

# Understanding Reasons Behind Student Teachers’ Pedagogical Decisions

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## Abstract

This qualitative case study is aimed at exploring the pedagogical decision making of English student teachers in planning and implementing a lesson that focused on listening and reading skills. We involved six student teachers in our study, all of whom attended a one-year teacher professional education program (Pendidikan Profesi Guru) in one university in Indonesia. We collected the data by examining the student teachers’ lesson plans, observing their peer teaching, doing an oral reflection with them, and studying their reflective journals. The student teachers appeared to show reasonable pedagogical decisions in terms of formulating comprehensive indicators of competences, employing various teaching techniques, preparing a number of texts and creative media, and trying to use English as the medium of instruction, which appeared to result from their understanding of relevant pedagogical principles as well as learning from the experience and feedback from lecturers and mentor teachers. However, we found issues concerning linguistic accuracy of the texts and the scope of the comprehension exercises. There also appeared to be lack of probing and higher order questioning from the student teachers during the class discussion of the exercises. From the students’ reflective journals, we found that these issues seem to be grounded in the student teachers’ lack of knowledge on the micro skills of listening and reading, and their conception of questions and feedback. Another main issue with the student teachers’ pedagogical decision making concerns the assessment, which relates to the potentially confusing dichotomy between “knowledge” and “skills” domains in the English syllabus of the 2013 curriculum applied in Indonesia.

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## 1 Introduction

### *1.1 Teacher professional education program in Indonesia: Current policy and implementation*

In an attempt to improve the quality of teacher education in Indonesia, the Indonesian government has, for several years now, conducted the one-year teacher professional education program (Pendidikan Profesi Guru – henceforth PPG) which aims to produce professional teachers with the competences in

planning and implementing a lesson, assessing student learning, following up assessment results, giving guidance and training to students, and conducting research and other continuous professional development activities (Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, 2017).

Only a number of selected universities receive the mandate from the government to hold the PPG program, and seats for students are limited. Upon graduation, students of the program will be certified as professional teachers. This PPG program is currently the only teacher certification scheme conducted by the government for pre-service and in-service teachers, while before, certification was done through three alternative schemes: direct certification for teachers with higher civil service rank, portfolio assessment, and a 90-hour in-service teacher retraining program held intensively in ten days (Syahril, 2016). Before the certification programs started in 2007, it was the four-year teacher training colleges that issued a teaching certificate for its graduates. The establishment of the one-year PPG program for bachelor graduates to fulfil teacher licensure requirements is expected to address issues with the previous teacher certification schemes and the varying standards of teacher training colleges. It is also in line with the conceptualization of teaching as “a highly complex kind of work, requiring specialized knowledge and skill and deserving of the same status and standing as traditional professions, like law and medicine” (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011, p. 185).

### ***1.2 PPG for English teachers: Cultivating pedagogical decision-making skills***

The PPG program for English teachers has been running since 2013. Based on the government regulation, the program is intended for both pre-service and in-service teachers who have earned their bachelor's degree; however, from 2013 to 2017, the PPG for English subject was only attended by alumni of the SM-3T program, a program which provides an opportunity for bachelor graduates to teach for one year in the frontier, outermost and disadvantaged regions in Indonesia. The one-year PPG is held intensively over two semesters, one semester for subject-specific pedagogy (SSP) workshops and the other one semester for teaching internships and action research.

The SSP workshops mainly involve weekly lesson planning and peer teaching, where the students are actively engaged in discussion and hands-on activities to exercise and promote their pedagogical decision-making skills in developing instructional materials and media and designing learning activities as well as assessment instruments for English lessons in secondary school context (see Widiati & Hayati, 2015 for further description of the PPG). Their skills in making pedagogical decisions are reflected and assessed through their lesson plans and peer teaching performance. The peer teaching appears to be one of the crucial components of the PPG workshops. In this weekly session, the students make a lesson plan for secondary school learners and practice teaching their peers using the lesson plan. They are thus expected to make pedagogical decisions in planning and implementing classroom instruction. The peer teaching sessions are supervised by one lecturer and one mentor teacher from junior or senior high school who are expected to provide them with feedback on how they could continuously improve their pedagogical decisions to make a more effective lesson.

## **2 Literature review on pedagogical decision-making**

Understanding teachers' decision-making process is an important part of teacher cognition research, which has become essential in the “conceptualizations of second language teacher education” (Richards, 2008, p. 166). Borg (2003), one of the leading researchers of teacher cognition, points out that “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (p. 81).

