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Assessing Non-English Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) in Teaching English at Preschools

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to assess non-English teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) in teaching English at preschools. Ten (10) teachers with varied degrees were treated as the object of the study. A four-month training, involving a pretest, face-to-face tutorial, micro-teaching, and post-test, supported by recording, observation, questionnaire, and interview, was conducted to evaluate the teachers' PCK progress. The results indicated that non-English Teachers' PCK progressed significantly after the treatments. It was concluded that non-English graduates were good at teaching English at preschools in terms of teaching a concept, yet they had limitations in developing practical skills.

Keyword: Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), non-English Teacher, Preschool

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai Pengetahuan Konten Pedagogis (PCK) guru non-Bahasa Inggris dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris di tingkat prasekolah. Sepuluh (10) orang guru dengan lulusan yang bervariasi dijadikan sebagai objek penelitian. Penelitian dilakukan dengan melakukan pelatihan selama empat bulan, yang meliputi kegiatan pra-tes, pertemuan tatap muka, pengajaran mikro, dan tes akhir, didukung dengan pencatatan, observasi, angket, dan wawancara, dilakukan untuk mengevaluasi kemajuan PCK guru. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa PCK Guru non-Bahasa Inggris mengalami peningkatan secara signifikan melalui kegiatan yang telah dilakukan. Disimpulkan bahwa lulusan non-bahasa Inggris mampu mengajar bahasa Inggris di prasekolah dalam hal pengajaran konsep, namun mereka memiliki keterbatasan dalam mengembangkan keterampilan praktis.

Kata kunci: Pengetahuan Konten Pedagogis (PCK), Guru non-Bahasa Inggris, Pra-Sekolah

1. Introduction

English has achieved the status of a primary international language, which led to the early teaching of English, and has become so fashionable that many schools started to teach English from the age of four, known as preschool level (Kocaman & Cansız, 2012). Psychologists claim it is good to start learning a second language as soon as possible because, until the age of seven, all the precepts are stored in the same area of one's brain (Klimova, 2013). In addition, teaching English at this age is as natural as acquiring one's native language (Berg et al., 2012).

Teaching English to young learners differs significantly from teaching it to adults, where children still acquire their first language and literacy. However, children can learn and construct knowledge from their own individual experiences, actions, explorations, and interactions (Erben et al., 2008; Musthafa, 2010; Zein, 2017). Even though they are still viewed as language knowledge transmitters, they are active meaning-makers (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018). Their 'Golden Age' leads them to be active learners and thinkers. Nevertheless, teachers still take prior positions to support their language development.

Implementing an English curriculum in elementary schools has created a considerable demand for qualified children's English teachers, thus placing more importance than ever on studying the issues related to teacher education. It is undisputed that teachers' professional knowledge is vital to their professional performance (Desimone, 2009; De

Wever, Voet, and Michiel, 2016). Teachers are considered one of the fascinating elements in which specific content knowledge is applied to teaching. It can represent the teachers' ability to transform the content knowledge into a special kind of teacher knowledge that links content, students, and pedagogy. PCK can distinguish between general and expert teachers (Chantaranima & Yuenyong, 2014). A qualified teacher will be able to engage and facilitate the students as well as explore the students' abilities to create active teaching and learning processes (Aimah & Purwanto, 2019). Thus, PCK plays a significant role in determining the success of teaching and enhancing the students' achievements, especially in preschool.

In addition, teaching English globally to young learners is also the focus of numerous professional development networks and forums comprising English Language Teaching (ELT) (Copland & Garton, 2014). Several studies have investigated it from various facets and levels of education (Kuhn et al., 2016; Lim & Guerra, 2013; Magkato, 2012). These include the materials, media, methods, strategies, classroom designs (Syamdianita & Cahyono, 2021; Santoso et al., 2019), the assessment (Lee et al., 2007; Moh'd, 2021), and challenges during the teaching and learning process (Ayderiz & Kirbulut, 2014; Smith & Banilowel, 2015). While the reviewed research papers contribute significantly to assessing teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), several research gaps remain, suggesting potential areas for future investigations, such as integration of technology-mediated assessment, longitudinal studies, contextual factors, or subject-specific PCK assessment.

