Sri Rejeki Murtiningsih

is currently a teacher at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia. She teaches in English Language Education Department and her current research interests are teaching EFL reading and writing, feedback, reflective practice and motivation in EFL.

Moody Teachers Ruin My Motivation: An EFL Student's Voice on Effective EFL Teachers

ABSTRACT

This focus of this study is to explore an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student's perspectives on the characteristics of effective teachers that helped her develop her linguistic competence. This case study was conducted in an English education department in a private university in Indonesia. The data were obtained through two conversations with Aliyah, a third year EFL student. The analysis considered her learning experiences, reflection on her own learning, linguistic development, and factors influencing her linguistic development – all of which related to English. The findings show that reflecting from her past learning experiences, pedagogical and content knowledge are considered important characteristics of effective teachers. Most importantly, EFL teachers' personal traits, e.g. moody or knowledgeable were deemed to be a strong characteristic of effective EFL teachers as it influenced students' personal growths, such as motivation, attitude toward the course, and personal feelings. Implications of the study were also discussed.

Key words: effective teachers, EFL teachers, pedagogical knowledge, personal trait

BACKGROUND

One of the most influential factors of students' success in language learning is teachers. Teachers not only merely transfer their knowledge and skills to students, but also are responsible in changing students' behavior and improving students' learning. However, the characteristics of teachers that can have major contribution to students' success need to be explored. While a plethora of research have been conducted in the area of roaches to help students succeed (Farrell, 2015).effective teachers (Demiroz & Yesilyurt, 2015; Celik, Arikan, & Caner, 2012; Hajizadeh & Salahshour, 2013; Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016), scholars offer different perspectives of what constitutes effective teachers that can help students' success. This is mainly because each person has different concepts of success and different app

Cultural background has been mentioned as one of the aspects that causes the distinctions in point of views (Richards, 2010). What might be called effective in one culture may not be considered as such in different cultures, e.g. the teacher-centered and student-centered approaches in teaching English. One culture might consider having a teacher who can sternly control the class as being helpful to help students' success, but it might not be acceptable in the other culture. The other reason is individual differences. For example, Farrell's (2015) study on native English speakers and non-native English speakers provide an excellent example of this particular issue. Farrell (2015) stated that a school administrator may think that students who are   taught by a native English speaker may be effective for his students. However, the other one may think otherwise, because a non-native English speaker can explain and understand their students well because they speak the same language and come from the same culture.

Existing literature shows that effective teachers in different cultural and educational contexts have been researched quantitatively. Alimorad and Tajgozari (2014), for example, distributed questionnaires to 202 students and 75 teachers of high school using convenient sampl-ing. Similarly, Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) and Celik et al. (2012) used quantitative method to investigate the opinion of 404 and 998 university students respectively towards effective teachers' characteristics. Chen and Lin (2009) also involved 198 junior high school students in China to find out the characteristics of good English teachers. Qualitative research in this particular area has been surprisingly scant. In addition, in what way these effective teachers influence students' success in language learning has not been revealed.

This article investigates the answer to the following questions: what characteristics of teachers are considered effective to an EFL student? And in what way do these characteristics help her improve her English? In reporting, I weaved Aliyah's perspectives, my

personal experiences and classroom observations, and scholars' stance into a sound piece of narrative.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS'S CHARACTERISTICS

Scholars offer different viewpoints of effective teachers' characteristics, and often these qualities overlap one another. Richards (2010) argued that to be effective teachers, EFL teachers need to have ten characteristics, which include language skills, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, student-centered teaching techniques, specific expertise, theorizing of practice, being a member of community of practice, and professionalism. From these many characteristics, some of them are also included in the study of several scholars whose definitions are sometimes more fluid than Richards's.

Language skills, for instance, which refers to a high level of linguistic proficiency from which students can learn the language features given in the feedback by the teacher, is also in line with Barnes and Lock's (2013) study. Linguistic proficiency here refers to teachers' language skills when giving comments to students' work. A study conducted by Barnes and Lock (2013) found that Korean university students preferred English teachers who can give direct feedback to students' grammatical error. This is unlike Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) who stated that students in Turkey preferred indirect feedback from their teachers when dealing with their error. This goes without saying that English teachers need to possess a high level English proficiency so that they can give proper feedback to their students.

