



Investigating Teacher's Linguistics Knowledge in Teaching English to Young Learners during the Pandemic: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Teaching the English language to young learners at the end of the pandemic is a bit challenging for the English teacher because he has to introduce the target language in several different ways. The way that the English teacher is supposed to practice is by implementing his linguistics knowledge. They have to be learned by a language teacher because teaching the language is not only about communication. A language teacher must apply linguistics knowledge when he is teaching language, especially teaching the English language. However, an English teacher who practices his linguistics knowledge to teach young learners is rarely found during the pandemic. This research aimed to investigate the English teacher's linguistics knowledge in teaching young English learners during the pandemic. This research employed a case study as a part of a qualitative design which included an interview and teaching video of the elementary English teacher. The result revealed that the English teacher only understood and practised three sub-fields of linguistics; phonology, morphology, and semantics in his English classroom during the pandemic. This research's findings suggest enriching the English teachers' linguistics knowledge and practising that linguistics knowledge appropriately, especially in teaching young Indonesian learners.

Keywords: *Linguistics, Linguistics knowledge, English language teacher, teaching language to young learners*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching the English language to young learners at the end of the pandemic is a bit challenging for the English teacher because he has to introduce the target language in several different ways. The way that the English teacher is supposed to practice is by implementing his linguistics knowledge. However, an English teacher who practices his linguistics knowledge to teach young learners is rarely found. It seems that the English teachers did not show off their knowledge sufficiently. Therefore, teacher linguistics knowledge will assist him in teaching the English language to young learners if he already becomes a competent teacher.

A competent English language teacher should reflect his basic knowledge of education. Johnson (2009) in Sakhiyya, Agustien & Pratama (2018), mention there are three broad fields

of study that make up the knowledge base of English language teacher education; 1) what student teachers need to know about English language teacher education programs is commonly thought of as the explicit language knowledge or linguistics component, as well as the target language proficiency, 2.) the pedagogies that are taught in English language teacher education programs is how student teachers are expected to teach, and 3) both the content and pedagogies are learned through institutional delivery - the way student instructors are educated to teach. Moreover, Freeman (1989) claims we need to be able to comprehend language on its terms. If what is acquired through linguistics, language acquisition research, materials development, and methodological exploration is to come to fruition in teaching practice, it must be analysed and better understood. Therefore, a competent English language teacher can achieve the target language proficiency using the pedagogies which he has gained in assisting the learners in learning English by applying linguistics knowledge.

In particular, teaching English to Indonesian young learners is challenging because the English language is not their first or second language. They consider English a foreign language, so they still experience difficult moments. They must be taught by a competent English teacher to understand the English language and meet the target language in learning English. They should be taught various strategies after they are introduced to the function of the English language. Nufus (2018) points out those students normally require time to get interested in the language they have learned; nevertheless, they do not need to know how to use the language once they have acquired it; the key thing is that they know how to use and practice it. Wulandari, et al (2020) cites Lungu (2015) cites Husein (2014) that a teacher should have both professional and pedagogical competence in TEYL while teaching English to young learners; professional competence comprises English proficiency, license, TEYL training, and so on, while pedagogical competence refers to the capacity to teach young learners.

In addition, Zakeri & Alavi (2011) discuss the efficacy of English teachers as influenced by their confidence in their ability to teach English. Teachers' self-efficacy is influenced by their lack of English competency because, while examining teaching assignments, teachers will make judgments based on their teaching competence to teach students English speaking, listening, reading, and writing. As a result of their lesser efficacy in teaching English, teachers will invest less effort into pushing pupils to learn and value English. In brief, English teachers' self-confidence affects their language proficiency in teaching English.

