

ENGLISH TEACHERS' CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES ON STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN DENPASAR MUNICIPALITY

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This study aims at (1) describing the conceptual pedagogical knowledge of the English teachers in public elementary schools in Denpasar municipality on child-centered learning, (2) describing the pedagogical practices of the English teachers in public elementary schools in Denpasar municipality on child-centered learning, and (3) describing the relation of English teachers' conceptual pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical practices in the context of child-centered learning in public elementary schools in Denpasar municipality. The subjects who are under investigation in the study are three English primary teachers from three public primary schools in Denpasar municipality. The type of this study is embedded mixed method which was adapted from Creswell (2012). The instruments used to collect the data in this study are observation sheet, questionnaire, and interview guide. The result of the questionnaire shows that the Teachers have very strong concept on child-centered learning as the mean score is in the range of $3.3335 \leq M \leq 4.0005$. This was contradicted with the data obtained from the classroom observation in which implementation of child-centered learning was low implemented. It indicated that there was tendency of inconsistent between teachers' conceptual knowledge and their practices on child-centered learning.

Keywords: *Child-Centered Learning, Pedagogical Practice, Teachers' Conceptual Knowledge, Teaching English for Young Learners*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to young learners has been steadily growing in Indonesia as English is now compulsory in primary education in many countries around the world (Nikolov, 2009 & Pinter, 2006 in Garton, 2011). While the decisions to teach English to primary school students have been made, requirements for teachers to be able to teach English well at this level is seldom discussed in public. As results, the knowledge about this important issue is very limited. It becomes a crucial issue as the years students spent at primary education are extremely important not just from the point of view of establishing a strong basis for their knowledge and cognitive skills, but also from the perspective of developing the students' intellectual, physical, emotional and social skills. Nevertheless, this is the period when children should be taught how to learn so that they can be more successful in their further studies and should be able to maintain motivation in learning. Teaching a foreign language in the first four years of primary school should definitely keep this assumption in mind and should be aware of the fact that teaching a certain skill always relies on some other skills, since several different skills and abilities are integrated at this stage of development.

Many advantages are claimed for starting to learn a foreign language in the primary years. However, twenty years ago, the United Kingdom found that language learning in primary school was not as positive as expected. It seems likely to be due to how it was implemented and, in particular, to the lack of teachers' knowledge in teaching English for young learners. Such problem occurs because English language teaching strategy in primary school did not have much attention on children's characteristics due to the factors of the teachers' competence in teaching young learner. Many teachers are not well-trained to teach children, they prefer teaching English focusing only on their instructions without even giving chances for students to be more active in their learning. Such methods are not appropriate applied in primary school because they require higher level of brain development. Children

need more learning experiences that expose them to what they can sense at the present therefore teachers need only take on a particular role or function in an attempt to enhance the learning within the class or to challenge their thinking in a new way. In this case, it changes the role of the teachers from the information provider to a facilitator and guide in acquiring them. Thus there must be a shift from the traditional approach in which teachers as the main subject of the learning to a child-centered approach. Regarding to this issue English teacher in primary level may need to be well trained in language pedagogy and are also reasonably competent in their teaching practice in classroom.

Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant (2011) pointed out that the implementation of teaching English for young learner in primary school is constrained by the fact that there are not enough teachers, not to mention appropriately trained teachers. The shortage of qualified, proficient, and competent teachers who are able to carry out the teaching of the language in primary schools becomes complex issue facing the introduction of English into the primary school curriculum. In addition, it has been argued that because most English teachers in primary school do not take English education for young learners therefore they hold low expectations for their students. Moreover there are not specific training opportunities on teaching English for young learner and facilities for English teachers. It makes them unqualified in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. Unfortunately, this situation had happened in China. According to Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China, 2001 in Zein (2012) when English was introduced in primary schools in 2001, the Chinese government was confronted by an acute shortage of teachers. There was an estimated 200,000 primary school English teachers however approximately 300,000 new primary school English teachers were urgently needed at that time. The huge gap occurring between demand and supply of trained teachers forced the Chinese government to immediately resort to a makeshift staffing measure. This was accomplished by assigning teachers of other subjects and class teachers to teach English in the primary schools. Realignment was made on their employment status which states that the Chinese government assigned that the teachers could teach English on either a full time or part time basis (Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China, 2001).

