

## **The Effective 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Pedagogical Competence as Perceived by Pre-service English Teachers**

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**Abstract:** This study is aimed at exploring the view of pre-service English teachers towards the effective 21st-century teachers' pedagogical competence and how they develop their pedagogical competence for their future teaching. The study was qualitatively conducted as a case study by involving 12 pre-service English teachers purposively chosen due to their familiarity with the study issue. The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The results indicated that in terms of 21st-century education, the participants perceived that pedagogical competence should focus on teachers' capability of integrating the technology in classrooms and teachers' ability to exploit adjusted methods and materials which furnish students with skills appropriate to their future real-life careers. Further, there were eight crucial traits of effective 21st-century pedagogical competence perceived by the participants. They were extended to; facilitating and inspiring students to learn creatively, utilizing, designing and developing digital media to create a good learning material, learning experience, and learning evaluation, promoting communicative language learning and responsibility through activities and discussions, creating and maintaining a good classroom atmosphere, motivating students, assessing what students have learned rationally, allowing students to have some controls over the learning process, and giving positive reinforcement to students showing good ideas or efforts. The findings of this study are expected to bring light to teachers or other pre-service teachers to reflect or evaluate and to professionally develop themselves.

**Keywords:** *21st-century education, Pedagogical competence, Professional development*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Educators of any fields of study are always encountered with many critical chores in their day to day activities. Undoubtedly, in the

enforcement of the chores, the teachers are required to possess certain competences in order to be effective in accomplishing their duties and to provide for quality (Amosun & Kolawole,

2015). They added that teachers share a momentous responsibility in preparing the students to achieve their success in education. In other words, teachers have great impacts in leading the students to become successful learners. Therefore, it is quintessential for the teachers to continuously develop their quality.

The importance of teachers quality has also been acknowledged by Wichadee (2010) who asserted that one of the absolute factors contributing to the development of the students learning is the teacher factor. Teachers' quality is crucial in affecting the learning. It is due to the pivotal role played by teachers in directing learners to optimally achieve the learning goals. Therefore, Richards, (2002) suggested that teachers are unquestionably responsible to run their duty to create a desirable classroom atmosphere, to plan various learning activities, and to utilize the material of instructions effectively.

Having been acknowledged among educational researchers for years, teachers effectiveness has been an on going topic of interest. It is not bounded only to teacher characteristics or merely abiding by a particular set of traits or dimensions. However, as affirmed by Celik (2013), the notion of teachers' effectiveness goes further about the making use of teaching practices that are valued by, and contribute to, the wider community in which the teaching process takes place. Moreover, the concept of an effective teacher has been explored from many different perspectives over the course of decades (Zhang & Watkins, 2007). Furthermore, Al-Mahrooqi, (2015) proposed that by understanding the characteristics which constitute effective teachers, it can assist teachers to sharpen their pedagogical practices by certifying them to embellish their good characteristics and find ways to overthrow those which are less valued or considered unsuitable for a specific teaching context.

Concerning for the needs of the students in the recent era, so-called as 21st-century, it is unquestionably believed that the needs of the students from the past years are genuinely different from the needs of students from these current and future years. Such distinction has been described into some sorts of terms, such as millennial students or 21st-century learning (Bedir, 2019). These are examples of appellation given to portray dissimilarity between the past and current education. For this, Bedir (2019) vindicated that 21st-century education demonstrates more prominence on advancing pivotal skills. He further ratified that such skills are important to learn and sustain the learning which does not meet the needs of contemporary students on the ground that the curriculum was not initially designed to meet the societies' demands. In line with this, Trilling & Fadel, (2009) agreed that current education should also focus on developing the next generation – the students, to be able to acquire both skills and knowledge to mobilize the virtue of digital technologies in broadening their opportunities. Additionally, the 21st-century education should concisely furnish students with mandatory skills that they can work with to become successful in the globalized world.