Three studies had been conducted on linguistic knowledge. First, Troyan, Sembianti & King (2019) contributed to language teacher education's knowledge base, the norms and rules that guide global language teacher education, and the need for a coherent, principled, and

rigorous philosophy of language to underpin contextualized world language teaching and learning. The result depicted the genre pedagogy connected with it to contextualize language used for his students at various levels of instruction. Second, Schleppegrell (2018) led to research about the understanding variation in the registers required to engage in metalanguage to raise children's consciousness are three aspects of that knowledge. The result revealed the language teacher needed to bring an understanding of language's meaning-making mechanisms to engage children in ways that enable them to acquire both language and subject knowledge by focusing on language. Third, Daffern (2016) researched teaching spelling with metalanguage entails explicit education in the linguistic processes that support written language. The result described teachers were supposed to encourage pupils to develop a repertoire of spelling strategies, and their understanding of the metalanguage and processes involved in spelling is critical. Furthermore, this research purposes to analyse, and investigate the English teacher's linguistics knowledge in teaching young learners. Then, it is expected to answer;

- 1) What does the English teacher understand about linguistics knowledge?
- 2) How English teacher practices his linguistics knowledge in teaching a language?
- 3) Is the English teacher aware of the importance of linguistics knowledge in teaching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abraham, et al (2022) view language proficiency is now regarded as something more than linguistic ability. Rather, it is viewed as a tool that may be used to instil a sense of professional legitimacy and self-assurance in English language teachers. The conviction and practice that the English language is a global language utilized in various situations around the world underpin this notion of considering English language proficiency. Han, et al (2021) mentions the underlying framework of English teaching is understanding the aim of teaching English. It can be separated into three categories: teachers' perceptions of the major motivations for studying English, their English learning goals for students, and their perceptions of the nature of English. Moreover, Sukarno (2008) elaborates that English teachers must know the types of language learning resources, especially for the young learner; 1) learning resources are not recreational items, but rather primary materials that are organized and learned as engaging activities that children engage in regularly. 2) Children's learning resources must be suited to their aptitude, will, world, and so on. As a result, the best English teachers for young students are those who are conversant with English songs and activities. Furthermore, they can reorganize those elements to make them more interesting. 3) A clear difference between

technique and resource is required. Resources include songs, stories, poems, and games. Therefore, English language proficiency which English teachers must master in teaching is originally from their lived knowledge related to the language learning resources.

Besides, Frawley (2020) claims teachers' lived knowledge of their subject may be constrained or muted in academic and political literature if they do not have the space and opportunity to either practice as a teacher-researcher or participate in this type of research. It means that teachers' knowledge is the prior aspect in creating the chances for the students, especially for English language subjects. While Konig, et al (2026) underline EFL teachers must also be professionals in language teaching and learning methodology. They'll require specific talents to establish engaging communicative learning settings and opportunities for content-related skill development. Another point by Vaisman & Kahn-Horwitz (2018) indicates that EFL teachers reported spending the most time in the classroom on vocabulary activities while teaching phonemic awareness and word reading received the least amount of time. Thus, those assumptions reveal that English language teaching encompasses language methodology and linguistics.

Linguistics is the study of language, which included the study of phonemes, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. They have to be learned by a language teacher because teaching the language is not only about communication. A language teacher must apply linguistics knowledge when he is teaching language, especially teaching the English language. He can begin his linguistics knowledge by introducing English pronunciation, which discusses how to say the correct word, phonemes, and phonetics to his English teaching class.

In addition, phonology is necessary to be taught by the language teacher to his students. Phonology gives the students an understanding of sounds and signs in a morpheme or a word in a language. Davenport & Hannahs (2010) highlight that phonology is the systematic study of speech sounds in English. McMahon (2002) states phonology is the rules of the language system. Szczegieliński (2015) mentions phonology describes what sounds are in a language, how they mix to form words, and why certain phonetic qualities are necessary for word recognition. Phonology is also notable for language students to understand how language rules sound in practising pronunciation and creating precious meaning. From those definitions, it can be summed up that phonology is the language system that rules sounds and signs to convey meaning in a language.

Besides, morphology is the organization and relationships of a language's smallest meaningful units are known. Morphology is connected to the word-formation and its meaning, and it is a requirement for the language teacher to introduce and practice the morphology for

the students. Morphology assists the students to know how the word is formed in learning vocabulary and grammar. Furthermore, Rastle (2018) emphasizes one particularly intriguing element of English morphology is that to express this vital information about the meaning, the writing system compromises consistency between spelling and sound. To conclude, morphology is useful to be exposed by the language teacher in teaching his students the language because morphology consists of words and meaning, it can be practised regularly so they can keep those elements in their memory.

