices, and evaluate their pedagogical competencies by a comparison with the general standards which must be met by teachers.

The process in which a teacher rates the quality of his/her own work is also a part of the process of reflective thinking. Lasley (1992, 24) defines reflection as the capacity of a teacher to think creatively, imaginatively and at times, self-critically about his/her classroom practice. Norton (1994, 139) identifies reflective thinking as a disciplined inquiry into the motives, methods, materials and consequences of educational practice. It enables practitioners to thoughtfully examine conditions and attitudes which impede or enhance student achievement. Teacher can identify and even control their strengths and weaknesses and their need for improvement if they have a process of regular self-evaluation. Their

involvement in evaluating themselves will enable them to honestly assess their competencies. Self-evaluation enables them to increase their commitment to improve the quality of their teaching.

As this article discusses the pedagogical competency of English teachers for young learners in the Province of South Sulawesi in Indonesia, the main research question addressed is: ‘*What is the self-perception of primary school English teachers about their importance and the level of their pedagogical competency?*’

The self-evaluation of English teachers is based on teachers’ competency in the National Education Ministry Decree, Number 16 Year 2007 reference to the Standards of Teacher Academic Qualifications and Competence. This self-evaluation also includes concepts from Richard (2010, 101) and Murray (2009, 19) regarding the language competency which must be met by all English teachers.

RESEARCH METHODS

The survey involved a sample from one thousand four hundred and fifteen (1,415) primary school English teachers in ten districts in South Sulawesi province in Indonesia. The districts are Makassar, Bantaeng, Bulukumba, Wajo, Bone, Sidrap, Soppeng, Pangkep, Parepare and Enrekang. The survey was conducted to obtain data about the profile of primary school English teachers.

Of these 1.415 primary school English teachers in ten districts, two hundred English teachers were selected randomly to complete the self-evaluation questionnaire. This self-evaluation classifies the perceptions about their pedagogical competency by using two categories, namely, level of importance and level of competence.

The level of importance was provided with a four point scale:

1. Meaning ‘*not important*’
2. Meaning ‘*somewhat important*’
3. Meaning ‘*important*’
4. Meaning ‘*very important*’

The competence level was also provided with a four point scale:

1. Meaning ‘*not competent*’ (poor category)
2. Meaning ‘*somewhat competent*’ (fair category)
3. Meaning ‘*competent*’ (good category)
4. Meaning ‘*very competent*’ (excellent category)

To support the self-evaluation data of the pedagogical competence level, a test was also applied to measure the sample teachers’ subject area. This test also contained open question requiring them to list resources that would support their primary competence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the test of pedagogical competency given to the 200 primary school English teachers found that fifty two teachers (26%) were in the *poor* category, one hundred and twenty nine teachers (64.50%) were in the *fair category*, eighteen teachers (9%) were in the *good* category and only one teacher (0.5%) was in the *excellent* category.

The responses to the open questions clearly indicate that the teachers need to improve their teaching competency. Most aspects of pedagogical competencies need improvement: methods of teaching English, learning models, learning theory, authentic assessment for young learners, preparation of syllabus and lesson plans, students' characteristics, motivating students, teaching grammar, teaching vocabulary, teaching listening, teaching reading, teaching speaking, teaching spelling, early childhood psychology, games, creation of material, and instructional media.

In their perception of the components of a lesson plan, teachers are aware that understanding the principles of curriculum development, writing syllabus and designing the lesson plans are important. Whilst they believe that all of the components of lesson planning are important, the majority perceive themselves to be incompetent in that area.

Table 1 shows the teachers’ rating of the importance and competence level of their lesson planning.

Table 1. The Self-Rating of Importance and Competence on Lesson Planning

No	Pedagogical Competency	Rating of Importance	Competence		Threshold
			Rating of Competence	Meaning	
1	Design lesson plan based on syllabus	3.790	2.885	incompetent	Level of competence: 3= competent
2	Write syllabus based on curriculum	3.720	2.805	Incompetent	
3	Understand the principles of curriculum development	3.615	2.700	Incompetent	Level of importance: 3= important

This self-rating shows that of the three sub-components in lesson planning, the teachers rated '*design lesson plan based on syllabus*' higher in importance than '*syllabus writing*' and the '*principles of curriculum development*'. Also, the teachers perceive themselves to be incompetent writing/preparing lesson plans. One of the most likely reasons is the lack of specialized training for primary school English teachers.

The principle of curriculum development is considered to be important and teachers perceive themselves to be incompetent in this area. This sub-component has the lowest level of the teachers' self-rating of competence. Lesson planning is obviously important for primary school teachers of English to enable them to implement their learning program in the classroom. Lesson planning provides the structure for primary teachers of English to conduct the joyous learning for young learners in the classroom.

