

INDONESIAN PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' MAJOR PROBLEMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, THAILAND

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui masalah utama dari enam guru pra-jabatan Indonesia yang telah menyelesaikan praktikum mengajar di tahun akademik 2017/2018. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Peneliti mendapatkan data penelitian melalui wawancara mendalam. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah enam guru bahasa Inggris pra-jabatan Indonesia di semester delapan, Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, yang telah melakukan praktikum mengajar kepada pelajar dasar selama lima bulan di Songkhla, Thailand. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan beberapa masalah utama yang dihadapi oleh guru-guru pra-jabatan Indonesia dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada pelajar dasar Thailand selama praktik mengajar mereka seperti perbedaan bahasa, manajemen kelas, kurangnya kepercayaan diri, kurangnya pengalaman mengajar, perbedaan peserta didik individu, dan perbedaan budaya.

Kata kunci : *Guru magang, masalah utama dalam menagajar praktikum bahasa Inggris, pelajar dasar Thailand*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to find out major problems of six Indonesian pre-service teachers who had completed teaching practicum in the academic year 2017/2018. This research used descriptive qualitative study. The researcher gained the data of the research through depth-interview. The participants of this research were six students of eight semester Indonesian pre-service teachers of English Education Department, Bogor Ibn Khaldun University who had done teaching practicum to primary learners in Songkhla, Thailand for five months. This research revealed several major problems faced by Indonesian pre-service teachers in teaching English to Thai primary learners during their teaching practicum were language differences, classroom management, lack of confidence, lack of teaching experience, individual learners differences, and culture differences.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, major problems in teaching English practicum, Thailand primary learners

INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teachers come into the teaching profession with beliefs about teaching; sometimes they are aware of them, other times they are not. As mentioned Sunderman (2015, p.8) "Pre-service teacher is a student accepted into an accredited university or college teacher preparation program to become a teacher. Pre-service teachers need teaching practicum to enter a classroom

because teaching practicum allows pre-service teachers to become exposed to the real world of teaching English to students of other languages and to gain knowledge about the complexity of current classroom practices, which contribute to enhancing pre-service teachers' motivations, attitudes, and engagement towards the teaching profession (Castaneda, 2017). During teaching practicum, pre-service teachers are likely to

pay close attention to their mastery of the range of skills necessary for success. It means, their performance is typically under the observation of their students, mentor teacher, and visiting lecturers, all of whom provide feedback that might be considered a form of verbal persuasion (Berg, 2018). Some failures in the teaching education system can be identified in relation to providing pre-service teachers with the adequate procedural knowledge of classroom as well as their tackling other issues such as pupils, the limited time to build a realistic view of teaching, and ways to cope with the current difficulties that may arise in the different educational scenarios (Castaneda, 2017).

Primary schools are level education given to children aged 6 to 11 plus in primary schools and that the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system since the rest of the education system is built upon it (Etor et al., 2013). Teaching English at primary schools in another country is such a challenge, especially for pre-service teachers. They will face some students who actually have different characteristics. Pre-service teachers can be the role of good English teacher for their students during their teaching practicum in another country. As outlined Pornpimon Prasongporn (2014) that recognition of the power of English as a mean of communication is accepted around the world and it is also fast becoming as one of the basic skills for the learners at primary level of education in Thailand. The school level is one of the factor that can affect teaching performance for pre-service teachers. Every different school level has different learners capabilities including in primary schools in Southern Thailand. Sinwongsuwat (2014) states Thai learners who have spent twelve years learning English in primary and secondary schools have relatively low English proficiency compared to their Asian country counterparts in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore. So that, Indonesian pre-service teachers can use this opportunity to be able to teach Thai learners

with different levels of English ability than learners in Indonesia. Sinwongsuwat (2014) also claimed that teaching English in ASEAN, especially in Thailand has increased to improve English language teaching (ELT) in order to prepare Thailand citizens for the upcoming merger of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) started in 2015.