There are different kinds of knowledge that might and should contribute to teachers' instructional or pedagogical decisions. Day (1993) argues that the knowledge base of ESOL teacher education programs consist of four elements, that is, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and support knowledge, while Stenberg (2010) emphasizes the importance of

grounding pedagogical decisions on self-knowledge, namely, “personal values, beliefs and understandings”, or else teachers’ decisions might be “governed by unexamined assumptions, stereotypes, fixed beliefs or even fears” (p. 331). Similarly, according to Ur (2013), teachers should make informed decisions based on their teaching reflections and relevant literature on “pedagogical and educational issues in general, sociology, cognitive psychology, and so forth, as well as linguistics and SLA research” (p. 470). Furthermore, Ur (2013) strongly advocates situated methodology, which is also greatly affected by teachers’ self-knowledge and preference, but more importantly, it should be driven by learners’ and classroom needs and characteristics and the question of how students can best learn, as well as the stakeholder needs. In relation to learner needs, Basthomi (2003), in his study on the teaching of English literature in Indonesia, emphasizes the importance of involving the students in designing classroom activities to promote student engagement and cater to the multicultural Indonesian society.

For student teachers, other external factors, such as curriculum and input and feedback given by teacher educators and cooperating teachers might also come into play when they make pedagogical decisions. In line with this, Smagorinsky, Rhym and Moore (2013) illustrate how teacher candidates are surrounded by the so called “competing centers of gravity” as various forces, which might, to a certain extent, be contradictory, pull these teachers in different directions (p. 148). Smagorinsky et al. (2013) further elaborate that these forces may be in the form of theories they learn from university, curriculum traditions, cooperating or mentor teacher guidance and pressures, demands from administrators, colleagues’ input and also pressures, and many others. Those forces seem to also be present among the students of PPG in the Indonesian context carrying out their peer teaching, where they are struggling with understanding the concepts of the newly implemented curriculum, the different perspectives of the lecturers that guide them in the university, and the comments by their classmates (see e.g. Widiati & Hayati, 2015). Findings of some studies also indicate that student teachers’ decisions might be largely driven by orientation on student learning outcomes or their own personal experiences. For example, Burn, Hagger, Mutton and Everton (2003) did a research with 25 student teachers who taught English, Mathematics and Science in England. One of the researchers’ points of analysis was the reasons that the student teachers offered for their teaching decisions. The findings suggested that the research subjects had “a high level of concern for pupils’ learning and an awareness of the complexity of teaching from very early in their training” (p. 309), which, according to the researchers, challenges the concepts of development of student teachers’ thinking which is said to progress from focusing on oneself, to focusing on tasks and teaching situations, and to finally considering student learning. In EFL or ESL contexts, Lee (2010) carried out a study on a number of Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) to examine the kinds of experiences that have influenced their classroom practice. She found that the participants drew largely on their past linguistic and cultural experiences as second language learners as well as their experiences of overseas education. Based on the findings, Lee (2010) suggested that “teacher education programs should encourage future NNEST students to examine their varied linguistic, educational, and cultural experience in relation to theories of language acquisition, language teaching, and curriculum design” so that they can explore “new perspectives in second language learning and teaching” (p. 37).

### **3 Significance and purpose of the study**

Exploring reasons for student teachers’ pedagogical decisions from the perspectives of the students themselves is essential, as it helps teacher educators understand their issues better and offer useful solutions. As Richards (1998) states that one important goal of teaching internship for student teachers is to “develop the pedagogical reasoning skills they need when they begin teaching” (p. 78). Similarly, Johnson (1999) asserts that this pedagogical reasoning is the core of “both understanding teaching and learning to teach” (p. 1). However, during the peer teaching sessions in PPG, it seems to be rare that lecturers who supervise student teachers explore the student teachers’ thoughts or encourage the students to reflect on why they do what they do. When giving feedback to the students, lecturers might just make assumptions on why student teachers make certain decisions. In line with

this, a research was done by Ong'ondo and Borg (2011) on student teachers in the Kenyan context, in which they found that student teachers did not adequately develop the pedagogical reasoning skills as expected from them, as they focused more on pleasing the supervisors and passing the program, while the supervisors did not provide feedback that was substantial enough – in that it was “mainly evaluative, directive and focused on general, rather than subject-specific pedagogy” (p. 510). Similarly, Kim (2008) concluded, based on her study of email responses of forty four pre-service teachers, that teaching practicum is a process of confidence building through interaction with advisors and students. It can be made more meaningful and productive by student teachers' receiving specific feedback and reflecting on their experiences.