The other characteristic of effective teachers relates to content knowledge. Unlike Richards (2001) who highlighted strong differences between content and pedagogical knowledge, other researchers like Rodriguez (2013), Birjandi and Rezanejad (2014), and Celik et al. (2012) incorporated these two bodies of

knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). The PCK refers to the ability to teaching the subject matters effectively. Rodriguez (2013) explained that English teachers with a high degree of PCK are those who can apply the theory of effective teaching into practice. Mean-while, Richards (2001) referred content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge as teachers' mastery of the English subject and "ability to restructure content knowledge for teaching purposes, and to plan, adapt, and improvise" (p. 210) respectively. Teachers' effectiveness in terms of PCK can be seen from, as Birjandi and Rezanejad (2014) assert, how the English teachers encourage their students to actively participate in classroom activities. With regard to involving all students in class work, Richards (2010) emphasizes that maintaining active student involvement to effectively teach the students.

Theorizing form practice, according to Richards (2010), is the ability to contemplate on their own practices "to better understand the nature of language teaching and learning" (p. 116). The contemplation can serve as reflection to English teachers to help students develop their linguistic competence. Farrell (2015) maintained that reflection is "an important part of effective teaching and effective teachers systematically examine their beliefs and practices" (p. 83). The reflective practice is the key factor to improve English teachers' effectiveness in the classroom because they can look back on what they have done in class and why they do what they do. Although this particular skill is considered important in being effective teachers, this characteristic surprisingly almost never appears in many studies in the area of effective teachers and teaching which involved either students, teachers, or both.

One characteristic that is not raised by Richards (2010) but has become the focus of numerous studies is the personal characteristic. Personal characteristic of effective English teachers, such as fairness, kindness, maintaining teacher-student relationship, reducing students' anxiety, and showing appreciation towards students, have become the findings of studies

conducted by Barnes and Lock (2010), Celik et al. (2012), Chen (2012), Chen and Lin (2009), and Lee (2010). These scholars mentioned that an English teachers' personal characteristic became one of the most important qualities indicated by their participants, ranging from junior high school students to EFL teachers. Barnes and Lock (2010), for example, asked their participants to EFL students to write down the qualities of what they perceive as effective teachers in Korean language. The results of the research showed that English teachers who were friendly, developed teacher-student relationships, open, understanding, and humorous were considered to be effective teachers. Meanwhile Celik et al. (2012) reported that EFL teachers that were approved by their participants were those who were able to reduce students' anxiety and make them feel relaxed in class. Similarly, English teachers who showed kindness, fairness, lenience, and responsibility were favored by Thai university students (Chen, 2012). Lee (2010) also looked at the uniqueness of EFL teachers in Japan. His study found that EFL teachers should have positive attitude and enthusiasm to be considered effective among Japanese freshmen.

In short, what the section explains is that what is perceived to be effective EFL teachers differ from one context to another, which means that what is considered to be a favorable characteristic in one context may be seen otherwise in the other. This heavily depends upon the cultural contexts and individual preferences. Having this kind of beliefs in mind, I did not set any limitations on what my participant considers as effective teachers during the conversations. As a matter of fact, the effective teachers topic was one of the topics that came up in the conversations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory underpinning the study comes from Dewey's (1916) education theory which says that "education is thus a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, process. All of these words mean that it implies attention to the conditions of growth" (p.10, para 1). This implies that being a teacher

requires someone to do more than delivering the materials; it also refers to being a role model, giving attention to students, and providing them with positive experience so that they can develop their potential, which is their language competence. In his book Democracy and Education Dewey (1916) also asserted that social environment needs to be created to shape and mold the immature members which in this study refers to students. The social environment consists of not only other students, but also teachers. Thus, teachers, as the older members, in the social environment bear a bigger responsibility for shaping students' attitude and competence, which can be shaped "by operating steadily to call out certain acts" (pp.12-13, para 1). Operating steadily here means that teachers need to establish a habit for themselves which can be a stimulus to the students. They could be models to their students which can garner students' attention, and eventually they would imitate the teachers' habit.

Setting this theory into the context of the study, this study discusses effective teachers as role models for their students, who nurture, foster and cultivate their students. The context of the study is an English as a foreign language teacher training institution, which produces future teachers. Thus, effective teachers can motivate these future teachers to become effective teachers for their future students because they learn being effective teachers from their teachers. From the students' point of view, they can learn from their social environment and build their habit and characters.

