HOW DOES TEACHERS’ COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN INDONESIA LOOK LIKE?*

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Abstract

Communication competence in education covers the capacities to give directions, to present advice, to ask questions, and to deliver the materials. This competence is essential to assist the English learners in developing their communication competence. A teacher who possesses excellent communication competence might provide a good model for his or her students’ communication skills. Numerous Indonesian teachers have been reported lacked various competencies, particularly the capacity to utilize the target language to deliver lessons, and this has become one major complaint. English teachers in Indonesia need to deal with some issues to satisfy the requirements of communication competence. However, teacher’s communication competences is not solely only faced by Indonesian teachers but also teachers in other Asian EFL and ESL contexts.

Keywords: Communication Competence Levels, English Teachers, EFL and ESL contexts, Communication Issues

Introduction

Indonesian teachers are demanded to possess four basic competencies: professional, pedagogic, personality, and social (Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 14 of 2005). Yufrizal (2017) asserted that professional competence obliges the teachers to fully understand the materials they teach particularly teachers are required to master English communication. This competence is vital as they need to assist their students to develop their English communication skills. English teachers supposedly possess excellent communication skills so their students would look up to them as an example. On the other hand, when the teachers have a low level of proficiency, then the students would never consider their feedbacks worthwhile. Zlatić, Bjekić, Marinković, & Bojović (2013) defined teachers’ communication competence as the abilities needed to develop the achievement of their students.

In reality, as the data released by the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2018, the English proficiency of Indonesians was lower than that of the people in Asian countries. From the 88 countries being surveyed, Indonesia ranked 51st. It was far behind the ASEAN countries as Singapore (3rd), Philippines (14th), Malaysia (22nd), and Vietnam (41st). The survey took English skills and aspects like listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary, and communication as the standards of competency. Such skills and aspects are interconnected. (Sundari, 2016; Syamsinar & Jabu, 2015)

As a matter of fact, the English Language Proficiency Index of Indonesia kept going down from 2011 to 2018. Also, data from research conducted by Sulistiyo (2016) and Yulia (2013) found out that the majority of teachers in Indonesia have been reported lacked some teaching competencies which one of the indicators was lack of skills to communicate in English which is necessary for good teaching delivery. This has been one of the biggest concerns in the educational sphere ever reported.

**What is communication competence?**

Widdowson (1983) defined communication competence is the relationships between competence and performance. This is as teachers’ capacity to speak English when interacting with students to deliver teaching materials. Thus, this includes the skills of giving instructions, providing feedbacks, asking questions (Abduh & Zainuddin, 2016; Puspitasari, Anugerahwati, & Rachmajanti, 2016). Therefore, proficient and competent teachers are fluent speakers. They also have the clarity of ideas (Syamsinar & Jabu, 2015; Yulia, 2013; Soepriyatna, 2012; Sullivan, 2011; Richards, 2010). Each of the criteria will be elaborated below:

**a. Fluency**

Shen (2013) defined fluency as the teachers’ ability to speak in a language smoothly, precisely, and effortlessly. The ability includes the skills to (1) produce the language easily, (2) speak well, and (3) communicate the ideas efficiently. Soepriyatna (2012) found out that Indonesian teachers struggle a lot in their English communication. Those teachers are the product of teaching institutions at tertiary level. Teaching institutions commonly do not regard verbal communication abilities as their priority for junior and senior high school students. Therefore, the curriculum at university also do not prepare the graduates to possess highly verbal communication abilities. This condition is worsened by the time allocation of the communication lessons in the curriculum, which only covers a few hours for communication classes during the whole four years at English Department. Besides, since most private universities have big classes for speaking, it is almost impossible for the students to have sufficient time to practice their communication skills. This might happen because of teachers’ beliefs on how speaking should be taught could influence the way they teach. It does not matter how new the curriculum and syllabuses models, they have, and they would still end up teaching speaking in a way they believe the best. Poedjiaastutie & Oliver (2017) studied this phenomenon on a college lecturer who holds a belief that her students were trained to be high school teachers who later would prepare their students to face the national examinations. Because of her belief, she rejected any fun and light topics in her class, like having the topic of slang language and song or movie discussions. Eventually, English education program graduates who are expected to be school teachers might lack this competence.
b. Clarity of Ideas

Metcalf (1992) defined clarity as the teachers’ capacity to deliver instructions and expositions that might assist the students to comprehend the lesson clearly. Currently, clarity is strongly linked to the improvement of the students’ accomplishments. Many experts have recurrently accounted that instructional clarity gives development to the students’ learning (Kareva, 2014; Ribera, BrckaLorenz, Cole, and Laird, 2012). The teachers’ clarity is crucial in assisting their students to understand the connections between what they have already known and what their teachers teach (Duta, Panisoara & Panisoara, 2015).

