

# RESEARCHING TEACHER SELF-EVALUATION PRACTICES OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN INDONESIA

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## Abstract

As in many international contexts, teacher evaluation occurs in universities in Indonesia through questionnaires, which the students are required to complete about their courses and their teachers' performance. Unfortunately, many teachers do not use the result of that questionnaire as a source of feedback for their teaching improvement and personal development. Moreover, student feedback, by itself, is not sufficient to help teachers improve and, in any event, this evaluation is only used by the institution for purposes of performance review (Wesner, 2007). As a result, a great number of English teachers in Indonesia do not feel satisfied with this kind of summative/evaluative evaluation (Limantoro, 2003). Therefore, teachers in Indonesia have to rely on their own initiative if they wish to improve their teaching performance. Teacher self-evaluation appears to be a promising way to help English teachers in Indonesia to do self-learning to develop their teaching effectiveness. Unfortunately, the concept of teacher-self evaluation is still something new in the Indonesian schools setting (Zulfikar, 2009). The aim of this study is to analyze the challenges and the opportunities for introducing teacher self-evaluation to teachers in Indonesia, particularly English college teachers. This study uses case study as the research design. Nine college English teachers in a private university in Indonesia, who are varied in term of gender and teaching experience, are invited to take part in this study. The participants are encouraged to use audio-video recording, teacher self-reflection questions, student feedback, and action research as teacher self-evaluation instruments. Interview, focus group discussion, observation, and document analysis are used as the research instruments. The data show that teacher self-evaluation assists the teachers to see the strengths and limitations in their instructional practice so that they can make some changes in their teaching to produce better teaching and learning outcomes. Focus group discussions as a part of collaborative action research enable teachers to implement new teaching techniques in their class as the result of sharing with other teachers. The challenges in implementing teacher self-evaluation are divided into two aspects: internal and external. The internal aspect includes the self-awareness and time availability, whereas the external factor includes facility availability and lack of support and control from institution. Since there is limited research about the practice of teacher self-evaluation in Indonesia, this study increases the scholarly literature on teacher self-evaluation which is more sensitive to contextual differences in Indonesia education.

Keywords: Evaluation, Self-Evaluation, Collaborative Action Research, Case Study.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As in many international contexts, teacher evaluation occurs in universities in Indonesia through questionnaires, which the students are required to complete about their courses and their teachers' performance. Unfortunately, there are still many fundamental issues about this kind of evaluation such as students' misunderstandings in answering questions, the subjectiveness involved in answering the questions, and a feeling of reluctance to answer correctly and honestly as there are usually too many items to complete. In addition, the teachers get the questionnaire results, usually at the end of semester, and only in the form of Likert scale without sufficient or specific descriptions about how well the teachers did in their teaching on that term. Therefore, many teachers do not use the questionnaire results as a source of feedback for their teaching improvement and personal development. Moreover, student feedback, by itself, is not sufficient to help teachers improve and, in any event, this evaluation is only used by the institution for purposes of performance review (Wesner, 2007). As a result, a great number of English teachers in Indonesia are dissatisfied with this kind of summative/evaluative evaluation (Limantoro, 2003). For most teachers, department head evaluations of teaching do not help teachers improve their teaching practice because of their brevity, lack of specific suggestions for improvement, and lack of resources needed to improve (Airasian & Gullickson, 1997). Moreover, there is limited discussion at teachers' meetings about classroom practices and teaching performance is not

discussed (Bjork, 2005). As a consequence, teachers in Indonesia have to rely on their own initiative if they wish to improve their teaching expertise and professional development.

## **1.1 Teacher self-evaluation**

One approach that has been developed to address the issues noted above in relation to teacher evaluation has been to involve teachers more actively through teacher self-evaluation. In recent years, an increasing number of teachers have shown interest in using self-evaluation to improve their own teaching performance (Barber, 1990). Teacher self-evaluation is a procedure in which teachers judge their performance effectiveness for the purpose of informing areas of improvement in teaching skills (Airasian & Gullickson, 1997). A teacher becomes a core in the self-evaluation process. He or she is the one who has the responsibility to examine, improve, and decide on proper times and aims of evaluations, by composing, collecting, organizing, and interpreting data which will indicate their effectiveness.

Reflection becomes the main focus of self-evaluation. Teachers need to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching to collect the information. According to Freiberg (1987), "teachers need accurate information about what they are doing in the classroom before they can begin to identify strengths and weaknesses and formulate a plan to institute change" (p.86). Teacher self-evaluation prompts teachers to actively engage in gaining information about their teaching activities that can be used as a valuable source of evidence to examine what has worked and what needs improving. Therefore, teachers must be open to criticism about their own teaching. This information guides the teachers in making and determining improvement needs to produce better teaching and learning outcomes (Ross & Bruce, 2007).