To be able to overcome the challenges and to pursue the goals in the 21st-century education, it is therefore fundamental to prepare the future teachers to master some sorts of skills. With regard to this idea, Levine (2006) claimed that pre-service teacher education is the most crucial point of having skillfully qualified teachers. Essentially, the teacher education programs are compelled to provide opportunities and to set the future (pre-service) teachers into a particular situation in which they can pedagogically practice to get used to the future education needs (Bedir, 2019). Moreover, teachers are demanded to be proficient in professional problem-solving and to be knowledgeable about technological,

pedagogical, and content knowledge (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008).

As previously mentioned, one of the most important aspects to develop in order to be an effective teacher (in the future), the pedagogical competence is not only seen as the knowledge of using techniques which are used technically, but also the acquisition of routines which every teacher undoubtedly needs to save time and energy for more significant aspects of the works. Magin (1998) as cited in Olatunji, (2013) supported that it is a broader view or concept than teaching skills. It presupposes good, broad and deep knowledge of the subject of teaching. Further, it was asserted that a pedagogically proficient teacher will in different contexts demonstrate a good ability to use the subject knowledge in research – related, practical, pedagogical actions with student learning in focus. Laverie in Iriana, & Liliana (2011) added that by being pedagogically competent, a teacher can use a coordinated and synergistic combination of both tangible resources (e.g. instruction materials such as books, articles, and cases, and technology such as software and hardware) and intangible resources (e.g. knowledge, skills, experience) to reach efficiency and/ or effectiveness in pedagogy. Furthermore, as depicted in the Act of the Republic of Indonesia number 14 in 2005, about teachers and lecturers, pedagogical competence will enable teachers to effectively manage the students learning. At last, it allows for the efficient manifestation of an activity, or as a minimum professional standard specified by law, which professional teachers should reach.

The question of what makes an effective teacher is hardly a new subject in the educational world. In a rational view, having an effective teacher is the critical need of any classes for an efficient functioning of educational systems and for enhancing the squality of learning (Shishavan, & Sadeghi, 2009). As asserted by Brown & Rodgers, (2002), there must be a

combination of certain competencies to be an effective teacher.

With regard to the combination of competencies, Park (2008) in Wichadee, (2010) highlighted four major categories of competence which constitute an effective ‘language’ teacher. One of which is the pedagogical competence. The complex and ever-changing role of teachers does not allow for an unequivocal definition of pedagogical competence. The concept of pedagogy has been acknowledged by (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, (2002) who mentioned that pedagogy corresponds with the teaching practice. In addition to this, they disclosed that such idea has extensively changed into something related to the groundwork of learning environment which covers explorations and learning instructions.

The pedagogical competence refers to teachers’ acquisition of techniques that are required to efficiently use time and resources for more important aspects of their work. Furthermore, it encompasses the knowledge of theoretical principles and research data that leads to a variety of techniques and strategies which teachers can choose from and structure conforming to the situational context (Beyer, 2002; Conczi, *et al*, 1990; Oser, 2006). On the other hand, Hill, Rowan, & Ball, (2005) defined the pedagogical knowledge as teaching knowledge. They affirmed that the pedagogical knowledge is closely related to teachers’ instructional strategies in conducting the learning process. It accomodates teachers to comprehensively visualize the best possible methods, strategies, materials, and resources to be utilized for the learning situation. Also, it assists teachers to understand how to use various forms of play; different strategies for grouping learners; different types of media and materials. Accordingly, the pedagogical knowledge and skills turn teachers into facilitators, coaches, models, evaluators, managers, and advocates (Amosun & Kolawole, 2015).

Moreover, Amosun & Kolawole (2015) added that effective pedagogy will help teachers in featuring skills at establishing curricula designed to build on learners' present knowledge and understanding and move those learners to more sophisticated and in-depth abilities, knowledge, concepts, and performances. Thus, effective teaching requires pedagogical skills so that the teaching is carried out smoothly and results in the maximum output in terms of the expected teaching outcomes.

Regarding the issue of pedagogical competence, there have been known some previous researches under the similar interest, pedagogical competence. First, Liakopoulou, (2011) investigated how the pedagogical knowledge was considered as a precondition to enter the teaching profession. The study was conducted in Greece. Respectively, the aim was to probe into the kinds of pedagogical knowledge assessed through the teachers' exam and investigating types of qualifications which prospective teachers need. The study found that almost all of the exam topics are related to the teachers' training in teaching methodology and, mainly, lesson planning, the selection of suitable teaching aids and techniques, and student evaluation.