Semantics is the study of meaning, and they have a role in knowing semantics when the students study the language; they have to know the meaning. Kreidler (2002) clarifies semantics is the scientific study of meaning while linguistic semantics is the study of how languages arrange and express meanings. Semantics must be introduced and practised frequently by the language teacher and the students since the target language is hardly achieved. Thus, semantics must be brought through the learning language process if it is not brought teaching and learning the language is useless.

METHOD

This research employed qualitative research. Elo, Kaariainen & et al (2014) explain for assessing qualitative data, is often utilized, and there is the issue of trustworthiness in a qualitative design. Credibility, reliability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity are all concepts used to describe the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Creswell (2012) defines the type of qualitative research as common in focusing on a few people or cases. This is because as each new person or place is added, a researcher's total ability to present an in-depth picture lessens. The intricacy of a site or the information offered by individuals is one of the goals of qualitative research. On the other hand, Creswell cites Stake (1995) that one of the case study kinds is the intrinsic case study. This is the traditional single-case design for comprehending a given situation. The researcher goes into great detail on the details of the case to shed light on it. The purpose is to comprehend the case as a whole, as well as to comprehend its inner workings. A secondary purpose is to gain a better understanding of a more general process by analysing a specific case. Besides, the intrinsic case study is very popular in education. Hence, this research employed qualitative research to dig deep into the individual phenomenon.

Because this study focuses on the individual phenomenon, a case study is appropriate to be employed. Johnson & Christensen (2014) refer to case study research as a type of

qualitative study in which the goal is to provide a detailed account of one or more situations. Their idea depicts a case study can influence the internal and the external context of one's phenomenon. In addition, Kumar (2011) a case study undergoes in-depth interviewing, gaining information from secondary records, gathering data through observations, collecting information through focus groups and group interviews, and other data collection methods are key aspects of the case study. Furthermore, Cohen, et al (2007) says a case study can prove cause and effect; in fact, one of its advantages is that they monitor impacts in real-world settings, knowing that context is a key determinant of both causes and effects. They also add a case study is a set in temporal, geographical, organizational, institutional, and other contexts that allow for the drawing of boundaries around the case; they can be defined by the characteristics defined by the individuals and groups involved, and they can be defined by the roles and functions of the participants in the case. They also cite Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) that a case study has some signs; 1) it is concerned with a detailed and vivid account of the case's happenings. 2) It combines the narration of events with their analysis. 3) It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors to have a better understanding of how they perceive events. 4) It draws attention to certain occurrences that are pertinent to the case. 5) In writing the report, an attempt is made to convey the complexity of the case. Accordingly, this study would analyse, and investigate the English teacher's linguistics knowledge in teaching young learners, and his linguistics knowledge was investigated by analyzing his teaching video and interpreting his idea through the interview.

Moreover, the data was gathered from teaching videos and interviews with the English teacher of the elementary school. The data source was a junior English teacher who has been teaching for four years. To begin with, the researcher watched the teaching videos from the English teacher. Then, the researcher took some notes based on the information provided in the videos. Next, the researcher conducted interviews with the English teacher to collect specific information related to his linguistics knowledge in teaching English. Afterwards, it is possible to provide information on a wide range of competencies. This allows for a variety of analytic and diversified reflections. As a result, it's a useful tool for content analysis, particularly in language teaching and learning settings where facial expressions and body language are prominent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion are shown in three points based on the research questions above. The first result indicated the English teacher's understanding of linguistics knowledge.

It would reveal the English teacher's comprehension of teaching a foreign language to young learners. Followed by the second result, described the English language teaching pedagogy in teaching and practising some linguistics sub-fields, such as pronunciation (phonology), morphology, and semantics. Then, the third last result declared the English teacher's awareness of the importance of linguistics knowledge in teaching the English language.

Research Question 1: What does the English teacher understand about linguistics knowledge?