INTERVIEWING ALIYAH

Aliyah – a pseudonym was a third year female student. During her six semesters studying in the English Education Department, Aliyah was enrolled in a variety of courses I taught for five semesters. Thus, I had vast opportunities to observe her attitude to her study, her personal development, and most importantly, her linguistic development. I kept some of her written assignments from when she was in the first semester for different purposes. I also had some of her journals from the last class she was enrolled in

my class. I brought these artifacts to one of our meetings in which we spent approximately one hour for each meeting, and she also brought some of the journals that she kept as I requested. While the conversation might have been considered short and semi structured, Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014) maintained that for narrative inquiry, data obtained from short interviews may be "supplemented by a longer period of classroom observation or artifact examination" (p. 25).

Aliyah was selected as a respondent for several reasons. The main reason was because, based on my inside and outside classroom observation, Aliyah was one of the students who made a steady progress on her linguistic development. She also showed good attitude toward the lessons I gave. For example, she read prior to the class, submitted assignments on time, and did not miss any classes. In addition, based on the interaction I have had with her, I considered Aliyah as an articulate person; thus, she would likely be able to provide thorough information. Aliyah and I met on campus – as she requested – twice. Because both of us were multilingual, we used several languages during the conversations which flowed quite naturally for both of us. This had allowed Aliyah to freely express her feelings and opinions. Due to this issue, the excerpts used in this study were translated into standardized English. The conversations we had raised a vast array of topics, ranging from Aliyah's learning experiences, reasons to take English education department, her perspectives of her own language competence, her teachers, and teaching. For this particular study, I coded and selected excerpts that answered the proposed research question.

ALIYAH'S PERPECTIVES OF EFFECTIVE EFL TEACHERS

Based on my observation, Aliyah was a shy student in the first semester of her program. She was almost quiet for all the meetings, but she was an attentive student. In all courses I teach, I assign my students to read a number of pages of t

knowledge, and personal characteristics. book, either a novel or textbooks and give them a question to answer in writing. From some of the artifacts from her first semester, Aliyah used her native language to answer the question, and she wrote only a few sentences. When we discussed her writing when she was in the sixth semester, I asked her how she felt about it. Aliyah stated that she was happy with her linguistic development. We went on discussing supports she obtained related to her linguistic improvement, which then she mentioned friends and teachers. These two factors were included in social environment, which can contribute to students' development because they learn from each other and establish a habit of learning (Dewey, 1916). To answer the proposed research questions, Aliyah asserted that she approved EFL teachers who hold pedagogical knowledge, conten.

Pedagogical Knowledge

Richards (2010) referred pedagogical knowledge as 'pedagogical reasoning skills' which concerns EFL teachers' cognition or "specialized kind of thinking that teachers posses and make use of in planning and conducting their lessons" (p. 114). This knowledge manifests in the way EFL teachers design and plan their lesson. Richards (2010) proposed aspects that an effective EFL teacher has to be able to "analyze potential lesson content" (p. 115). Aliyah also found that having a teacher who could plan the class well and be consistent with the plan helped her succeed in class. She remarked, "if a teacher cannot remain as planned, I don't know. The students will go 'I've prepared something for a class, but why would the teacher change it?'" Teachers who did not have any plans, according to Aliyah, would be underestimated by students and gain low trust from their students because those teachers were considered as unreliable. Aliyah maintained that she needed to know the teachers' plan in running the class because it helped her to be organized and prepared for the lesson. Teachers' plans or teachers' preparation is also highlighted in Barnes and Lock's (2010) study in which Korean university students attributed lecturers'

enthusiasm and preparation.

In addition to be well-planned and consistent, Aliyah also mentioned that effective EFL teachers should be able to employ teaching strategies that accommodate students' individual differences. Aliyah believed that teachers' ability to run and utilize a variety of teaching strategies would improve students' motivation, which lead to participation in the class activities. Like Aliyah who was a student, teachers also agreed that involving the whole class participations in class activities is included in effective teachers' criteria (Birjandi & Rezanejad, 2014).

Content Knowledge

For Aliyah, EFL teachers needed to understand and master the lessons they taught because she called teachers as the fountain of knowledge to whom students could find the answers of their questions. She also added that effective EFL teachers not only understand the content of the lessons, but also become proficient – the term that Aliyah used – in the issue. She continued on explaining that becoming proficient for teachers means that EFL teachers have a good grasp of the materials of the course they teach. She remarked, "if a teacher is proficient, she would know what kinds of questions would come up from the topic." Aliyah's opinion with regard to EFL teachers' content knowledge is, in fact, similar to many studies conducted by Celik et al. (2012), Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015), and Lee (2010).

