

Investigating Pre-Service Teacher's Self-Confidence in Teaching Practicum Activities at Junior High School Level: A Case Study

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Abstract

Teaching practicum is considered very complicated task for many EFL pre-service teachers for they have to prepare perfect lesson plans, master the teaching materials, teaching method, teaching mental, and also student assessment. This present study through case study design, is focused on investigating pre-service teacher's self-confidence during in their teaching practice. Two pre-service teachers of Educational English Department in Indonesia were recruited voluntarily. They were assigned to practice teaching English lesson in secondary school for one semester. Videos of their performance were taken during the class and interview and reflective journal were taken for the data source. Observation showed differences in self-confidence between the two participants. Participants with high self-confidence started the class with a positive attitude, built initial interactions, and used L2 flexibly, creating an interactive learning atmosphere. In contrast, participants with low self-confidence faced high anxiety, which affected their ability to teach and interact with students. In return to these results, this study may contribute benefits to pre-service English teachers, lectures, and English study program administer.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teacher; Self-Confidence; Teaching Practicum

INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation for the formation of quality individuals and communities. In education, the teacher or instructor's role is vital as a facilitator, mentor, assessor, supervisor, and evaluator in the class. It is an effort to encourage students to gain a deeper understanding and mastery of the subject matter (Archana & Kumbakonam, 2017). To achieve this goal, psychological factors such as pre-service self-confidence play a crucial role. At the tertiary level, education students have teaching practice. This practice is essential to train students from education programs to become future teachers (Gorospe, 2022). In Indonesia, this teaching practice is regulated in laws and regulations, including the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 3 of 2020 concerning national standards for higher education. Articles 5 and 6 state that universities need graduate competency standards so that students can practice their knowledge and have adequate skills in the world of work. Students need to carry out knowledge and have the ability to research or serve the community according to their learning or field. In addition, they need to have real-world work experience. Referring to this article, students from education study programs must have direct teaching experience or practice in schools. This practice aligns with legislation that aims students to have skills according to their fields. Pre-service teachers experience a process involving observation, practice, and involvement in various teaching tasks, from planning to evaluation during their practicum course. During this period, they not only apply the pedagogical knowledge they have learned, such as teaching methods, strategies, and principles, but also have to deal with complex student behaviours and diverse learning contexts. This often results in various challenges, including anxiety and difficulties in adapting to the role of a teacher (Alvi et al., 2015; Pesonen-Wen, 2022). Teaching anxiety is a feeling that inhibits teachers from starting, continuing, or

completing teaching tasks (Novitasari & Murtafi'ah, 2022), which can affect their performance and effectiveness. Based on Özer and Akçayoğlu (2021) social cognitive theory, anxiety is negatively related to self-efficacy due to the fear of possible failure. Research on teacher self-confidence shows that self-confidence is one of the significant characteristics related to teaching behaviour and performance, as well as strategies applied in the teaching process (Rezaull Karim et al., 2021). Prospective teachers must overcome significant complexity to qualify and achieve their practice goals. However, their success depends mainly on the extent to which their needs can be met promptly according to their readiness.

Self-confidence is an individual's belief in his ability to achieve specific goals. In the context of education, pre-service teachers' confidence in teaching practice is a factor that can influence the way they teach, interact or build collaborations with students, innovate in learning, and overcome challenges in the learning process (Hoang & Wyatt, 2021; Hoon et al., 2023). Pre-service teachers with high self-confidence tend to have more confidence in their ability to manage classes, make the right decisions, and adapt to various learning situations.

Research on the self-confidence of pre-service teachers in teaching practicum still needs to be explored more, especially in the context of language teaching at the secondary school level. Previous studies have tended to focus more on the quantitative aspects of self-confidence and sometimes pay less attention to the context of complex teaching practices (Hoon et al., 2023; Korkut, 2017; Yoon, 2012). Therefore, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by investigating the self-confidence of students undergoing teaching practices in a secondary school setting.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design based on Yin's theory (2018), involving two students who were undergoing teaching practice in a secondary school. The two research participants involved were selected voluntarily. It differed from previous studies that predominantly used quantitative participant selection (Hoon et al., 2023; Korkut, 2017; Yoon, 2012). Data were collected through direct observation and documentation during the learning process, with data validation carried out using data triangulation. Data collection instruments included an observation checklist and photo documentation of classroom activities. Data analysis followed the thematic approach of Braun and Clarke (2022) through six stages: recognizing data, coding findings, looking for thematic patterns, checking theme suitability, naming identified themes, and presenting findings systematically in this research report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

From the observations of the two research participants, the researcher found that each participant showed different behaviours. Participant A showed a strong feeling of insecurity during the teaching process in the classroom, which significantly affected how he interacted with students and delivered the material. This insecurity was evident from A's habit of using his first language (L1) more often than his second language (L2) in teaching, even though the material should have been delivered in L2. This choice showed that A felt safer using a more familiar language, which reflected uncertainty in mastering or delivering the material in L2. In addition, A often looked panicked and confused when teaching, which further emphasized the feelings of anxiety he experienced. This anxiety affected the effectiveness of delivering the material and A's interactions with students, which were minimal and rarely involved eye contact. This indicated an obstacle in building good relationships with students, which is an essential element in creating an interactive classroom atmosphere.

