

Content Knowledge for EFL Teachers in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In EFL context, formulating adequate content knowledge for university students majoring English Language Education is quite challenging. However, this study aims at presenting the components of Content Knowledge provided by an English Education Study Program in preparing their graduates to be professional teachers following the classification of content knowledge by Jack C. Richards, namely Disciplinary Knowledge and Pedagogical Content Knowledge. The qualitative based-content analysis was employed as the method with a document of latest curriculum in English Language Study Program and fifty samples of Lesson Plans of the study program as the research sources. The findings revealed that the disciplinary knowledge is covered by three different components, namely Language Skills, Linguistics, and Literature, with the focus in Language Skills. The Pedagogical Content Knowledge is covered by four components, namely the knowledge of curriculum, students, instructional strategies, and evaluation, with the major concerns of curriculum and instructional strategies. However, there is an additional knowledge that appears important in the provided content knowledge, namely Research Knowledge. The last classification is made since it is being the main concern in this era.

Keywords: Content knowledge; disciplinary knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; EFL teacher

INTRODUCTION

Teaching a language has many different features. A teacher does not only teach and pay attention to students' language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but also helps, facilitates, and encourages students to have enthusiasm, good attitude, and motivation towards English. Furthermore, teachers are required to understand what students learn, how and why such learning influences them and how lessons could be beneficial for them in the future (Derakhshan, 2015). Hence, language teaching requires teachers to teach students to develop both academic and personal abilities.

What contributes to success in preparing highly qualified teachers has been intensively discussed in the past decades. Research on teacher knowledge has increased during the past decade as part of the wider field of teacher cognition research (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Of particular interest is what might be learned from research about the effects of teacher preparation program characteristics on the knowledge, skills, and performance of program completers (Floden, 2015).

As, however, relevant research is comparatively rare, empirical studies in higher education are needed that systematically connect program characteristics to program outcomes (Schmidt, Blömeke, & Tatto, 2011). The findings of such studies could help to inform educational policy and curriculum planning.

However, teaching English becomes a crucial issue when it is taught as a foreign language. Teaching English as a foreign language is a demanding task when it comes to the places where English serves limited exposure (Khan, 2011). Furthermore, such challenge faced by Songbatumis (2017) in her teaching practice exists in Yogyakarta, one of the developed areas in Indonesia, which likely has enough English graduates, competent teachers, and good language learning facilities. Apart from that, one of the most crucial issues dealing with teaching English as a foreign language is the teacher knowledge.

Teacher knowledge has increasingly become a research area of considerable interest, also as a relevant outcome of initial teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In Indonesian context, according to the Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, the teacher competency standard is fully developed in four main competencies, namely: personality competence, pedagogic competence, professional competence, and social competence. The four competencies are integrated in teacher performance. However, there is no specific or characteristic requirements for language teachers, especially English teachers, yet they are supposed to transfer the knowledge and skill of the subject while performing a good command of English.

Several terms have been used to describe knowledge needed for teaching. These include, for example, teachers' knowledge, professional knowledge, practical knowledge, knowledge for teaching and subject knowledge. Within some of these terms, several different types of knowledge have been identified. For example, Shulman (1987) identified seven knowledge bases which he described as necessary knowledge for teaching: content knowledge; general pedagogic knowledge; curriculum knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; knowledge of learners and their characteristics; knowledge of educational contexts; and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, values, and philosophical and historical influences. This study focused on the role of content knowledge as one of the compulsory requirements for being a professional language teacher. Content knowledge refers to what teachers need to know about what they teach (including what they acknowledge about language teaching itself) and constitutes knowledge that would not be shared with teachers of other subject areas (Richards, 2010).

Regarding content knowledge, Richards (2010) promoted disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Disciplinary knowledge refers to a circumscribed body of knowledge that is considered by the language teaching profession to be essential to gaining membership of the profession. Such knowledge is acquired by special training and possessing knowledge of this kind leads to professional recognition and status. For example, it could include: the history of language teaching methods, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, phonology and syntax, discourse analysis, theories of language, critical applied linguistics and so on.

Pedagogical content knowledge on the other hand refers to knowledge that provides a basis for language teaching. It is knowledge which is drawn from the study of language teaching and language learning itself and which can be applied in different ways to the resolution of practical issues in language teaching. It could include course work in areas such as curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, classroom management, teaching children, teaching the four skills and so on.

