

## **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

**Applicant:** Tabitha Kidwell

**Title:** Becoming an English Teacher: The Learning, Practices, and Beliefs of Novice Indonesian Teachers of English

**Location:** Kota Salatiga & Kabupaten Semarang

**Duration:** 8 months

**Expected Commence Date:** August, 2017

### **Introduction**

This qualitative case study focuses on the experiences of English teachers during their early years of teaching. In the current era of globalization, high quality English teaching and learning is essential to citizens of many countries, including Indonesia (Graddol, 2006). Many Indonesian people see strong English skills as a gateway to opportunities in commerce, diplomacy, and academia (Chodidjah, 2008; Faisal, 2015). Because teacher quality is a major predictor of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000), the effective preparation of novice Indonesian teachers of English is an important contributor to Indonesian students' language skills.

Nevertheless, little research on novice English teacher preparation has been conducted outside of native English speaking countries, and even less in highly multicultural and multilingual societies like Indonesia. Research in countries like Indonesia, which Kachru (1986) characterizes as "expanding circle", and which Canagarajah (1999) calls a "periphery" country, is growing in importance as English is increasingly used as a common language among non-native speakers worldwide (Jenkins, 2006). Kachru (1986) advocates for the development of "world Englishes" (such as "Indonesian English") that better match local needs, cultural practices, and linguistic norms. Similarly, Canagarajah (1999) argues that students and teachers of English in

periphery countries should question standardized native speaker norms by rejecting, embracing, or appropriating, the language in accordance with their own needs and priorities.

Supporting students' development of a locally appropriate "Indonesian English" may be quite challenging for novice Indonesian teachers of English, who may not have learned about teaching methods to support this practice. Much of the published work regarding English teaching methods has been generated by the Western Eurocentric academic tradition (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2008). Scholars from outside this tradition have argued that certain teaching methodologies may not be compatible within certain educational settings, such as the use of learner-centered communicative language teaching methodologies within Confucian, teacher-centered education cultures (e.g., Jin & Cortazzi, 1996; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Scollon, 1999). It is important, therefore, to identify teaching methodologies that would appropriately support the development of "world Englishes" in periphery contexts, such as Indonesia.

By investigating the experiences of early-career English teachers in Indonesia, this project aims to address the dearth of research in periphery countries and generate insights about the process of becoming a non-native English-speaking teacher. Teacher trainers in Indonesia could prepare English teachers more effectively if they had a better understanding of how novice Indonesian teachers of English learn to teach and begin to do so during their early years in the classroom. More empirical evidence about this process in the Indonesian context would also benefit teacher trainers in other contexts because Indonesia's cultural and linguistic diversity makes it a particularly telling case

(Mitchell, 1984) where novice teachers' challenges and difficulties are more likely to become visible. Findings from this study, therefore, could be of great interest to teacher trainers and education researchers in other contexts where English is taught as a foreign language by non-native speakers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

To better understand the experiences of novice Indonesian teachers of English, I will focus on three concepts: teacher learning, teacher beliefs, and teacher practices. Teacher learning, the process of gaining pedagogical knowledge and practical skill, happens in many places, including preservice teacher education programs (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Kennedy, 1999), the socialization process in schools (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), and professional development programs (Borko & Putnam, 1995, Cohen & Hill, 1998). Teachers' beliefs, the affective understandings about schooling, teaching, learning, and students that underlie teachers' professional decision-making (Pajares, 1992), develop from their personal experiences (Bullough & Knowles, 1991), their own experiences with schooling (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975), and their exposure to formal knowledge (Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987). Lastly, teacher practices are the habitual actions and professional skills that teachers draw on during their teaching (Lampert, 2010), or, put more simply, "the things teachers actually do, the visible practices of teaching" (Kennedy, 2016, p. 6). These three concepts will provide the framework for this study's data collection and analysis.

### **Objectives**

The objective of this study is to better understand the experiences of novice

Indonesian teachers of English. Conceptually, the study will focus on how novice Indonesian teachers of English learn to teach, what they believe about effective language teaching, and what practices they use to teach during their early years of teaching. The case will be bounded by focusing on the experiences of recent graduates from the Department of English Education and Teacher Training at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Salatiga. I will use ethnographic methods to conduct a qualitative case study of English teacher preparation practices at IAIN Salatiga, complemented by embedded case studies (Yin, 2009) of 5-7 recent graduates during their early years of teaching, a pivotal period when teachers begin to develop, test, and refine their beliefs and practices (Berliner, 1994; Huberman, 1989; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006). The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Indonesian teachers of English learn to teach?
2. What beliefs do novice Indonesian teachers of English hold about effective language teaching?
3. What practices do novice Indonesian teachers of English use to teach?