In the component of teaching and learning, the self-rating of importance and competence is listed in table 2 below.

Table 2: The Self-Rating of Importance and Competence in Teaching and Learning Strategies

No	Pedagogical Competency	Rating of Importance	Competence		Threshold
			Rating of competence	Meaning	
1	Use the various strategy in teaching English	3.690	2.790	Incompetent	Level of competence: 3=competent
2	Plan the English learning objective for EYL	3.685	2.800	Incompetent	
3	Teach English by using examples	3.670	2.970	Incompetent	Level of importance: 3=important
4	Understand the principles English learning for young learners	3.655	2.780	Incompetent	
5	Apply the various learning method	3.620	2.755	Incompetent	3=important
6	Apply the various learning technique	3.605	2.740	Incompetent	
7	Understand the learning theory of English	3.605	2.700	Incompetent	
8	Understand the various learning principles	3.585	2.665	Incompetent	
9	Teach English language skill	3.555	2.770	Incompetent	
10	Understand the principles of English learning design	3.485	2.670	Incompetent	
11	Simplify tasks to the simple steps	3.475	2.680	Incompetent	
12	Conduct constructively feedback	3.465	2.620	Incompetent	
13	Diagnose the learning problems in teaching English	3.425	2.570	Incompetent	
14	Teach English by using song	3.375	2.715	Incompetent	
15	Teach English by using flashcards	3.370	2.625	Incompetent	
16	Teach English by using story	3.265	2.590	Incompetent	

Table 2 shows that the teachers perceive themselves to be incompetent in the components of teaching and learning while these are considered to be important for them. The lowest level of teachers' competence is in terms of diagnosing the problems of the students. Despite its importance, the teachers may rarely, if at all, discover the students' problems in learning the language to enable the teacher to provide appropriate assistance in achieving the desired instructional objectives. As well, the table shows that the teachers have

poor capability using various resources and media such as stories, songs and flashcards. This would definitely limit the delivery and variety of instructional material. As a result, classroom activities would have limited interest, and therefore learning will certainly not be maximized.

Teachers perceive themselves to be incompetent in teaching English using stories. Story telling in teaching English to young learners is very important because children enjoy stories. By using stories, young learners can connect English with their background knowledge. Teaching English through story telling gives young learners additional practice at English skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing. Stories also stimulate creativity in students. Slattery and Willis (2001) state that children love stories. They are always eager to listen to stories, know how stories work, want to understand what is happening, can enjoy hearing stories in English when they start English lessons, enjoy looking at storybooks by themselves, and can reread the stories they like when they themselves can read in English.

Table 2 also shows that teachers also perceive themselves incompetent in other aspects of teaching and learning strategies including the application of various principles of language teaching and learning and various teaching techniques. In short, the current teachers' level of competency urgently requires improvement for better classroom instructional practices.

The perception of the level of importance and competence of students' characteristics is outlined in table 3 below.

Table 3: The Self-Rating of Importance and Competence of Students' Characteristics

No	Pedagogical Competency	Rating of Importance	Competence		Threshold
			Rating of competence	Meaning	
1	Monitor the students' progress	3.660	2.910	Incompetent	Level of competence: 3=competent
2	Understand the students' characteristics	3.655	2.835	Incompetent	
3	Identify the students' learning difficulties	3.640	2.835	Incompetent	
4	Use the appropriate language level of student ability	3.605	2.825	Incompetent	Level of importance: 3=important
5	Use media that are relevant to the students' characteristics	3.590	2.780	Incompetent	
6	Understand the learning styles of different students	3.585	2.810	Incompetent	
7	Use the learning resources that are relevant to students' characteristics	3.560	2.805	Incompetent	
8	Identify the students' potency	3.550	2.815	Incompetent	
9	Improve the children's potency to achieve optimal performance	3.525	2.725	Incompetent	
10	Meet the needs of students	3.505	2.685	Incompetent	
11	Accommodate the varying levels of student' ability	3.425	2.685	Incompetent	

Understanding students' characteristics is another crucial part of teachers' pedagogical competency. Students' characteristic in teaching and learning are a crucially important factor. Learners of the same age differ from one to another. Learners may learn best through speaking or writing. They may learn easily alone or in a group. In short, understanding the learners' characteristics is essential for teachers.

Table 3 indicates that while teachers consider all related aspects of students' characteristics are important to understand, the teachers' capacity to understand them is perceived to be poor, and below the intended competence level. These aspects consist of monitoring students' progress, identifying students' learning styles, identifying students' potential, and identifying students' difficulties in learning the target language.