The range of abilities one expects from a competent language teacher is formidable. Some of them include the ability of teacher to pay attention to both the linguistic forms produced by the students and the content of their utterances (Tarone & Allwright, 2005). Because speaking ability is at the heart of the language classroom (Baleghizadeh & Shahri, 2014; Borg, 2006), the teacher should be able to deploy specific teaching methods and strategies that support oral communication (Spada, 2007; Watzke, 2007). An EFL teacher should be able to draw on high-level communicative abilities. However, at the same time, good command of the target language does not guarantee that students will receive the necessary learning opportunities (Chambless, 2012). Language teachers should also develop a differentiated language awareness, language learning awareness, and intercultural competencies to diagnose their students' performance and enable them to develop competencies in the whole range of culture-, media-, and text- related objectives of the curriculum (König, 2017). EFL teachers need specific competencies to create stimulating communicative learning environments and opportunities for developing content-related skills. Finally, they must attend to the authenticity of the interaction between students and teachers, primarily through their choice of tasks, and create an atmosphere in their classrooms that is conducive to successful foreign language teaching (Gilmore, 2007).

Based on the attached background, the main purpose of this study is to discuss the components of content knowledge covered by an English Language Education Program and how they support the expected English teacher criteria in Indonesian context. The curriculum structure including the subject contents are also displayed in this paper.

METHODS

This study this study employs a qualitative based-content analysis method. This method consists of four components, namely: data collection, condensing, presentation, and conclusion drawing. A document of latest curriculum in an English Language Study Program and fifty samples of Lesson Plans of the study program were collected. This study only focused on the core subjects of the study program. There are forty-six compulsory subjects and fourteen elective subjects. The elective subjects are divided into two concentrations, namely English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Young Learners (EYL).

The data in the documents, namely the syllabi, were collecting by listing the topics in each meeting of the syllabus. The data were then analyzed by implementing the theory of content knowledge from Richards (2010). The results of analysis became the decision whether the subject matter belongs either to the major classification of disciplinary knowledge or to pedagogical content knowledge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Content Knowledge Components

There are forty-six compulsory subjects that belong to the group of The Learning Expertise Subjects of Study Program (MKKBPS) and The Core Expertise Subjects of Study Program (MKKIPS). Besides, the students of English Education Program must take seven other subjects dealing with their interest. The elective unit of study consists of two concentrations, namely English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Young Learners (EYL). All subjects are then classified into disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge based on Richards (2010).

Building on Shulman's concept of content knowledge (1986), Ball et al. (2008) described subdomains of content knowledge, including (1) common content knowledge, (2) specialized content knowledge, (3) knowledge of content and students, and (4) knowledge of content and teaching. While focusing on content knowledge related to the field of mathematics instruction, the researchers stated that "these insights extend to the knowledge teachers need in other subjects as well" (p. 399). However, in this paper, the disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, the subjects are then divided into several components. The subjects in disciplinary knowledge are divided into four components, namely: language skills, linguistics, literature, and research. Meanwhile, for pedagogical content knowledge, the components are divided into the knowledge of curriculum, student, instruction, and evaluation. To represent the current hypotheses, a division as a refinement to Richard's categories is proposed as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Content Knowledge in Language Learning

Content Knowledge	Component	Subject Unit
Disciplinary Knowledge	Language Skills	17
	Linguistics	14
	Literature	3
	Research	6
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	Curriculum	7
	Student	2
	Instructional Strategies	7
	Evaluation	4
Total		60

The total number of the subjects provided in the study program is sixty with forty subjects that belong to disciplinary knowledge and twenty subjects dealing with pedagogical content knowledge. This paper only takes the groups of subjects that are considered as particular to the study program. Hence, the general subjects required by the teacher students (such as Pedagogic and Fundamental of Education) are excluded since they are not specific to the English Department Study Program.

Disciplinary Knowledge

The disciplinary knowledge consists of three components, namely language skills, linguistics, and literature (see Table 2). The three components are basically the major knowledge to be acquired by any English language students. People always come with expectations that the English language/literature graduates are having very good command in English. The disciplinary knowledge is also considered as the professional identity of the graduates since the subjects are only learned by the students in the study program.

TABLE 2. Disciplinary Knowledge

No	Component	Subject Matter
1	Language Skills	Listening For General Communication Speaking For General Communication Reading For General Communication Writing For General Communication Listening In Professional Contexts Speaking In Professional Contexts Reading In Professional Contexts Writing In Professional Contexts Listening For Academic Purposes I Speaking For Academic Purposes I Reading For Academic Purposes I Writing For Academic Purposes I Listening For Academic Purposes II Speaking For Academic Purposes II Reading For Academic Purposes II Writing For Academic Purposes II ESP: Public Speaking
2	Linguistics	Grammar I (Basic) Grammar II (Intermediate) Grammar III (Advanced) Theoretical Foundation of Translating and Interpreting Practice of Translating Practice of Interpreting Content Writing for Creative Industry Language in Society Functional Grammar Classroom Discourse Analysis ESP: Business English ESP: Copywriting ESP: Multimodality And Digital Literacies ESP-Based Projects
3	Literature	Exploring Fiction Exploring Poetry Exploring Drama

Language Skills

The first component in the disciplinary knowledge is the language skill component which consists of the four skill subjects, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The students must pass all this skill subjects to prepare them in the future since they must perform the good command of English. The four skills are grouped into three different areas, namely general communication, professional context, and academic purposes. Each area has its own aim and focus as stated in the lesson plan.