A : I am a little nervous and have difficulty building active interactions with students. I worry about feeling awkward and that learning is not going well. So, I feel dissatisfied when teaching and fear that the learning material is not conveyed well. Students also look bored when I explain, so this puts pressure on me, which makes it difficult for me to concentrate on the material being presented, even though I have prepared the material in such a way.

The interview data supports the findings of the research observation. Participant A expressed feelings of nervousness and difficulty in building active interactions with students during the teaching process. A's lack of self-confidence caused a domino effect, where dissatisfaction with his teaching performance worsened his concentration and performance in class. A was worried that students would get bored, which added pressure and worsened the situation, even though he had prepared the material well. Finally, this feeling of lack of self-confidence became the root of various problems faced by A during the teaching process, triggering feelings of dissatisfaction and ongoing stress.

Meanwhile, participant T showed slightly opposite behaviour from A. In the research observation, participant T showed active and cheerful behaviour in the teaching process. This behaviour shows that T has higher self-confidence when teaching compared to A. T's statement in the interview session supports the research findings.

T : A bit tense, but it doesn't matter because I enjoy interacting with students

Based on the study's results, participant T showed behaviour that was different from A's by showing a more active and cheerful attitude during the teaching process. This attitude reflects that T has higher self-confidence when teaching compared to A. Although T admitted in the interview that he felt nervous, he also stated that the tension was not a problem because he enjoyed interacting with students. This statement supports the observational findings that T's self-confidence allowed him to remain calm and enjoy the teaching process, even though there was a little tension. T's active involvement and positive attitude in interacting with students showed that he could overcome the existing pressure and remain focused on teaching, which indicates strong self-confidence in his role as a teacher. The interaction between teachers and students began at the beginning of learning. Teachers who look confident will have positive feelings or auras and high teaching motivation. In the results of the research observations, the two research participants also showed opposing behaviours. Participant A tended to look nervous when starting to learn. He rarely greeted or opened a little conversation with students when taking attendance, while T tended to be cheerful in opening the class. T greeted and asked how the students were and started with several questions about the previous material. Participant interview data support the findings of this observation.

A : I am a little nervous about starting the lesson by greeting students. They will have high expectations of learning English with me.

T: I am happy. I will greet them cheerfully because the beginning of learning is an opener, so teachers must have a cheerful demeanour so that students are also happy to learn

The observations and interviews show apparent differences in behaviour and self-confidence between participants A and T during the teaching process. A pre-service teacher's self-confidence dramatically influences how they start and run learning, affecting interactions with

students and the overall classroom atmosphere. A and T's differences in self-confidence levels significantly affect how they interact with students and run the teaching process. T's self-confidence allows her to create a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment, while A's lack of self-confidence causes obstacles in building effective communication and delivering materials confidently. This shows that the self-confidence possessed by pre-service teachers is a critical factor in determining the success of teaching and students' learning experiences. Increasing the self-confidence of pre-service teachers can positively impact their performance in the classroom and the quality of the learning they provide. The study also showed that the use of L1 and L2 of the two participants had quite contrasting differences. Observations showed that A predominantly used L1 in her teaching process, while T was bilingual in her teaching process. The following interview validates the findings of the observations.

A: I think I tend to use L1 rather than L2 because I feel that students also have difficulty learning English even though I am bilingual. And, I am more comfortable using code-switching; I also find it easier to convey material to students.

T: I think I use both languages balanced because students still have difficulty speaking English, so I also usually translate the discussion into Indonesian. I am comfortable using code-switching. In addition to the students' less qualified abilities, I find it easier to convey material to students so they can understand it more quickly.

The findings of this study revealed striking differences in the use of L1 and L2 by the two participants, which were closely related to their confidence levels as pre-service teachers. Participant A was more dominant in using L1 in the teaching process, while Participant T used a bilingual approach, balanced between L1 and L2. A's dominant use of L1 reflected a lower level of confidence in teaching using L2. In the interview, A admitted that he felt more comfortable using L1 because his students also had difficulties learning English. This discomfort made A switch to L1 or use code-switching more often to deliver the material, indicating that he may need more confidence in his and his students' abilities to understand and use L2 effectively.