The preliminary studies, however, in our knowledge scope, also have a limitation that makes them different from our current study. Most of these studies only focus on teachers teaching subjects aligned with their educational background (specialist teachers). For example, a mathematics education graduate was assigned as a mathematics teacher. However, in some developing countries, for instance, Indonesia, there is a phenomenon where a subject, for instance, English, is taught by non-English graduates (generalist teachers) or non-English teachers (NET). This situation is commonly found in English teaching for beginners (preschool or elementary students) due to the need for generalist teachers required to fill the number of teachers available in many schools throughout Indonesia (Zein, 2017). Whether generalist teachers are competent in teaching English lessons is questionable. Thus, this research explored more NETs' PCK teaching English at preschool. As the scope of this research, preschool implies a school for children between four and six years old (Indonesian Ministry of Education, 2014).

2. Method

This research applied the descriptive qualitative method, combining field and library research. It involved (ten) teachers of non-English graduates employed in 5 (five) different public preschools located in Medan City, North Sumatera Province, Indonesia. The teachers came from varied study backgrounds, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Background of the participants.

Teacher	Graduate	Gender	Teaching Experience
A	Islamic Education for Young Learners	Female	1 year
B	Islamic Education for Young Learners	Female	5 years
C	Islamic Studies	Female	1 year
D	Islamic Studies	Female	1 year
E	Islamic Economy	Female	2 years
F	State Administration	Female	4 years
G	Arabic Language	Female	8 years
H	Islamic Philosophy	Female	1 year
I	Chemistry	Female	1 year
J	Accounting	Female	4 years

The teachers were labeled as teachers A, B, and C until J. The research started with a pretest. It was continued by conducting a four-month English language learning course using the blended learning approach: a combination of face-to-face tutorials and micro-teaching, and it ended with a post-test, questionnaire, and interview. The pretest was done first to measure the teachers' ability in English. It consists of a list of questions familiar to them (daily expressions) and correlated to the preschool syllabus. The following stage was a face-to-face tutorial. The face-to-face tutorial lasted two months and was divided into 16 (sixteen) sessions, two weekly sessions, with 90 minutes per session. This activity was intended to examine the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the concepts of English teaching at the preschool and design a lesson plan.

The next phase was micro-teaching practice. It aimed to measure the teachers' ability to apply their designed lesson plan and receive constructive feedback from peers or the facilitator. It was done twice during the research for each teacher to compare their improvement in teaching-learning competence before and after receiving input from the previous micro-teaching practice. Steps in a micro-teaching cycle and micro-teaching for peers/students' observation were developed by (Kurdi, 2015) to make the evaluation more reliable, as described in Figure 1.
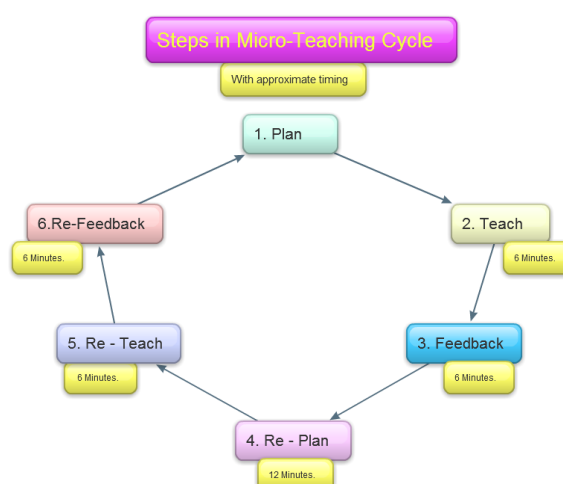
Figure 1. Steps in a micro-teaching cycle

A participant selected a simple topic according to the preschool syllabus and taught it to other participants based on the lesson plan designed. It lasted for a short duration, and the participant had to concentrate on her teaching skills because the facilitator and other participants would observe her performance and give feedback after the presentation. The input and the observation results were then used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of her teaching skills, re-plan the lesson, and re-teach it. The performance observation before and after getting the feedback was also used to measure the participants' progress in competence in teaching English by considering the micro-teaching skills provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Micro teaching: peers/teachers' observation.

Skills	Teacher's actions	Yes	To some extent	No
1. Set Induction	Aroused interest at the beginning concerning previous learning, throwing a new idea, questioning, etc. Specified the objectives of the presentation.			
2. Planning	Organized material in a logical sequence. Used relevant content matter.			
3. Presentation	Changed the pace of the presentation by shifting emphasis, jokes, etc. Used specific examples to illustrate the main ideas. Used non-verbal cues, eye contact, etc.			
4. Pupil participation	Allowed questions from students. Asked questions. Solicited/ raised questions. Rewarded pupil effort.			
5. Use of audio-visual (AV) aids	Used proper AV aids. Used the aid(s) effectively.			
6. Closure	Summarized the most essential points at the end of the session.			
7. Any other suggestions for the teacher:				

The research ended with a post-test, questionnaire, and interview. The post-test examined the teachers' progress on the topics given during face-to-face tutorials. The question type was similar to the pretest. The results obtained through the interview were used to validate the post-test result. Meanwhile, the results obtained through the questionnaire were used to support the feedback given by participants on the micro-teaching observation sheet, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Micro teaching: self-analysis form.

