

The Competency of English Language Teachers in Implementing the English Language Literacy Programme

Suhaimi Abdul Wahid, Sanitah Mohd Yusof*, Noor Azean Atan
and Halijah Ibrahim

Abstract--- *The teachers' competency level was investigated from four related aspects which are knowledge competency, teaching skills competency, assessment and evaluation competency, and professional values and behaviour competency. A total of 141 English language literacy teachers from 83 primary schools in Pontian, Johor were involved with this study. The research design is through the use of a questionnaire which intended to measure the competency level of respondents. Data that had been collected is analyzed with Statistical Package for The Social Science (SPSS 12.0) to find the mean, frequency and standard deviation. ANOVA and t-test were used to analyze the hypothesis. The findings showed that the level of competency is high for the knowledge, teaching skills, assessment and evaluation, and professional values and behaviour aspects. As for the hypothesis, there are no significant differences in the competency of the English language teachers across the school zones, teaching experience, and gender factors. Implications of the study were discussed which then followed by a few proposals of the study to the stakeholders such as English teachers that are involved with the LINUS Bahasa Inggeris (LBI) programme, the school administrators, local education authorities (District Education Office and the State Education Department), and the Ministry of Education.*

Keywords--- *Competency Level, Literacy, English Language Teacher, Knowledge, Teaching Skill, Assessment and Evaluation, LINUS Bahasa Inggeris Programme.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers need to improve knowledge and skills to enhance, improve and explore their teaching practices. The teaching profession is also not spared in the need for the teachers to be competent in the schools. A competent teacher will be able to carry out his or her duties well, efficiently, effectively, on time, and suitable with the school mission and vision. Previous researcher¹ propagate that although many teachers went for teacher-training courses or went for undergraduate programme; there are still some of them who have not acquired a minimal satisfactory level of competence during these training. They further elicit that to be a competent teacher it is utmost important for them to be competent in the subject matter and the skills of teaching and this will only be achieved after a long period of time serving in the profession.

Suhaimi Abdul Wahid, School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia.

Sanitah Mohd Yusof, School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia. E-mail: p-sanitah@utm.my*

Noor Azean Atan, School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia.

Halijah Ibrahim, School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia.

LINUS is an acronym for Literacy and Numeracy Screening. This programme started in the Malaysian primary schools in the year 2010 for year 1 pupil. LINUS programme was given an extra emphasis in the national level as it is incorporated in the NKRA (National Key Result Areas) under the education field which is to expand the access to good quality education to everyone². LINUS programme aims at primary school pupils who have problems to master the 3Rs skills, which are reading, writing and arithmetic. According to this programme, every pupil will have to master the basic literacy and numeracy skills after undergoing three years of primary school schooling. The realization of the LINUS programme shows that the Ministry of Education (MOE) are well concerned about the mastery level of literacy and numeracy skills among the pupils.³

II. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The issue of our students failing in the literacy and numeracy skills needed serious attention. This is because it is related to the development of our country. Research shows that in the year 2000, 877 million people around the world are not able to master the basic aforementioned skills.⁴ Malaysia is also trying to overcome the literacy and numeracy problem. The first ever programme that was recorded been done by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in order to curb the literacy and numeracy problems among the primary school students can be traced back before our independent. This can be seen in the *Penyata Razak 1956*⁵ where it is found out that many students are lacking in the mastering of the 3Rs skills in Bahasa Melayu and Mathematics.⁶ From the Razak's Statement, the MOE then began to come out with their remedial programme. From 1967 to 1970 the MOE conducted an overview survey on the need of remedial classes in 9 schools. After conducting remedial classes in those 9 schools, the MOE⁷ then conducted a seminar on the teaching and learning for remedial class for primary school teachers in order to find answers to the problem on the readiness of remedial teachers in the primary schools. Other than that, a long term specialized project which is called as "Projek Pendidikan Imbuhan" was carried out from 1972 until 1981 to identify the problems in the remedial teaching and learning session.

Only in 1980, the MOE gave a rather critical attention towards remedial education through the enactment of the New Integrated Primary School Curriculum (KBSR). The implementation of remedial education in primary schools was not smooth sailing. This is because in 1986 the MOE identified that the implementation of the remedial education was not up to par because there are not enough remedial teachers. In 1987, MOE have identified that there is a shortage of remedial teachers. At that time, the number of remedial teachers was 4,331 teachers; but the actual need of teachers nationwide in order to ensure that the remedial programme will be successful was 6,700 teachers.⁸ Nevertheless, the MOE still insisted that all the schools that have remedial teachers must carry out the remedial programme. Starting in 2013 according to Shamsuri Sujak, the deputy director of Curriculum Development Division, English language remedial programme will also be put into action by the MOE through the commencement of LINUS Bahasa Inggeris (LBI) in the primary schools with the accordance to the NKRA.⁹ For the LBI programme, the MOE set up the KPIs to be rather high which by the end of the Year 1 schooling 67% students will pass the LBI screening test, at the end of Year 2 schooling 83% students will pass the LBI screening test and at the end of Year 3 schooling 100% students will pass the LBI screening test.^{10, 11} This at the end has forced teachers to push their schools' percentage to achieve the high KPIs in a short time of period. The stress that the teachers undergo also

made them to divert from the main objectives of LINUS which is to overcome illiteracy problems. At the end, the teachers opted to teach to the test neglecting the aspects of teaching and learning that will help the students to master the English language literacy.¹¹

