

Perceptions of Effective English Teachers and Lecturers: Voices of Pre-Service English Teachers in an Indonesian EFL Context

Bukhori ¹, Zelly Putriani², Cut Raudhatul Miski³, Dedy Wahyudi⁴

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia; bukhori@uin-suska.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia; putr0028@flinders.edu.au

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia; cut.r.miski@gmail.com

⁴ Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia; dedy.wahyudi@uin-suska.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Understanding what constitutes an effective English teacher or lecturer is essential for shaping competent future educators, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts like Indonesia. However, limited research explores how pre-service English teachers perceive the effectiveness of both school-level teachers and university lecturers. This study employed a quantitative survey design involving 102 fifth-semester students from the English Education Department of an Indonesian university. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire comprising 60 items across four domains: organizational and communication skills, pedagogical knowledge, socio-affective skills, and English proficiency. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze responses. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers perceived both English teachers and lecturers as sharing similar core characteristics. Effective teachers were associated with stimulating interaction, clear lesson planning, and motivating learners. Effective lecturers were more strongly associated with using clear and simple language, demonstrating vocabulary mastery, and providing constructive feedback. Fairness, patience, and supportive attitudes were highly valued for both roles, while excessive focus on error correction was considered less important. The study underscores the importance of pedagogical clarity, interpersonal sensitivity, and language proficiency in English teaching across educational levels. It also highlights nuanced differences in role expectations between teachers and lecturers. These findings offer valuable insights for English teacher education programs to balance content knowledge, instructional skills, and relational competence.

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Corresponding Author:

Bukhori

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia; bukhori@uin-suska.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

As a language teacher, it is crucial to understand what it means to be an effective language teacher within the specific teaching and learning context. In the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting, English instruction requires teachers to demonstrate particular professional qualities to improve their effectiveness (Badshah, 2016). This effectiveness is not achieved solely through mastery of linguistic

competence; it also requires awareness of cultural nuances, learner diversity, and the unique challenges of teaching English in environments where the language is not used socially or professionally (Harmer, 2007; Richards, 2015). Consequently, teachers must constantly adapt their instructional strategies to engage students meaningfully, address varying proficiency levels, and create learning conditions that promote confidence, participation, and communicative fluency (Brown, 2001; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

However, realizing the principles of effective English teaching in Indonesia is particularly challenging. Since English is categorized as a foreign language, meaningful linguistic input is largely restricted to formal classroom settings. Students rarely encounter authentic English use outside the classroom, making the use of English highly dependent on teacher mediation. This situation is evident across all educational levels—from primary school to higher education—where the learning environment seldom supports natural exposure. As a result, teachers must work within these limitations while striving to create immersive and meaningful learning opportunities.

Adding to these contextual challenges, Indonesian regulations, such as Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, set professional expectations for teachers and lecturers. School teachers are expected to employ pedagogical approaches suitable for young or adolescent learners, whereas lecturers are expected to adopt andragogical principles to cater to adult learners. Despite these distinctions, the regulation does not provide differentiated characteristics or competencies specific to English teachers and English lecturers. This regulatory gap suggests a need for further evaluation of how these roles should be understood and operationalized in English language education.

To establish such an understanding, various theoretical perspectives have attempted to define the characteristics of effective teachers. Early foundational works, such as those by Kounin (1970), emphasize classroom management, monitoring, and lesson organization. Good and Brophy (1994) highlight the importance of using instructional time efficiently, meeting student needs, and creating opportunities to apply new knowledge. Likewise, Calabria (1960) and Falvey & Coniam (1999) stress the importance of subject-matter mastery, pedagogical content knowledge, strong communication skills, and dedication.

Other influential frameworks further elaborate on these characteristics. Borg (2006) identifies target language proficiency, clarity of explanation, impartiality, and availability to learners as essential qualities of effective English teachers. Suwandee (1994) similarly underscores the importance of mastering English content, simplifying complex concepts, preparing thoroughly, and establishing effective teacher–student and teacher–group interactions. Institutional standards such as those from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1987), NCATE, and TESOL also include core competencies such as knowledge of learners, language development, culture, instructional planning, assessment literacy, and professional engagement (Tellez & Waxman, 2005).

A substantial body of research also emphasizes subject-matter knowledge as a foundation for effective EFL instruction (Buchman, 1984; Lafayette, 1993; Schulz, 2000). Brosh (1996), for example, found that both teachers and learners value target language proficiency and clear instruction above other characteristics. Similarly, Park and Lee (2006) demonstrated that teachers prioritize linguistic competence, while students emphasize pedagogical skills—revealing a discrepancy between professional and learner perspectives.