In conducting teacher self-evaluation, teachers should focus on particular dimensions of practice to be examined. Teachers are required to focus on narrow elements of teaching when they want to select self-evaluation areas rather than more general ones (Airasian & Gullickson, 1997). Earl (1986) suggests some aspects of teaching that may be evaluated such as: classroom presentation skills; preparation of materials; competency in the subject-matter; the availability of a teacher for students; the willingness and desire to work, share knowledge and skills with colleagues. In addition, Siedow (1981) suggests some important aspects of instructional effectiveness that should be evaluated are unit and lesson plans, material selection, and classroom management. Having self-evaluated in these areas of teaching, teachers are then able to get a clear picture showing how well they have done in their profession. After focusing on the teaching elements to be examined and observed, teachers then can decide on using the appropriate and possible self-evaluation instruments.

## **1.2 Teacher self-evaluation instruments**

There are various instruments by which teachers are able to make a beneficial evaluation of their instruction and define improvement for their own teaching. Elton (1984) lists a number of methods that can assist self-evaluation such as checklists, questions on a student feedback form, audio and visual feedback, co-operation with colleagues, observation of others, and annual retrospective and prospective reports. Richards (1996) mentions other means of self-evaluation such as teaching journals, lesson reports, survey and questionnaires, audio and video recordings, observation, and action research. In addition, Airasian and Gullickson (1997) lists some more strategies such as teacher self-reflection tools, media recording and analysis, student feedback tools, teacher portfolio, student performance data, external or peer observation, journaling, and collegial dialogue, experience sharing and joint problem solving.

In this study, I facilitate a group of Indonesian English college teachers to engage in teacher self-evaluation activity by using four self-evaluation tools: teacher self-reflection questions, video recording, action research, and student feedback. The reasons for these tools are that they assist teachers to focus on certain aspects of their teaching and can act as a practical guide to plan possible improvement on that teaching. Video recording is also used as the tool because it could be a mirror allowing teachers to see and assess their own instructional practices. I also used tools that involve others in examining teaching practice. First I used student feedback because students as knowledge receivers become a significant source of evaluating of their teachers' performance. According to Richardson (2005), student feedback provides important evidence for assessing teaching quality and it can be used to support efforts at improving teaching quality. Action research, which is done collaboratively with other teachers, is also used as a self-evaluation tool in the process of teacher self-evaluation as it could increase the effectiveness of teachers' practice by sharing and collaborating with

other teachers. McKernan (1996) states that action research solves the immediate and pressing day-to-day problems. It can be done by implementing new methods in teachers teaching. In this paper, I will describe in what ways a series of teacher self-evaluation activity help teachers to enhance the quality of their classroom practice and student learning and the challenges and opportunities in implementing self-evaluation as perceived by the English teachers.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This study involves elements of case study as a research approach. Some scholars relate case study to the situatedness of context. "A case study is one that examines a unit of human activity embedded in the real world that can only be studied or understood in context to answer specific research questions" (Gillham, 2000: p. 1). Gillam further explains, "case study seeks a range of different kinds of evidence, evidence which is there in the case setting, and which has to be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers to the research questions". In addition, a case study is a design which is suitable to be used when the various phenomena under study cannot be separated from their context (Merriam, 2009; Roberts K. Yin, 2003). In this case, teacher self-evaluation and teacher professional development can only be understood in the context of the institutional and sociopolitical context framing the study.

Initially, ten English college teachers are invited to take part in this study. The reason behind the sample size of ten is to provide a balance between breadth and depth, as well as pragmatic considerations of manageability. There are three considerations for choosing the participants. First, the participants are selected based on their difference in gender. In this case, five teachers are male and five teachers are female. Next consideration is because of their dissimilarity in teaching experiences. Five teachers are junior teachers with three to five year experiences in teaching, while five teachers are senior teachers with six or more year teaching experience. Finally, those teachers are chosen because of their willingness to participate in this study. Unfortunately, one of my research participants withdrew his consent to continue participating in my study regarding his busy schedule. Therefore, in the end of my study, I had nine participants. However, from nine English teachers, Hani and Adi were chosen for analysis in this study.

Interview, focus group discussion, observation, and document analysis are used as the research instruments. Teachers participated in focus group discussion for four times which lasted about 1-1.5 hours per meeting. To make it more effective, the research participants WERE divided into two groups consisting of four teachers and five teachers. I observed each participant's class once and the whole process of data collection. The individual interview was done two times which lasted about 45 minutes. Document analysis in this study are in the form agenda and schedules for meetings, images of focus group discussion, attendance list, teachers' report on teachers' action research that support other data.