Aside from the pressure that the teachers have to endure, multiple case studies conducted¹² in four primary schools in Hulu Langat reveal that although headmasters in the school are supportive of the LINUS programme, they list four problems that hinder the success of LINUS, namely the ineffective dissemination of information regarding LINUS, the lack of qualified teachers and technology, miscommunication between the MOE, state education department (JPN), district education department (PPD) and the schools and the social, economic and political factors.¹² This is an indication that although the statistics show that there is an increment of percentages of students passing the LINUS test at national level; there are still problematic areas in implementation that need to be addressed. As been stated in the above discussion, two out of four problems of the implementation of LBI is related to the teachers, the one who carry out the programme. Therefore, a study should be done on the teachers of the LBI programme so that a conclusion can be made whether they are competent enough to support the LBI programme to be successful. Competency is derived from the word competent. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, competency can be defined as having the necessary ability or skills and able to do something well or well enough to meet a standard stipulated. Other than that, being competent also can be seen as having requisite or adequate ability or qualities needed in order to carry out certain task given. Conclusively, competency can be identified as the internal abilities that help individuals to conduct the task effectively and efficiently and it can be “expressed in a broad, even infinite, array of on-the-job behaviors.”¹³

The overall purpose of this research is to explore the LBI English language teachers’ level of competency in order to identify their ability to implement the LBI curriculum. Through the exploration of the aforementioned statement, this research will be looking into the level of competency among the LBI English language teachers in the district of Pontian, Johor based on four competencies which are knowledge, teaching skills, assessment and evaluation, and professional values and behaviour. Besides that, the researcher will also dwell into identifying whether there are significant differences of the LBI English language teachers’ level of competency across the school zones, teaching experience, and gender factors. The identification of the teachers’ competency level in implementing the new LBI curriculum will be able to elicit the real situation faced by the teachers. With the findings, this research aims to help the teachers themselves, schools administrators, local education authorities and the Malaysian Ministry of Education in gaining a better understanding of the impact of the teachers’ competency level on the teaching and learning of the LBI curriculum.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey using descriptive and inferential statistics. The sample in this research will use whole population sampling method. The research population are all the English language teachers in the district of Pontian that are directly involved with the LBI program which are 81 teachers (Source: LBI Facilitator, Pontian District Education Office). The instrument is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that investigates on the level of competence of the LBI English language teachers on four aspects which are knowledge, teaching skills, assessment

and evaluation, and professional values and behaviour. A pilot study was conducted to analyse the reliability of the questionnaire in which the whole is 0.957. All data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively. All items in the questionnaire are "pre-coded" in advance. Subsequently, these items are then transferred into the coding sheets to facilitate the researcher's analysis using the computer. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The main method used to analyze data is descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were used in this study because the data could be considered as a summary of the entire data set. It may also provide information directly and easily. Some of the analysis includes percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation. Descriptive analysis and the percentage will be used to address the first four objectives of the studies. For the fifth research objective a one-way ANOVA analysis will be used because there are three independent constants that will show the variance between groups based on the experience of teachers.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents Demographic Analysis

For item related to demographic information, respondents were asked three items regarding to their gender, teaching experience, and the school zone. The descriptive analyses of the demographic information are shown in the following Table 1.0 below.

Table 1.0: Analyses of Respondents' Demographic Information

Item	Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
1.	Gender	Male	29	20.6
		Female	112	79.4
2.	Type of schools	SK	115	81.6
		SJKC	17	12.1
		SJKT	6	4.3
		Lain-Lain	63	2.1
3.	Teaching experience	1-5 years old	53	37.6
		6-10 years old	39	27.7
		11-15 years old	22	15.6
		>15 years old	27	19.1
4.	School Zones	Benut	40	28.4
		Pekan Nenas	33	23.4
		Bandar Pontian	28	19.9
		Kukup	40	28.4

There were 141 respondents involved in this study. The majority of the respondents are female teachers, with the percentage of 79.4%. Meanwhile, the male teachers that are involved in this study are 20.6%. For the second demographic data, 37.6% of the respondents can be considered as young teachers with the teaching experience of 1 to 5 years. 27.7% of the respondents have been teaching for 6 to 11 years. Meanwhile, 15.6% and 19.1% of the respondents have been teaching for 11 to 15 years and more than 15 years respectively. The last demographic data that this research explores is the school zones that the respondents belong to. There are four school zones under the authority of District Office, Daerah Pontian which are Benut, Pekan Nenas, Bandar Pontian and Kukup. For the Benut zone, the respondents are 28.4%, followed with 23.4% of respondents from the Pekan Nenas zone.

