



# The Development of Pre-Service Teacher's Professional Competence in Teaching English at Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi

Ahmad Bowo Saputro✉, Zulfa Sakhiyya, Januarius Mujiyanto

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

### Article Info

#### Article History:

Accepted 30 March 2023

Approved 8 June 2023

Published 15

September 2023

#### Keywords:

PPL program, pre-service teacher, professional competence, professional competence development.

### Abstract

Teaching English as a second language requires pre-service educators to possess a diverse skill set and adapt to evolving teaching methodologies and language acquisition theories. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the factors that contribute to the development of pre-service English teachers' professional competence to ensure their readiness to enter the teaching profession. This study aims to investigate the factors contributing to the development of pre-service English teachers' professional competence in teaching English, addressing the lack of research in this area. More specifically, it aims to explore the challenges faced by pre-service teachers in developing their professional competence, identify areas where current teacher education programs may fall short, and provide practical recommendations for pre-service teacher training programs. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method by involving five pre-service English teachers participating in a School Teaching Practice Program. To gather the data, this research uses a reflection section and then analyzed categorized. The findings highlight the significance of active learning experiences, such as fieldwork and classroom practice, in fostering the development of professional competence among pre-service teachers. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for pre-service teachers to be adequately prepared to meet the evolving needs of English language learners, especially in the context of changing teaching methodologies and advancements in educational technology.

✉Correspondence Address:

Kampus Pascasarjana unnes, Semarang, Jl. Kelud  
Utara III Semarang 50237 Indonesia  
E-mail: [ahmadbowo@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:ahmadbowo@students.unnes.ac.id)

**p-ISSN 2087-0108**

**e-ISSN 2502-4566**

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a second language is a complex task that requires individuals to possess a range of skills, including linguistic mastery, pedagogical expertise, and cultural awareness of the language in context. Pre-service educators play a crucial role in shaping students into proficient English speakers and communicators. However, concerns have been raised about the capability of pre-service teachers to efficiently tutor their students toward fluency in the language (Ersin & Mede, 2020; Sasmito & Wijaya, 2022).

Over time, we have seen drastic transformations within this field wherein teaching methodologies have changed considerably (Üstündağ Güvenç et al., 2022), alongside evolving language acquisition theories (Razfar et al., 2011) coupled with advancements made in educational technology (Al-Haj, 2020). In light of these shifts and related implications upon practical application by tutors towards grooming candidates seeking proficiency across various skill sets, it becomes imperative for pre-service teachers. The need for pre-service teachers to be adequately prepared to enter the teaching profession and meet the evolving needs of English language learners is of utmost importance (Nguyen & Sheridan, 2016; Rachmawati, 2022).

The definition of professional competence can vary depending on the specific field, but generally, it refers to an individual's ability to carry out their professional duties and responsibilities effectively. It also encompasses the capacity for sustained performance, which includes skills like problem-solving, innovation, and transformative abilities within a particular domain (Mulder, 2014).

In the context of teaching, professional competence can be further distinguished from a teacher's competence. Toshboeva (2015) explains that a teacher's professional competency comprises knowledge of the subject matter, familiarity with standard competencies, comprehension of the school curriculum, a grasp of instructional concepts and methods, and the ability to apply scientific ideas in real-life

situations. Teachers must fully understand the material they teach to convey its purpose effectively.

On the other hand, as per the Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008, professional competency for teachers is defined as the capacity to comprehend and possess knowledge in the fields of science, technology, culture, and arts that the teacher is responsible for teaching. To be professionally competent as a teacher entails having a profound comprehension of the subject matter being taught (Helmawati, 2017). Helmawati further explains that this understanding can be of two types: a broad and deep understanding of the learning material. This includes mastering the subject matter curriculum, as well as having a solid grasp of the scientific framework and methodology. Mastery of the curriculum material is a crucial indicator of teaching expertise, encompassing the structure, topics, and scientific methods aligned with the teaching materials, as well as the interconnections between various subjects.

The development of pre-service teachers' professional competence in teaching English is a critical aspect of ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their roles. Despite the importance of pre-service teacher training programs, there needs to be more research on the factors that contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' professional competence in teaching English. However, a few noteworthy studies stand out. For instance, Corcoran and O'Flaherty, (2018) research centered on pre-service teachers and revealed that their levels of competence increased progressively throughout their Pre-Service Professional Learning (PPL) program. Similarly, Cheng's (2014) study demonstrated that as pre-service teachers advanced through their program, their pedagogical understanding became more refined and cohesive. Tang et al. (2021) also provided supporting evidence for the idea that professional competence tends to grow over time, particularly in the context of classroom teaching. These findings align with Niemi et al. (2016) research, which emphasized that active learning experience within PPL programs played a pivotal

role in fostering the development of professional competence among pre-service teachers.

