

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introduction describes the background of the study, the research questions, the purpose as well as the significance of study to give an overview of what the study is about and aiming to achieve. It also gives a clarification of the recurring terms to avoid misunderstanding and the organization of the study to give a clearer structure for the readers.

1.1 Background of the Study

With the continued rise of English to be used globally, whether because of globalization and emigration (Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009), the increase awareness of the importance of learning another language (Wallner, 2016), cross-cultural marriage (Logan-Terry, 2008; Qiu & Winsler, 2017) , and an increase in the mobility of people around the world (Gathercole, 2010), there is an increased need in the provision of English teachers. However, a problem arises when this increase is not met by the availability of trained and proficient teachers. This can result in people with lower degree of proficiency to be employed by schools or courses (Bailey, 2006).

The problem of English teachers having low language proficiency is also encountered in Indonesia. Even though there are no current nor official national data on EFL teachers' level of proficiency, a lot of studies in local contexts have found the prevalence of teachers with lower language proficiency level, stating that a large number of professional English teachers at formal schools are considered to have low competence to teach English to their students (Lie, 2007; Marcellino, 2008; Soepriyatna, 2012). The last national survey of TLP was done to teachers teaching in International Standard Schools (Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional or SBI, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture decree (Permendikbud) number 20/ 2003 which used English as the medium of

instructions) reveals that only a small number of teachers had a high proficiency level, with others having either very low or elementary and intermediate level of English (Renandya, 2018). Although the result of this study may not reflect the real, valid, and current situation of English education in Indonesia, it shows that the teachers' level of proficiency can vary greatly from school to school.

Different from other countries in Asia such as Hong Kong, Japan, and Vietnam which have started to implement language proficiency tests and training (Nhung, 2017), there are still no clear guidelines on what level of language proficiency a teacher needs to have to teach the English language at both formal and non-formal schools, and there are no specific trainings to help teachers achieve a certain level of proficiency (Renandya, 2018). Although the two core competences of the English subject teachers in the Ministry of National Education decree (Permendiknas) number 16/ 2007 clearly states that an English teacher needs to have the knowledge of various English language aspects (linguistics, discourse, sociolinguistics, and strategic) and master the English language in the spoken and written forms, receptively and productively in all its communicative aspects (linguistics, discourse, sociolinguistics, and strategic) , it is not clear how the assessment of these is conducted in the field.

On the other hand, while the importance and definition of teacher language proficiency are mostly agreed upon, the same cannot be said about teaching effectiveness. Different from TLP, it is far more difficult to define TE as there are multiple facets of what constitutes effective teaching is, added with the fact that different researchers have different ideas on what teaching effectiveness is (Chambless, 2012). Thus, it is also not always easy to see the relations between how much TLP helps a teacher's TE.

Contrary to the old belief that teachers with high proficiency, that in some cases refer to native English speaker teachers, automatically possess higher effectiveness in teaching, more recent findings shows that the relation between

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these two is inconclusive (Choi, 2016; Faez & Karas, 2017; Freeman, 2017). One finding from a study done in Vietnam shows that there is no straightforward relation between language proficiency and the classroom language, and that both are needed to create conducive learning environment (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017).

Another done in Hong Kong shows that TLP does play an important role to a certain extent; however, after meeting a certain threshold of proficiency, other factors come into play in determining a teacher's ability to engage students in the lesson (Tsang, 2017). Yet another finding shows that even though teachers with higher proficiency can give a richer language input, lower proficiency ones can be as good in exploiting target language resources, giving correct models, and using the target language to manage the class (Richards et al., 2013).

Thus, with these burning issues related to TLP and TE, it is worth investigating how TLP relates to TE and how EFL teachers perceive the role of TLP in the effectiveness of their teaching process to be.

1.2 Research Questions

This study was focused on EFL teachers' language proficiency and the teaching effectiveness of the English teachers in a language school in Bandung, Indonesia. In relation to this focus, the following research questions were formulated to be answered at the end of the study:

1. Is there a relation between teachers' language proficiency and the effectiveness of their teaching process?
2. How do teachers perceive the role of language proficiency in the effectiveness of their teaching process to be?

This study hypothesized that there was no relation between TLP and TE at the level of significance of .05. If it was found that the significance value to be bigger than or same as .05, then the study did not reject the null hypothesis.