Secondly, Amosun & Kolawole (2015) did a study to elaborate the level of pedagogical knowledge and skill competencies of Nigeria's pre-school teachers. By involving 58 pre-school teachers randomly chosen from public schools in Ibadan city. the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. the results of this study demonstrated that the level of pedagogical knowledge and skill competencies displayed by the pre-school teachers in Ibadan, Oyo state Nigeria was low.

Although pedagogical competence has currently been a widely discussed among teachers and educational researchers, however, there has been no wide exploration of such notion in terms of the 21st-century education

particularly based on the view of pre-service teachers, so-called as future teachers. With all of these things in mind, based on the aforementioned problems, the study aimed at exploring what the pre-service teachers perceive about the effective 21st-century pedagogical competence (E21PC) as well as their strategy to develop their 21st-century pedagogical competence. Finally, this present study is considered different from the aforesaid relevant studies. The key difference is the notion of the pedagogical competence which is scrutinized based on the current educational situation. Further, the list of most important competencies was also described according to the participants' point of view.

## **METHOD**

To obtain an extensive description of the issue, this study was conducted as a qualitative case study research. The case study is considered helpful to deeply investigate a phenomenon to bring the best comprehension of the research problems (Creswell, 2008).

To obtain the data, Pre-service teachers of English education program in a university in Central Java of Indonesia were purposively chosen to be the participants of this research in accordance with their familiarity with the technical terms related to the 21st-century education.

To reach the trustworthiness, this study employed method triangulation to reach the credibility by involving a combination of data sources, theories and data collection techniques which focused on a single phenomenon (Guba, 1981). The data of this study were obtained by both conducting a semi-structured interview and disseminating a questionnaire to the participants. The instruments were designed by adapting Park's (2008) in Wichadee (2010) framework of an effective teacher's pedagogical competence and the 21st-century pedagogical competence framework by National Educational and

Technological Standards (as cited in the Indonesian Teacher Professional Development module, 2019).

The data were firstly collected by conducting a semi-structured interview. A total of 12 pre-service English teachers was interviewed to gain the data which were analyzed to probe into their perception and strategies. The interview was conducted by using the participants' first language to assist the participants in elaborating appropriate details regarding the focused data. Then, the interview transcripts were sent back to the participants. The participants were asked to clarify whether or not the transcripts were appropriate to what they meant. So called as member checking, this stage was also conducted to reach the trustworthiness degree.

Afterwards, a questionnaire of 5-point Likert scale from very important (5) to not important at all (1) was disseminated to the participants. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed to reveal the crucial qualities of pedagogical competence as perceived by the participants. Also, the data obtained from the questionnaire were used as supporting data to confirm the main data from the interview. These crucial steps were considered substantial to be executed to unzip the credibility degree of this research.

Finally, the Interactive model proposed by (Miles, & Huberman, 1994) was used to do the data analysis. The stages were extended to data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction, the whole obtained data were classified thematically. The data were grouped based on the coded themes to portray any essential information pertinent to the problems. In the data display, the classified informations were displayed into conceptual charts and interview transcriptions. At last, the findings of the study were thoroughly discussed.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

This section portrays the encountered findings extended on the adjustment which is closely relevant to the study focus. The details are interpreted in the following issues: 1) pre-service teachers' perception of the 21st-century pedagogical competence, 2) strategies of developing the pedagogical competence to encounter the 21st-century education, and 3) the most crucial traits of the effective 21st-century pedagogical competence as perceived by the pre-service teachers.