Furthermore, Ubani (2016) stressed the importance of fieldwork, asserting that pre-service teachers' competence in classroom teaching and their ability to function effectively within school settings can be significantly enhanced through professional practice.

Within the Indonesian context, research specifically addressing the development of teachers' professional competence still needs to be made available. However, a substantial body of research exists concerning various aspects of teachers' professional competence (Wahyuni & Rozi, 2020). This research spans topics such as evaluating the level of teacher professional competence, examining the relationship between teachers' professional competence and student outcomes, understanding the impact on overall school quality, and exploring the implementation of pedagogical and professional competence within classroom settings. For example, Faizah and Sutopo's (2021) study delved into the implementation of teachers' pedagogical and professional competence in classroom practices, while Rahmatunnisa et al. (2021) investigated the application of professional competence in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Febriana and Faridi (2016) contributed a study focused on evaluating teachers' competencies, including their professional competence, across four distinct domains.

This gap in the literature highlights the need for further investigation into the challenges that pre-service teachers face in developing their professional competence and the factors that can facilitate their development. The proposed research aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating the factors that contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' professional competence in teaching English. The study will explore the challenges that pre-service teachers face in developing their professional competence and identify areas where current teacher education programs may fall short. The proposed research aims to contribute to the field of English language teaching and teacher education by providing practical recommendations for pre-

service teacher training programs in Southeast Sulawesi.

## METHOD

For this study, the chosen research method was descriptive qualitative. The study objective is to describe and interpret professional competence development in pre-service teachers during school practice teaching programs. It aims to define how particular phenomena regarding pre-service teachers' professional competence change, then analyze how they are similar and different from other phenomena.

This research five pre-service English teachers who are conducting a School Teaching Practice Program for 45 days based on the lecturer's suggestion according to participants' personality and performance in writing reflection. The unit analyzed was concept of professional competence by Mulyasa (2007), which has been cited more than four thousand times and is compatible with the Indonesian education perspective.

There were several stages in collecting the data, including reflection. All the participants were provided with reflection each time they finish teaching the class and another different type of reflection at the end of the program. There were six reflections from each participant that became the data of this study.

Before conducting the study, the researchers did an in-depth interview with the lecturer who manages the students who will become the participants of this study regarding their personality and performance in writing reflection. The lecturer then provided seven names that passed the requirement; from those names, only five people were enthusiastic to join in this research. After obtaining the participants for this study, the research was conducted by handing them the reflection question.

After all the required data had been gathered, the data was transcribed and later translated into English. To ensure the transcripts' reliability and accuracy, the participant was asked to review and approve the translated transcripts. The data then can be analyzed using thematic

analysis employing descriptive coding techniques, as proposed by Saldaña and Omasta (2016); the data were highlighted, coded, and categorized according to their information. From those coded and categorized data from each meeting, the participants' development of professional competence can shed light.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section presents the findings and discussion of data collected in the study. Specifically, it presents the development of pre-service English teachers' professional development, what affects it, and then compares it with other studies. All names are pseudonyms and will be addressed as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

From the data collected in this study, the participant's professional competence in teaching English is developed during this program, even though there are some aspects that still need to be adequately developed.

**The development of pre-service English teachers' confidence in teaching English**

In showing confidence, all the participants felt nervous in the first meeting but gradually improved throughout the class. Considering the pre-service teachers' first experience directly involved in the fieldwork, it is expected. Moreover, the participants did a great job managing their nervousness, making the class conduct without much trouble. However, there was a participant who got a worse symptom than the other; she felt terrified and uneasy knowing his schedule was approaching. Even though it seems terrible, his uneasiness calms down throughout the time.

P3 "I was very uneasy when my teaching schedule was approaching and nervous when the learning started...."

P4 "10 minutes passed, and I felt nervous, but after that, I did not."

In the last meeting of the program, there were two participants who managed to deal with their nervousness and enjoyed teaching in the class. However, three out of five participants were feeling nervous again even though, in the

previous meeting, they began to adapt to the class.

**Table 1.** Participants' confidence from each meeting during the PPL program

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
P 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
P 2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
P 3	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
P 4	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
P 5	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

This phenomenon results from the headmaster and guru pamong in the classroom yearning to see pre-service teacher performance and assess the participants. Ji (2014) believe that young English teachers' professional ability can be enhanced through self-practice, teaching experiences, and education reform; Jung (2007) also adds that training and collaboration can improve teacher confidence. However, being assessed by the principal and guru pamong and then knowing the grades given can impact participants' future; it burdens them psychologically and causes them to be in a cold sweat. National Institute of Mental Health, (2020) agrees that in some cases, when it comes to conditions where one's future is on the line, one cannot think clearly, making him think of something that has not happened yet.