Apart from becoming proficient, Aliyah also mentioned that being effective EFL teachers need to be up-to-date with the current development of the subjects they teach, because this would influence the quality of knowledge she would learn from the teacher. This characteristic would make teachers understand their students' way of thinking. This particular point of effective teachers' characteristic is in line with Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi and Maamari's (2015) study in Oman in which they state that their high school participants also preferred up-to-date teachers. They, however, did not think that their teachers needed to have a professional

development program.

Personal Traits

Aliyah deemed effective teachers as those who do not bring personal matters to class. She explained you know some teachers are young, and in that age range, some of them have mood swings. For example, something might have happened before they came to class, and they became very moody. It should not have happened. They have personal problems alright, but they do not need to bring it to class (interview excerpt, 2017).

Aliyah called the characteristic that describes an ability to leave personal problems out of the class room as professional. Unlike the definition in western culture that refers 'professional' as being competent in a particular activity (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2017), 'professional' in the Indonesian language may mean the ability to keep personal feeling away when working. If a teacher is professional, for instance, she is required to remain composed even if she has personal problems. Aliyah continued on by saying that a professional teacher should be able to hide her personal feeling when teaching or that a professional teacher should treat all of her students fairly. The example that she gave was that one of her teachers confronted a student for being misbehaved. However, to Aliyah, even after the student apologized to the teacher, the student kept being left out by the teacher in many classroom activities.

Teacher-student relationship was also mentioned by Aliyah as effective English teachers. She stated that effective teachers are the ones that nurture their students, apart from delivering materials in class. This is also in line with Dewey (1916) who stated that education is a series of process that provides nurturing, fostering, and cultivating environment from older members to younger members of society. In addition, studies reveal that many EFL students in different contexts consider personal characteristics are the key to EFL teachers to be effective. Personal characteristics found in these studies varied from one study to another. Barnes and Lock (2010), for example, found that EFL teachers who

appreciated students' efforts, respected students, and called them by names were considered effective. Lee (2010) maintained that the personal characteristics attributed by Japanese students were positive attitude and enthusiasm.

ALIYAH'S IMPACTED GROWTHS
Linguistic Development

In relation to the growth, Aliyah asserted that her writing ability improved much better than the other skills. She remarked, "I did not know how to write properly at the time I came to this department. Now, I know how to organize my ideas and how to form a sentence." She also told me that once her friend from a different department was amazed with her current English competence. Her linguistic competence developed through the activities by the teachers. She provided example of her teacher who assigned her to read and write every week and who asked her to give opinion and argument based on the reading. These activities, along with the feedback given, had heavily influenced her linguistic development.

Personal Growth

With regard to EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge, Aliyah stated that she was demotivated to follow the lesson because the class seemed to be poorly designed. She remarked An organized teacher would be consistent when running the class. This lets me know what is going to happen. On the other hand, inconsistent teachers would be different. She would just abruptly change the lesson. This makes me think. Why would I prepare for the class? The teacher is going to change plan anyway. I feel like what I have prepared is useless. Well, not really useless actually. But, I feel unappreciated (interview excerpt, 2017)

Dealing with a teacher who possessed this characteristic, Aliyah felt that she became less organized and that she could have done better if the teachers had performed the lessons as planned. She also felt that she would have participated more actively in the class. In other words, she would have learned more had the EFL teachers been well-planned. We did not discuss if

her grade in the class was affected by the teacher. In the courses in which Aliyah was enrolled, I noticed that she was always enthusiastic when she had to work in small group discussion or individual work. While she appeared less verbally active in class discussions, Aliyah was not shy to ask questions to me, although this did not happen very often. She always sat at the front rows and performed the required tasks in timely fashion.

With regard to personal characteristics, Aliyah stated that a moody teacher affected her motivation. She continued on saying, "moody teachers really ruin my motivation. Once I was on fire with one course. When I found out that the teacher was quite moody, I was not as excited anymore with the course." Aliyah also shared her feelings when she observed that one of her EFL teachers treated some of her peers unfairly. Although she was not the one who was in the situation, she believed that the situation should not have happened.