### **Pre-service teachers' perception of the 21st-century pedagogical competence**

Some of the pre-service teachers' perceptions are emphasized on technology integration in the classroom. Their view of such issue is in accordance with the 21st-century education which will be characterized as the technological era. This is in line with Yavuz-Konokman et al. (2013) in (Ozdemir, 2016) who suggested that all individuals are required to have digital or technological competence due to the expeditious and innovative changes in science and technology. With regard to this, the pre-service teachers perceived that the 21st-century pedagogical competence is closely related to teachers' capability of integrating the technology in the classroom. This perception is confirmed by Parvin & Salam, (2015) who asserted that in the case of 21st 21st-century education, it is rare to find any classes, especially language classes, which do not involve the utilization of any form of technology. Teachers of any field of teaching should, therefore, involve the use of technology in their teaching. For them, technology plays an absolutely crucial role in 21st-century education. Accordingly, all educators should familiarize themselves with the technology in order to strengthen their proficiency. They further affirmed that all teachers should be able to adapt themselves to the technology development and to utilize and manipulate the provided facilities;

teaching aids, apps, and others to promote the teaching and learning process.

*Technology has an important role in 21st-century education, so teachers should get used to the use of technology. This will help in their teaching and their proficiency. (participant 9)*

*Teachers are expected to adapt themselves into technology development since 21st-century is known as technological era. (participant 11)*

However, some participants emphasized that the 21st-century pedagogical competence is unquestionably pertinent to the ability of teachers to employ various teaching methods and teaching materials. The participants highlighted that methods and materials employed in the teaching and learning process should have been adjusted with the context in which they are utilized, particularly in the context of the modern digital era. Also, the participants noted that the methods and materials delivered to the students should furnish students with skills that will eventually equip them with their real-life careers in the future. This finding is similar to Pretorius, (2017) who suggested the importance of all educators to qualify the students to become professionals in their chosen field of study.

Furthermore, the participants suggested that the methods and materials equipped in the teaching and learning process should affect the students to be more creative, innovative, and critical. This is a pivotal point since by being critical, students will be able to think clearer, to ask questions both in the classroom and in the society, and further to become better students (Mabe, 2004). With respect to the 4C's skills, the participants ratified that teacher should profoundly think about the choice of methods, media, and classroom management in order to allow students interacting with such skills.

*In 21st-century education, teachers should be able to use methods that supply students with the skills they need for their future careers. (participant 2)*

*21st-century pedagogical competence is the ability of teachers to adjust the implemented methods to the situational context in which the methods are used. (participant 5)*

### **Strategies of developing the pedagogical competence to encounter the 21st-century education**

In terms of strategies of developing the pedagogical competence, from the whole pre-service teachers participating in this study, it is acknowledged three major categories of strategy which they will likely allocate to develop their pedagogical competence to confront the 21st-century education. Firstly, the participants would like to update their knowledge about methods, materials, media, and technology integration by attending seminars, webinars or workshops about related subjects. For them, it is a quintessential thing to do since such activities; seminars or workshops, are delivered by experts of particular fields. This allows them to get as much information as they need since they manage to know the state of the art of something directly from credible sources.

*I update my knowledge and information by following workshops, seminars or webinars about teaching and learning to learn from experts. (participant 2)*

*I would like to attend various pieces of training and workshops in teaching. (participant 11)*

Secondly, they will intentionally allocate their time to conduct sharing sessions with other teachers of similar subjects. Emphasis is given to experienced teachers whom they will collaborate

with since the highly experienced teachers are capable of examining the classroom situation, unlike the novice or inexperienced teachers. This is supported by Tsui, (2003) and Westerman, (1991) who found that when compared with experienced teachers who can see the big picture of classroom practice, novice or inexperienced teachers often wait for problems to arise and are unable to anticipate how the activities they plan will turn out in the classroom. With regard to the English language classroom, Freeman & Johnson, (1998) suggested that teacher practices should include experienced teachers as mentors to novices during field experiences or school-based programs. They showed that both pre-service and in-service English teachers benefit from each other's classes and they can use the opportunity of being observed to become more aware of their teaching.

*I would like to have some discussions or sharing sessions with other teachers who have more experience. (participant 5)*

Thirdly, the participants develop their pedagogical competence by employing the self-practice. Extensively related to the notion of autonomous learning, it is expected to push themselves to learn, and they would get the opportunity to be massively improved. This implied that the pre-service teachers, as learners, can work on their own pace and know what, when, why, how and where to learn. Convincingly, they have the power and right to learn for themselves (Smith, 2008).