**The development of pre-service English teachers' capability in applying a variety of learning methods in teaching English**

Participants are showing two different facets in the capability category in applying a variety of learning methods. The first facet is a good and tremendous appliance that is shown by P2, P4, and P5, who use multiple learning methods. The second facet is unmeasurable, as

shown by P1 and P3, who use the same learning method for five meetings.

P1 “The teaching method is formal based (Expository method) and displays teaching materials via PowerPoint.

P1 uses the expository method, which tends to explain the material in front of the class while the students listen to the explanation. He uses this method in weeks 2, 3, and 4 until the end of the school practice teaching program in week 5. Corresponding to P1, P3 also does the same thing by explaining the materials to the students while the students listen carefully. Thus, the two participants needed to show more developed professional competence in terms of applying a variety of learning methods. However, because they used the same method for the entire program, the participants became proficient with the Expository method, resulting in students quickly understanding the material given.

P3 “They (students) are used to the material model that I provide, an explanation of the material first, then the characteristics, and give the example.”

P1 “Successfully made students understand the material I provided.”

There are two possibilities that such a phenomenon could occur: whether the students are the majority of high achievers, so the pre-service teacher did not feel the need to indulge themselves in learning to implement another learning method, or the pre-service teacher is inattentive to learn another learning method followed by their experience with the teacher who used the same learning method when the pre-service teacher was still a student.

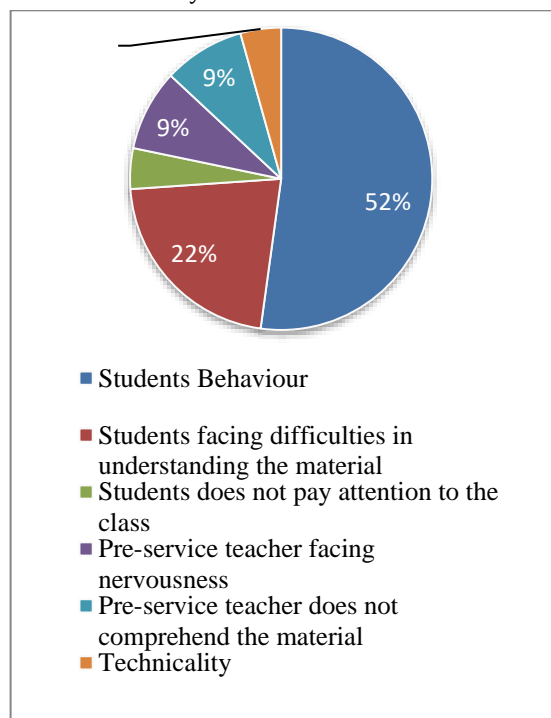
Der Stel and Veenman (2010) agreed that performing the same thing for a period of time is able to manage one's master in that specific area. However, Huang and Qi (2022) and Green (2022) do not support the idea of implementing the same method in every meeting. They believed that implementing the same learning method in the classroom can have several adverse effects if the learning method is not practical or they struggle to understand the material, such as lack of engagement, increased anxiety for the students, limited progress, and inefficient use of resources.

On the other hand, P2, P4, and P5 were using multiple learning methods during the PPL program. It shows the participants' eagerness to become a professional teacher. Flores (2017) points out that becoming a teacher involves complex factors like motivation, professional identity, enthusiasm for learning, and the need for guidance, mentoring, and opportunities to learn in the workplace.

From the data above, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers' understanding and capability to apply various learning methods are indeed developed.

**The development of pre-service English teachers' handling problems arising in the class**

In this area, 75% of problems found in this study were made by the students, ranging from their behavior to difficulties in understanding the material and needing to pay attention to the class. Another 18% are made by the pre-service English teacher themselves, from their nervousness in the class and their capability in comprehending and demonstrating the material, and the last 4% is from technicality in the classroom.



**Figure 1.** Problems faced by pre-service English teachers during the PPL program

From those problems, pre-service English teachers are able to manage and solve 91% of them. Some of the participants needed help to handle the problem correctly as a result of their ability to teach. They are still novices and need more preparation before beginning the class. Anderson and Stillman (2013) agreed that making mistakes in teaching is normal, especially for pre-service teacher in their early teaching. The participants of this study were learning from the mistake and improving their teaching ability in the next meeting, shown by the reflection that this is the first and last time.

P3 "I did not comprehend the material well enough when I explained it in front of the class..."