Below, I will describe the setting and participants for this study and will explain my planned procedures for data collection and analysis. I plan to collect data from August, 2017 to March, 2018 in the city of Salatiga, Central Java and the Kabupaten of Semarang, Central Java.

## **Methodology**

IAIN Salatiga will act as host institution for the duration of my research period. IAIN Salatiga was originally established as a teacher training college to prepare teachers

of English, Arabic and Islamic education, but it has expanded rapidly in recent years, and is a flourishing and well-run institution. Research activities and data collection will take place on IAIN Salatiga's campus and in primary and secondary schools in the Salatiga area. Most of the research will take place within the city of Salatiga, Central Java, with some school visits also taking place in the outskirts of Salatiga, in the Kabupaten of Semarang, Central Java. I will explain the project and request permission from administrators at IAIN Salatiga and at local schools before collecting data in each setting. Participants will include approximately 10 faculty members and 20 recent graduates from IAIN Salatiga's Department of English Education and Teacher Training.

To investigate the first research question (*How do Indonesian teachers of English learn to teach?*), I will review materials, curriculum, and syllabi for English education courses related to teaching methodology, and I will also observe classes and interview the professors of those courses. Interviews will last 30-60 minutes, and will focus on how the faculty prepare IAIN students to become English teachers. As I observe classes, I will take detailed field notes, focusing in particular on the teaching practices they discuss. Interviews will take place during August, 2017 and January, 2018, before the beginning of each semester, and observations will take place during the first several weeks of each semester (during September to October of 2017 and February to March of 2018).

I will also investigate the first research question by hosting several small focus group interviews with approximately 20 recent graduates who are currently teaching. These interviews will focus on participants' preparation, initial experiences, and beliefs

regarding effective language teaching. These focus group interviews will last approximately 90 minutes, and will take place in August 2017.

To investigate the second and third research questions (*What beliefs do novice Indonesian teachers of English hold about effective language teaching?* and *What practices do novice Indonesian teachers of English use to teach?*), I will host a monthly professional development (PD) working group for approximately 20 recent IAIN Salatiga graduates who are currently teaching English. This PD working group will take place monthly from September, 2017 to February, 2018, for a total of six sessions. During these PD working groups, participants will be invited to discuss the successes and challenges they have encountered during their first years of teaching, and I will offer professional development on topics participants request.

I will also investigate the second and third research questions by interviewing and observing 5-7 focal participants in their teaching settings. From among the 20 participants attending the PD working group, I will use maximum variation sampling to select focal participants who have varying backgrounds (e.g., gender, hometown, academic success) and school settings (e.g., urban/rural, primary/secondary/tertiary). By using this type of purposeful sampling, I will be able to develop a rich understanding of each individual's experience, as well as identify patterns between and among individuals with different backgrounds and school settings (Patton, 1990). I will visit these 5-7 participants at the schools where they teach for one day each month from September, 2017 to February, 2018. As I observe them teaching, I will take detailed field notes, focusing in particular on the teaching practices they use to teach English. During post-

observation interviews, I will ask participants about their thinking and decision-making process while they were teaching.

I will audiorecord and transcribe all interviews and PD working group sessions, and will take detailed field notes during observations. I will conduct iterative and ongoing data analysis using Dedoose, a data management program, to apply codes to portions of the interview transcripts and observational field notes that reveal emerging concepts of interest. I will use the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) to compare and compile these coded concepts and thereby identify important themes in the data. I will draw on these themes to write a case report profile of each focal participant, then will conduct a cross-case analysis to build a general explanation that fits the individual cases (Merriam, 2009).

During March, 2018, I will prepare a report for the faculty at IAIN Salatiga, and will also present and request their feedback on my initial findings. I will also present my initial findings to the participants in the PD working group, and will request feedback from participants. I will conclude data collection efforts and will depart from Indonesia at the end of March, 2018. I will return to the University of Maryland, my home institution, and will complete my doctoral dissertation, which will be based on this research project. I also intend to submit a number of articles to international journals about this research project, including several co-authored with my Indonesian counterpart, Mr. Hanung Triyoko. I hope that this project will provide a foundation for continued investigations of effective language teaching and language teacher preparation Indonesia, the United States, and other contexts worldwide.

## References

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