*I will conduct self-reflective teaching and self-practice to improve my pedagogical competence. Afterward, I will have sharing sessions with other teachers. (participant 6)*

## Traits of the effective 21st-century pedagogical competence

With respect to the data obtained from the questionnaire, there were found eight major traits or qualities of 21<sup>st</sup> pedagogical competence as perceived by the participants. Such qualities are considered very important as they were chosen by more than 60% of the participants. The aforementioned traits are as follows.

**Table 1. The traits of the 21st-century pedagogical competence**

No	The traits of the 21st-century pedagogical competence	Percentage
1	Facilitating and inspiring students to learn creatively.	91.7%
2	Creating and maintaining a good classroom atmosphere.	91.7%
3	Utilizing, designing and developing digital media (video, audio, multimedia, etc) to build a good learning material, learning experience, and learning evaluation.	83.3%
4	Appreciating students for giving good ideas or efforts.	83.3%
5	Motivating students by supporting their self-efficacy.	75.0%
6	Assessing what students have learned rationally.	66.7%
7	Allowing students to have some controls over the learning process.	66.7%
8	Promoting communicative language learning and responsibility through activities and discussions.	66.7%

In general, the eleven important traits of the 21st-century pedagogical competence of an effective English teacher derived from the participants' experience of clutching the exposures about the pedagogical competence as it has been one of the fixated topics in the teacher education program.

As shown in the table, an emphasis was given to the first point, which is teachers' capability of facilitating and inspiring students to learn creatively (number 1). Almost all participants (91.7%) were in agreement that the future education requires teachers to play two pivotal roles, a facilitator and an inspirator. In other words, they complied that a teacher is not only a teacher who literally explains topics or gives materials or assignments to students but the

one who can provide substantially corroborative things in order to assist the students to optimally develop. In addition to this, the participants underlined that facilitating students' creativity will significantly result in giving students the best opportunities for achieving their best skills.

Another intensified trait is the fourth one, creating and maintaining a good classroom atmosphere. As seen in the table, almost all participants (91.7%) shared their common thoughts of how important it is to establish a supporting classroom atmosphere (number 2). A good classroom atmosphere, according to some participants, is the situational context in which there is a well-maintained communication between a teacher and students. They believed that there is a direct relationship between the kind of learning environment teachers create in their classrooms and students' achievement. Maintaining a good and supportive learning atmosphere will significantly affect the students' willingness and motivation regarding their study. In addition to this, they perceived that a good atmosphere will be established if a teacher and students are well-engaged or emotionally connected. In this case, the teacher is seen as a compassionate role model who genuinely understands the students' condition. This finding approves the finding from Wichadee (2010) in which the participants also put the 'creating and maintaining a good classroom atmosphere' as one of the highest rankings. However, this finding is slightly different from Abu-Rahma, (2008) who investigated the qualities of an effective teacher based on the view of Arabic prospective teachers. While the finding of this study showed that the participants considered 'maintaining classroom atmosphere' as a very important trait, Abu-Rahma showed that such trait is only considered important. This might be due to the cultural differences of the participants of the studies.

The total 83.3% of participants were in agreement that it is very important for teachers to

utilize, design and develop digital media (video, audio, multimedia, etc) to build a good learning material, learning experience, and learning evaluation (number 3). This means that the participants believed that possessing the ability to integrate the use of technology in future education is quintessential, especially for teachers. This is considered beneficial as the participants conceived that appropriate and effective utilization of technology will obviously ease teachers to qualify the students with skills to confront their future lives. However, this finding is contrastive to Abu-Rahma's (2008) which mentioned that utilizing the latest technology in teaching is moderately important. With respect to this finding, he further visualized that it might be due to the participants' belief that language teachers can effectively teach without having any sophisticated educational technology.