The result of the interview that the writer and the teacher had conducted, described that English teachers only understood the function of linguistics in teaching a language. He told that linguistics knowledge prepares the language teacher for professional language competency. He often applies his linguistics knowledge when he is teaching vocabulary, and it's meaningful because the most common language element to be exposed to is vocabulary. He also claimed spelling is also needed when he is mentioning the words, he believes that spelling is a part of learning phonemes and phonetics. Although phonemes and phonetics sound complicated for young learners, he always does the drill by telling the pupils how to pronounce the words correctly.

Besides, the English teacher emphasizes the importance of semantics when he is telling the word meaning in a particular context. He usually let his pupils predict the meaning first before he mentions the actual meaning of a particular word. He explained the literal meaning to the pupils because they have to know the basic meaning appropriately; for example, he mentioned “travel (Verb)” in Indonesian is *pergi* and “travelling (Noun) in Indonesian is *berpergian*. He gave a short elaboration to the pupils about those two words, the basic word is travel while travelling has the suffix “-ing” that changes the meaning and the word classes. In brief, the English teacher understands linguistics knowledge even though only three studies which he has implied such as phonemes and phonetics, semantics, and morphology.

Research Question 2: How English teacher practices his linguistics knowledge in teaching a language?

Based on the teaching video, revealed that English teachers mostly practised pronunciation by spelling particular words and telling their actual meanings. He said the word earlier before he asked his pupils to repeat the same words because it was important for him to act first, so the pupils would do the exact practice as he did. After he said the word, he spelt the word by word whole word then he mentioned the meaning to the pupils. He practised that

pronunciation process several times to assist the pupils to pronounce correctly and know the real meaning after following him.

The English teacher taught vocabulary, he discussed public transportation and buildings. He performed the drilling slowly because he was nervous to mention the word a bit faster and his pupils would not listen carefully. He did misspell for few times when he was trying to say longer words, and he often provoked the pupils to guess the real meaning of the specific words by telling the synonym and antonym. He realized the mistakes which he delivered during the spelling practice but he did not confess them to his pupils because the English subject has a limited duration in elementary school. Thus, the English teacher has to improve his performance in pronouncing and spelling complicated words because those words represent different sounds in phonemes and knowing the words and sounds in phonetics.

Research Question 3: Is the English teacher aware of the importance of linguistics knowledge in teaching?

From the interview the English teacher realized the importance of linguistics; he told that a language teacher is not able to teach a language if he does not have any linguistics knowledge. He pointed out that as a language instructor; you must not only exercise language abilities but also correctly explain the rules of the language. He also added that teaching a language can refer to specific culture because a language is a part of a culture, and linguistics can guide the teacher to act ethically. Therefore, English teachers must be aware of the concern of linguistic knowledge because teaching a language is difficult, it covers several fields like phonology, morphology, syntaxes, semantics, pragmatics, and other socio-cultural fields.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this study exposed three results from different questions. The first result focused on the teacher's understanding of linguistics knowledge, it explained that the English teacher understands and practices his linguistics knowledge in phonology, morphology, and semantics. The second result concerned the teacher's linguistics practice in teaching, the result depicted the English teacher must enhance his performance in pronouncing and spelling hard words because of those words' phonemes phonetics. The last result referred to teachers' awareness of the importance of linguistics knowledge, it showed that teaching a language is challenging and encompasses various domains, English teachers must be aware of the issue of linguistic expertise. Furthermore, these findings suggest enriching the English teachers'

linguistics knowledge and practising that linguistics knowledge appropriately, especially in teaching young Indonesian learners.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

- 1. English teacher's understanding of linguistics knowledge and his praxes of linguistics knowledge as an English language teacher**
 1. What do you know about linguistics knowledge?
 2. How much do you apply your linguistics knowledge?
 3. What linguistics knowledge do you emphasize in teaching a language?
 4. How do you introduce and practice your linguistics knowledge in teaching English?
 5. Do you often make mistakes when you are teaching English?
- 2. English teacher's awareness of the significance of the linguistics knowledge**
 1. How necessary is linguistics knowledge for English teachers?
 2. What are the roles of English language teachers in teaching a language?
 3. Is there any correlation between teaching the English language with other fields?