Based on the preliminary observation, when the researcher was in Southern Thailand, it was found that Thai learners especially at primary schools who learn English tend to be hard in mastering English because several factors such as Thai learners have minimum chance to speak English in their environment, and Thai teachers used to speak full Thai language in English learning classroom. Pre-service teachers do not equip themselves with competencies for teaching English in primary schools level from the campus. Some of the Indonesian pre-service teachers, including the researcher, did not get courses specifically for teaching in primary schools. So that, pre-service teachers lack competencies that needed in teaching primary schools level.

In Thailand, English used only as a foreign language, it has played an important role in Thai education for more than a century (Darasawang, 2014, p. 186). The objective of learning foreign languages is to facilitate. In schools, English not used as a medium of instruction. This becomes the reason why some Thai students have difficulty in speaking and understanding the language. The main objectives of teaching English at this level according to Al Malihi (2015) :

- Learn the basics of the English language that would form the foundation for its mastery in the future.
- Use the basic structures of English sentences.
- Learn the core vocabulary assigned for this stage.
- Listen to and understand simple English language.
- Read and understand simple written English language materials.

- Write simple guided sentences in English language.
- Appreciate the importance of English language as an international language of communication to benefit from the achievements of other cultures in accordance with Islam.

Much effort and experimenting are being put in the elementary school EFL teaching in an attempt to level up the unsatisfying English language teaching outcomes in Southern Thailand. Some pre-service teachers have some challenges while they were teaching English as a foreign language, as outlined by Abrar (2016) :

- Lack of learner's motivation such as shyness, afraid of making mistakes, and not interested to study.
- Insufficient time, resources, and materials.
- Over-crowded English classes.

Furthermore, young children do not come to the language classroom with empty-handed. They bring with them set of instinct, skills and characteristics which help them to learn another language. As Halliwell (1992) mentioned that young learners are :

- Already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily;
- Understanding the individual words;
- Already have great skill in using limited language creatively;
- Frequently learn indirectly rather than directly;
- Take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do;
- Have a ready imaginations;
- Above all take great delight in talking.

Characteristics of child language learning have been discussed in the literature. Young children, especially those up to the ages of nine or ten, learn differently from older children, as outlined by Harmer (2007, p. 82) as follows:

- They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words.
- They often learn indirectly rather than directly - that is they take in information

from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught.

- Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with.
- They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them.
- They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher.
- They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom.
- They have a limited attention span; unless activities are extremely engaging they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.

For the last several years, study on teaching English at primary school has often been a topic of research several researchers from several countries. There were previous studies that have discussed by several researchers such as Copland, et al. (2014) that conducted in five countries (Colombia, Italy, South Korea, Tanzania, and the UAE) and the study revealed some challenges emerged as affecting large numbers of teachers in different educational contexts, namely, teaching speaking, motivation, differentiating learning, teaching large classes, discipline, teaching writing, teaching grammar, and other challenges are more localised, such as developing teachers' English competence. Also, there was study conducted in Kuala Tungkal Indonesia by Abrar (2016) revealed problems faced by EFL primary school teachers in teaching English, such lack of learners' motivation, insufficient time, resources, and materials, and over-crowded English classes.

This study was conducted to investigate the major problems faced by Indonesian pre-service teachers in teaching English at Thailand primary schools. The findings of this study will be useful for English pre-service teachers to identify the problems they might encounter at primary level.

METHOD

A qualitative study was conducted in this study. As defined by Walliman (2011, p. 98) "Qualitative methods are used to find information on people's actions and holdings by asking them to give their own interpretation, or account, of what they experience." Accounts can consist of a variety of data sources; people have spoken explanations, behavior (such as gestures), personal records of experiences and conversations. The kind of this research was descriptive research. It describes major problems of Indonesian pre-service teachers in teaching English at Thailand primary schools.