In Indonesia, several researches have been conducted to examine the challenges the teachers face when teaching English. Poedjiaastutie, Amrin, and Setiawan (2018) discovered that numerous teachers spoke Bahasa Indonesia (L1) disproportionally during English class. Other research carried out by Warsono and Mujiyanto (2015) found that the teachers deliberately taught English (L2) using Bahasa Indonesia (L1). Those teachers claimed that using Bahasa Indonesia may help students to understand the materials. However, using Bahasa Indonesia most of the time might hamper the process of linguistic transfers.

As many might know that English teachers do not speak English on a daily basis. Suryanto (2014) discovered that both teachers and learners do not use English after the English class ended. The study also asserted that English teachers in Indonesia have already made their lives understandable through an interactive process for meaning and its representation in their national and local language and this affected the English development.

How is Teachers Communication Competence in other Asian Countries in EFL Context?

The problem with teacher communication competence in Indonesia is not an exceptional case as it also happens in some Asian countries in Asia. The ministries of education of those countries have shown similar concern about the competencies of their English teachers. Many scholars have observed these problems. One of them was Thadphoothon (2017), who studied the competencies of English teachers in Thailand. In this research which is conducted between March and April 2017, inviting around 175 teachers to do self-assessment questionnaires of their English competencies. The conclusions of the questionnaires demonstrated that those Thai teachers in general considered their own competencies low. However, the results of this study might not a thorough representation of the whole population of teachers in Thailand, which at that moment was around 400,000. However, these findings were in line with the results of the assessments conducted Education First (2017) regarding the English proficiency in which Thailand fell in the bottom 25%. This achievement might not be that surprising as many English teachers in Thailand regarded their English proficiency as the cause of their anxiety (Klanrit and Sroinam, 2012). Other research found out that Thailand was in need of competent English teachers (Noom-Ura, 2013) and other study discovered that the Thai teachers were not demanded to communicate in English with their students (Thadphoothon, 2017).

Another research by Yusof and Halim (2014) examining the teachers’ communication skills at Universiti Utara Malaysia. The researchers gathered the data in the form of 18 hours long video documented the teaching and learning process in the EFL classrooms. The study found there were some teachers who hardly made eye contact with
their students while teaching as they kept reading their notes. It was also found that they
did not fully understand the topics they taught. A similar situation happens in Indonesia,
as discovered by Lie (2007), who had done research on how Indonesian teachers prepared
themselves before teaching. This phenomenon should be a concern of the relevant
institutions since, in the context of EFL, language and communication competencies of
the teachers are critical to give English exposure for the learners.

Canh and Renandya (2017) had conducted a study in Vietnam about the English
teachers’ competencies and language use in EFL classrooms. The findings pointed out
that the local teachers had inadequate communication competencies as they rarely used
English to communicate with students. Another finding confirmed that the local teachers
had an insufficient level of clarity. This result was gained from how the students
miscomprehended certain topics delivered by their teachers. Marcellino (2008) found a
comparable situation in Indonesia since most English teachers often speak in Bahasa
Indonesia when teaching and, mostly, when teaching they prefer to teach English
grammar because of their low level of competencies.

Farooqui (2014) had conducted research on the challenges that the English
teachers faced in Bangladesh. The research observed few subjects; first, what language
that the teacher spoke in the English class; second, whether it is feasible for the teachers
to teach in English; third, what kind of problems they would face. A thorough inquiry
was made by interviewing the informants and observing the EFL classes to acquire the
picture of EFL in Bangladesh. One of the research results pointed out that the Bangladeshi
teachers, in general, possessed a low level of competencies. This was in line with other
research done by Haider and Chowdhury (2012), who found out that the majority of local
teachers favored speaking in Bangla when teaching English as they had issues with their
low level of competencies.

In countries that consider English as a foreign language like Indonesia, Thailand,
Malaysia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, English teaching and learning are highly dependent
on classroom meetings as the learners hardly ever put their English into practice on a
daily basis. This situation is one of the causes of why the English communication
competence of such countries is behind that of countries that commonly apply English to
communicate and interact.

Some research also examined the communication competencies of the teachers in
Indonesia. For instance, Soepriyatna (2012) had conducted a survey of English
Indonesian teachers. The participants were randomly chosen from the participants of
conventions, seminars, discussions, and training related to English education and
learning. Those participants were working as teachers and principals at high school,
lecturers, assessors, and experts with some experiences in English education and learning.
The participants of the study were 98. One of the findings was that the majority of the
participants considered the primary competencies of the Indonesian teachers was their
English competence. In the EFL education in Indonesia, such competency is critical as
almost all of the learners are dependent on the language performed by the teachers. That
is why the teachers’ quality of applying English when delivering the lesson turns to be
the key feature. In similar vein, Poedjiastutie et al. (2018) found out that students had
some expectations; first, their teachers should have sufficient abilities in communication;
second, they should possess an excellent critical thinking capacity as they should present
advice to develop the communication abilities of their students. According to Tomic,
Dvorski, , Kirinić, (2015), teachers’ communication competence is also required by the
teachers as a methodical skill to gain success.
To summarize, as one of the primary resources of information and one of the language models in the teaching and learning, teachers need to possess outstanding English proficiency so they would be able to present and to develop their methodical teaching skills to enable them to deliver the materials perfectly.