In addition to pedagogical and linguistic competencies, socio-affective qualities have been identified as another essential dimension of effective teaching. Borg (2006) asserts that the interaction between teachers and students reflects socio-affective skills that support learning engagement. Research further highlights that rapport-building, emotional support, encouragement, and sensitivity enhance learners' confidence and reduce anxiety—two crucial factors in language learning success (Brosh, 1996; Molica & Nuessel, 1997). These characteristics align with theories of second language acquisition, motivation (Dörnyei, 1998), and language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Moreover, personal qualities such as warmth, enthusiasm, and tolerance also influence teacher effectiveness (Vadillio, 1999; Borg, 2006). These traits help create a learning environment where students feel

supported and empowered to express their difficulties openly, allowing teachers to respond more effectively to their needs.

Despite the extensive literature on effective teaching, studies seldom focus on how pre-service English teachers perceive the characteristics of effective English teachers and lecturers. Previous research has predominantly explored students' perceptions in school contexts rather than those of English education students who will become future teachers (e.g., Alzobiani, 2020; Ceylan & Turhan, 2010; Koc, 2013; Nontin, 2016; Rezanejad & Birjandi, 2014; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009; Suwandee, 1994; Sundari, 2016; Taylor, 1962; Virgiyanti et al., 2016; Zadeh, 2016). Yet, pre-service teachers—being simultaneously learners and future practitioners—hold valuable insights. According to Murray (2005), students can provide honest and reflective judgments about their teachers' qualities and, therefore, offer meaningful perspectives on teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, Hattie (2009) and Stronge (2018) emphasize that effective teaching involves responding to learners' needs rather than merely delivering content.

Given this background, it is important to examine how Indonesian pre-service English teachers conceptualize effective English teachers and lecturers. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What qualities define effective English teachers according to pre-service teachers?
2. What qualities define effective English lecturers according to pre-service teachers?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the traits of effective English lecturers and English teachers?

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a survey design to address the research questions. Survey research is commonly used to examine a wide range of issues and to describe broader trends within a defined population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). It is particularly useful for capturing information related to demographic shifts, educational contexts, and policy factors that shape teaching and learning (Nunan & Bailey, 2009), even when only a small proportion of the population is sampled (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In addition to its descriptive function, survey research can also serve explanatory purposes, including the examination of relationships among variables (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In this study, the questionnaire enabled the researchers to document the frequency and distribution of characteristics perceived as essential for effective English teachers and lecturers.

2.2 Research Site

The study was conducted in the English Education Department of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau State Islamic University. The department was selected because it holds an "A" accreditation rating, indicating its strong academic standards and well-established teacher education program. The researchers were also familiar with the institution, which facilitated access to participants and streamlined the data collection process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

2.3 Participants

The participants consisted of 102 fifth-semester students enrolled in the English Education Department. They were distributed across four classes: Class A (26 students), Class B (25 students), Class C (26 students), and Class D (25 students). At this stage in their studies, the participants had completed several pedagogical, language skills, and language component courses, enabling them to provide informed and relevant perspectives on the characteristics of effective English teachers and lecturers. Their accessibility and academic background made them suitable respondents for the aims of this study.

2.4 Data Collection Technique

Data were collected primarily through a closed-ended questionnaire, which is a widely used instrument for measuring participants' attitudes and perceptions, particularly in studies involving large samples (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The instrument used in this research comprised 60 items adopted from Zamani and Ahangari (2016), Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009), and Khojastehmehr and Takrimi (2009). The questionnaire demonstrated strong internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.945. A four-point Likert scale (very important, important, somewhat important, not very important) was employed to generate clear response patterns and reduce interpretive ambiguity. This instrument was selected because it represents a recent, contextually relevant tool for examining similar constructs in previous EFL studies and aligns with the Indonesian educational context.

2.5 Data Analysis Technique

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret the questionnaire data. The primary measure was the mean score for each item, calculated on a 4-point rating scale, where responses were coded as follows: 4 = very important, 3 = important, 2 = somewhat important, and 1 = not very important (Zamani & Ahangari, 2016). These mean values were then examined to determine the perceived importance of each characteristic associated with effective English teachers and lecturers.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The findings of this study present pre-service English teachers' perceptions of the characteristics that define effective English teachers and lecturers across four major aspects: organization and communication, pedagogical knowledge, socio-affective skills, and English proficiency. The results also highlight the similarities and differences between school-level English teachers and university English lecturers.

3.1.1 Characteristics of Effective English Teachers

Across the four aspects, pre-service English teachers identified several characteristics they considered essential for an effective English teacher. In terms of organization and communication, the participants emphasized the teacher's ability to stimulate interaction among students as the most important characteristic, followed by preparing appropriate materials, using easy language to enhance understanding, planning lessons clearly, and maintaining strong communication skills. Teachers who were helpful inside and outside the classroom, able to manage lessons effectively, make learning interesting, and guide students toward independent learning were also regarded highly. Conversely, using the students' native language in class was considered the least important.

