

## FROM THEORY TO PLANNING: AN ANALYSIS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' INTERPRETATION OF TESOL METHODS

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### Abstract

The present study explores how pre-service teachers of English education program articulate theories of the Methodology in TESOL analyzed based on Pedagogical Content Knowledge learned in the form of written assignment and analyzes how they interpret their understanding into individual mini lesson designs. In particular, the focus is on how the understanding of the theoretical concept of TESOL methodologies is put into a lesson plan design based on the alignment and discrepancy of both sides. The data were collected based on the students' assignment reporting their knowledge of subject matter, their lesson plan describing their knowledge of instructional strategies and curriculum knowledge to validate the content appropriate for the level of students. The data were analyzed through analyzing 4 group assignments and 10 individual lesson plans produced by the samples through doing the cross-case analysis in which how wrong alignment, partial alignment and misalignment happened. The finding suggest that pedagogical knowledge of TESOL methodologies is essential but the skill to translate the knowledge into coherent and relevant instructional planning remains vital. The course, methodology in TESOL, should move beyond conceptual understanding and facilitate sustained scaffolding, modeling and reflective practice to help them close the gap between conceptual knowledge written in books and articles and relevant and specific lesson planning.

**Keywords:** Pre-Service Teachers; Pedagogical Content Knowledge; English Language Teaching; Methodology in TESOL; Lesson Plan

### Introduction

English education program promotes Methodology in TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) as one of vital courses for students to master the pedagogical knowledge as pre-service teachers about what and how to teach English in various school  
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settings. However, the main purposes are not only acknowledging all conceptualization of various English teaching methods within books, articles and any other types of sources through analysis and discussion but also transforming the knowledge into effective pedagogical planning based on the given or chosen contexts. Lesson design which contain proper task, methods, instructions and assessment is the parameter of their true understanding of the concept. However, many pre-service teachers find it challenging to bring their theoretical understanding into practice, not only their lesson plans are traditional method-oriented but also their elements are not well arranged in terms of structure and content.

Four major issues that need to be taken into account are: how content teaching practices are learnt, how mental processes are conceived, the role of prior knowledge in learning to teach and the social and institutional settings with specific contexts. Teacher knowledge should be planned and practiced with those principles to get better and suitable results of learning (Freeman, 2002).

The phenomenon where pre-service teachers are able to finish assignment of teaching very well but being bewildered to produce lesson plans constructed based on the learnt theories become the theory-practice gap in many English study programs. Some claimed the causes are because of limited experiences, context constraints, lack of reflection, and default habit.

Borg claimed that many teachers are familiar and knowledgeable about appropriate methods of teaching but choose not to apply them. Many teachers are not able to clearly present their belief but in fact the method practiced in the learning system/instruction is not in line with the belief. So mostly there will be a contradiction in the field where the school wants the students to speak more English but the teacher believes that student is possibly more secure when the first language is used (Birello, 2013).

Shulman introduced Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) believed as a “special amalgam” of content and pedagogical knowledge in which teachers transforming the content of learnt subject into relevant forms for learners. It was brought about due to the “missing paradigm” in teacher education where there is no bridge between what to teach and how to teach. Mostly education learners were considered capable of their teaching readiness based on their theoretical or conceptual knowledge written in books and tested in quizzes. Meanwhile the actual learners were not able to put the “concept” into an appropriate lesson design with a specific contextual setting (Shulman, 1986).

In Indonesia setting, it was found that even experienced English teachers had problems with their pedagogical content knowledge in order to find more relevant teaching methods in certain classroom activities (Ibrahim, 2016; Safitri et al., 2020; Suharyadi et al., 2021). Teachers were using lecturing and grammar translation method for the current generation of students. Therefore those English classes with shallow PCK were poorly influenced by traditional methods.

The components of PCK involve: the knowledge of subject matter; knowledge of instructional strategies; knowledge of learners’ conceptions; an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics hard to understand or not for students; and curriculum knowledge. (Ibrahim, 2016; Shulman, 1986)

To deeply comprehend the phenomenon of “gap” between what and how, PCK is able to illustrate the complex cases of how teachers design their lesson plan based on their pedagogical knowledge for a real classroom setting.

In this research context, the two dimension, first “knowledge of subject matter”, second “knowledge of instructional strategies” and the last “curriculum knowledge” become the focus because the students’ written assignments about TESOL methods are examined as the source of

the first dimension and their lesson plans, as the data of second dimension, are examined about how far their designs fit the contextual and theoretical pedagogy and the curriculum/syllabus of school target to validate the appropriate content.

Hence, this study explores how pre-service English education students' theoretical understanding of teaching methods (as shown in their written assignment) is congruent with their pedagogical planning (as reflected in their lesson design) analysed with a modern PCK framework.