The present study thus aims to investigate English student teachers' decision-making process when planning and implementing classroom instructions. These decisions are referred to as pedagogical or instructional decisions. It intends to examine the right and not so right decisions that English student teachers make during their teaching practicum, and the reasons or contributing factors that they have in mind when making the decisions. This study seeks to explore the students' thoughts of their classroom practices and how internal factors, such as, their knowledge and experiences, and external factors, including curriculum, materials, students, supervising lecturers, mentor teachers, colleagues, and others, might affect their pedagogical decisions, as Burn et al. (2003) state that teacher educators need to “provide opportunities for beginners to explain their aims and to share with us the thinking that informs their teaching decisions and the evaluations they make of their own practice” (p. 329). The study contributes to the relatively limited literature on English student teachers' pedagogical decisions which are based on in-depth studies. It also provides insights into the discussion on the outcomes of English teacher education programs and how the contents of the program can be further improved to cater to the needs of the students.

## **4 Method**

### **4.1 Research setting and participants**

The study took place in a teacher training institution in Indonesia which had received the mandate to conduct PPG. It was done in the first semester where the PPG students had their subject-specific pedagogy (SSP) workshops from Monday to Friday, culminating in peer teaching sessions every Friday. There were in total 15 PPG students in the year when the study was conducted, consisting of 11 females and four males. All of them held a bachelor's degree from English Language Teaching study programs with a GPA ranging from 3.2 to 3.7. They graduated from nine different universities, two public and seven private universities. Twelve of the students graduated from private universities with similar levels of reputation. The students' ages ranged from 25 to 27 when the study was conducted. All of them were alumni of the SM-3T program where they taught for one year in the frontier, outermost and disadvantaged regions in Indonesia.

Considering the homogeneous demographic characteristics of the students and the scheduling of PPG, we decided to use convenience sampling, which means “the research participants are selected based on their ease of availability” and “because they were readily accessible” (Given, 2008, p. 124). Therefore, out of the 15 PPG students, six were recruited as participants of the study, because they conducted the peer teaching under the researchers' supervision. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, these six participants will be referred to in this paper as student teacher (ST) A, ST B, ST C, ST D, ST E, and ST F. Although the recruitment used convenience sampling, the research participants represented the variations of demographic characteristics of the PPG students in that batch. Five of them are females and one is a male (ST F). Two graduated from public universities (ST A and ST C) for their bachelor's degree in ELT, and the rest came from four different private universities.

### **4.2 Source of data**

#### **4.2.1 The peer teaching session**

Data were collected during one peer teaching session where the participants taught a lesson planned for 10<sup>th</sup> graders. At that time, they had already undergone seven sessions of peer teaching using lesson plans intended for 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders. We therefore expected that when the data were collected at the eighth session of peer teaching, the participants had become quite familiar with making pedagogical decisions and receiving feedback for their decisions. The average scores of the participants in the peer teaching and lesson planning for the previous seven sessions range from 80 to 85. The scores were given by a lecturer and a mentor teacher who supervised the peer teaching.

#### **4.2.2 *The lesson plans***

The lesson plans the participants prepared were designed for a 90-minute class but implemented in half-an-hour peer teachings; therefore, some parts of the lesson plans were carried out only briefly. The lessons covered the following text types: descriptive, narrative, recount, and song. The language skills focused on when the data were collected were either listening or reading. The student teachers' lesson plans were based on the 2013 English curriculum that currently applies for secondary schools in Indonesia. To harmonize perceptions, here is a brief overview of the curriculum. The curriculum consists of four kinds of core competences, that is, spiritual attitude, social attitude, knowledge and skills. It uses text-based or genre-based approaches (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). The core competences of knowledge and skill are further broken down into basic competences while the other core competences do not have explicit basic competences but need to be developed indirectly in the English subject and integrated in the teaching and learning process of English (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). The basic competences for the "knowledge" and "skills" should be accompanied with indicators to measure their achievement. A lesson plan includes these two types of basic competences with a focus on a certain type of text and the combination between the basic competences reflect the focus skill of the lesson, whether it is listening, reading, speaking and writing, though the teaching and learning activities might involve integrated skills. For clearer explanation, Table 1 shows a brief mapping of the English curriculum for the 10<sup>th</sup> graders of Indonesian senior high schools. The basic competences that the participants chose to develop into lesson plans and taught during the peer teaching are highlighted.

**Table 1. A brief mapping of the English curriculum for the 10<sup>th</sup> graders of Indonesian senior high schools\***

