

Improving teacher's English proficiency in teaching various levels and background

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT		
<p>Keywords: Teacher's English Proficiency, various levels, various background</p>	<p>Teachers have an important role in educating the nation. Teachers' duty and responsibility are not only transferring the knowledge to the students but also making the students understand the materials given. Therefore, the students will be able to apply the lesson in the real life. In order to reach the teaching objective above, teachers must have good standard of ability and skill in teaching English. In addition, they must have good ability in teaching English. However, not all of teachers have the skill to teach various students equally. The focus of this article is to improve the teachers' English proficiency on teaching various students based on the students' level of education background and based on the students' age. Teaching students of various ages and various level of education background need teachers' creativity of their way of thinking. Some teachers tend to teach one level of students, elementary school for example, and they are not ready to teach other level of student, for example the senior high and adult. This article is expected to help the teachers seeing several views in teaching students of various levels and background.</p>		
Article History:	Submission 21 July 2023	Accepted 30 August 2023	Published 30 October 2023

1. Introduction

Teaching is an interesting and challenging activity that does not only give advantages to the teacher but also to the students. To be a teacher means to commit and dedicate life for the development of the nation in educating the next generation. However, behind the simplicity of several people thoughts that teaching is a simple job, there is a great responsibility that a teacher should take care of the students' needs and should do the job with a high dedication and pure heart. According to Ramadani (2006) Teaching is believed to be a synergy of science and art in that some innate ability complements learned teaching skills. It means that to be a teacher needs some competences and skills. Teaching is not only making the students understand the materials, it is a process of transferring the knowledge in order to make the students both understand the materials and apply the materials given in their real life. English teachers should have a good proficiency in English and should be able to teach English in every level and also various backgrounds of the students.

Teacher's role and teacher's proficiency

Byrne (1992) and Brown (2001) in Ramakant (2006) pointed out that a teacher has the following roles, some of which are more supporting to creating an interactive atmosphere than others. The five roles are as controller, conductor, monitor, facilitator, and consultant. Teacher should have at least two roles in the classroom. Good English teacher must have good standard of ability and skills in teaching English which is called proficiency. According to Victoria Institute of teaching, there are three classifications of the standards of proficient teacher's level namely: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. An English teacher who has good English proficiency will be ready to teach any level of students they are assigned to.

The Characteristics of learners

This research shares about the researcher's and some subjects' students they are teaching. Secondly, the research also explains about the level of education the students are as well as the background of the students. The third is the abilities, strengths and weaknesses of the students. In the characteristics of the learners, the researchers classified into the young learners characteristics, adolescent characteristics and adult characteristics (Brown, 2001), (Harmer, 2007).

The Level of The Students

According to Brown (2001) students can be classified into three types namely children, teenagers and adult. Each type of the students' needs different treatment to teach. In this research context children group consists of young learners like play group, kindergarten and elementary school. The teenager group consists of junior high school and senior high school while adult group consists of university students, workers and the old people. Besides, Brown (2001) and Harmer (2001) proposed three levels of students namely beginner, intermediate and advanced. The researcher classified the level of the students as well in these three terms since the students in the private tuition were classified into these three categories of English Examination. The purposes of the research are to share personal experiences of teaching various level and background of students and to gain insight on teachers' experiences of teaching various level and background of students

2. Research Methodology

This descriptive research was designed to obtain information concerning the current status and phenomena. In this research, the phenomenon was about improving the teacher's English proficiency in teaching students of various levels and background. There were seven teachers as the subject of the research. The three teachers were the English instructors in a private tuition in Semarang city, and the other three were the English teachers of a junior high school in Semarang. Interview guide and questionnaires for the English teachers were used to conduct the study. Questionnaire was the first instrument used to collect data. The researcher made 20 statements which was continued to interview sessions using the interview guide. It consisted of five close-ended questions and 17 open-ended questions. Those questions guide the researcher for more specific questions during the interview. After collecting the data, the next step was analyzing the data. The teachers' experiences about teaching students in various levels and backgrounds were shared after analyzing the data based on the questionnaire and interview guide. For the questionnaire, the researcher counted the answer of the teachers and then described it narratively and supported by the

experts' theory while the data obtained by the researcher from the interviews were transcribed and summarized narratively.

3. Findings

The result of the questionnaires is presented in this following table. The number of the subjects is seventh and the number of the statements is twenty. The options answers are strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (DA), strongly Disagreed (SDA). The numbers in each of the column below SA, A, DA, and SDA means the numbers of the subjects that answer the same statements.

No.	Statement	SA (Strongly Agree)	A (Agree)	DA (Disagree)	SDA (Strongly Disagree)
1	Teaching English is fun.	6	1		
2	Teaching English is hard and tiring.		1	3	3
3	I need a lot of preparation before teaching.	3	4		
4	Different classes need different ways of teaching.	5	2		
5	I use different methods every time I teach.	2	3	2	
6	I prepare different materials in teaching.	1	6		

This table organizes the responses for each statement under the columns "SA," "A," "DA," and "SDA" based on the number of participants who selected each response.

The Result of the Interview

Here is the result of the interview with the seven teachers including the researcher. The first teacher or subject is the researcher herself. She is an undergraduate degree and she has experiences in teaching young learner up to adult during these seven years of teaching. She thinks that teaching various levels and background of students is interesting, challenging and useful for her higher order thinking. By teaching various students increased her knowledge and improved her ability of English and teaching English. Her tips to manage various levels and background of students are to be confident, open-minded, quick learning, master the English, know the students well, be creative in explaining the materials and creating the task. The Second subject is an English instructor of a private tuition in Semarang city who has been teaching for eighteen years. Her education background is undergraduate degree. She thinks that teaching is interesting. Her strength of the four skills is writing and her weakness is listening. She also experienced teaching various levels and backgrounds of the students. She likes teaching intermediate level because they have known the pattern of English structure well. She does not really like to teach the basic level because it takes a long time to explain the materials and repeat it till the students understand. According to her, in teaching multi levels class, teacher must give more attention to the weaker students.