A similar percentage (83.3%) was also granted by the study subjects to 'appreciating students for giving good ideas or efforts' (number 4). This means that the participants take into account that teachers' appreciation is very crucial in the classroom. This might be due to their belief that appreciation given by a teacher will positively impact the students' willingness or motivation to do better in the classroom. It is also a common sense that everyone is glad to be praised by nature. Furthermore, since an uncomfortable atmosphere of competition can arise when children hear other children being praised while they are not, teachers, therefore, should try to hold a wider range of behavior that they would like to praise. This finding confirms the finding of Zamani & Angahari, (2016) which mentioned that giving appreciation towards students for their ideas and efforts is a very important trait of pedagogical knowledge.

The participants of the study enunciated 'motivating students by supporting their self-efficacy' (number 5) as a very important characteristic of the 21st-century pedagogical competence. This is clearly seen in table 1 that



such trait was chosen by the total 75% of the participants. According to the participants, this kind of trait holds a crucial part in the learning process since external motivation from teachers will positively affect their students' performance. In addition to this, they ratified that the students will not perform or achieve well if they are demotivated, no matter how good the learning materials are. This finding is in line with Al-Mahrooqi, (2015) who found that the participants also gave credence to the way a teacher encourages his or her students.

Finally, a parallel percentage was accredited to three different traits; 'promoting communicative language learning and responsibility through activities and discussions' (number 8), 'assessing what students have learned rationally' (number 6), and 'allowing students to have some controls over the learning process' (number 7). The three traits were considered very important by 66.7% of the participants (as seen in table 1). The fact that it is very important to promote communicative language learning might be due to the participants' belief about language as a means of communication through which we can connect to global society. This finding supports findings from Febriyanti, (2018) and Wichadee, (2010) who found that it is unquestionably important for a language teacher to possess abilities in promoting communicative language learning through well-designed activities and discussions. The seventh trait was also perceived as a very important skill for teachers to have. The participants stated that such trait is strictly related to the notion of teachers' role as a facilitator of the class. They believed that the students will discover and learn more if they do things by themselves. With regard to this trait, the subjects of the study also conceived that this will help the students sharpening their problem-solving skills. This finding is in line with Wichadee (2010) whose participants similarly acknowledged the importance of allowing students to have some

control over the learning process. At last, the sixth trait; 'assessing what students have learned rationally', was also considered very important by the participants. This supports findings from Wichadee (2010) in which teachers, as participants of the study, gave this trait the highest ranking.

## CONCLUSION

The study found that the pre-service teachers perceived that the 21st-century pedagogical competence primarily focuses on two major dimensions. Firstly, they postulated the teachers' capability of integrating technology in classrooms. Secondly, their perception was focused on teachers' ability to exploit and adjust methods and materials to meet the situational context and needs in order to furnish students with skills appropriate to their future real-life careers.

Corresponding to the pre-service teachers' strategies of cultivating their pedagogical competence, the participants would like to update their knowledge about methods, materials, media, and technology integration by attending seminars, webinars or workshops about related subjects since it allows them to get as many information as they need from particular experts. Other valuable strategies were also justified by the pre-service teachers. Those are sharing with experienced teachers and conducting self-learning and self-practice.

Some crucial traits of 21st-century pedagogical competence were also discovered. They were extended to: facilitating and inspiring students to learn creatively, utilizing, designing and developing digital media to create a good learning material, learning experience, and learning evaluation, promoting communicative language learning and responsibility through activities and discussions, creating and maintaining a good classroom atmosphere, motivating students, assessing what students have learned rationally, allowing students to have

some controls over the learning process, and giving positive reinforcement to students showing good ideas or efforts.

This study is considered profitable to be one of the references for future teachers to develop their persistence and professionalism in teaching. This study could also contribute as a reference for language teachers to rectify their pedagogical quality. More courses and training on the knowledge about encountering 21st-century education should be sequentially conducted for both pre-service and in-service teachers to keep faddish of any changes and improvement particularly in English language learning.

For future research, it is suggested to investigate how in-service teachers view the pedagogical competencies with reference to the features of the 21st-century learning or education. Moreover, future study can be conducted by investigating how effective the implementation of the pedagogical competence in the classroom is. At last, future researchers are suggested to investigate stakeholders' perception on the importance of the pedagogical competence.

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