The four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) for general communication focus on the use of skills in daily communication for different field as reflected in the lesson plans. The Listening for General Communication put forward some topics focusing on listening for details and listening for gist in several different subtopics, such as personal information and numbers in daily life. Another example is the Speaking for General Communication. The subject outlines some topics dealing with the skill in writing in different genres, such as descriptive and procedural texts while they also learn how to deconstruct some stories.

In the area of Professional Context, the four skills are taught to be applied in the students' professional context, such as in business or journalism worlds, not only in teaching. The purposes are depicted in the contents of lesson plans. For example, in the Speaking in Professional Context, the students obtain the lesson of how to use English in classroom context as well as in business context. They also learn how to deliver a speech and a presentation, even simulating a job interview. Another example is the subject of Writing in Professional Context which promotes the writing practices in order, namely: building text knowledge, drafting, and editing, and critical thinking aspects in discussion and explanation texts.

The last area of learning the four skills is the Academic Purposes. This area is considered important for the university students since the area has a huge contribution to the students' competence in conducting current and future research. Therefore, the area is delivered in two levels in two different semesters to strengthen the students' competence. The Listening for Academic Purposes mostly focus on note taking practices, while Speaking for Academic Purposes, Reading for Academic Purposes, and Writing for Academic Purposes mostly focus on the research proposal. Students get to know early about the components of research proposal from the very beginning of building the research topic, formulating the literature review, working on the methodology, until presenting each of them.

Linguistics

The second component is linguistics. The subjects in linguistic field in this study program are not merely designed in the form of traditional linguistic subjects, namely phonology, morphology, or semantics. In fact, the subjects are more in applied linguistics, such as Functional Grammar and Classroom Discourse Analysis. However, the aspects of the traditional linguistics are still integrated in some topics of the lesson plans. Apart from the Functional Grammar, the traditional Grammar is still provided in specific subjects. There are three levels of grammar subjects provided for students, namely Grammar I (Basic), Grammar II (Intermediate), and Grammar III (Advanced). All of them focus on how the language is used in terms of structure and implementation, start from the word to the other bigger aspects like text.

Literature

The last component of disciplinary knowledge, namely literature, cannot be separated from the language learning since it displays the authentic learning material which includes the touch of culture in the particular foreign language. Although there are only three subjects that clearly belong to the component, there are still several other subjects that support the literature knowledge in some of their topics. One example of the subject in literature component is Exploring Poetry, which

elaborates the aspects of poetry including the image, structure, sound, and figurative language. Since the subject is delivered in the English Education Study Program, it also includes the topic of poetry in syllabus designing.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The pedagogical content knowledge in the curriculum of English Education Study Program covers four knowledge components including the knowledge of curriculum, the knowledge of student, the knowledge of instructional strategies, and the knowledge of evaluation. The component of pedagogical content knowledge was originally proposed by Tamir (1988). The subject matters regarding pedagogical content knowledge are presented in conceptual descriptions to define the specific knowledge that is represented by each component in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Pedagogical Content Knowledge

No	Component	Subject Matter
1	Knowledge of Curriculum	Perencanaan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Teaching English in the New Media Age Edupreneurship ESP: Theoretical Bases EYL: Theoretical Bases Of English To Young Learners EYL Course Design EYL Material Development
2	Knowledge of Student	Learning Agility and Adaptability Critical Pedagogy
3	Knowledge of Instructional Strategies	English Language Learning Strategy Literacy in ICT and Learning Media Introduction To Gamification in ELT Teaching English Literature At School Digital Storytelling For Young Learners Practice Of Teaching English To Very Young Learners Practice Of Teaching English To Young Learners
4	Knowledge of Evaluation	Evaluation in English Language Teaching Designing Assessment Assessment Analysis EYL Assessment

Knowledge of Curriculum

The first component, curriculum knowledge, is represented by the full range of programs designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level, the variety of instructional materials available in relation to those programs, and the set of characteristics that serve as both the indications and contraindications for the use of particular curriculum or program materials in particular circumstances. By taking the subjects in this component, the students will acquire the knowledge about curriculum including the basic theory of curriculum, needs analysis, and curriculum development. There are also several fields to be learned, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) area and English for Young Learners (EYL) area.

This component basically consists of teachers' knowledge of the goals and objectives for students in the subjects they are teaching, as well as the articulation of those guidelines across topics addressed during the school year. It also includes the knowledge teachers have about the vertical curriculum in their subject(s); that is, what students have learned in previous years and what they are

expected to learn in later years (Grossman, 1990). In addition, it also regards the knowledge of the programs and materials that are relevant to teaching a particular domain of language and specific topics within that domain.