A quite similar situation also occurs in Indonesia where English teachers at primary level mostly hold no relevant qualification. Classroom teachers with limited English proficiency are pointed out by primary school principals to teach English, despite having no appropriate English qualifications and experiences in teaching English. On the other hand, those with a non-English undergraduate degree are allowed to teach English in primary schools. They are employed to teach English even though they have inadequate pedagogical experience and may only have some English proficiency (Agustina, Rahayu, Murti, 1997; Chodidjah, 2008 in Zein, 2012). In addition, those who were graduated from general English education are allowed to teach English for young learners whereas most of them are not trained to teach young learners.

The implementation of such policy measure has nevertheless been a subject of criticism. Hu (2005) in Zein (2012) argued that assigning teachers with no English background and have no experiences in teaching English for young learners provides an immediate solution but the extent to which the solution is applicable on a long-term basis is arguable. He added that this policy is a reflection of a naive conception of the professional qualities of primary foreign language teachers (Hu, 2005 in Zein, 2012). Even now, the efficacy of such method has not been empirically proven to be positive to young learners' language development. The reason is because young learners are typically characterized by their age with regards to aspects such as cognitive development, learning style, and attention span (Brown, 2001).

Teachers' perception on conceptual knowledge about the goals of young learners' education, the children's capabilities as learners, and their roles and competence as teachers, might affect their effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches, and their classroom practices which is seen such powerful forces in their decisions and actions to influence students' achievement. In other words, it is linked to student performance (Good, 1987). In some cases, teachers hold low expectations of their students with the result of their behaviors, classroom decisions and activities are guided by those concepts. As stated by

Stipek and Byler (1997) who worked with 3–4 year olds kids found that the more preschool teachers in the United States believed in fostering independence and fostering positive self-concept as goals of early childhood education programs, the more they supported child-centered practices. In contrast, kindergarten teachers who worked with 5 year olds emphasized the basic skills which were associated positively with their perceived importance of the goals of acquiring knowledge and learning basic skills, demonstrated poor mastery of the academic curriculum (Stipek and Byler 1997). It claims that teachers of early age students have to put their effort in making students be an independent learners during the process of inquiring the new language.

Many studies on teachers' beliefs and how their belief affects their teaching practices in the classroom were conducted. Hind, et al (2000) observed that there are five kinds of practices of English language teaching as a second language in primary school classes in Australia. First, the teachers provided practical and multimodal activities. Secondly, they gave explicit modeling and discussion of managing the students' own learning. The third one is in order to ease students' feeling of comfort and to foster their self-confidence, the teachers' referred to the students' experience of other cultures and languages. These kinds of practice are believed

Research on the comparison of teacher knowledge and practice on child-centered learning is barely conducted and the few studies that exist have focused only on pedagogical content knowledge. This is the fact of the phenomena that teachers usually or mostly have the qualification of English education in general in which they are prepared to teach for English in secondary school therefore it is very important to investigate how much their understanding to the theoretical and practical side of child-centered learning with regard to teaching English as foreign language for children.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Embedded mixed methods design was used to investigate the perceptions and classroom practices of English primary school teachers in Denpasar municipality on child-centered learning in teaching English for young learners. It was used as the research questions in this study had both quantitative and qualitative components which used Creswell (2012) model to present the detail and comprehensive data in order to achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions. The research methodology dominantly used the quantitative component therefore the data gained was mostly in the quantitative form. In this study, embedded design approach used quantitative method to gather data from the first research question related to the perceptions of the English primary school teachers about child-centered learning. Meanwhile, the qualitative method was used to obtain the data in relation to the second and third research questions. The use of qualitative method was needed in order to obtain a clearer picture of the quantitative data, and to provide better understanding from further explanation of the data. Therefore, using both methods provided detail and comprehensive data.

Data gathered in this study were collected in sequence which was begun from the quantitative data collection and followed by qualitative data. Quantitative data was gathered through questionnaire administration to answer the first research question. Meanwhile, qualitative data was obtained from classroom observation in order get data about teachers' implementation. In addition, data of interview was also conducted to answer the third research question in which categorized as qualitative data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study has three research questions that were answered by distributing questionnaire, conducting classroom observations and interview. The teachers observed were English teachers from public primary schools in Denpasar municipality which have the same educational background and use the same curriculum in each school. Teacher 1 was

from SD Negeri 20 Pemecutan while Teacher 2 was from SD Negeri 10 Dauh Puri and Teacher 3 teaches in SD Negeri 1 Padangsembian. The first research question which asked about the perception of English primary school teacher in Denpasar municipality was answered by distributing questionnaire to the three teachers. From the result of the questionnaire, it was found that the perception of the Teachers related to child-centered learning was very strong. As it is seen in the table 4.14, from the twelve component of child-centered learning stated, the Teachers seem have very strong concept on six components including the cooperation between teacher and students, role of teacher as facilitator, pleasant learning atmosphere, self-assessment, peer-assessment, and the impact of child-centered learning in which the main score of the three teachers in those components was in range of $4.0005 \leq M \leq 5.0001$ where the highest score is 4.5 on the use of self-assessment and the establishment of pleasant learning atmosphere. Meanwhile, the lowest score obtained is 3.75 on accommodating students with different learning style.