Participants

Purposeful sampling technique was employed to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is a technique in which, "...the researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon," (Creswell, 2012). The six Indonesian pre-service teachers in the eight semester in Bogor Ibn Khaldun University were selected as the participants. The participants consisted of five females and one male. The data were collected on the 22nd – 25th of February, 2019. Their average age was 22 (age range 21-22). All of the participants taught in Thailand primary schools for five months. They taught at different primary schools in Songkhla, Southern Thailand.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interview that was in Bogor Ibn Khaldun University. The interview question included four questions that adapted from Fraser (2014), and Karekatti (2012). A voice recorder from smartphone was used to prevent any words skipped during the interview.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher followed several steps. First, the researcher managed the data from interview by categorizing the data based on their group

scuh as feeling in teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand, confidence in becoming a good primary school English teacher, teacher training in dealing with learning problem, and teacher training program experiences. Second, make a schedule for interviewing the participants, explain them about the research, and record the interview by using a voice recorder in a smartphone.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interview indicate that there are several major problems encountered by Indonesian pre-service teachers in teaching English at Thailand primary schools. The results were presented below.

Table 1: Feeling of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Thailand

Question	Is teaching English in Thailand primary schools difficult or easy for you?
PST1	In my opinion, it was <i>difficult</i> because it was hard to communicate with children, especially the stubborn ones.
PST2	..for Thailand, because different aspects of culture and environment were <i>more difficult</i> because we had to adapt to the student behaviors.
PST3	<i>In my opinion, it was easy</i> , but it depended on class. For me, the 1 st -3 rd grade was rather difficult because they could not speak English, but the 4 th -6 th grade was easy.
PST4	<i>Difficult and easy</i> , because primary learners were not as we could imagine as easily controlled, they were difficult to control.
PST5	<i>Not too difficult but also not easy</i> . It was not difficult, because I had taught elsewhere but at the junior high school level, there must be definitely

	difference between junior high school students.
PST6	<i>Easy and difficult</i> sometimes. Difficult, when I was coordinating my class, and easy was when the primary lesson was still in basic level.

*PST = *Pre-service Teacher*

From the table 1, the researcher concluded the interview session of Indonesian pre-service English teachers' feeling in teaching English as a foreign language to Thai primary learners was *difficult*. Most of the participants reported that they got some difficulties in managing classroom and also in communicating with Thai primary learners caused of different language (PST1), culture (PST2), and individual learner differences (PST5). It was same as Harmer (2007) outlined that young learners respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words. Thai primary learners tended to not understand of what Indonesian pre-service teachers' words but they understood of the meaning itself.

Table 2: Confidence in Becoming a Good Primary School English Teacher

Question	Are you confident of becoming a good primary school teacher as soon as you complete your Sarjana Degree? Why?
PST1	<i>Not sure</i> , because I was rather difficult to interact with primary learners.
PST2	<i>Not yet confident</i> , because there were still many shortcomings such as compiling class activities to make primary learners were not getting bored and how to arrange English lessons so that primary learners understand the lesson.
PST3	<i>I did not feel that way</i> , because I could not handle myself

	when I was teaching.
PST4	<i>I was confident</i> , because as a teacher we must be confident when teaching..
PST5	<i>Still not sure about confidence or not, still in the middle</i> , because maybe when I taught in Thailand, it was still not optimal because the limitation of language.
PST6	<i>Easy and difficult</i> sometimes. Difficult was when I was coordinating my class, and easy was when the primary lesson was still in basic level.

*PST = *Pre-service Teacher*

It can be seen the result of the table 2, most of the participants reported that they were *not confident* of becoming a good primary English teacher as soon as they complete their Sarjana Degree because they got the difficulties in managing classroom, and in interacting with Thai primary learners. The difference of language became the major problem they faced during teaching practicum. Besides, PST1 reported that, "*..hard to communicate with children, especially the stubborn ones*" indicated that primary learners also have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher (Harmer, 2007). Thai primary learners need more attention from the pre-service teacher during learning English.