P3 "I cannot handle the problem..."

P4 "The explanation I gave turned out to be uninteresting and too long..."

Moving on to the problem that participants can handle, how pre-service teachers handle their nervousness in front of the class is favorable. The participants were redirecting their focus to teaching instead of being frozen. Delamarre et al. (2019) support the participants' decisions by controlling their emotions and making them forget their nervousness.

In terms of facing students' behavior, pre-service English teachers are using warnings and punishment. The participants gave students who interrupted classmates a warning, such as reporting them to the detention center or did not give a grade for the assignment they had done. Sanson et al. (2019) point out that giving a warning has minimal effects on reducing adverse effects, suggesting it is neither meaningfully helpful nor harmful for students. Under some conditions in managing the class, giving a warning to students is necessary.

On the other hand, there is a participant uses positif reinforcement in the first meeting. He promises to the student whoever finish writing the material will get a point. It is a common occurrence for teacher who wants to know their students. Unfortunately, it only conducted once because it was not really effective for most of Indonesian students.

P3 "I made a rule that whoever finishes writing all the material quickly will immediately get the point, so the students will race to complete their assignments and write the material."

In Indonesian school context, giving warning to students who does not abide to the law or for students' behaviour is normally done. For some students, getting a warning from the grown up make them realize and they will not do it anymore. Even though it often just for some period of time, the students then do the same thing again especially for delinquent students. Unfortunately, this practice nevertheless conducted throughout the school. It then become paradigm that delinquent students are ought to be yell at and a students who are often get scolded are delinquent.

After getting a view warning, but the students were not obedient, the pre-service teacher punished them. The participants did not deliver any physical punishment to the students. Punishments in this context are changing seating arrangements, writing down their name, then reporting them to the detention center, and not grading their assignment; however, for some participants, it is just an act to deceive them.

P1 "Write down their names and report them in the detention center. Nevertheless, that is just an act. When I spoke like that, they immediately quieted and apologized."

P3 "I will change their seats because the main problem in the class is that students often talk and don't pay attention to the lesson."

Knowing the problem in the classroom, P3 decided to change one of the students' seats to someone quiet. If this seat arrangement is not working, the participants will change the seat to the students' opposite gender. Strangely enough, this punishment works like magic for the students who change seats and the entire class.

Another problem pre-service English teacher faces in the classroom during the PPL program is students' difficulties in understanding the material. It is common knowledge that students have different levels of understanding; there are high achievers and low achievers who are able to hinder the classroom. All five participants were facing the same problem and

had the same answer, that is, to give the low achiever students extra care and explanation than the others. The participants prefer to give extra effort in explaining the material privately in the classroom to the low-achiever students, as Komarraju and Nadler (2013) who stressed that Self-efficacy, effort regulation, and help-seeking could increase academic achievement for low-achiever students. On the other hand, there are many methods and approaches to teaching to help low-achiever students (Foong et al., 2022; Wan Yusoff, 2018).

There is a participant who scolds students when they are found not paying attention to the classroom. This is the easiest way to solve the issue; however, it is not recommended. It is essential to approach these issues with understanding and empathy, find solutions that suit students' individual needs, and provide the necessary support so they can engage more actively in the classroom. Being a teacher is not just standing in front of the class and explaining material to the students; the essentials of being a teacher are guiding the students to reach their goals in life. To do that, teachers have to know the students' character, issues in learning, and what students need, then incorporate those and create a solution.

It is indeed hard to become a good teacher. There needs to be more than just mastering all the material and theory of teaching; the pre-service teacher needs to have empathy, responsibility, and creativity in mind. The teacher needs empathy to help low achiever students in their learning process and responsibility to guide the students in reaching their goals in life, then creativity to solve any issues arising in the class regarding the students to a technicality in the classroom such as learning media that broken or glitching as p1 experience.

P1 "I was hampered by the projector which sometimes turned off and on by itself."

## CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that pre-service English teachers' professional

competence is developed accordingly during the school practice teaching program. The formulated concerns regarding the pre-service teachers' reliance on a single learning method and their confidence in managing classroom challenges have been addressed through the research findings. The study provides insights into the eagerness of pre-service teachers to become professional educators and the complex factors involved in their development, including motivation, professional identity, and enthusiasm for learning. In line with the research purposes, the study contributes to the field of English language teaching and teacher education by providing practical recommendations for pre-service teacher training programs. It sheds light on pre-service teachers' challenges in developing their professional competence and identifies areas where current teacher education programs may fall short. The research aims to bridge the gap in the literature by investigating the factors that contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' professional competence in teaching English, ultimately aiming to enhance the quality of English language education in Southeast Sulawesi.

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