Due to their poor capacity in these areas, the teachers are rarely concerned with such important pedagogical aspects. Without accurate identification of the students' characteristics, it is very unlikely that the teachers select and use appropriate instructional media, appropriate instructional language for the students' level, select and use learning resources appropriate to the students' characteristics, and provide appropriate help to overcome the difficulties that the students encounter. To summarize, the capacity of the teachers in this pedagogical aspects is still insufficient, and therefore requires improvement through various professional development activities.

The learning phase is an important period in the growth of intelligence, mental and social skills. Therefore, how students learn and how teachers teach should be planned based on their development. Related to the child's development, the teachers are required to understand the condition and the characteristics of their young students. In addition, the teachers also need to have special skills to select and apply the teaching techniques of interest. The teachers are expected to raise the students' motivation and also help the learners to achieve the learning objectives that have been planned.

The other component of pedagogical competency is (authentic) assessment. While the teachers consider this component is important, they rate themselves to be incompetent in this area.

Table 4 shows the self-rating of importance and competence levels of authentic assessment.

Table 4: The Self-Rating of Importance and Competence of Authentic Assessment

No	Pedagogical Competency	Rating of importance	Competence		Threshold
			Rating of competence	Meaning	
1	Evaluate the students' learning result	3.760	2.940	Incompetent	Level of competence: 3=competent Level of importance: 3=important
2	Understand the principles of authentic assessment	3.625	2.750	Incompetent	
3	Using the results of the assessment information to improve the quality of learning	3.610	2.705	Incompetent	
4	Determine the assessment procedure	3.575	2.710	Incompetent	
5	Analyze the results of the assessment process for a variety of purposes	3.520	2.735	Incompetent	
6	Using the assessment information to design an enrichment program	3.515	2.610	Incompetent	
7	Use the assessment information to design a remedial program	3.510	2.690	Incompetent	
8	Develop the assessment instrument	3.505	2.615	Incompetent	
9	Communicate the results of assessment to stakeholders	3.320	2.500	Incompetent	

Table 4 shows that all of aspects in authentic assessment are important (average score is above 3) and the teachers perceive themselves to be incompetent.

The most important aspect is *evaluate the students' learning* while *communicate the assessment results to stakeholders* is the lowest aspect in the rating of importance and competence.

Three aspects have been assessed as being important, i.e. *developing the assessment instrument*, *using the assessment information*, and *analyzing the results of the assessment process*. Regardless of how important they might be, there are still other sub-components that have been rated as being more important. *Using the results of the assessment information* and *understanding the principles of authentic assessment* are perceived more important for English teachers of primary school. Recording regular comments about young learners' progress is useful for the primary teachers, as teachers are expected to tell parents how their children are learning English. In the beginning, assessment is done in very simple ways. To summarize, the aspect of assessment is important in teaching English in primary school, yet the teachers are not capable enough to undertake this task in their classroom practices.

The result of this survey suggests that the teachers' pedagogical competencies which require priority for improvement are in the areas of (1) teaching and learning strategies, (2) authentic assessment, (3) students' characteristics, and (4) lesson planning. In relation to this recommendation Edelenbos, Johnstock and Kubanek (2006, 132) emphasize the most important didactical concepts that should be addressed in early language teaching and learning. They include (1) meaningful contexts and thematic areas, (2) comprehension precedes production, (3) learning strategies and learning styles, (4) the topics of ELL to be personalized, (5) task-oriented, (6) authentic material, and (7) computers to be fully exploited.

While meaningful contexts and thematic areas are the uppermost priority in Europe, teaching and learning strategies have the highest priority in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. Besides, this study also

recommends authentic assessment to be important and of primary concern in the teacher professional development. This is in line with Ivanova (2008, 173) who advocates the primary importance of teaching preparedness, statement of the teaching objectives, and integrated EFL methods. Similar to Ivanova's (YEAR) research findings, this research reveals that teaching preparedness or lesson planning should be one of the priorities in teacher training development.

The need for teachers' pedagogical competence development, as recommended in this survey, becomes the most crucial step for better classroom instructional practices for primary school students, especially for shaping positive attitudes toward, and high interest in learning English by the young learners. Children with a positive attitude and high interest, developed at the elementary level may, in all probability, display increased motivation for learning the language in their secondary and tertiary education.

CONCLUSIONS

Learning English for young learners is increasingly widespread, and more and more primary schools are offering English in their curriculum. Government policies have also supported the existence of learning English in primary school which is intended to build positive attitudes towards English as well as improving the young learners' ability to speak English at an earlier age. This aim should certainly be supported by adequate competency of the EYL teachers. EYL teachers need to be nurtured and trained so that they can continually improve their competency including pedagogical competence.

This study has demonstrated that primary school teachers of English have a poor level of pedagogical competence, below the intended minimum level. Therefore, this study strongly recommends the continual professional development for the teachers, especially in-service training in such areas as 1) learning and teaching strategies, 2) authentic assessment, 3) students' characteristics, and 4) lesson planning.