Aliyah's growth impacted from EFL teachers' ineffectiveness she met might not have been clearly visible because other aspects might have played stronger roles on her academic success. It is worth noted that Aliyah's development, including her linguistic development, might have been better if teachers' ineffectiveness can be minimized. Alimorad and Tajgozari (2016) stated that understanding students' expectations can help bridge the gap by addressing the ineffectiveness shown by some teachers. Students' expectations of effective EFL teachers should be heard and met as much as possible, which means that listening to a student like Aliyah's voice with regard to her feelings or disappointment of several ineffective teachers. While this research may be a case study in which the generalizability is quite limited, other students, whose self-esteem is not as high as Aliyah's might have the same feelings as her, but have not received opportunities to express their opinion. There has been very little research conducted on the impacts of ineffective EFL teachers toward students' linguistic development and personal growth. However, it is believed that

effective teachers would be able to improve students' learning achievement, change students' behavior, and increase student learning (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015; Birjandi & Rezanejad, 2014; Hajizadeh & Salahshour, 2013; Alimorad & Tajgozari, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Aliyah's growth was reflected from her experiences dealing with some of her teachers she encountered during her study whom she considers ineffective. From her experiences, she learned that effective teachers were the ones who had the opposite characteristics that she described. For example, she was taught by a teacher or two who showed problems with their pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and personal traits. Characteristics like being inconsistent between lesson plans and practice and having less variety of teaching strategies in class were considered as ineffective. Well-planned EFL teachers was deemed effective because they helped students develop their habit and linguistic competence by giving them a considerable amount of time to prepare for the class. In addition, EFL teachers' personal traits are also regarded as one of the most important characteristics of effective teachers. Aliyah, however, provided examples of personal traits that demotivated her to join the class. Personal traits, such as emotional maturity, showing respects to students' efforts, and treating students fairly, were considered as aspects that influence students' learning.

This study implies that to create social environment that can enhance student's learning and change their behavior can be done by improving EFL teachers' effectiveness. This can be done by listening to students' voices followed by facilitating teachers to join teacher professional development programs to minimize teachers' lack of pedagogical and content knowledge. While it might be considerably challenging to work on teachers' personal traits, it is not impossible if the issue is consistently addressed to meet students' expectations of effective teachers.

REFERENCES

Alimorad, Z., & Tajgozari, M. (2016). A comparison of Iranian high school teachers' and students' perceptions of effective English teachers. Retrieved from SAGE Open : doi: 10.1177/2158244016679212

Al-Mahrooqi, R., Denman, C., Al-Siyabi, J., & Al-Maamari, F. (2015). Characteristics of a good EFL teacher: Omani EFL teacher and student perspectives. Retrieved from SAGE Open: doi: 10.1177/2158244015584782

Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research. New York, NY: Routledge.

Barnes, B., & Lock, G. (2010). The attributes of effective lectures of English as a foreign language as perceived by students in a Korean university. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 35(1), 139-153.

Birjandi, P., & Rezanejad, A. (2014). How can I teach effectively when...: An exploration of factors affectivng willingness to teach effectively among EFL teachers. International Journal of Applied Linguitics & English Literature, 3(4), 168-177.

Celik, S., Arikan, A., & Caner, M. (2013). In the eyes of Turkish EFL learners: What makes an effective foreign language teacher? Porta Linguarum, 20, 287-297.

Chen, J. (2012). Favorable and unfavorable characteristics of EFL teachers perceived by universities students of Thailand. International Journal of English Linguistics, 2(1), 213-220.

Chen, Y. J., & Lin, S. C. (2009). Exploring characteristics for effective EFL teachers from the perceptions of junior high school students in Tainan. STUT Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2, 219-249.

Demiroz, H., & Yesilyurt, S. (2015). Effective foreign language teaching: Perceptions of prospective English language teachers. Universal Journal of Educational Research, 3(11), 862-870.

Dewey, J. (n.d.). Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education [E-reader version].

Farrell, T. S. (2015). It's not who you are! It's how you teach! Critical competencies associated with effective teaching. RELC Journal, 46(1), 79-88.

Hajizadeh, N., & Salahshour, N. (2014). Characteristics of effective EFL Instructors: Language teachers' perceptions versus learners' perceptions. International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature, 3(1), 202-214.

Lee, J. J. (2010). The uniqueness of EFL teachers: Perceptions of Japanese learners. TESOL Journal , 1(1), 23-48.

Richards, J. C. (2010). Competence and performance in language teaching. RELC Journal, 41(2), 101-122.

Rodriguez, A. D. (2013). Bilingual and ESL Pre-service teachers learn about effective instruction for ELLs through meaningful collaboration. Gist Education and Learning Research Journal, 7, 12-34