Knowledge of Students

The next component of pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge of students. This component of pedagogical content knowledge refers to the knowledge teachers must have about students in order to help them develop specific knowledge about English language. This category consists of teachers' knowledge and beliefs about prerequisite knowledge for learning particular knowledge, as well as their understanding of variations in students' approaches to learning as they relate to the development of knowledge within specific topic areas. It also about teachers' knowledge of the language concepts or topics that students find difficult to learn. However, there are several reasons why students find learning difficulties in acquiring English as language or culture, and teachers should be knowledgeable about each type of difficulty.

Knowledge of Instructional Strategies

Teachers' knowledge of the instructional strategies component of pedagogical content knowledge is dealing with general approaches to or overall schemes for enacting English language instruction. Teachers' knowledge of subject-specific strategies is related to the orientations to teaching English component of pedagogical content knowledge in that there are general approaches to language instruction that are consistent with the goals of particular orientations. For example, in the subject of Literacy in ICT and Learning Media, students are exposed to the concepts and practical skills in using technology as teaching media which practically useful in the latest era of technology. Students also learn the instructional strategies in teaching young learners in the subject of Digital Storytelling for Young Learners and Practice of Teaching English to Young Learners. The teachers' knowledge of specific strategies are useful for helping students comprehend specific language concepts. However, it appears to be important for the teacher to also understand the particular strategies to be employed in particular situation.

Knowledge of Evaluation

This component refers to teachers' knowledge of the aspects of students' learning that are important to assess within a particular unit of study and teachers' knowledge of the ways that might be employed to assess the specific aspects of student learning that are important to a particular unit of study. There are a number of methods of assessment, some of which are more appropriate for assessing some aspects of student learning than others. However, this component covers the knowledge needed by the teachers. It is implied in the topics of the subjects. For example, students obtain some information regarding testing and assessing in teaching English by taking the course in Evaluation in English Language Teaching. More information regarding the evaluation in designing assessment and assessment analysis are also available in order to prepare the students in becoming the English language teacher.

The Role of Research Knowledge

The last knowledge needed by language teachers is research. Students need to have the opportunity to practice their research skills and develop research knowledge at an early stage and need to go through cycles of conducting and using research throughout their period of study (van der Linden, 2012). The research knowledge is essentially important for the professional requirement of language teachers. However, the faculty has provided several subjects regarding the knowledge about research to their students as presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Research Knowledge

No	Component	Subject Matter
	Research	Seminar on ELT Research Proposal Statistics Research Methodology Thesis Research Project in TEFL (Thesis Replacement) Trends and Innovations in TEFL (Thesis Replacement)

The table indicates that one of the compulsory requirements to be graduated from the English Education Study program is conducting some research. Students are basically prepared to conduct some research in throughout their period of study and following period as teachers. They obtain the essential aspects to be implemented in their involvement of research. For example, they studied the statistics and research methodology which obviously the core in conducting research. They also get some chances in practicing the knowledge in the Seminar on Research Proposal and Thesis Writing.

Furthermore, the undergraduate students must write a thesis as their final paper. A thesis itself is usually written in a very comprehensive way and consists of more than one hundred pages. However, in the past few years, there is another way in writing up the final paper by writing a research project as the thesis replacement. There are two types of research projects available, namely Research Project in TEFL and Trends and Innovations in TEFL. By taking one of those particular subjects, the students do not need to write a thesis to be officially graduated.

However, the 'research culture' is usually buried as the students graduated and entering the working situation, unless they directly continue to take the postgraduate studies. Whereas teachers nowadays are required to regularly conduct some research as the requirement of their professional area. Thus, more research is needed on the development of student teachers' research skills in relation to their motivation to carry out research activities in their activities. It is also important to introduce teacher research in such a way that the student teachers would develop a positive attitude towards the research, and that they would also develop research knowledge and skills.

CONCLUSION

The Content Knowledge provided by the English Language Education Study Program is basically promoted to prepare their graduates in becoming professional teachers in the future. Based on the content analysis of the curriculum documents and lesson plans, the content knowledge is divided into three domains, namely Disciplinary Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and Research Knowledge. The Disciplinary Knowledge consists of three components, namely language skills, linguistics, and literature, with the main concern in the language skills components (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) since they are one of the basic competences for language teachers in EFL context. The Pedagogical Content Knowledge covers the knowledge of curriculum, the knowledge of student, the knowledge of instruction, and the knowledge of evaluation, with the main concern of curriculum and instructional strategies. The additional classification of content knowledge found in this study is Research Knowledge. The last classification is made since it is being the main concern in this era and most of the students and graduates are not quite familiar with research. Therefore, this gap can be one of the potentials of the further studies regarding EFL subject content.

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