Basic Competences of "Knowledge"	Basic Competences of "Skills"	Text type	Skill Focus
Apply the social function, text structure and language features of transactional and interpersonal texts based on the contexts of their uses	Construct short and simple transactional and interpersonal texts in spoken and written forms with correct and appropriate social function, text structure and language features based on the context	<b>Transactional texts</b> expressing self identity and family relationships, and expressing intentions <b>Interpersonal texts</b> expressing and responding to congratulations and extended compliments, and expressing past events	Listening Speaking Reading Writing
Differentiate the social functions, text structures and language features of some spoken and written functional texts of the same type or genre based on the contexts of their uses	Understand the contextual meanings of short and simple functional texts in spoken and written forms in relation to the social function, text structure and language features	<b>Functional texts</b> descriptive, recount, and narrative	Listening or Reading
Differentiate the social functions, text structures and language features of some spoken and written functional texts of the same type or genre based on the contexts of their uses	Construct short and simple functional texts in spoken and written forms by paying attention to the social function, text structure and language features with correct and appropriate social function, text structure and language features based on the context	<b>Functional texts</b> descriptive, recount, and narrative	Writing or Speaking
Differentiate the social functions, text structures and language features of some spoken and written specific functional texts in the form of announcements based on the contexts of their uses	Understand the contextual meanings of short and simple, spoken and written functional texts in the form of announcements in relation to the social function, text structure and language features	<b>Specific functional text</b> Announcement	Listening or Reading
Differentiate the social functions, text structures and language features of some spoken and written specific functional texts in the form of announcements based on the contexts of their uses	Construct short and simple functional texts in the form of announcements in spoken and written forms with correct and appropriate social function, text structure and language features based on the context	<b>Specific functional text</b> Announcement	Writing or Speaking
Interpret the social function and language features of song lyrics related to the life of senior high school teenagers	Understand the contextual meanings of song lyrics in relation to the social function and language features	<b>Specific functional text</b> Song	Listening Reading

\*Translated from Ministry of Education and Culture (2016) with some adaptations without altering the meaning

### ***4.3 Procedures for data collection and analysis***

#### ***4.3.1 Examining the lesson plans***

The procedures to collect and analyze the data on the student teachers' pedagogical decisions and the reasons for their decisions were as follows. First, we asked the participants to submit the lesson plans that they were going to use for their eighth session of peer teaching intended for 10<sup>th</sup> graders. We then examined the lesson plans, going through all the elements: the basic competences, indicators of the basic competences (lesson objectives), instructional materials and media, teaching and learning activities, assessment, and worksheets attached. We used a rubric to see if all parts of the lesson plans had been well aligned with the guidelines the participants had learned throughout the SSP workshops. The rubric consists of ten criteria: (1) indicators of competences are clearly formulated, and are measurable and achievable; (2) instructional materials are in line with the lesson objectives and students' characteristics; (3) instructional materials are organized systematically and are suitable with the time allocation; (4) instructional materials are valid and accurate; (5) instructional media are in line with the lesson objectives, materials, and student characteristics; (6) teaching and learning activities are systematically planned; (7) teaching and learning activities encourage students' active participation in developing their higher order thinking skills; (8) teaching and learning activities are in line with the lesson objectives; (9) instruments for assessment are valid and complete; (10) instruments for assessment are in line with the lesson objectives. We categorized the elements of the lesson plans into two: meeting the criteria, and not really meeting the criteria. The elements that we put in the second category became the pedagogical decisions to explore further in the oral reflection and reflective journals.

#### ***4.3.2 Observing the peer teaching***

After examining the participants' lesson plans, we observed the eighth session of their peer teaching. We examined the peer teaching using a rubric consisting of various aspects: how the participants helped the students connect the new materials to the previous ones, how they contextualized the materials, how they delivered the materials (whether they demonstrated adequate mastery of the materials), how they made use of the instructional media, how they carried out the teaching and learning activities (whether the activities were systematically organized and were in line with the lesson objectives), how they managed the class and time allocation, how they encouraged student participation, how they gave reinforcement, how they monitored the students' learning progress, how they assessed the students, how they used written and spoken language in the class, and how they did reflection with the students. During the observation, we made notes on the issues that we would explore further in the oral reflection and the participants' reflective journals.

#### ***4.3.3 Exploring reasons for the pedagogical decisions***

After identifying the issues regarding the participants' pedagogical decisions in their lesson plans and peer teaching, we explored the students' thoughts and feelings concerning the issues. We did this in two ways. First, we conducted an oral reflection with the participants after their peer teaching session, using the notes we made on the lesson plans and peer teaching as our guide. During the oral reflection, we talked with the participants, trying to get them to reflect on their peer teaching where they identified the good points in their lessons and areas that needed improvements, as well as what had made them decide to do certain things during the lessons. We also asked them to write a reflective journal at home and send it to us by email the next day. The journals were written by the participants using the format that we gave which allowed us to explore the participants' thoughts on their decisions concerning various aspects of lesson planning and implementation and particularly the reasons for their decisions. The use of oral reflection and reflective journals to collect data on the same issue, that is, the participants' reasons for their pedagogical decisions, is a way for us to do data triangulation to

gain comprehensive understanding of the phenomena (Patton, 2001) as some people might not be too comfortable sharing their ideas orally.

