

Teachers' self reflection in teaching english

Sonya V Ch Benu

STKIP SOE, English Education Program, STKIP Soe, Soe, Indonesia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe how teachers rated themselves in teaching English. The participants of the research were ten English teachers from SMA Negeri 1 Soe and SMA Kristen 1 Soe. A questionnaire was used to get the data. There were 33 items of the questionnaire were compiled and used to rate the teachers themselves in teaching English. The results shown that 90% of the participants did reflection on their teaching, while very few or 10% did not. It shown that the participants fulfilled the requirements of a good teacher as reflected in the items of the questionnaire. It concluded that reflecting on the way of teaching English became an important part for teachers in order to reach their professionalism in teaching.

Keywords: teachers, self-reflection, teaching english

Introduction

English is a required subject for students at high schools in Indonesia. They have to learn English not only for getting good grades but also for being familiar with English in communication. Teachers play an important role in teaching of English (Williams and Burden, 1997) ^[13]. They understand themselves, their practices and their students. In teaching and learning process, teachers have to use different ideas and experiences to teach so that students will be interested to learn.

There are many metaphors to describe what a teacher is. Sometimes, teachers are said to be like actors because 'they are always on the stage'. Others think they are like orchestral conductors, because he/she directs conversations and sets the pace and tone. Yet, others feel like gardeners, because we plant the seeds and then watch them grow. The range of these images indicates the range of views that they have about their profession (Harmer, 2008) ^[2]. There are many perceptions about being a teacher. Individual reasons for becoming a teacher maybe intrinsic (desire to work with young people, passion for the subject, a desire to serve others and society) as well as extrinsic (work hours, vacations, job security), although, a teacher has many tasks to do in teaching. With regards to language, according to Ward and Renandya (1999) ^[12], a language is much more than lists of vocabulary and sets of grammar rules, and language learning is not simply a matter of acquiring a system of linguistic formulas. Language is a form of communication among individuals in a specific social context. But even more than that, language is a way of thinking and of processing information. It is a symbol of culture and of personal identify.

According to Parkay and Stanford (2010) ^[7], teaching is a way to transfer knowledge to other people especially for students at school. It is the work of a teacher. In transferring knowledge, teachers must prepare themselves before teaching so that teachers can be the model for their students. Everything that they do will be imitated and followed by their students.

In the classroom, language teachers have many roles. Two

of the roles are as controller and organizer. They have to organize students to do various activities. This often involves giving the students information, telling them how they are going to do an activity like putting them into pairs or groups, and finally closing things down when it is time to stop. Language teachers can also function as a participant during students' discussion, role plays, or group decision-making activities. In some activities teachers are the resource person. They should be helpful and available, but at the same time they have to resist the urge to spoon-feed their students so that students become over-reliant on them (Harmer, 2001) ^[3].

Karl (1994) gave some criterias of being a good language teacher. A good language teacher should be friendly, creative and supportive to the students. In the classroom, teachers must be able to manage the class activities well. Teachers are facilitators as well as models. Good English teachers have to make good eye contacts with their class, pay attention to all students, and make the class comfortable. In teaching, teachers can divide students into small groups and arrange the seating related to class activities. English teachers also must speak loudly and clearly because they are teaching a new language. Their handwriting on the board and chart must be large enough to see from all parts of the classroom. Teachers also must make sure that the students understand the lesson because English spelling is very different from spelling in their mother tongue. Language teachers must create good class atmosphere for the students and plan the class activities equally well. To wake the students up and to get them work, teachers can use simple activities. Teachers must be a friend for the students and they can recognize individual students who have problems, besides that they have encourage their students to do their best and treat them with the same respect. Teachers should be aware that their students learn differently so they have to provide models, examples and experiences before doing the class activities. The activities must maximize students' involvement and must focus on using English. The skills practiced in class must be easily transferrable for use outside the classroom and the content

of the activity must be relevant and meaningful to the students' life. Teachers have to pay attention in their teaching especially their speaking. They must speak clear enough and use simple language that the students can understand. Sometimes, teachers feel that they know everything so they speak without thinking of students abilities in receiving the knowledge. Teachers should encourage the students to be more active in class.