Teaching English to young learners can be an enjoyable and fun filled activity if teachers master the various and practical techniques in using instructional materials or books in the classroom. English primary teachers should develop the methods of teaching and techniques according to the needs, the circumstances, resources and the conditions in the schools.

REFERENCES

- Edelenbos, Peter., Johnstock, Richard., & Kubanek, Angelika. (2006). The Main Pedagogical Principles Underlying the Teaching of Languages to Very Young Learners (*Final Report of European Commissions Education and Culture, Culture and Communication Multilingual Policy*, the EAC 89/04, Lot 1 Study, June). Retrieved from <http://www.ec.europa.eu/...uments/doc127.en.pdf>.
- Indonesia, Department of National Education. (2007). *The Guidance of Assessment*. Jakarta: BSNP.
- Ivanova, Lilia. (2008). Adapting EFL Methodology to Teaching Young Learners. In Kantelinen, Ritva., Sokka-Meaney, Eija Liisa., & Pogolian, Victoria (Eds.). *Paper presented at the Seminar on Early Foreign Language Education, University of Joensuu*, 2008, p. 168-175. University of Joensuu Bulletins of the Faculty of Education No.6.
- Kantelinen, Ritva & Pirkko, Pollari. (2008). Foreign Language Education at The Primary Level In Finland. In Kantelinen, Ritva., Sokka-Meaney, Eija Liisa., & Pogolian, Victoria (Eds.). *Paper presented at the Seminar on Early Foreign Language Education, University of Joensuu*, 2008, p. 10-22. University of Joensuu Bulletins of the Faculty of Education No.6.
- Krashen, Stephen D. (1981). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Great Britain: Prentice hall International.
- Lasley, T. (1992). Promoting Teacher Reflection. *Journal of Staff Development* 13 (1): 24-29.
- Musthafa, Bachruddin. 2010. Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia: Essential Requirements. *Educationist* (Online), Vol. IV No.2. July 2010. (http://file.edu/Direktori/Vol...2010/07_Bachrudin_Musthafa.pdf, Accessed on April 9th 2013).
- Norton, J.L. (1994). Creative Thinking and the Locus of Control as Predictors of Reflective Thinking in Pre Service Teachers. Paper presented at th 74th Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators. Atlanta, GA.

- Pogosian, Victorian. (2008). The Russian System of Training Teachers of Foreign Languages for Young Learners: History and New Developments. In Kantelinen, Ritva., Sokka-Meaney, Eija Liisa., & Pogosian, Victoria (Eds.). *Paper presented at the Seminar on Early Foreign Language Education, University of Joensuu*, 2008, pp. 45-55. University of Joensuu Bulletins of the Faculty of Education No.6.
- Richards, Jack C. (2010). Competence and Performance in Language Teaching. *RELC Journal* 41(2) 101-122. Retrieved from <http://rel.sagepub.com/content/41/2/101>.
- Saez, Fernando Trujillo. 2001. *Teaching Languages to Young Learners. A Historical Perspectives*. Granada: Grupo Editorial Universitario, (Online), pp. 135-145. (ISBN: 84-8491-071-1). (http://fernandotrujillo.es/wp-content/uploads/.../TEFL_young_learners.pdf, Accessed on April 9th 2013).
- Slatterly, M., & Willis, J. (2001). *English for Primary Teachers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sugiyono. (2009). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R & D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Suyanto, Kasihani K.E. (2009). *English for Young Learners*. Jakarta: Sinar Grafika Offset.
- Tandlichova, Eva. (2008). Looking at Some Innovative Methods in the Light of the New Conception of Foreign Language Teaching at Primary Schools. In *International Conference – ELT in Primary Education*, Bratislava Slovakia, 20-21 November 2008, p. 10-14. Retrieved from http://www.fedu.uniba.sk/.../user.../ELT_IN_PRIMARY_EDUCATION.pdf.
- Vale, David., & Feunteun, Anne. (2012). *Teaching Children English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vojtcova, MGR Nadesda, 2008. Training Future Elementary Teachers to Use Picture Storybooks. In: *International Conference – ELT in Elementary Education*, Bratislava Slovakia, (Online), 93-97 November 2008, pp. 10-14. (http://www.fedu.uniba.sk/.../user.../ELT_IN_PRIMARY_EDUCATION.pdf, Accessed on January 9th 2013).
- Wang, Wei Pei. 2008. *Teaching English to Young Learners in Taiwan: Issues Relating to Teaching, Teacher Education, Teaching Materials and Teacher Perspectives*. University of Waikato. Published thesis. (Online), (<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/2547>, Accessed on April 9th 2013).