In contrast, T, who also acknowledged students' difficulties in speaking English, chose to use a language balance between L1 and L2. T felt comfortable with the use of code-switching. However, the balanced bilingual approach indicated that T had greater confidence in teaching using L2, although he still paid attention to the needs of the students. T believed that despite the students' difficulties with L2, he could use both languages effectively to ensure faster and more comprehensive understanding. This attitude suggests that T had greater confidence in his students' and his abilities to manage bilingual teaching, reflecting higher self-confidence in his role as an English teacher. This difference in language use underscores the importance of self-confidence in influencing pre-service teachers' pedagogical choices and success in delivering content to students.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the critical role of self-confidence in the teaching process, especially in the context of pre-service teachers who are developing their teaching skills. This finding is in line with previous research showing that self-confidence is one of the critical factors determining teaching effectiveness and the quality of interactions between teachers and students.

Self-confidence affects various aspects of teaching behaviour, from how teachers start classes, their language use, and how they interact with students (Gorospe, 2022). Teachers with high self-confidence tend to start classes with a positive and proactive attitude, reflected in the initiative to greet students and establish initial interactions (Junker et al., 2021). This attitude creates a fun and interactive learning environment, encouraging student participation and strengthening the relationship between teachers and students. This self-confidence also allows teachers to be more flexible in using the L2, even though students may have limitations in the language. Confident teachers use the L2 effectively and can overcome language barriers with strategic code-switching, ensuring that students can still understand the material well.

In contrast, teachers who have low self-confidence show a more defensive and risk-averse behavioural pattern. They may use the L1 more often than the L2, feeling more comfortable and secure with the more familiar language. Although using L1 can help overcome students' difficulties in understanding the material, L1 dominance in L2 teaching indicates a need for teachers to have confidence in their ability to deliver the material in the target language. It also reflects teachers' uncertainty about students' ability to follow the lesson in L2, which can hinder the development of students' language competence (Wessels S et al., 2017).

Lack of confidence also hurts interactions with students. Teachers who lack confidence tend to experience high levels of anxiety, which can hinder their ability to focus and deliver the material effectively (Kind, 2009). This anxiety is often followed by dissatisfaction with their teaching performance, which triggers a negative spiral effect, where teachers become increasingly stressed and find it challenging to improve the quality of their teaching. In contrast, confident teachers can cope with the pressures and tensions that may arise in the teaching process. They enjoy interacting with students, which increases their teaching effectiveness and creates a more positive and supportive classroom atmosphere. Previous research supports this finding, where confidence is closely related to classroom mastery, varied teaching methods, and teachers' ability to manage student interactions. Confident teachers are more likely to adopt innovative and flexible teaching approaches, which allow them to adjust their teaching methods according to students' needs. They are also more open to feedback and can better respond appropriately to students, which supports a more dynamic and interactive learning process (Brown et al., 2021; Ma & Cavanagh, 2018). Self-confidence is a crucial factor in language education. Language teaching often requires the courage to speak and interact in the target language, as well as the ability to manage unstructured communication situations. Teachers who lack self-confidence may feel hesitant to speak in the L2 or encourage students to communicate in the target language, which can hinder the development of students' language skills.

These findings emphasize the importance of developing self-confidence in pre-service teachers as part of their preparation to become effective teachers. Teacher training programs need to emphasize mastery of teaching materials and techniques and the development of psychological aspects such as self-confidence, which directly affect the quality of teaching and interactions with students. Improving self-confidence in pre-service teachers will have a significant positive impact not only on their ability to teach effectively but also on student learning outcomes and the learning atmosphere in the classroom (Malandrakis, 2018). Thus, self-confidence is not only an internal individual attribute but also the foundation for creating a productive and harmonious learning environment. Developing self-confidence in the teacher education process will produce educators who are not only competent but also able to build positive and deep relationships with students, which will ultimately improve the overall quality of education.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study confirms that self-confidence is an important factor influencing teaching effectiveness, especially in the context of pre-service teachers. The study found that

pre-service teachers with high self-confidence, such as T, showed better ability to interact with students, start class with a positive atmosphere, and use a balanced bilingual approach. It created an interactive learning environment, encouraged student participation, and strengthened the relationship between teacher and students. In contrast, teachers with low self-confidence, such as A, tended to rely on L1, experienced anxiety that hindered material delivery, and showed less effective interactions with students. These findings emphasize the role of self-confidence in shaping pedagogical strategies and teaching success. This study also suggests that developing self-confidence needs to be a focus in teacher training programs. By strengthening this psychological aspect, pre-service teachers can be better prepared to face classroom challenges, increase teaching flexibility, and encourage more meaningful learning. Self-confidence supports teacher competence and creates a productive and harmonious learning atmosphere, ultimately positively impacting student learning outcomes and the overall quality of education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the invaluable support and guidance of many individuals. First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Mr. Kusrin, whose expertise, unwavering encouragement, and generous funding made this study a reality. His dedication to advancing education and his insightful input throughout the research process have been instrumental in shaping the quality and depth of this work. I would also like to acknowledge my own role as a researcher in this study. The journey of conducting this research has been both challenging and rewarding, providing me with a profound learning experience. The collaboration and shared commitment to exploring the role of self-confidence in pre-service teacher education have been a source of inspiration and motivation throughout the process. To all those who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the successful completion of this research, your support is deeply appreciated.

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