



English Teachers' Knowledge in Indonesia: A Biographical Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

This study delves into the dynamic and multifaceted realm of English teachers' knowledge, exploring how personal and professional experiences in Indonesian education shape it. Employing a biographical narrative inquiry approach, three elementary school English teachers from Solo, Indonesia, representing different generations, were engaged in detailed interviews. The study reveals the evolving nature of English teachers' knowledge, with one retiring teacher illustrating a shift from traditional to student-centered teaching practices. Another teacher's journey reflects the growing recognition of cultural diversity and the adoption of culturally responsive teaching. The study underscores the significance of continuous professional development and the value of collaborative learning among English teachers of different generations. These findings hold implications for teacher education, professional development, and educational policy, emphasizing the need for context-specific and ongoing support to enhance the quality of teaching in a diverse and ever-changing educational landscape.

Keywords: *Narrative Inquiry, Biographical study, biographical narrative inquiry, English teachers' Knowledge*

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INTRODUCTION

Effective teaching and learning hinge upon English teachers' knowledge, a crucial yet not fully understood aspect (Perkins & Unger, 2013; Clarke, 2020). This knowledge's nature and development can be explored by investigating English English teachers' personal and professional experiences. Scholars have long emphasized the importance of understanding English English teachers' knowledge to enhance educational outcomes (Hargreaves, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Employing a research approach known as biographical narrative inquiry, we delve into English teachers' lives and narratives, uncovering the intricate interplay between their life experiences and knowledge formation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). This narrative approach has been recognized for its ability to reveal rich contextual insights into the lives and experiences of educators (Riessman, 2008).

This study will adopt the biographical narrative inquiry approach to scrutinize the knowledge of three elementary school English teachers in Solo, Indonesia. Our focus will encompass English teachers from three distinct generations, offering insights into how their knowledge has evolved. Of particular interest is the unique opportunity to explore the knowledge and experiences of a teacher nearing retirement. Previous studies have shown that

English teachers' expertise tends to develop over their careers, with significant shifts occurring as they approach retirement (Ingersoll, 2018). Our study will address the following three core research questions: 1) How do English teachers' knowledge and practices mirror the multifaceted tapestry of Indonesian society? 2) In what ways do English teachers' knowledge and practices resonate with Indonesia's historical journey, marked by colonialism and nationalism? 3) How does English teachers' knowledge evolve over time?

These three central questions provide the framework for our inquiry, offering essential insights into English teachers' development and the broader context of Indonesian education. The amalgamation of narrative inquiry and these central questions enables a comprehensive understanding of English teachers' knowledge, echoing the sentiments of previous scholars (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Our findings hopefully will carry significant implications for teacher education and professional development in Indonesia, impacting a wide array of stakeholders, including English teachers, teacher educators, policymakers, and researchers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Furthermore, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of English teachers' knowledge within the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Solo, Indonesia. It highlights the intricate connection between personal and professional experiences and knowledge formation. In a rapidly changing society, these insights are invaluable. This study not only advances our understanding of English teachers' knowledge but also aids in improving the quality of education and the professional growth of English teachers, aligning with expert opinions advocating for a more context-specific approach to teacher development (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hargreaves, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Significance of English teachers' Knowledge: The role of English teachers' knowledge in shaping effective teaching and learning experiences has long been a subject of interest in educational research. Smith and Johnson (2019) highlight that English teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge of students are fundamental components that influence instructional decisions. These aspects of knowledge contribute to better student outcomes, emphasizing the critical importance of understanding and enhancing English teachers' knowledge.

Narrative Inquiry in Education

Biographical narrative inquiry as a research approach has gained recognition for its ability to uncover the complex, context-specific nature of teaching knowledge (Cresswell, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). According to Leight (2015) Narrative Inquiry has been seen as an approach to study identity. Scholars have found that English teachers' personal and professional narratives reveal not only their knowledge but also the values, beliefs, and experiences that influence their instructional practices (Riessman, 2008).

The Evolution of Teacher Knowledge

Research by Cochran-Smith (2005) underscores that English teachers' knowledge is not static but continually evolving. A teacher's expertise is subject to change over their career, influenced by various factors such as professional development opportunities and shifting educational paradigms. This emphasizes the need to explore how English teachers' knowledge transforms over time.

Socio-cultural Context and Educational Practices

Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2016) emphasize the significance of understanding the socio-cultural context in which teaching and learning occur. They argue that effective teaching is deeply intertwined with English teachers' awareness of their students' backgrounds and the broader societal context. This underlines the importance of the first research question, which seeks to examine how English teachers' knowledge and practices align with Indonesian society's diversity.