Conclusion

Indonesian teachers need to solve various problems so they might not able to fulfil the level required to deliver the material interestingly. The problem with communication competencies is not exclusively faced by Indonesian teachers, teachers in other countries of Asia face similar obstacles.

A teacher who possesses excellent communication competencies can be an ideal example for his or her students. Teachers’ competencies in communication could be considered as the capacity required to develop the learners’ learning outcomes. Teachers are suggested to find out the available professional training in order to develop their English proficiency level.

References:


Noom-ura, S. (2013) English teaching problems in Thailand and Thai teachers’ professional development needs English language teaching. English Language Teaching, 6(11), 139-147. DOI: 10.5539/elt.v6n11p139


Oral Presentation Certificate

Dwi Poedjiastutie
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has presented the research entitled:

An Interpretive Study of the English Language Needs of Different Stakeholders at
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang Indonesia

This is to confirm that Dwi Poedjiastutie (34861), having presented the above research, actively participated in The Asian Conference on Language Learning (ACLL2017), and thereby contributed to the academic success of the event.

On behalf of the ACLL2017 Organising Committee:

Dr Joseph Haldane
Chairman & CEO, The International Academic Forum (IAFOR)
Saturday Session IV
15:15-16:45 | Room 503 (5F)

Saturday Session IV: 15:15-16:45
Room 503 (5F)
Alternative Assessment & Development
Session Chair: Dwi Poedjiastutie

35412  15:15-15:45 | Room 503 (5F)
Seaqil's Product for Enhancing Teaching Quality of Language Teachers
Susi Fauziah Johan, SEAMEO QTIEP in Language, Indonesia
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Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Centre for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel (QTIEP) in Language, known as SEAQL, is a part of SEAMEO and administratively under the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia. Aiming to improve the quality of language teachers and education personnel in Southeast Asia region, SEAQL has one of the flagship programs, namely the Workshop on SEAQL Goes to Schools held in four cities in Indonesia in 2014 and 2015, aiming to compile good practices of language teachers (Arabic, English, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese and Mandarin) teaching at secondary level and lecturers teaching Indonesian Language for Foreign Learners (ILFL) in universities and colleges. From the workshop, the Centre managed to collect 164 good practices to then be reviewed and selected by language education experts. Only those that passed the selection were included in a book entitled Language Teaching Techniques: Good Practices from Indonesia. This book is distinctive because, unlike any other teaching books, it is written in many languages – seven to be exact. The teaching strategies are all presented in the target language. It was expected that the book would inspire the lecturers, who would mostly be foreign language teachers in the region, to implement at least one of the good teaching techniques contained in the book. Then, they could find their own teaching techniques so that their teaching quality would improve.

35019  15:45-16:15 | Room 503 (5F)
Teachers' Views on the Use of Portfolio Assessment in Secondary Schools In Indonesia
Rizaldy Hanifa, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

Having undergone several changes within a decade, the concept of students' evaluation system in Indonesia has been significantly transformed. In this regard, portfolio assessment has been taken into account as an alternative way to measure students' development based on the process and results of learning. However, lack of familiarity with this kind of assessment, followed by the strong influence of traditional and standardized testing, may prevent teachers from having the best insight about portfolio assessment. Therefore, this current study was carried out to investigate teachers’ understanding in implementing the portfolio and the contents of the portfolio compiled. The framework of qualitative research was employed in this study. The data were collected from four respondents by means of documents and interviews. The result of the study obviously indicated that the contents of students’ portfolio were comprised of wide ranges of topics in different genres. Furthermore, teachers' understanding of the implementation of the portfolio as a means of evaluating students’ learning was very good. In spite of that, it was highlighted that students' involvement in determining the topic and the allocated time for product revision were absent. Therefore, a professional development program needs to be carried out to enhance teachers' capabilities in implementing effective portfolio-based assessment and overcoming the present problems.

34861  16:15-16:45 | Room 503 (5F)
An Interpretive Study of the English Language Needs of Different Stakeholders at Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia
Dwi Poedjiastutie, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

The research objective of this study is to examine the extent to which the English Department Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (ED UMM) curriculum matches its stakeholders’ needs. These stakeholders include learners, teachers, and employers. It compares the results from classroom observations, faculty interviews, student interviews and survey, thereby exploring needs from various perspectives in order to gain an overall understanding. The findings of the present study confirm previous research about the multiple roles of English use in Indonesia. The three cohorts of stakeholders at UMM see English as fulfilling several goals that need to be addressed in the curriculum, namely English for employment opportunities, international collaboration, reading English publication, understanding English culture, improving learning outcomes, and for post university life. The findings of the present study suggest that at university, faculty and classroom level some problems exist and challenges continue to emerge. These current obstacles potentially inhibit the development of English programs at UMM and possibly make it difficult to achieve the English learning goals set within the university. This study provides information that may guide future policy development and, by taking into account the voices of the stakeholders, providing valuable information for planning and redesigning the curriculum to ensure the relevance of its content and appropriateness of its pedagogy.