#### **4.4 *Qualitative data analysis***

Our data were therefore in the form of verbal descriptions which required the use of qualitative data analysis. As we have described earlier, we already somewhat analyzed the notes on document study and peer teaching observations before we did the reflections. This is in line with what Schutt (2011) says, that “the analysis of qualitative research notes begins in the field, at the time of observation, interviewing, or both, as the researcher identifies problems and concepts that appear likely to help in understanding the situation” (p. 325). The results of the oral reflection and the participants' reflective journals were also qualitatively analyzed. It started off with the first stage of content analysis as explained in Gillham (2000), that is, deciding on the categories of data. The categories were derived from the issues found in the lesson planning and peer teaching as well as the different factors that contribute to pedagogical decisions as reviewed from the literature, such as, teacher knowledge, learner factors, and curriculum. The next step of data analysis was to put the data into the appropriate categories. In doing so, the researchers went through the processes of data reduction and display (two of the three main components of Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework of qualitative data analysis). The last stage in data analysis is drawing and verifying conclusions. The conclusions of the study were reached by triangulation, making connections between variables after they had been classified, by examining “regularities, variations and singularities in the data” and trying to find patterns (Dey, 1993, p. 47).

### **5 Findings and discussion**

In this section, we present the findings on the pedagogical decisions made by the participants of the study in their lesson planning and peer teaching based on the results of examining the lesson plan documents, observing the peer teaching, conducting the oral reflections with the participants, and studying their reflective journals. We also discuss important points of the findings in light of relevant literature.

#### **5.1 *Pedagogical decisions in lesson planning and reasons for the decisions***

The results of the document analysis reveal some good pedagogical decisions in the lesson plans that the participants had developed. One seemingly good point was the way they formulated the competence indicators (lesson objectives) by referring to the basic competences established in the national curriculum. For example, four of the participants chose to teach functional texts of descriptive, narrative, and recount types, focusing on listening or reading, dealing with competences of “differentiating the social functions, text structures, and language features of some spoken and written functional texts of the same type or genre based on the contexts of their uses,” and of “understanding the contextual meanings of short and simple functional texts in spoken and written forms in relation to the social functions, text structures, and language features.” Another participant used songs as the main material with lesson objectives of “interpreting the social function and language features of song lyrics related to the life of senior high school teenagers,” and “understanding the contextual meanings of song lyrics in relation to the social function and language features.” Before the research was conducted, these student teachers used to formulate lesson objectives dwelling on the generic structure and language features of the text and hardly mentioned those related to understanding various information in the text such as finding main ideas or specific and detailed information although the lessons were aiming to develop listening or reading skills. They were also confused about how to interpret some of the competences particularly those from the curriculum. However, the results of analyzing the lesson plans indicated that some of this confusion had been sorted out as they went through the sessions of PPG workshops. They already put in their lesson objectives some points about developing



ability to understand various information in the text and made them more operational and logical, which reflects how these subjects managed to make sense of the standard competences that had been confusing to them at the first place.

This improved competence might have been partly attributed to the PPG activities which were mostly in the form of workshops. The workshops enabled the PPG students to improve their pedagogical competences as there were plenty opportunities for them to discuss their lesson plans with lecturers as well as with peers. They seemed to establish what Brown and Lee (2015, p. 541) cite as communities of practice where the PPG students played their roles as practicing professionals building an atmosphere of mutual inter-dependence, continuously learning from each other. The workshop format is likely to trigger the development of the PPG participants' skill in carrying out academic interactions with the professional community (Johnson, 2006). The workshop experience can fruitfully help the PPG students see themselves as active participants in language learning and teaching (Freeman, 2002 in Macalister, 2012, p. 99).

Another good point in the participants' pedagogical decisions concerned the selection of the materials and the development of media. They had prepared quite a number of texts for a 90-minute lesson focusing on listening or reading, which helped ensure adequate modelling and practice for their students. The texts they selected were varied in terms of topics and themes. Regarding teaching media, during the PPG workshop sessions, the subjects prepared some creative media, such as word cards, sticky board, crossword puzzles, audiovisual materials, pictures, and power point presentations. In terms of teaching techniques/strategies, the student teachers were also found to demonstrate high creativity in designing various kinds of teaching activities, such as, cooperative learning techniques, individual, group, and whole class activities, jigsaw, games, and so forth.

Based on the oral reflection, they mentioned that they learned the strategies and media from the workshop sessions they had on instructional media development and also their previous experience teaching in remote areas. They appeared to have instilled an understanding that to make their classes more engaging, they would need to make their lessons varied in terms of activities and media. Like most teachers nowadays, these PPG students did not follow a single method throughout the program. In developing the teaching and learning activities and tasks, they were trained to employ various teaching techniques and strategies which they considered to be the best and most appropriate in regard to their instructional objectives, materials, and media. Furthermore, throughout the workshop sessions, these PPG students were also taught to "[t]hink of the lesson as a series of separate but linked activities" (Scrivener, 2011, p. 33). This means that the activities they designed should be appropriately selected and clearly organized to form a sequence of activities in class.