Historical Context and Pedagogical Practices

Au (2017) suggests that historical context plays a pivotal role in shaping English teachers' pedagogical practices. Understanding how Indonesia's history of colonialism and nationalism influences English teachers' knowledge and instructional approaches is crucial to comprehending the nuances of their educational practices, aligning with the second research question.

Expert Opinions on Teacher Development

Darling-Hammond (2017) and Hargreaves (2015) stress the need for context-specific approaches to teacher development. They argue that understanding English teachers' unique experiences and knowledge within their specific environments is essential for improving teacher education and professional development programs, aligning with the overall goal of this study.

Implications of Retirement in Education

Research by Ingersoll (2018) indicates that English teachers' knowledge and practices may undergo significant changes as they approach retirement. Exploring the knowledge and experiences of a retiring teacher can offer valuable insights into the evolution of teaching expertise and provide guidance for younger English teachers. This underscores the importance of the third research question and the comparison between retiring and younger English teachers.

By synthesizing these key elements from existing literature, this study sheds light on the intricate relationship between English teachers' knowledge, their life experiences, and the broader educational context. It recognizes that English teachers' knowledge is a dynamic, context-specific, and evolving entity that necessitates thorough exploration and understanding to effectively improve teacher education and professional development practices. The research questions in this study are designed to uncover these critical dimensions and contribute to the ongoing discourse on English teachers' knowledge and its role in contemporary education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a biographical narrative inquiry approach, a qualitative research methodology, to explore the knowledge of three elementary school English teachers in Solo, Indonesia. Biographical narrative inquiry is particularly suitable for capturing the complex interplay of English teachers' life experiences and knowledge formation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

Participants: The study will include three elementary school English teachers from Solo, Indonesia, representing three different generations. The selection of participants aims to provide insights into how English teachers' knowledge evolves over time. One of the English teachers is nearing retirement, offering a unique opportunity to examine the knowledge and

experiences of a teacher at the end of their career. This mixed-age sample will help address the third research question and compare retiring and younger English teachers.

Data Collection: Data will be collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant. These interviews will revolve around the life stories and experiences of the English teachers, with a specific focus on their journey as educators. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis: The qualitative data collected through interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. This approach will allow for the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and narratives related to the English teachers' knowledge and experiences. The analysis will be iterative, involving a process of data coding, theme development, and triangulation to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical Considerations: The study will adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their information. The research will also comply with local ethical standards and protocols, ensuring the protection of participants' rights.

Data Triangulation: To enhance the robustness of the findings, data triangulation will be employed by cross-referencing the interview data with relevant documents and artifacts provided by the participants, such as teaching materials, records, and reflections. This multi-source approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the English teachers' knowledge and experiences.

Comparative Analysis: In addressing the study's third research question, the retiring teacher's knowledge and experiences will be compared with those of the younger English teachers. This comparative analysis will enable the identification of knowledge shifts and the potential influence of career stage on teaching practices and expertise.

Researcher Reflexivity: To minimize bias and enhance the validity of the study, the researchers will engage in reflexivity throughout the research process. This involves ongoing self-awareness and critical examination of how their perspectives and experiences may influence data collection and interpretation (Finlay, 2002).

Limitations: It is important to acknowledge that this study is limited to a small sample of English teachers in Solo, Indonesia, and may not be fully representative of the broader teaching community in the region. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research limits the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the intricate relationship between English teachers' knowledge, personal and professional experiences, and their cultural context.

Data Validation: To ensure the credibility and dependability of the findings, member-checking will be conducted by sharing the research results with the participants and inviting their feedback and reflections on the accuracy and relevance of the findings to their experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Timeline: The study is anticipated to span approximately 3 months, including participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings.

This methodological approach seeks to uncover the rich narratives of English teachers' knowledge in Solo, Indonesia, exploring the complex interplay of personal and professional experiences in the context of changing educational landscapes. The research design and ethical considerations are carefully structured to provide valuable insights into English teachers' knowledge and its evolution over time.

FINDINGS

Participant 1: Mrs. MM. Tejowati Isrini

Mrs. Rini, a seasoned teacher nearing retirement, shared insights into the evolution of his knowledge and practices. She described how her early years of teaching were marked by adherence to traditional pedagogical methods. "I used to rely heavily on textbooks and teacher-centred instruction. That's how I was trained, and it was the norm."

Over time, Mrs. Rini knowledge evolved as she embraced student-centred teaching approaches. She attributed this transformation to professional development opportunities that exposed her to innovative teaching methods and a deeper understanding of the diverse needs of her students. "I realized that my students had unique backgrounds and learning styles. I had to adapt to meet their needs."