## **Methods**

The qualitative research was adopted with purposive sampling techniques for the informants' selection (Creswell, 2018). The criteria of informants were: 1) the third semester students of English education in State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung; 2) enrolled in the Methodology in TESOL course; 3) varied in the level of school (elementary, junior and senior high school); and 4) completing group assignments and individual lesson plans. The data were collected based on the students' assignment reporting their knowledge of subject matter, their lesson plan describing their knowledge of instructional strategies and curriculum knowledge to validate the content appropriate for the level of students. The data were analyzed through analyzing 4 group assignments and 10 individual lesson plans produced by the samples through doing the cross-case analysis in which how wrong alignment, partial alignment and misalignment happened.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Knowledge of Subject Matter**

The first group was discussing about project-based learning testing their pedagogical knowledge through critical questions such as "What Makes This a Project Rather Than a Simple Assignment?", "Why Do We Learn Language Through Creating Something?" and "How Can This Help Develop 21st-Century Skills?" and it was found that they demonstrate strong knowledge in teaching and are able to design a project that represents project based learning as a learning process, not merely a product. The project they illustrated was to position the students to research, design and present a cultural poster and during process English is the tool of communication. They also integrate several language skills namely reading (research), writing (poster text), speaking (conversation) and visual literacy. The skills showed interconnectedness not being separated. The authenticity of project can be seen from the issue being taken which reflected real world issue.

The second group discussed English club issues due to losing membership and need to find any creative solution specifically about the learning activities that should be promoted. While the pedagogical process is well written but the language focus like target features, genres or assessment criteria is inadequately visible. This showed that even though they are able to structure learning they do not present how the language practices are possible implemented and evaluated. All in all, the ELT goals they formulated are not clearly articulated in the language outcomes and assessment strategies.

Group 3 reported their reflection on TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge) of a lesson design. The finding was that they know the what to do but are not able to present how to do it with tangible instructional designs. Their work do not represent the pedagogy because no specific lesson sequence is presented with no learner task and interaction concretely described. Though the language objective were implied but they were not operationally written.

Group 4 adapted deep learning as their method to discuss social life issues (environment, bullying, digital safety), analyze it, and create a reflective campaign message in English. The structure of report showed the understanding of a correct task sequencing of how a deep learning should be where cognitive and affective scaffolding were being written. The report also

demonstrated how not only the language but also identity, emotion and social critiques were being demonstrated as a reflection of a deep learning as teaching method.

### **Knowledge of Instructional Strategies**

Based on the findings, pre-service teachers showed various performances in their lesson designs. Many show strong knowledge of instructional strategies by showing clear teaching objectives, appropriate language level and interactive teaching.

In the first case, students designed the lesson for elementary schools with the activities of student-centered interaction like group drawing and guessing games but the project based learning remain small-scale and short-term. The learner's progress was also formatively assessed. Though the topic taken was grammar the lesson follow pedagogical sequencing: warm up-guided practice-collaborative production-reflection which demonstrated gradual progress of students from their input to output. However the lesson sounds pedagogical as it was claimed in the introduction of lesson plan. In the core activities, it can be clearly shown that the lesson is like a task-supported not a full project cycle.

In the second case, the design was presenting Task based language teaching where language is used to plan, negotiate and present which is aligned with TBL principles. The lesson plan explicitly follows the TBL stages: pre-task, task, language focus and report in order. This procedure demonstrates how the pedagogical knowledge is demonstrated clearly in the report. Moreover, the interaction and collaboration are shown from the pair group work as the central activity enabling peer scaffolding and share meaning through discussion. Last but not least, observation checklists, worksheets, and oral reporting are well aligned with the lesson objectives.

The third involved the feelings and opinion expressions and song interpretations with project based learning as the method. Besides aiming for linguistic accuracy, the language here is a tool for personal meaning. The open statement (e.g. "I think the song is about...") invited the students to securely show their expression. The project was to create group presentation of posters they made covering the messages or meaning of the song being discussed. The skills of language were integrated with listening, speaking, writing and reading combined. The assessment also is presented in the form of rubrics that cover the fluency, comprehension, collaboration and reflection.

The fourth was considered very creative because of the theme, mini mesuem of me. The lesson clearly elaborates the procedures, roles of students and teacher, language prompts and interaction patterns. The authenticity and emotional engagement were shown through the activities where the students use English to express about themselves, preferences and personal facts. Besides its well-sequenced learning goals, activities and assessment, the follow up activity (video recording) showed forward planning for the medium of students' progression in the future.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated how pre-service teachers' pedagogical understanding was translated into instructional planning, particularly from the point of view of knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of instructional strategies. The findings revealed a variation of pedagogical competence across pre-service teachers, underlining both strengths and challenges in the transition from theory to planning.

In terms of knowledge of subject matter, 2 groups of pre-service teachers simulated strong pedagogical enactment by taking English a place for meaningful communication. The projects reflected authentic purposes and integrated multiple language skills and addresses real-world or social phenomena, showing an understanding of TESOL methods as learning process, not end products. However, the second group presented pedagogical structure in their report with lack of sufficient articulation of language outcomes and assessment criteria. The third group defined TPACK well but struggled to demonstrate in concrete lesson sequences, learner

task and interaction patterns, implying incomplete understanding pedagogical content knowledge.

Related to knowledge of instructional designs, most pre-service teachers demonstrated an ability to design student-centered, interactive activities that suit to students' levels. Strong alignment was evident in their lesson plans clearly reporting objectives, employing communicative tasks, and integrating assessment with relevant instructional processes. Important notes taken were about pre-service teachers labelling their lesson plans promoting a certain teaching method but in practice (shown in lesson plan) it seemed the claim was overgeneralization because some parts/stages were missing conceptually.

Overall, the finding suggest that pedagogical knowledge of TESOL methodologies is essential but the skill to translate the knowledge into coherent and relevant instructional planning remains vital. The course, methodology in TESOL, should move beyond conceptual understanding and facilitate sustained scaffolding, modeling and reflective practice to help them close the gap between conceptual knowledge written in books and articles and relevant and specific lesson planning.

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