Table 3: Teaching Training in Dealing with Learning Problem

Question	Do you have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem?
PST1	<i>Not enough</i> , because I never took part some trainings like that and there was no experience before in teaching English to primary learners.
PST2	<i>It was not enough</i> , then I should learn more.
PST3	<i>I did not have any trainings</i> .
PST4	<i>It was not enough</i> , because

	primary learners were rather difficult to manage so I thought that I did not have enough training.
PST5	<i>No, I did not have.</i> In particular, I did not have but there was debriefing when I was in high school but more specific for teaching junior high school, which was different for primary learners.
PST6	<i>I had less trainings,</i> before teaching in Thailand, <i>we did not receive any trainings</i> and only used our makeshift ability.

*PST = *Pre-service Teacher*

As we can be seen the result of table 3, most of the participants reported that they did not have enough training to deal with almost any learning problems during teaching practicum in Thailand caused difficult to manage primary learners in the classroom. This can influence pre-service teachers teaching performance. In this case, mentor teacher plays important role because, pre-service teachers' performance is typically under the observation of their students, mentor teacher, and visiting lecturers, all of whom provide feedback that might be considered a form of verbal persuasion (Berg, 2018). If the mentor pays attention to this, the pre-service teachers' performances will increase and the mentor will improve the debriefing for the pre-service teachers who will do teaching practicum.

Table 4: Teachers Training Program Experiences

Question	Do you think your lectures training program and / experience has given you the necessary skills to be an effective pre-service teachers with primary learners? Why?
PST1	<i>It was not enough,</i> because

	teaching in Thailand was my first experience in teaching English and I had no experience before.
PST2	<i>Yes, I had the experience.</i> Because before teaching in Thailand I taught a private lesson in my house so I was not surprised of Thai primary learners' behaviors were different when I was teaching them.
PST3	<i>Never,</i> because I was not interesting.
PST4	<i>Still not enough in having experience</i> so I was still rather difficult to manage Thai primary learners. I got little experience when I taught my little brother.
PST5	<i>Yes. I got teaching experience</i> since I was in senior high school and became junior high school teacher in Indonesia.
PST6	<i>I did not have any experiences</i> for becoming primary pre-service teachers formally, but I had experience informally like private teaching.

*PST = *Pre-service Teacher*

Table 4 indicates that almost all of the participants said that they did not have any training programs or experiences to be effective pre-service teachers with Thai primary learners. It was same as outlined by Castaneda (2017), "Some failures in the teaching education system can be identified in relation to providing pre-service teachers with the adequate procedural knowledge of classroom as well as their tackling other issues such as pupils, the limited time to build a realistic view of teaching, and ways to cope with the current difficulties that may arise in the different educational scenarios." Indonesian pre-service teachers need more training programs or experiences to be effective pre-service teachers with primary learners to cope with the difficulties that

may arise in the different educational scenarios.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study revealed that all of the six Indonesian pre-service teachers encountered some problems in teaching English to Thai primary learners. The researcher concluded based on the result above there were four major problems encountered:

1. The six Indonesian pre-service teachers' feeling in teaching English as a foreign language to Thai primary learners was difficult. Most of them got difficulty in communicating with Thai primary learners caused of different language and culture, and individual learner differences.
2. The six Indonesian pre-service teachers were not confident of becoming a good primary English teacher as soon as they complete their Sarjana Degree because they got difficulty in communicating with them. The difference of language became the major problem encountered during their teaching practicum.
3. The six Indonesian pre-service teachers did not have enough training to deal with almost any learning problems during teaching practicum in Thailand primary schools.
4. The six Indonesian pre-service teachers did not have any training programs or experiences to be an effective pre-service with primary learners.

Those four major problems influence pre-service teacher performance in teaching English. It is hoped that the above research findings will encourage more researchers and educators to learn more about teaching English for primary learners. Researcher may use the results from this study to become better aware of primary learners' characteristics and then help pre-service teachers expand their knowledge in teaching English for Thailand primary learners.

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