Participant 2: Ms. Erni (Pseudonym)

Mrs. Erni, representing the mid-career group, shared her experiences in relation to the first research question. She emphasized the importance of understanding the diversity of Indonesian society. "In my early years of teaching, I didn't pay much attention to the cultural backgrounds of my students. I had a 'one-size-fits-all' approach."

However, as she engaged in professional development programs, Mrs. Erni became more attuned to the cultural nuances within her classroom. She began to incorporate culturally relevant teaching practices and acknowledged the significance of recognizing and valuing her students' diverse backgrounds.

Participant 3: Mrs. Yamtini (Pseudonym)

Mrs. Yamtini, a younger teacher in the study, described her experiences in light of the third research question. She highlighted the influence of her more experienced colleagues on her teaching practices. "I've learned so much from my senior colleagues. They have a wealth of experience, and they are always willing to share their knowledge with me."

Mrs. Yamtini's account underlines the importance of collaborative learning among English teachers of different generations. It reflects the idea that English teachers' knowledge is not solely shaped by their individual experiences but is also deeply influenced by their interactions with colleagues.

Comparative Analysis

Comparing the retiring teacher's experiences with those of the younger English teachers revealed several notable patterns. While Mrs. Rini's journey showed significant evolution in her teaching practices and a shift towards student-centred approaches, the younger English teachers, Mrs. Erni and Mrs. Yamtini, appeared to begin their careers with a more pronounced awareness of cultural diversity.

In terms of collaboration and knowledge sharing, Mrs. Yamtini's experiences echoed the importance of learning from more experienced colleagues, suggesting that intergenerational knowledge transfer is a vital aspect of teacher development.

Themes

- Evolution of Knowledge: English teachers' knowledge is dynamic and evolves over time. Professional development opportunities and exposure to innovative teaching methods contribute to this evolution.

- Cultural Awareness: English teachers are increasingly aware of the need to adapt their practices to the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students.
- Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer: Collaboration among English teachers of different generations is a valuable source of learning and knowledge acquisition.

These results provide a glimpse into the complex relationship between English teachers' knowledge, experiences, and the context of Indonesian education. The study suggests that professional development and collaboration among English teachers from different generations play a significant role in shaping English teachers' knowledge and practices. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness in teaching, highlighting the need for ongoing teacher development programs to reflect these changing dynamics.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide a profound understanding of the intricate relationship between English teachers' knowledge, personal and professional experiences, and the evolving landscape of Indonesian education. In this extended discussion, we will explore the implications of the findings in greater depth, connecting them to previous research on English teachers' knowledge and contextual factors influencing their pedagogical practices.

The Evolution of English teachers' Knowledge

Mrs. Rini's journey from traditional, teacher-centered instruction towards more innovative and student-centered approaches reflects the dynamism of English teachers' knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Yumarnamto, 2016). This evolution mirrors previous studies showing that English teachers' expertise is subject to change over their careers, driven by factors such as professional development opportunities and evolving educational paradigms (Ingersoll, 2018).

Her transition highlights the significance of ongoing teacher education and training programs, echoing the sentiments of Ingersoll and Strong (2011). These programs must be designed to support English teachers in their pursuit of professional growth, facilitating the evolution of their knowledge. In this regard, Mrs. Rini's journey serves as an illustrative case study of the transformative power of continuous professional development.

Cultural Awareness in Teaching

Mrs. Erni's experiences highlight the pivotal role of cultural awareness in teaching, in accordance with the research by Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2016). Her journey from initially overlooking the cultural diversity of her students to embracing culturally relevant practices underscores the necessity of recognizing and valuing the diverse backgrounds of learners in a multicultural society.

The findings also echo the work of scholars who advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Mrs. Erni's narrative demonstrates that an emphasis on cultural sensitivity not only enhances student engagement and understanding but also promotes inclusive and equitable educational experiences.

Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Mrs. Yamtini's account of learning from her more experienced colleagues exemplifies the value of intergenerational knowledge transfer, which has been championed by Hargreaves (2015) and Darling-Hammond (2017). Collaborative learning among English teachers from different generations fosters a culture of professional growth and knowledge exchange. In doing so, it contributes to the ongoing development of English teachers' expertise and the improvement of teaching practices.

Furthermore, Mrs. Yamtini's experiences highlight the significance of mentoring relationships in the teaching profession. Effective mentoring can offer valuable guidance, support, and insight to newer educators (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This underscores the need for structured mentorship programs that encourage experienced English teachers to share their knowledge with those at the beginning of their careers.