Name:	Date:

Guidelines:
1. Complete questions 1, 2, and 3 before your first session.
2. Complete questions 4 and 5 before you re-teach the lesson.
3. Complete question 6 after your re-teaching lesson.

No.	Questions
1	List the objectives of your lesson.
2	How do you intend to accomplish these objectives?
3	What skill do you intend to practice specifically ?
4	How successful was the lesson? Cite positive and negative aspects.
5	Given the feedback, what changes do you intend to make for the re-teach lesson?
6	How effective were the changes you made from the first lesson?

4. Result and Discussion

The steps taken in the research showed significant progression in non-English graduates' knowledge and competence in teaching English. The face-to-face tutorial showed that the topics dealing with the lessons taught or referred to in the syllabus at preschool are still easy to learn and understand. It can be seen through the results of the pretest and post-test listed in Table 4.

Table 4. The result of the pretest and post-test

Teacher	Pretest	Post-test
A	35	60
B	80	95
C	45	80
D	45	75
E	55	75
F	90	95
G	65	90
H	65	80
I	55	80
J	85	95

Three of the ten participants, teachers B, F, and J, had little difference in scores between the pretest and post-test. According to the information obtained through interviews, the participants' experience learning and teaching English is one of the main reasons for their progression. For example, Teacher B stated that teaching and learning English with her kids at home helps her to know more about English, especially grammar and vocabulary; meanwhile, Teacher F said that having a good experience learning English at school, in courses, and at the university where she studied helps her to teach English at preschool.

On the other hand, teacher J said that besides learning English with her kids at home, learning and practicing English for boarding school during the lower and upper secondary levels also helped her improve her English skills. It means that the experience of learning and teaching English contributes positively to the progress of non-English graduates in teaching English. However, the three teachers have the same opinion that their ability to teach at preschool is limited to teaching vocabulary, simple expressions, or instructions. If they were given more complex questions, they would be unable to answer them. It implies that the experience of learning and teaching English influences non-English graduates to teach English at preschools. Still, sustainable training or other applied activities are required to prepare non-English graduates for more advanced teaching of English.

In addition, the results of micro-teaching necessarily cover three main parts: the evaluation of steps in micro-teaching done by the participants, an observation sheet and feedback from peers and facilitators, and a questionnaire filled out by the participants. Overall, the results represent a progression in the participants' micro-teaching performance, specifically after getting feedback from the facilitator and peers. It means that input given by the facilitator can improve the participants' ability to teach English. However, the observation sheet and questionnaire results show that seven of ten participants were unsatisfied with their micro-teaching performance in the first cycle, especially for participants with one-year teaching experience (questionnaire number 4).

The presentation became one of the participants' weaknesses when performing micro-teaching. The topics they taught needed to be more relevant to the lesson plan. Hence, the facilitator emphasized this point as immediate feedback for all participants. Their unfamiliarity with audio-visual aids also made it difficult for them to present their topics. There needed to be more funds owned by their schools to facilitate the teaching-learning process.

Nevertheless, they were good at set induction, pupil participation, and closure. The results of the questionnaire strengthened it. Most of them decided to explain particular vocabulary and use simple expressions as their lesson

objectives. It was correlated with the effects of the tests given to them described previously. They also felt more confident after making some changes. i.e., the teaching method, the topic, and the teaching media. The full results indicate that micro-teaching influences non-English graduates' confidence and their improvement in English teaching.

5. Conclusion

Assessing non-English graduate teachers at preschools requires comprehensive treatment. Corresponding to the assessment of non-English teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) in teaching English at preschool, it is concluded that they can teach English lessons at preschool, but they have limitations. They are good at teaching the lesson contents but weak at improving their practical English skills. The lessons they taught were suitable with the syllabus arranged, yet they only focused on vocabulary mastery. They frequently mispronounced some words taught and dominantly used simple expressions or instructions and communicated in the first language (Indonesian) during the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, they also dominantly applied traditional teaching methods for delivering the learning materials. Therefore, inclusive and continual activities for non-English teachers are required to support English teaching at preschools and other education levels in Indonesia.

6. Acknowledgement

7. Conflict of Interest

The authors claim that the research followed the ethical aspect regulated by the University of Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Also, there is no conflict of interest in this research.

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