From all the scores gathered on each component, it was found that the mean score of the Teachers' perception is 4.1. It indicates that the Teachers have strong concept on child-centered learning as the mean score is in the range of $3.3335 \leq M \leq 4.0005$. The study also found that among the three teachers, Teacher 2 has very strong concept about child-centered learning. It can be seen from the table in which the mean score is 4.44 which is in the range of $4.0005 \leq M \leq 5.0001$. Teacher 2 teaches in SD Negeri 10 Dauh Puri. She had ever attended workshop about the implementation of curriculum 2013 in 2018. When she was in the university, she also took TEYL program in 2015. It was argued that Teacher 2 had strong concept on child centered learning as she had ever attended workshop on curriculum 2013. It was supported by Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1995) in Boudersa (2016) who stated that teachers' training and professional development are seen as central mechanism for the improvement of teachers' content knowledge in order to meet high educational standard.

The second research question which considering the teachers' implementation on child-centered learning was answered by conducting classroom observation. Each teacher in each public primary school was observed three times during their teaching practice. The data found reveals that English teachers in Denpasar municipality did not seem to be ready to apply child-centered learning in their classrooms practices. It was found the average of the implementation on all components was only 7.25 which indicate that the implementation was very low.

Among the three teachers, the implementation of child-centered learning was mostly used by Teacher 1. It was found that she got the highest frequency on some components including the use of teaching media, teachers' roles as facilitator, accommodating different learning style, giving students' full responsibility on their learning, and the use of self-assessment. These components were implemented consistently in three meetings. Teacher 1 had used teaching media such PowerPoint, picture, and video to explain the materials as in each classroom is provided by LCD projector. She also played her roles as facilitator in which she gave example before giving students their task. Hadson (2008) argue that, teachers need skills that would make it possible for them to give useful practical examples during the lesson. In line with Hadson, Weimer (2002) also underlines that teachers also have to organize learning content and generate examples. As the experts stated, teachers are responsible to give clear and useful example for students to get better understanding of the material. It is hand in hand with Teacher 1's teaching practices where she gave students useful examples before gave them any task.

Chan (2009) stated that one of strategies to promote child-centered learning is giving feedback on specific aspects of students' work. Teacher 1 had usually put her comment right after students' presentation finished. She added feedback students' work as she stated in the interview that giving feedback to students is very important so that they can improve the quality of their work in the future. It claims that Teacher 1 has already implemented child-centered learning by giving students' constructive feedback as she understands that it is beneficial for students' performances. In addition, Teacher 1 gave motivational encouragement for students to become more active in classrooms. She gave them

applause, compliments and verbal reinforcements where students become comfortable to perform in the classrooms.

In her teaching practice, teacher 1 allowed students to assess and gave comments on their work whether they are happy or not with it. These activities were mostly done after students did group discussions and performance. It was in line with Macfarlane-Dick (2006) who assumes that the major goal of education is to help students aware on their own performance. Therefore, Teacher 1 has understood that self-assessment is needed to increase students' awareness of their work as well as their performance.

The result of teachers' perception and implementation on the impact of child-centered learning was inconsistent. The data gathered from the questionnaire showed that teachers have very strong concept on it. Unfortunately, the implementation was very low. Thus, it indicated that there was not consistency between teachers' perception and their implementation on the impact of child-centered learning.

Based on the calculation of the mean score of all components, it was found that teachers had very strong perception on child centered learning in which the average of perception was 4.1. This was contradicted with the data obtained from the classroom observation in which implementation of child-centered learning was low implemented. The average of the implementation on all components was only 7.25. It indicated that there was tendency of inconsistent between teachers' perception and their practices on child-centered learning. Meanwhile, the data shows that there are six components that indicate tendencies of inconsistency on providing teaching media, emphasizing students' to have control on their learning, enabling higher order thinking, giving students full responsibility on their learning, giving students chances to be active participants, and using peer-assessment. In addition, there are four components which have the indication of inconsistency including cooperation between teacher and students, the making of pleasant learning atmosphere, the use of self-assessment, and the impact of child-centered learning.