Apart from the good decisions, we also identified some issues concerning the student teachers' lesson plans, and we explored these issues further by conducting an oral reflection with the participants and examining their reflective journals. First of all, although the student teachers in general could already formulate relatively good indicators of the basic competences, the indicators did not seem to be translated well in the assessment they designed and described. In most of the lesson plans examined, for example, the student teachers seemed to try to measure speaking or writing skills, not understanding of the texts while they were actually focusing on teaching listening or reading skills. This can be seen from the speaking or writing scoring rubrics they developed, which were more relevant for measuring the productive skills of speaking or writing. The main reason for this pedagogical decision regarding assessment appeared to be the confusion of some of the student teachers with the dichotomy between "knowledge" and "skills" domains in the concept of the 2013 curriculum for English subject. For example, ST A, ST B, and ST E state in their journals (quoted verbatim):

In assessing "pengetahuan" [knowledge], I used written test in order to assess the students' reading comprehension. Then, in assessing "keterampilan" [skills], I used diagram venn and summarizing. (ST A)

For assessing knowledge. Because my skill is reading so I focus on their ability to catch the information from the text. And written test like matching the words and identify the text by comparing the content of those two texts can cover all aspects that I need to assess like the vocabularies and their ability to identify those two texts. For assessing the skill. Because it is reading so I check the students' comprehension by giving essay questions. In this activity include about the topic and detail information about the text. For

retelling activity, I check the students' comprehension through their way to retell the text to other. Will they deliver or tell the information in the text or not? (ST B)

For assessing knowledge. I used puzzle to give new vocabulary for the students. And matching the description with the picture can make the students understand about the content of the text. Then, the statement about true or false can check the students understanding about all of the information in the whole text. For assessing the skill, because it is reading so I check the students' comprehension by asking the students to fill the chart. (ST E)

It can be seen from the data that the student teachers mostly associated the written test with objective questions to measure reading comprehension skill with knowledge, while the skill, according to their reflective journals and lesson plans, is assessed using essay questions, chart and diagram completion, retelling, and summary writing. The assessments described in the student teachers' lesson plans for both knowledge and skill seem to be talking about the same thing, that is, assessing reading, using various kinds of exercises, but the student teachers appeared to be confused with the dichotomy between knowledge and skill in the 2013 Curriculum. The concept of the curriculum involves the KSA (knowledge-skill-attitude) learning outcomes; however, with English subject for secondary schools, misunderstanding often arises as to what constitutes knowledge and what refers to skills. In PPG, prior to the research, the student teachers often associated listening or reading activities with developing and assessing knowledge, whereas speaking or writing activities with developing and assessing skill. By nature, however, English subject is about developing and assessing knowledge and skills, which are hard to distinctively separate. The students eventually improved their understanding in this regard through the PPG workshop sessions, but some of the confusions appeared to remain, particularly in designing assessment procedure as illustrated here.

Another issue found in the student teachers' lesson plans concerns the texts they prepared. As mentioned earlier, the texts were varied, which was a good thing, but quite a number of the texts and the comprehension questions written in the lesson plans contained language inaccuracies. Regarding exercises, the listening and reading comprehension exercises the student teachers included in their lesson plans were mainly in the form of short-answer questions; unfortunately, exploration of other types of exercises, such as, true-false, cloze text, table and note completion, multiple choice, etc. appeared to be lacking. The exercises in the lesson plans focused more on generic structure and communicative function, but not on the various information in the text. In other words, although the lesson plan indicates the importance of understanding the language features of the text, the exercises hardly involved any discussion on understanding key words, figurative language in the case of songs, and more complex grammar in the text.

In their reflective journals, the student teachers explained the reasons for their choice of materials. They believed the materials they had planned would help them in developing the targeted competence of their students. Some of them were also making adaptations of the material they found on the internet to suit the students' needs. However, due to the limitations of their English skills, they sometimes failed to notice the errors in some of the texts they used. Besides, they also had not yet developed adequate ability to recognize texts that use natural and correct English as well as legitimate websites having quality resources. Their understanding of the micro-skills of reading and listening and ways to develop and assess them through various kinds of exercises also appeared to be lacking. In fact, in their reflective journals and oral reflection, the student teachers did not mention this as part of the reasons for their decision in selecting materials. This is in line with what Rezaei and Hashim (2013) pointed out; that teachers, especially in EFL contexts, are often not aware of the learners' process and problems in listening comprehension; as a result, the common practice in the class is that they focus on the outcome of the listening rather than the process.