### **2.1 The procedure of data collection**

The following table is the summary of the data collection events in this study:

**Table 1: summary of the data collection events**

STAGE	ACTIVITIES
1	Meeting with the participants to introduce research procedures and the concept of teacher self-evaluation
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Videotaping teaching learning process which focuses on general teaching and learning</li> <li>- Asking the teacher to complete self-reflection questions</li> <li>- Asking the students to give feedback to their teacher performance by answering the questionnaire</li> <li>- Inviting the teacher to explore the information about their teaching from video, self-reflection questions, and student feedback</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Videotaping teaching learning process which focuses on teacher and student talk</li> <li>- Asking the teacher to complete self-reflection questions</li> <li>- Asking the students to give feedback to their teacher performance by answering the questionnaire</li> <li>- Inviting the teacher to explore the information about their teaching from video, self-reflection questions, and student feedback</li> </ul>
4	Asking the participants to conduct a collaborative action research which involves focus group discussion among the teachers
5	Interviewing the participants individually using semi-structured interview

Based on the above table, the procedures of data collection in this study are done in the following step. Firstly, I invited all of my research participants to have a meeting. In that meeting, I informed them about the aims and procedures of my study. I also gave two forms of self-reflection questions. They are, then, informed that self-reflection questions should be completed immediately after the end of the lesson. I also distributed questionnaires for their students in that meeting. Next, I assisted my participants to video record their teaching two times which have different focus. It particularly focused on: (1) general teaching and learning; and (2) teacher and student talk. In the end of each input session, the teacher had two feedbacks: (1) his or her self-reflection and (2) students feedback. Those feedbacks then were combined with the video input. These three sources of feedback provided information to the teachers on how they have done in the lesson. This information become source for teachers to select an element of teaching to be improved. Thirdly, the participants were asked to improve the selected teaching element through a collaborative action research as one of self-evaluation instruments used in this study. The participants become action researchers and I was the facilitator. Finally, I interviewed my research participants individually concerning their opinions and feedbacks on a series of teacher self-evaluation activity they just engaged.

## 2.2 Data analysis

Main data sources of this study consisted of transcripts from individual and focus group interviews and the field notes from the observation. All data in this study were coded to mine significant information. In the process of data analysis, I transcribed each interview in Indonesian and then translated it into English. Next, I read all the transcriptions to gain general sense of the data. During the transcribing process, respondents' answers were reviewed multiple times. This allows me to identify key words, phrases, and sentences well. After transcribing the entire interview, I started to examine for regularities, patterns and assertions and compared it in order to support or refute assertions. Merriam (1998) states, "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read [is the process of making] meaning" (p. 178). Therefore, I united and combined the data I got from interview and observation which then they were organized around certain topics and central questions. I also referred to literature review to validate the data. According to Hartley (2004), "the analyzing of data is enhanced by reference to the existing literature and using

this to raise questions about whether the researcher's findings are consistent with or different from extant research" (p.330).

### 3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data show that teacher self-evaluation assists teachers to see more on their teaching and students' learning limitation. Airasian & Gullickson (1997: 8) states *"teacher self-evaluation is an important process for teachers to use because it makes teachers aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their practice"*. My research participants really focused on what needs to be improved in their teaching and students learning. However, they feel awkward when they have to mention the strengths of their teaching. The followings are the statements from my two research participants regarding their reluctance to talk about their strengths of their teaching.

*"Indonesian people are not used to talking about their strengths. They tend to talk about their weaknesses in the hope that they can improve them". (Hani, 28 February 2012)*

*"If I talk about my strengths, it will give the impression that I am an arrogant person. I prefer to just talk about my weaknesses." (Toni, 13 December 2011)*

Therefore, I did not have much information about teachers' strengths in their teaching so that I focused more on their teaching limitation. The followings are the description of in what ways a series of teacher self-evaluation activity help two research participants: Hani and Adi to enhance the quality of their classroom practice and student learning. The challenges and opportunities in implementing self-evaluation as perceived by the English teachers are discussed next.

#### 3.1 Hani

The use of teacher self-evaluation instruments facilitated Hani to see closer on her limitations in her teaching. Firstly, after viewing herself in videos on her teaching, she realized that she used too much Indonesian in the class compared to her performance in the previous semesters. She mentioned that in the prior semesters when she just graduated from her master, she used English a lot and even some students in the class complained about that since they hardly understand what she said. However, her class video recording showed that she spoke English less in that term.