From the perspective of pedagogical knowledge, the most valued characteristic was the teacher's ability to motivate students by strengthening their self-efficacy. Participants also highlighted the importance of teaching the subject matter using accessible and varied methods, setting clear learning tasks, praising students' efforts, and using diverse materials such as videos and multimedia. Rational assessment practices, clear explanations of vocabulary and grammar, and the use of real-world examples also emerged as important. The least emphasized characteristic in this category was avoiding direct criticism when students make errors.

Regarding socio-affective skills, pre-service teachers considered fairness and equal treatment as the most critical characteristic of an effective English teacher. This was followed by the importance of patience, emotional control, neat appearance, the ability to build good relationships with students, and

showing politeness and respect. Teachers who were able to motivate students, be punctual, build confidence, accept criticism, listen to students' viewpoints, and reduce anxiety were also valued. Showing interest in individual students (e.g., addressing them by name) was rated the least important within this aspect.

In terms of English proficiency, the ability to read, write, speak, and understand spoken English well was perceived as the strongest indicator of teacher effectiveness. Making lessons interesting, possessing strong vocabulary knowledge, understanding English grammar well, and creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere also ranked highly. Other valued characteristics included maintaining discipline, adjusting techniques based on student needs, supporting learner autonomy, and providing cultural insights. Emphasizing error correction received the lowest rating.

3.1.2 Characteristics of Effective English Lecturers

Similar to perceptions of effective English teachers, pre-service teachers identified a range of characteristics that define effective English lecturers. For the organization and communication aspect, using simple and comprehensible language was considered the most important characteristic. This was followed closely by clearly planned lessons with explicit objectives, strong communication skills, well-prepared materials, and the ability to make learning engaging. Lecturers who were helpful beyond class time, able to foster student interaction, manage class time effectively, analyze student needs, and guide students toward independent learning were also valued. Maintaining classroom discipline through authority was considered the least important.

In the domain of pedagogical knowledge, the ability to teach content in ways accessible to all learners—using varied instructional methods—was considered the strongest attribute. Supporting students' self-efficacy, providing continuous feedback, and explaining vocabulary and grammar with relevant real-life examples also ranked highly. Additional valued characteristics included setting clear tasks, using multimedia resources, praising student effort, and rationally assessing achievement. Avoiding direct criticism of errors was again the least emphasized characteristic.

With regard to socio-affective skills, fairness and equality were once more ranked highest. Pre-service teachers also valued lecturers who could make learning interesting, build students' confidence, show patience, maintain emotional control, and present themselves neatly. The ability to develop good rapport, respect students' personalities, listen to their ideas, and accept criticism were also rated highly. Similar to perceptions of teachers, having an interest in individual students was considered the least important trait.

For English proficiency, knowing English vocabulary well and creating an entertaining atmosphere for class activities were identified as the top two characteristics. Making lessons interesting, possessing good grammar knowledge, and demonstrating strong English skills across modalities were also viewed as important. Additional characteristics included maintaining discipline, supporting autonomous learning, adjusting teaching techniques to student needs, providing cultural knowledge, and using appropriate evaluation tools. As with English teachers, emphasizing error correction was considered the least important.

3.1.3 Similarities and Differences between Effective English Teachers and Lecturers

Overall, the findings show that pre-service teachers perceived similar sets of characteristics as important for both effective English teachers and effective English lecturers. Across all four aspects, fairness, clarity, motivation, engaging delivery, strong communication, and solid language proficiency appeared as recurring themes. However, differences emerged in the degree of emphasis given to each characteristic.

For example, in the organization and communication aspect, interaction-stimulation was most valued for teachers, whereas the use of easy and clear language was most emphasized for lecturers. In the pedagogical knowledge aspect, motivating students was the top priority for teachers, while

accessibility of teaching methods ranked highest for lecturers. Meanwhile, the socio-affective aspect showed strong alignment, with fairness and equal treatment being the most important for both groups. For English proficiency, teachers were expected to demonstrate comprehensive English skills across modalities, whereas lecturers were expected to possess strong vocabulary mastery.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that pre-service English teachers generally perceive effective English teachers and lecturers as sharing similar core characteristics, although they assign different levels of importance to specific attributes. When these findings are connected to the theoretical concepts reviewed in the literature, several key points emerge regarding the dimensions of teacher effectiveness in the EFL context.