We can also see that the challenge the student teachers faced was how to make the very best use of the teaching materials. As highlighted by Brown and Lee (2015, p. 228), various forms of materials are meant to support and enhance classroom activities. They further imply that the problem with new teachers, as the ones joining this PPG program, concerns finding creative use of the textbooks, instead of merely choosing or selecting them. For example, once selecting the materials, these student teachers need to continuously learn how to develop learning activities and tasks from the mate-

rials after selecting the appropriate texts, they should explore how the texts work, not only exploring the linguistic features, the text structure, and the social function, but also going beyond by developing their students' skills in comprehending various information in the texts. The PPG workshops need to help them explore more how the materials they have selected can be geared towards particular students in terms of level, ability, and goals.

## ***5.2 Pedagogical decisions in peer teaching and reasons for the decisions***

As with the lesson plans, we were also trying to identify the good points and issues with the pedagogical decisions the student teachers made during the peer teaching. A couple of good things that we were able to note were, first of all, the student teachers used classroom English pretty intensively and communicatively. In addition, in line with the lesson plans, the student teachers demonstrated creativity in using different techniques and media. In the oral reflection they mentioned that they were intrinsically motivated to use English, and they also received encouragement from their peers and lecturers. The use of English by the student teachers of PPG particularly during teaching is, in fact, strongly required by the lecturers of the program in general. The reason behind this requirement was that many of the lecturers often observed during pre-service or in-service teacher training programs they were involved in, that generally once becoming teachers, many tended not to maximize the use of English in the classroom for a number of reasons. Therefore, for these PPG students, the use of English as a medium of instruction in peer teaching appears compulsory. Regarding this, the student teachers might also have held an insightful belief about successful language learners, that it is essential to practice a lot using the language, as also highlighted by Wong (2010, p. 124). Their ample use of classroom English when doing peer teachings can be of a twofold function: improving their own English proficiency and providing for their prospective students as much language input as possible. When teachers use a lot of English in the classroom, students get comprehensible input through listening activities. Teachers' consistently using classroom English means providing their students with a steady diet of hearing and understanding the target language, which has been proven useful in language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2001).

A number of issues were found in the peer teachings the student teachers conducted. First of all, although they already had indicators in their lesson plans concerning the students' expected ability to understand various types of information in the text as the lesson focused on developing the listening or reading skills, the actual lessons put a great emphasis merely on the communicative functions and generic structures of the texts used. Furthermore, while the lesson plan indicates the importance of understanding the language features of the texts, the lessons hardly involved any discussion on understanding keywords, figurative language in the case of songs, and complex structures in the texts. Based on the reflections, these pedagogical decisions appeared to result from the student teachers' incomprehensive understanding of the curriculum and lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills of how to teach receptive skills, particularly by considering the micro skills. Wilson (2018) asserts that the emphasis on micro - skills in teaching listening has the potential to lead to "clearer goals in listening instruction, replacing the generalized objective of improving listening with the more specific goals of working on discrete skills" (p. 1).

Another issue concerns the lack of follow up questions or further exploration of the texts when the student teachers discussed the worksheets during peer teachings. To be specific, the discussion of the work very often stopped with the peer students' answering the questions; rarely did the student teachers ask the peer students why they gave a particular answer, or tell them to go back and refer to certain parts of the texts, or discuss difficult words and complex sentence structures relevant to the answers to the questions. Suryati (2015) who studied the classroom interaction strategies of lower secondary school English teachers in Indonesia also found that display questions dominate the interaction. Faraheen and Rezaee (2012) concluded the same thing in their study on an Iranian teacher's questioning. Both studies also showed that the teachers' types of questions affected the students' willingness to communicate.

The reasons for the ineffective questioning can be found the PPG students' reflective journals

where they explained the questions they gave to the class. The following are some extracts of their journal writing regarding the questions they asked their peer students in the class.

I asked some questions about the reading comprehension since I focussed on reading skill. (ST A)

I thought that I used mostly open question. I used open question because I wanted to explore the students' language use. Some students might have different possible answer, so I gave chances for them to use their English in answering the question. For instance: What do you see on the slide? What are the purposes of the text? (ST C)

Are you ready to start the lesson? (to know the students readiness) Who is missing today? (to know the students' absence) Are you through with that? (to know the students' understanding) Do you enjoy the lesson, which part? (to know the students' response) (ST D)

We can see that the students' concepts of questions do not really touch on substantial questions to develop reading comprehension and they do not seem to be familiar with some comprehension-checking activities such as prompting, probing, and higher-order questioning. This is contradictory to the fact that "higher order thinking skills" is strongly emphasized in the current curriculum that applies in Indonesian secondary schools. Studies also support the use of higher order questions; for example, Peterson and Taylor (2012) conclude from their study that higher order talk and writing about texts contribute to students' growth in reading and their gains in reading achievement.