Conversely, with a significance value of less than .05, then the result rejected the null hypothesis, in that there was a relation between the two variables.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory research study was designed to find the relation of teachers' language proficiency and the effectiveness of their teaching process and how they perceived the role of teacher language proficiency in the effectiveness of their teaching process to be. This was done through a quantitative study of all the teachers in a language school in Bandung to get an understanding of the relation between TLP and TE, and a qualitative study in the form of descriptive analysis research to have an in-depth understanding on the perception of some these teachers on the role of language proficiency in the effectiveness of their teaching process. Thus, this study can answer the three significant problems related to TLP and TE: no clear guidelines on level of proficiency for English teachers (Renandya, Hamied, & Nurkamto, 2018), no specific proficiency assessment for English teachers in Indonesia, and not enough studies to describe the relation between TLP and TE (Chambless, 2012; Renandya et al., 2018; Tsang, 2017).

1.4 Scope of the Study

Although language proficiency for teachers can mean general language proficiency or classroom language proficiency, the aspect used in this study was the former as measured by teachers' scores in the standardized tests (paper-based TOEFL, internet-based TOEFL, and IELTS) they had taken. Although not a completely ideal measurement of teachers' language proficiency, without a standardized measurement of language proficiency for the teachers in this school or in the Indonesian context, the use of these tests was done to get better standardized results of TLP.

Furthermore, as the purpose of the study was to find the relation between TLP and TE, it concentrated on the use of English in the classroom. This means that other factors of teaching effectiveness, such as teacher personality characteristics and teaching methodology were not included in the study of TLP and TE. With this scope, all the instruments used in both the quantitative and qualitative part of the study were geared towards collecting data related to teachers' proficiency and teachers' language use in the classroom, and this was reflected in the questionnaires, interviews, and in the classroom settings. The framework used to measure TE was also limited to that of using the target language in three aspects of TE: managing the classroom and communicating, understanding and communicating lesson content, and assessing students and giving feedback taken from a study by Freeman, Katz, Gomez, & Burns in 2015.

In addition, this scope of study also means that teaching effectiveness was seen from the teaching process happening in the classroom, not from students' achievement through tests. This was done because measuring teaching effectiveness only through how well students achieved a certain grade have been proven to be problematic in that it could not fully describe the teaching process happening in the classroom (Lie, 2007) and at its worst might entice teachers to resort to devious means.

The study was also limited in the institution participating in the study to ensure more in-depth and comprehensive findings were achieved.

1.5 Significance of the Study

There are several theoretical and practical benefits that this study offers. Theoretically, the findings of this study can enrich the reference on the topic of TLP and TE especially in the Indonesian non-formal language schools context. It is also expected to reveal the current situation of English teachers' level of proficiency in a local context and whether this has any relations in the effectiveness of teachers' teaching process. This study can also be used as a

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theoretical basis to create a framework of language proficiency assessments and trainings to assess and help teachers achieve higher level of language proficiency and teaching effectiveness.

Practically and in general, the framework created from the theoretical point of view can be used by both education policy makers of Indonesia and related educational stakeholders to help both Indonesian teachers and students to become better English language users. More specifically it can be used by the participating language school to develop more customized teacher professional development programs for their teachers, especially for both their language and teaching practice development.

1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms

To make it clearer for the readers and to avoid misunderstanding, some recurring terms in this study are defined as follows.

Teacher language proficiency (TLP): the general level of proficiency teachers have to communicate. This is measured using the CEFR levels: B1, B2, C1, and C2. The proficiency used in this study is collected from teachers' own perception of their proficiency (considered as self-evaluated), and from the result of the standardized tests they have taken converted into the CEFR levels (considered as externally measured).

Teaching effectiveness (TE): the level of how teachers can help facilitate their students' learning and engage students in the teaching and learning process. There are three aspects of TE discussed in this study: managing the classroom, understanding and communicating lesson content, as well as assessing students and giving feedback, collected from teachers' own perception (considered as self-evaluated) and from the academic team assessment (considered externally measured). Each of these aspects is measured using the Australian professional standards for teachers (2018).

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Managing the classroom (TE 1): teachers' ability to use English to group learners, give praise and encouragement, control activities, discipline students, and give clear instructions.

Understanding and communicating lesson content (TE 2): teachers' ability to use English resources, give accurate and meaningful explanations of the meaning and usage of the TL, adjust level of English to match that of the students', and use appropriate models of English.

Assessing students and giving feedback (TE 3): teachers' ability to correct students' errors accurately, show acceptance or rejection of students' response, and can provide appropriate corrective feedback,

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This thesis consists of five main parts. The first one is the introduction where the background, purpose, significance, scope, and organization of study as well as the research questions are clarified. This is followed by the literature review to define theoretical frameworks of variables of the study and what current and related research have found about this topic. The third part is the research methodology consisting of research design, data collection, and data analysis, and the fourth chapter puts forth the findings and discussion of the result gathered in the previous stages to answer the two research questions. Finally, the thesis is closed with the narrative of conclusions, implications and limitations of the study, and recommendations.