Notable Interview Transcript

- Interviewer : "Can you describe the most significant changes in your teaching methods and knowledge throughout your career?"
- Mrs. Rini : "Certainly, in my early years, I was more traditional. I relied on textbooks and teacher-centered instruction. But over time, I saw the need to adapt. I started attending workshops and training, and that's when I began to embrace student-centered teaching."
- Interviewer : "How has your understanding of cultural diversity influenced your teaching?"
- Mrs. Erni : "In the beginning, I didn't pay much attention to it. But as I learned about the importance of cultural sensitivity and began incorporating culturally relevant materials, I noticed a positive change in my students' engagement and understanding."
- Interviewer : "What have you learned from your more experienced colleagues?"
- Mrs. Yamtini : "I've learned a lot from them. They have decades of experience and are always willing to share their knowledge and insights. It's been incredibly valuable to have their mentorship."

Connecting to Previous Research

The findings of this study are firmly grounded in the existing body of research on English teachers' knowledge and the contextual factors that influence their pedagogical practices. Mrs. Rini's transformative journey aligns with the notion that English teachers' knowledge is dynamic and continually adapting to new educational paradigms (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Yumarnamto, 2016). Her shift from traditional to student-centered approaches highlights the impact of professional development, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and growth for English teachers. This also similar to what Wijaya & Kuswando (2018) findings on English teachers' reflection that help to develop English teachers' knowledge overtime.

Ms. Erni's increased cultural awareness in her teaching practices underscores the emphasis on understanding the socio-cultural context, as advocated by Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2016). Additionally, her narrative serves as a confirmation that teacher is capable of ethnographers to increase awareness of multi-cultural education (Ahmadi, 2021). Her narrative also aligns with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, which is fundamental for fostering equitable and inclusive learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In the other hand, Ms. Yamtini's experiences demonstrate the value of collaborative learning among English teachers of different generations, in line with the research by Hargreaves (2015) and Darling-Hammond (2017). Additionally, previous research by Yumarnamto (2016) mention how professional growth and changing identities occur in the teacher's environment. The intergenerational knowledge transfer she describes emphasizes the importance of structured mentorship and peer support to facilitate professional development.

The results of this study provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of English teachers' knowledge and the profound impact of contextual factors on their practices. These findings have significant implications for teacher education, professional development,

and educational policy in Indonesia and beyond. They highlight the need for ongoing, context-specific professional development, cultural awareness, and collaborative learning among English teachers of different generations to enhance the quality of teaching and promote student success.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we embarked on a journey to explore the complex and evolving nature of English teachers' knowledge by examining the personal and professional experiences of three elementary school English teachers in Solo, Indonesia. The results offered a rich tapestry of insights into how English teachers' knowledge is shaped by the context in which they teach, how it evolves over time, and how it is passed from one generation of educators to the next.

Our study affirmed the dynamic nature of English teachers' knowledge, echoing the findings of previous research (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Yumarnamto, 2016). Mrs. Rini's journey from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to innovative and student-focused approaches underscored the importance of continuous professional development. It illuminated how English teachers' knowledge is not stagnant but responsive to emerging educational paradigms, further underscoring the need for ongoing training and learning opportunities. Furthermore, Ms. Erni's experiences underscored the critical role of cultural awareness in teaching (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2016). Her narrative emphasized the significance of recognizing and valuing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students. This aligns with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, which are essential for creating inclusive and equitable educational environments. Additionally, Ms. Yamtini's account highlighted the value of intergenerational knowledge transfer (Hargreaves, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2017). It demonstrated that collaborative learning among English teachers from different generations fosters a culture of professional growth and knowledge exchange. Structured mentorship and peer support were shown to be instrumental in promoting English teachers' development and the continuous improvement of teaching practices.

The implications of this study are significant. It underscores the need for teacher education and professional development programs that are not only ongoing but also tailored to the specific context of English teachers' work. These programs must acknowledge the dynamic nature of English teachers' knowledge and address the changing needs of educators as they progress in their careers.

Moreover, the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in teaching practices cannot be overstated. Recognizing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and valuing their unique experiences is central to creating a more inclusive and effective educational system. This is particularly relevant in diverse societies like Indonesia, where students come from varied cultural backgrounds.

Finally, the findings emphasize the value of fostering a collaborative culture among English teachers, one that encourages the sharing of knowledge and experiences across generations. Mentorship and peer support programs can be instrumental in helping English teachers learn from each other and continue to develop their expertise. In short, this study has shed light on the intricate relationship between English teachers' knowledge, their experiences, and the broader educational context. It reinforces the idea that effective teaching is not static but dynamic, shaped by continuous learning, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative efforts. These insights hold the potential to guide teacher education, professional development, and

educational policy in Indonesia and beyond, with the ultimate aim of enhancing the quality of teaching and promoting the success of all students.

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