In addition to the issue related to the student teachers' conception of questions and questioning in teaching, their understanding of teacher's feedback in the context of teaching receptive skills also appears to be limited as indicated in their journal writing. One student teacher says that s/he forgot to provide feedback. Another associates feedback with reinforcement in the form of compliments, giving correct answers to questions, and providing feedback on pronunciation, while feedback in the context of teaching receptive skills should also more importantly relate to the exercises and tasks the student teachers give to develop their students' comprehension. Another student teacher appeared to misunderstand the question about the feedback as s/he explains how s/he attempted to gauge students' feelings and understanding of the lessons instead of talking about the feedback s/he gave. These are the student teachers' statements in their journals that lead to the conclusions discussed above about their concepts of feedback.

I planned to give feedback after each activity, but I missed it. I only give the feedback about the content of the diagram venn. (ST A)

Yes, I did. I gave feedback to my students. When my students did wrong pronunciation, I gave the correction. When my student did a great work, I gave reinforcement such "okay give applause to your friend" well done" good job". When checking the students work, I gave the correct answer for the question. (ST C)

Yes, I did. I asked the students about what they felt during the teaching learning process, it would make me know whether students could understand the material or not. (ST D)

The participants' teaching practice indicated some misconceptions and lack of knowledge and skills of certain elements in the teaching of English, which included, based on the study, the micro skills of listening and reading comprehension, quality questioning and effective feedback. This was also indicated by the student teachers' lack of ability to give theoretical reasons for the decisions they had made. In other words, the student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge needs to be enhanced. This might be an issue shared by many teacher training institutions in Indonesia, and PPG needs to address this and better equip the students with strong theoretical basis. In fact, the role of professional development is to aid teachers in building new pedagogical theories and practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Schifter, Russel, & Bastable, 1999), and such professional trainings would appear to have pivotal role in the delivery of knowledge and skill necessary for teaching (John, 1991). As the peer teaching session observed was already the eighth session in the PPG program, the issues that the student teachers had seem to be persistent ones and result from preconceived beliefs they have had about how to teach English. It requires continuous reflection with the help of the lecturer and the mentor teacher, and appropriate follow-ups from the student teachers to overcome the issues. In line with this, Gan and Lee (2016) and Mukeredzi (2014)

concluded from their study that teacher education programs need to promote and sustain a culture of reflection during practicum experiences as it is an essential tool for meaningful learning and knowledge construction among pre-service teachers.

## 6 Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that the student teachers had made some reasonable pedagogical decisions in terms of formulating appropriate indicators of basic competences, employing various teaching techniques, preparing a number of texts and creative media, and trying to use English as the medium of instruction. However, the texts they prepared still contain language inaccuracies and the comprehension exercises did not adequately address the various types of information in the texts, focusing more on the generic structure instead. The class discussion on the exercises most often stopped at the students' answering the questions in the worksheets with lack of probing and higher order questioning. These issues were found to be grounded in the student teachers' lack of knowledge on the micro skills of listening and reading and their conception of questions and feedback. Another important issue concerns the assessment that the student teachers planned, which relates to the potentially confusing dichotomy between "knowledge" and "skills" domains in the English syllabus based on the current Indonesian curriculum.

These findings have implications for various parties working in teacher education programs, particularly the PPG program. For the student teachers themselves, their participation in the study helps them reflect on their classroom practices, why they do what they do, and how they can improve their pedagogical decision-making further. This implies the need to conduct continuous and more comprehensive reflection on their teaching. Supervising lecturers and other lecturers that work on preparing student teachers through teaching education programs like PPG can draw some more insights from the results of the present study on student teachers' thoughts and problems with regard to instructional planning and implementation and how teacher education programs can better contribute toward the development of such beginning teachers. More specifically, issues on the lack of pedagogical content knowledge related to the micro skills of listening and reading, quality questioning and effective feedback will need to be addressed during the subject-specific pedagogy (SSP) workshops, so that the PPG students will be better prepared to become professional teachers. School-based cooperating teachers will also need to pay close attention to these issues in their attempts to provide better guidance and mentoring for the student teachers. There is also the need for more discussion on how the knowledge-skill-attitude domains in the current Indonesian curriculum can be appropriately applied in the context of English teaching, particularly concerning student assessment. Further research on pedagogical decision making can be done in the context of internship program at schools. Such research might result in empirical information about the differences of challenges between doing peer teaching and 'real' teaching at schools.

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