*"I think this is the worst semester I had since I used more Indonesian than English. I used to speak English a lot in the class – at least 90% of my talk. Even some of my students said "Mam, we do not understand so that you must use Indonesian to help us". But now I realized that my use of English in the class decreased quantitatively and qualitatively." (Hani, 2 January 2012)*

Secondly, Hani mentioned that viewing her class video recording helped her to be more aware on her grammar mistake when she was talking explaining in front in her class. The mistakes such as *"Have you took a look on that?"*, *"If you see that one sentence don't really support the controlling idea..."* are found in her class video. Hani really concerned on how she used English when she was explaining in front of the class.

Hani believes that she must be a good model for her students to learn English. She, therefore, wants to speak fluently and correctly when she is teaching. She also expects to use English a lot in her class as she assumes that English classroom is the only place to have an opportunity for her students to improve and practice their English. She wants to have good English environment in the place where she is teaching now in which teachers and students always use English when they talk. However, she finds it hard. She stated:

*"I found a teacher reminded other teachers when they did not use English when they talked with their students. However they did not speak English when they talk each other. Why don't we use English with other teachers? In the meeting? I complained a lot when I first joined this institution." (Hani, 2 January 2012)*

Next, the use of teacher self-reflection questions, video-recording, and student feedback as teacher self-evaluation instruments helped Hani to realize that she had difficulty in managing her big class, which consisted of 44 students. She stated:

*"There was a time when I have to walk around the class and there was a time when I just sat in front of the class. When I sat, I thought that there was a problem with the students in the back*

*row. In that situation, I couldn't decide whether I should approach them or not." (Hanum, 2 January 2012)*

Finally, use of collaboration action research as one of teacher self-evaluation instruments in this study assisted Hani to find more effective teaching methods to be applied in her teaching. In that semester Hani was required to teach some Writing classes. She mentioned that she conducted pre-test to know how far her students' ability to write is. She then found out that many of her students were not good in making sentences since most of the sentences were only simple sentences and the students were also not good in combining sentences into paragraph. She also stated that her students even forgot the basic structure of a paragraph that consists of topic sentence, supporting sentences, and conclusion.

*"In my Writing II class, I decided to refresh what the students have gotten in Writing I (about paragraph structure) at the second meeting. It was quite shocking to know that most of them seem know nothing – they said they "forgot"- about topic sentence and its parts, on how to list and choose only related points as supporting details and in how to conclude a paragraph!" (Hanum, 6 February 2008)*

By sharing with other teachers in a focus group discussion in the process of collaborative action research, Hani implemented "self and peer-editing activity" in her writing class by giving self-editing worksheet and peer review checklist for paragraph. This new method helped the students to think critically in checking friend's writing, improve their writing quality by finding their weaknesses in their writing, and improve their confidence to write. Hani stated:

*"My students' paragraph quality and their ability in writing were improved since the worksheets guide them to write more effectively. The self-editing worksheet increases their confidence since it helps them in editing and revising their own writing. Besides, this worksheet helps them to see what they had done." (Hani, 14 January 2012)*

### **3.2 Adi**

Adi chose to video record his Vocabulary I class in the process of self-evaluation. After viewing himself in the video, answering teacher self-reflection questions, and reading his students feedback, Adi could analyze some limitations in his Vocabulary I class. Firstly, compared to another subject he taught, he mentioned that he had less feedback for his students in his Vocabulary class. He expected to always correct the students' mistake and they could learn from that mistake. Secondly, he got difficulty in pronunciation and grammar. He stated:

*"I think in Vocabulary class, I gave less feedback to my students if they did a certain mistake in their use of word. I always give feedback in my speaking class at the end of the class but in my vocabulary class I was too focused on the subject. I also sometimes had a problem with my pronunciation and grammar" (Uun, 28 December 2011)*

He mentioned his grammar mistakes when he spoke in front of the class such as *"In the last meeting, last two weeks I give u..."* and *"You can make a conclusion what is the meaning of the statement"*. Thirdly, he said that he did not have adequate concern on poor students in his class. Uun stated:

*"I feel I did not give enough attention to my poor students in the class. If some students in the class could answer the questions correctly, I assumed quickly that all students must understand my explanation. However, I then thought whether the poor students really understood or not." (Adi, 28 December 2011)*

In focus group discussion, Adi stated that he gave some questions to his students about their impression of Reading Comprehension course. He, then, concluded that most of them disliked it. He also found out that some of his students were not enthusiastic and not attentive in the class. Adi stated:

*"Mystudents said that Reading Comprehension was a boring and difficult course. They could hardly enjoy the course. Therefore, they came to my class with the same mindset: Reading Comprehension 3 would be another boring course." (Adi, 6 February 2011).*

Adi believes that teaching must be enjoyable. If the class is exciting and the students are engaged well in the teaching and learning activity, students' achievement will improve accordingly. That is why he always wants to make his class interesting and his students happy. He really wants his students both the good and poor ones learn something from his class. Adi stated:

*"Sometimes I positioned myself as a student to improve my teaching. I remembered when I was a student, I felt bored in the class and I wanted to have an interesting class. Therefore, I always want to try new methods to make my class exciting. If I notice even though only one student who looked unhappy in my class, it influences my mood to teach. I always want to make every student interested in my class." (Adi, 28 December 2011.)*

After having a group discussion with other teachers, Adi planned to use more challenging and enjoyable activities for his students. From some of possible activities suggested by other teachers, he chose cooperative and competitive activities. He then found that this new method helped him to create better learning for his students.

*"Combining cooperative and competitive activities in Reading Comprehension course was really helpful in creating more joyful learning. The students were enthusiastic to comprehend the texts because they were going to use them in a competition among their groups. They became more active and showed more interest in the course. There had been an atmosphere of enjoyment and enthusiasm in the class since they experienced the combination of cooperative and competitive activities for the Reading Comprehension course. The class was dynamic and alive. I was really happy to see the improvement of my students' motivation and enjoyment. It was great to see them applauded and celebrated as their friends succeeded in answering questions in the competition part." (Adi, 10 January 2012).*

### **3.3 Opportunities and challenges in implementing self-evaluation**

A series of teacher self-evaluation activity gives more opportunities for teachers to evaluate their own teaching and makes them more aware of their teaching limitation. In other words, teacher self-evaluation facilitates teachers to grow professionally especially by improving their teaching effectiveness. The information about teachers' limitation on their instructional practice is then used as a source to make some possible changes that have practical implications for the improvement of teaching practices. In addition, teacher self-evaluation provides more complete and detailed evaluation about teachers' performance as teachers need to have a clear focus in conducting teacher self-evaluation. It could be a mirror for teachers to see their instructional practice (their gesture when they are teaching, their teaching method they used).

*"Self-evaluation has a clear direction about what we should evaluate in our teaching. We can, for example, focus on our classroom management only. It seems we have a mirror of our teaching". (Hani, 2 January 2012)*

Despite the opportunities offered by teacher self-evaluation activity, Indonesian teachers found some challenges in implementing teacher self-evaluation consisting two aspects: internal and external. The internal aspect includes self-awareness and time availability. Self-awareness is closely related to time availability. The over busy schedule for teaching limits teachers to concern on the quality of their teaching so that teachers lack of awareness to actively improve their teaching expertise. The external factor includes facility availability and lack of support and control from institution. The existence of facilities such as video recording, meeting room, or paper has an impact on self-evaluation implementation. However, the institution does not provide enough facilities and support for teachers to conduct meaningful teacher self-evaluation.

*"There is no policy from the institution that requires us to do self-evaluation so that we do not do that. Moreover, there is lack of institutional control on our practice. The only evaluation we have is just student questionnaire which does not fully help us to improve our practice." (Maria, 10 January 2012).*

## **4 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Teacher self-evaluation assists teachers to be more aware of their limitation on their teaching. Research participants in this study who are English college teachers use teacher self-evaluation to concern more on the language they use in the class such as pronunciation and grammar. Teachers' major focus is on explicit knowledge about the language. According to Ellis (2004:244), explicit knowledge is defined as declarative knowledge of the "phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and socio-critical features of L2." Teacher self-evaluation provides more opportunities for teachers to grow professionally by giving more information about their practice which then it can be used as a source to enhance the quality of their instructional practice. Focus group discussion as a part of collaborative action research helps teachers to find out some new methods in their teaching to solve

the problems in their students' learning and to make changes in their practice. However, teachers face some challenges in doing teacher self-evaluation both from internal and external aspects. The internal aspects including self-awareness and time availability that become barriers for teachers to do self-evaluation are really influenced by the external aspects such as facility availability and support from institution (university management). Thus, the institution (university management) should provide more opportunities to teachers to do self-evaluation by facilitating and supporting them to implement an effective self-evaluation activity. The institution, for example, could make a policy that requires teachers to do self-evaluation and provide them with the support teachers need such as video recording, paper, audio recording, meeting room, or funding. The institution should also provide more opportunities to improve teachers' professionalism by involving teachers in professional development activities such as seminar, workshop, or research project.

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