3.2.1 Organization and Communication Skills

The study shows that interactional ability, clarity of lesson planning, and effective communication are ranked highly for both teachers and lecturers. This aligns with the theoretical perspectives of Good and Brophy (1994) and Kounin (1970), who emphasize smooth lesson flow, clarity, appropriate pacing, and maximization of instructional time as markers of effective teachers. Pre-service teachers' preference for teachers and lecturers who use easy and comprehensible language mirrors Suwantee's (1994) findings that clarity and comprehensibility are essential in EFL classrooms. Additionally, the emphasis on preparing appropriate materials resonates with Falvey and Coniam's (1999) view that pedagogical content knowledge must integrate content expertise and effective material design.

Interestingly, the finding that using the students' native language is considered one of the least important characteristics reflects the contemporary communicative language teaching (CLT) orientation, which encourages maximal use of English in classroom interaction (TESOL/NCATE standards). This also reinforces Borg's (2006) emphasis on sustaining learners' interest through English-medium engagement.

3.2.2 Pedagogical Knowledge

The dominant characteristics identified in this category—motivating students, varying teaching methods, setting clear learning tasks, and providing feedback—strongly correspond to Shulman's (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Shulman argues that effective teachers should be able to present subject matter in comprehensible and engaging ways, a pattern clearly reflected in the participants' responses. The high ranking of *self-efficacy support* and *clear instructional outcomes* supports Badshah's (2016) and Park & Lee's (2006) findings that pedagogical knowledge is often more highly valued by students than teachers themselves—a mismatch also noted by Ramazani (2014). The present study confirms this tendency, as pre-service teachers' ratings suggest that how teachers teach matters more than what teachers know. Furthermore, the relatively lower importance given to *avoiding direct criticism* suggests that these students may perceive constructive corrective feedback as necessary for language learning, provided that it is delivered respectfully—aligning with socio-affective research (Krashen, 1985; Oxford, 1990).

3.2.3 Socio-Affective Skills

Both teachers and lecturers are expected to treat students fairly, be patient, remain calm, and build students' confidence. These findings strongly echo the socio-affective emphasis in Borg (2006), Brosh (1996), and Molica & Nuessel (1997), who argue that supportive interpersonal behavior is indispensable in foreign language teaching. Pre-service teachers also value lecturer–student relational attributes such as politeness and proper communication, reflecting Feldman's (1976) findings that students appreciate approaches that are respectful, friendly, and open to dialogue. The slightly lower ranking of “knowing

students personally” suggests a shift toward valuing professionalism and effective instruction over personal familiarity. These patterns confirm the importance of affective classroom climate in EFL settings, particularly in Indonesia, where limited exposure to English outside the classroom requires teachers to build positive, motivating learning environments.

3.2.4 English Proficiency

Proficiency-related characteristics such as grammar mastery, vocabulary knowledge, fluency, and the ability to make lessons interesting are also central to participants’ perceptions. This aligns with Velez-Rendon (2002) and Brosh (1996), who highlight that strong language proficiency underpins teachers’ instructional confidence and effectiveness. The higher emphasis on vocabulary mastery among lecturers may reflect the expectation that university-level instruction demands deeper linguistic understanding. Meanwhile, the lower ranking of error correction emphasis is consistent with contemporary communicative approaches, which prioritize fluency and meaning-focused interaction. Overall, the findings reaffirm that English proficiency remains foundational but is not the sole determinant of teacher effectiveness.

3.2.5 Similarities and Differences Between Teachers and Lecturers

The comparative analysis shows that while both groups share similar core qualities, pre-service teachers prioritize different traits depending on the educational level. For school teachers, the most valued trait is the ability to stimulate student interaction, consistent with communicative language teaching expectations in early-level education. For lecturers, clarity, comprehensibility, and the ability to make complex subject matter accessible become more critical—aligning with andragogy principles, where learners are expected to process abstract academic content. This distinction supports the theoretical position of NBPTS (1987) and adult learning theories, suggesting that effective teaching at higher education levels requires deeper content knowledge, analytic explanation, and the ability to engage mature learners in reflective and autonomous learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored pre-service English teachers’ perceptions of effective English teachers and lecturers, focusing on four key dimensions: organization and communication skills, pedagogical knowledge, socio-affective skills, and English proficiency. The findings reveal that while foundational qualities are shared across both roles, pre-service teachers prioritize different characteristics based on the educational context. English teachers are primarily valued for their ability to engage students, communicate clearly, and manage classrooms, whereas lecturers are distinguished by their clarity in presenting complex content and using accessible language for adult learners. Socio-affective attributes—such as fairness, patience, and the ability to build student confidence—emerged as the most highly regarded across both groups. These results reinforce existing literature on the centrality of pedagogical expertise, communicative clarity, and interpersonal skills in teacher effectiveness. However, the study is limited by its reliance on self-reported data from a specific group of pre-service teachers, which may not fully capture diverse perspectives across different institutions or regions. Future research should consider longitudinal or comparative studies involving in-service teachers and students to provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective teaching practices in varied EFL contexts.

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