The findings of this study showed that teacher-centered learning was more frequently done than child-centered learning. These findings confirmed Karavas-Doukas's (1996) study which revealed that although teachers tended to be selective in their teaching, traditional practice was mostly done than constructivist practice. A study conducted by Uztosun (2013) also found that teachers' practices were not congruent with their beliefs because all participants remarked that their opinions about ideal teaching did not match their teaching practices. They confirmed that they only focused on structural forms of the target language.

The data found in this study also clarifies that there are numerous challenges on the implementation on child-centered learning. These are lack of time on tasks in which only approximately 50 minutes in one meeting. In addition, these schools have small classrooms size with numbers of students that make child-centered learning is not well implemented in every class. Moreover, lack of support from school administration to take initiatives in giving teachers professional development training is also important factor of the unsuccessfulness of the child-centered learning implementation. Qutoshi & Poudel (2014) state that in such a complex situation, only a few teachers who are highly skillful and have expertise can implement child-centered learning in their classes but majority of teachers blame poor resources and insufficient support as challenges. Therefore, this kind of situation offers teachers a chance and justification to switch to teacher centered teaching mode. Ultimately, the students cannot get the education they deserve that has been claimed by the school stakeholders in their vision which is curriculum 2013. This finding validates the finding of Lea, Stephenson, and Troy (2003) that clarify many institutions or educators claim to be putting student-centered learning into practice, but in reality they are not.

This research identified various conceptual knowledge regarding students-centered learning pedagogy and strategies for its implementation in the classroom. Teacher 2 has very strong concept about child-centered learning in which the mean score obtained was 4.44 which is in the range of $4.0005 \leq M \leq 5.0001$. The highest mean score obtained was 4.75 on the indicator of student takes full responsibility of their learning. Meanwhile, the total score of Teacher 1 is 3.95. It indicates that Teacher 1 has strong concept on child-centered learning in which she seemed very sure about the use of self-assessment where the mean

score is 4.5. Teacher 3 also has strong concept although the mean score is lower than Teacher 1. She only got 3.57 where the highest mean score is on the indicator related to the impact child-centered learning. From all the scores gathered on each component, it was found that the mean score of the Teachers' conceptual knowledge is 4.1. It indicates that the Teachers have very strong concept on child-centered learning as the mean score is in the range of $3.3335 \leq M \leq 4.0005$.

The data collected from the classroom observations showed that the highest mean score on teachers' classroom practices was 25 on the component of teachers' role as facilitator. However, the mean score obtained on enabling students' higher order thinking was 0 in which there was not any activity that belongs to the indicator. The data obtained also indicates that among the three teachers, the implementation of child-centered learning was highly implemented by Teacher 1 while Teacher 3 has the least frequency among others.

Based on the calculation of the mean score of all components, it was found out that teachers had very strong conceptual knowledge on child centered learning in which the mean score was 4.1. This was contradicted with the data obtained from the classroom observation in which implementation of child-centered learning was low implemented. The average of the implementation on all components was only 7.25. It indicated that there was tendency of inconsistent between teachers' conceptual knowledge and their practices on child-centered learning.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings reveal that English teachers in primary schools in the Municipality of Denpasar generally have adequate knowledge about the concepts or principles of student-centered learning which was demonstrated by their strong perception (average score of: 4.07) about the values of this pedagogy in supporting children literacy in English as a Foreign Language. However, very few indicators of students-centered learning in teaching English for young learners were practiced in the classrooms. It means that there is a huge gap between what the teachers know and what they practice. The follow up interview with the teachers reveal that it is not easy to handle young learners to work on their own. It is also considered hard by the teachers to know how much they have learned if they have to work individually or in groups. All the teachers involved in this research were confident about what should the students go through in a student centered learning activity. They were also aware of their roles in leading a student-active learning classroom, that are, as a facilitator and as a manager who manage students' behaviors and in class learning activities. The gap between the conceptual knowledge and the practice of the knowledge was observable in the classroom. This leads to the suggestion that English teachers in primary schools in Denpasar Municipality need help to put theory into practice. This can be in the format of professional development from which teachers learn about how to design / plan. Implement, supervise as well as assess student-centered learning activities in the classroom.

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