Teachers' self-reflection plays an important role in the career as a teacher. Teachers should evaluate themselves in order to improve their teaching methods and techniques so that they can be successful in delivering their knowledge to the students. It is necessary that teachers reflect on their actions and experiences as human beings and as professionals (Kuzmina, 2008). Teachers must be aware to improve their teaching and make their English class more attractive and interesting. It be a must because students will be bored with the same teaching style from time to time. However, teachers and students feel that they have interesting teaching and learning in the same time (Williams and Burden 1997) ^[13]. Teachers must improve their teaching by following workshops, trainings, seminars, etc. They will learn more on how to make their class active and get many styles to make students enjoy studying English. Some teachers do make reflection on their teaching but other teachers almost never reflect on their teaching. The teachers do not realize that their explanation may not be clear, their teaching style may be monotonous and it makes students bored and maybe lazy in studying English. In an English class, teachers must observe themselves to recognize their progress in teaching English because when they do not make an observation, they will not know why their students are lazy or passive in class. They must realize that their teaching is boring for the students. Teachers can observe themselves by using questionnaires distributed to the students or they can ask their colleagues to observe their classes and give comments on their teaching (Bartlett, 1990) ^[1].

Teachers also can ask the students to write comments after class. Observing a class means to help the teacher become better and have more effective strategies to use. Some teachers think that observers are their greatest enemies. Teachers do not like to be observed so they try to observe by themselves with using many methods to encourage their progress in teaching (Ravayee, 2008) ^[8]. As the title suggests, this study was conducted in order to answer the following research question: How do teachers rate themselves in teaching English? The objective of the study was to describe how do teachers rate themselves in teaching English.

Literature Review

There are some studies wrote about teachers' reflection in teaching English. The first study was from Mathew and Peechattu (2017) ^[6]. They said that reflective practice played a central role in teachers' professional development. Here, students teachers were chosen as the participant. The participants carry out systematic enquiry into themselves, they understand themselves, their practice and their students. By looking at their own understanding and actions also experiences, they professionally grow in their own. Being a real teacher in class demanded the student teachers to improve their skill in teaching. Learning from the environment made them understand their ability in teaching

and also helped them improving their way of teaching in class. Above all, they needed to find new strategies and technique used to interact the students in class to believe that they could teach even they were student teachers.

Next, a study done by Sassi (2016) ^[10] about teachers' belief on self-observation. She said that there were two benefits of self-observation. The first one described self-observation as an opportunity for reflection, awareness and professional growth while the second claimed such practices depend on personality and attitudes and its limited by various constraints. The researcher tried to inform that teachers' awareness of self-reflection help them understanding their capability in teaching. It became their motivation to be better in educating and teaching their students. However, teachers were also faced by some administration staffs related to educational system in which they spent too much time on those things.

The last study was done by Saylag (2012) about self-reflection on the teaching practice of English as a second language: becoming the critically reflective teacher. He highlighted the importance of personal beliefs and experiences which contribute to critical reflection as the distinguishing attribute of reflective practitioners. Teachers had opportunity to improve their skill in teaching by developing knowledge and understanding the ability of their students. They may decide to do something new in thier teaching process. It helped them to make their class attractive and the students will be more interested to learn the lessons.

Method

The population of this study was English teachers from Senior High Schools in Soe. While, the sample were ten teachers from SMA Negeri 1 Soe and SMA Kristen 1 Soe. They were four male and six female teachers who taught English two times a week. Questionnaire was used in this study consisting of reflection on learning environment, the individuals and the activities done by the teachers during teaching and learning process. The data of this study was analyzed by Microsoft excel with descriptive analysis. Mean score of the description showed the total of participants with the total number of answers from the questionnaire. From the description, the researcher could explain the result of teachers self-reflection in teaching English.