The Third subject is an English instructor of a private tuition in Semarang city who also teaches English in a private kindergarten. She experienced teaching English for thirteen years and she has taught students from kindergarten up to adult students. She prefers to teach English to elementary school students than other level because she thinks that primary students start from the beginning therefore, they are enthusiast in learning English. The suggestions she offered to teach multi-level class is by giving more attention to the weaker without ignoring the stronger. She is good at reading and she think that she needs to improve

her listening. According to her a good English teacher should be able to explain the materials to the student well.

The fourth is also an English instructor a private tuition in Semarang city. She thinks that teaching is interesting for her and she likes English. She experienced teaching elementary school students up to adult. She is also good at reading but she needs to improve her listening. According to her, teaching adult is preferable than teaching any other level because she can get more knowledge when she teaches adult. She does not really like teaching junior high school students because they cannot really focus on the lesson. To teach various level and background of students needs good preparation, ability, responsibility, and patience. According to her a good teacher has to master the four language skills.

The fifth subject is an English teacher of junior high school in Semarang city. She has been teaching English for nineteen years in Junior high school level. She has experience in teaching elementary school students and junior high school students. She has no experience in teaching multilevel, multi age and various backgrounds of students but she experiences teaching classes which consist of stronger students and weaker students. According to her, a good English teacher has to be able to communicate well and has a high patience towards the different individuals in the classroom. The method to be used should be suitable with materials given as well.

The sixth is also an English teacher of a junior high school in Semarang City. She has earned her master degree in English pedagogy. She chose English because it is international language. She has been teaching English for seventeen years. She has experience in teaching elementary school students and junior high school students. According to her teaching multi-level class is difficult because teacher has to know the ability of the individual in the classroom before deciding the proper materials and method. According to her a good teacher must be able to understand the psychological condition of the student.

The last subject is currently as an English teacher of a junior high school in Semarang City. She chose English as her major because she likes it. She experiences in teaching elementary school students and junior high school students. She prefers to teach elementary school students than junior high school students because they are more obedient to the teacher. The methods she uses in teaching are lecturing, questions and answers, and games. According to her a good English teacher must master vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

4. Discussion

The discussion of the research findings with the reference to the underlying theories is explained in this following explanation. There were three things included in the instruments namely, various levels, various ages and various education/occupation backgrounds of the learners. For the various levels of the students, all of the subjects experienced in teaching various levels of students based on the strength/weak and quick or slow of the students to accept the materials from the teachers. Besides, the teacher also stated that in a classroom sometimes, the beginner/basic students are in the same class with the intermediate ones. Therefore, their ability to catch the same materials explained by the teachers is different.

Teachers have to be able to explain clearly in the proper speed that can be understood by the beginner or the weaker at the same time try not to make the intermediate students or the stronger to be bored. According to Hess (2001) the challenges that teachers face in this class will be the feeling of out of control, the problems of the management, the huge amount

of written work, the difficulty of providing individual learning styles and how to activate the quiet students. Some tips that those seven teachers use to cope these problems are by being patience, giving more attention to the weaker or the beginner, give more tasks or different task between the weak and the strong as well as try different method in teaching such as using games and grouping. The second explanation is about the multi age class. Teaching students of different age needs teacher's high self-confident and high creativity. Sometimes teacher may feel uncomfortable to teach certain age of students for example the older students or the same age students with the teacher herself.

However, this can be handled by the teachers if the teacher knows the student well. Although the students are the same age or older than her/him, teacher should be professional and realizes that she/he is the controller and director of the class. The students might older but they come to the classroom to learn, so teacher should believe that he/she is the one that the students lean against. Managing multi age classroom is a possible think to do for teachers. If in a classroom there is more than one age group of students, teacher can ask the older students to be a tutor in terms of sharing experience for example (Allman and Freeman). The same experts also offered needs analysis before teaching as well as some strategies that can be used in teaching the multiage class. First, think students as important part according to their social, emotional and intellectual ability. Second, use more than one teaching method. Third save the students' portfolio to know their improvement. Last try to encourage the students to be more confident and active in the classroom.

The last explanation is about teaching students of various education or occupation background. Every student has their own education background or occupation background. Therefore, they have different intention and purpose to learn English. Students of elementary school for example, they learn English as a local content subject. It is something new for them while junior high and senior high school students learn English because they want to pass National Examination. It will be different with university students and worker students. Teacher has to conduct needs analysis before teaching this various background of students. There are some possible ways to practice according to Robinson (1991) namely questionnaire, interviews, observation, case studies, tests, authentic data collection and participatory needs analysis. The seven subjects use the interviews and observation to know the students. After conducting the needs analysis of the students, teachers can decide the materials given to the students and what method to be used to teach the students.

5. Conclusion

It is expected that the conclusions and suggestions are valuable to improve the teachers' English proficiency in teaching various levels and background. Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that teaching English to various levels and background of the students is a dynamic, interesting and challenging activity. It needs well organized preparation, high quality teacher's English proficiency and also teacher's mastery both in teaching and the language skills. It is suggested that teachers of any level of education whether it is formal or non-formal education, should take and try to conquer the challenge in teaching students beyond their institution they work. Therefore, anytime they are asked in sudden to speak up or teach new group of students there will not be any difficulty or anxiety anymore. By teaching multilevel and various backgrounds of the students, teacher can

improve their teaching ability, enrich their knowledge and add their experiences that will be useful for the future self-development.

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