Result

The analysis below answered the research question *how do teachers rate themselves in teaching English?* All the participants in this study could be considered as good English teachers because they fulfilled the requirements of a good teacher as reflected in the items of the questionnaire. From the eleven categories: relationship to the students, the classroom, presentation, culture and adjustment, physical health, self-concepts, aptitude and perception, reinforcement, development, interaction and language, the most prominent categories the participants were good in, were physical health in which the participants paid attention to the students' condition, followed by relationship to the students in which the participants paid attention to the student-student relationship and teacher-student relationship. The categories in which the participants were not so good in were the classroom setting and teachers' development. We can understand this fact because with too many students in the classroom it is difficult to make a

conducive seating arrangement for group activities. With regard to teachers' development, we cannot deny the fact that they do not have enough opportunities to develop themselves due to the school and financial situation. All participants did reflection on their teaching. The following are the results of the questionnaire:

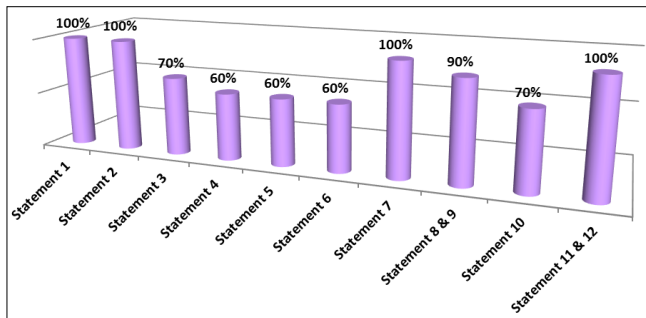


Chart 1: Learning environment (Statement number 1-12)

The chart above show the relationship to the students. Almost all of the participants had close relation with the students. 100 % of the participants made good eye contact with the class and 100 % of the participants paid attention to all the students equally and in teaching just 70 % of the participants divided the students into small groups. In the classroom, 60% of the participants arranged the seating related to the class activities then 60 % of the participants gave the material before the class began and 70 % of the participants made the class comfortable. In presenting the materials, 100 % of the participants spoke loudly and clearly so that the students understood what they are talking about. Also 90 % of the participants' handwriting on the board and chart was clear enough to be seen from all parts of the classroom. While for culture and adjustment, 70 % of the participants were aware of the students' differences and they realized that this affects their learning. 100 % of the participants always tried to create good class atmosphere for the students.

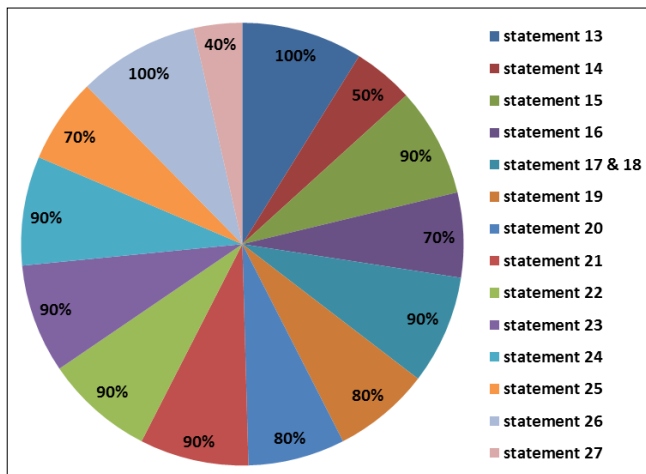


Chart 2: The individuals (items number 13-27)

The chart above shown concerning the physical health of the teachers. 50 % of the participants realized that they had to improve their ways to recognize individual students who had problems but 100 % of the participants began the class with simple activities to wake the students up and get them work together and 90 % of the participants tried to encourage the students to do their best. About self-concepts,

70 % of the participants treated the students with the same respect and 90 % of the participants involved the students in the class activities. About aptitude and perception, 80 % of the participants were aware that their students learned differently. 80 % of the participants used their ability or skill by providing models, examples, and experiences before doing the class activities to make their students learn together in their differences. 90 % of the participants taught their students the techniques to memorize the lesson. While about reinforcement, 90 % of the participants wrote good tests for the students, 90 % of the participants told the students that they have done well and 90 % of the participants told them how to grade their work. About development, 70 % of the participants always tried to find new techniques in language teaching and 100 % of the participants tried new ideas to present the lessons but just 40 % of the participants needed to improve themselves in observing other teachers to get other ideas for improving their teaching.

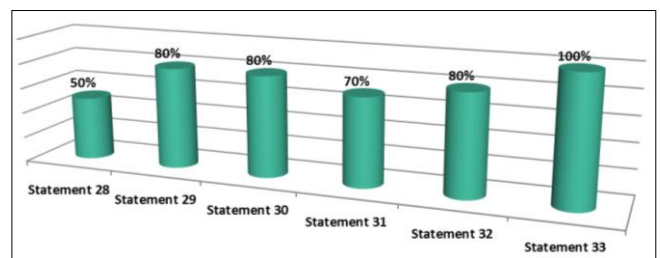


Chart 3: The activities (items number 28-33)

The chart shown that the activities consisted of interaction and language. 50 % of the participants minimized their role in conducting the activities while 80 % of the participants maximized the students' involvement in activities. 80 % of the participants also organized the activities for real interaction among the students. Finally, about language, 70 % of the participants focused on using English and 80 % of the participants asserted that the materials used were easily transferrable for use outside the class. 100 % of the participants asserted that the content of the activity was relevant and meaningful to the students' world.

Conclusion

The results shown that 90 % of the participants did reflection on their teaching and learning process while very few or 10% did not. Self-observation is a way for teachers to develop themselves in teaching English beside following trainings, seminars, workshops or observing other teacher. It is also a way to make the teaching of English more successful. Most of the participants always tried to the best in teaching as shown in the questionnaire. All the participants in this study can be considered good English teachers because they fulfilled the requirements of a good teacher as reflected in the items of the questionnaire. Most participants focused or paid attention to their students' individual situation/condition as well as student-student relationship and teacher-student relationship. In my opinion, those two components are very important for language teachers because language teachers should be learner-centered. For all English teachers, do not be shy to ask other teachers to observe your teaching. Teachers' teaching will improve and students will be interested to study.

References

1. Bartlett L. Teachers Development Through Reflective Teaching in RICHARDS, Jack C and NUNAN, David, Second Language Eduaction. Cambridge University, 1990.
2. Harmer J. How to teach English “ An Introduction to the Practice of English Language Teaching. Pearson Education, 2008.
3. Harmer J. The Practice of English Teaching. Pearson Education, 2001.
4. Karl T. (Ed). Teacher Development Making the Right Moves. English Language Prostams Division. United States Information Agency. Washington DC, 1994.
5. Kusmina J. Observation. Florentsiyam, taken from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/forum/observation-4>, 2008.
6. Mathew PDr, Peechattu PJ. Reflective Practices: A Means to Teacher Development. Asia Pasific Journal of Contemporary Education and Communication Technology (APJCECT), 2017, 3(1).
7. Parkay FW, Hardcatle Stanford B. Becoming a Good Teacher (Eight edition). Pearson Education, 2010.
8. Ravayee A. Students can sense it, taken from [http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/forum-topic/observation -4](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/forum-topic/observation-4), 2008.
9. Richards Jack C. The Language teaching Matrix. Cambridge Press, 1990.
10. Sassi SBH. Teachers’ Perception on Self-observation As An Appraisal Tool. Arab World English Journal, 2016, 7.
11. Townsend Hall, Brenda, PhD. Self-observation in the Classroom. ESL School taken from [http://www.esl-school.com/archives/2006/05/self-observation in the classroom.php](http://www.esl-school.com/archives/2006/05/self-observation-in-the-classroom.php), 2006.
12. Ward Christoper, Renandya Willy. Language Teaching (New Insights for the Language Teacher). Anthology series 40. Seameo Regional Language center. Singapore, 1999.
13. Williams M, Burden R. Psychology for Language Teachers. Cambridge University Press, 1997.