Meanwhile, only 19.9% of the respondents are teaching in the Bandar Pontian zone. Lastly, 28.4% of the respondents belong to the Kukup zone.

What is the level of competency among the English language teacher?

The analysis of the findings will uncover the LBI English language teachers' level of competency in knowledge, teaching skills, assessment and evaluation, and professional values and behaviour aspects. Researchers then categorized the five-point Likert scale classification of the questionnaires into three categories of mean score for analysing purposes. This is summarises in the following table.

Table 2.0: Mean Descriptive Analysis of the Overall Competencies

The Aspects of Competency (<i>n=141</i>)	Mean	Interpretation
Knowledge	3.92	High
Teaching skills	3.98	High
Assessment and evaluation	3.87	High
Professional values and behaviour	4.16	High
Overall Mean of Competency	3.98	High

The results show that the teachers have high level of competency on the fours aspects that this study looks. On the knowledge competency the teachers score the average mean of 3.92. While in the teaching skills, assessment and evaluation, and professional values and behaviour competency they score the average means of 3.98, 3.87, and 4.16 respectively. The flowing Table 2 summarize the findings. Overall result also indicates that the LBI English language teachers in the district of Pontian, Johor have a high level of competency to carry out the LBI programme with the mean of 3.98.

Is there any significant different in the LBI English teachers' competency across school zones?

Table 3.0: ANOVA Analysis for the Competency Differences based on School Zones

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Group	0.593	3	0.198	1.492	0.220
Within Group	18.158	137	0.133		
Total	18.751	140			

The ANOVA analysis in Table 3.0 above shows that the value of $F=1.492$ with the value of $p=0.220 > 0.05$. This indicates that there are no significance differences if the LBI English teachers' competency based on school zones.

Table 4.0: Descriptive Analysis of the LBI English Language Teachers' Competency based on School Zones

School Zones	Mean	Standard Deviation
Benut	3.96	0.38
Pekan Nenas	3.95	0.35
Bandar Pontian	4.11	0.43
Kukup	3.93	0.30

Through the descriptive analysis, it shows that English teachers from Bandar Pontian zone recorded the highest mean competency with the value of 4.11. On the other hand, with the mean competency value of 3.93, the English teachers from the Kukup zone recorded the lowest mean of competency compared to the other zones. However, the mean competency values are still on a high level across all four zones. On the other hand, if we look on the

competency mean scores of based on the zone areas factor, we can see that teachers from the Bandar Pontian zone score the highest on the competency mean scores compare to teachers from the Benut, Pekan Nenas, and Kukup zones. This shows that on certain level the teachers in Bandar Pontian which schools are categorized as urban schools, are more competent than the teachers who are teaching in the rural schools in Benut, Pekan Nenas and Kukup. This result is parallel with previous researches^{14, 15} which state the teachers teaching in urban schools are more competent than those who are teaching in rural schools. The research further suggests that the main reason that teachers teaching in urban areas having higher competency level compare to their counterpart, is due to the different facilities that are available in urban schools and rural schools. Urban schools generally are more equipped with better facilities that assist the teachers in their everyday teaching, thus it contributed into their higher level of competency.¹⁴

Is there any significant difference in the LBI English language teachers' competency across teaching experience factor?

Table 5.0: ANOVA Analysis for the Competency Differences based on Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Group	0.393	3	0.131	0.977	0.405
Within Group	18.358	137	0.134		
Total	18.751	140			

The ANOVA analysis shows that the value of $F=0.977$ with the value of $p=0.405 > 0.05$. This indicates that there are no significance differences if the LBI English teachers' competency based on teaching experience.

Table 6.0: Descriptive Analysis of the LBI English Language Teachers' Competency based on Teaching Experience

Teaching Experience	Mean	Standard Deviation
1-5 years	3.94	0.40
6-10 years	3.97	0.31
11-15 years	3.98	0.38
>15 years	4.08	0.37

On the contrary, in the descriptive analysis, it shows that LBI English language teachers with the teaching experience of more than 15 years recorded the highest mean competency with the value of 4.08. On the other hand, with the mean competency value of 3.94, the LBI English language teachers with the teaching experience of one to five years recorded the lowest mean of competency compared to the other zones. However, the mean competency values are still on a high level among all the teachers regardless of their years of teaching experience. Nevertheless, if we look on the competency mean scores of based on the teaching experience, we can see that teachers who are more experienced (senior teachers) with more than fifteen years of teaching stint have the highest competency mean scores compare to young teachers with the teaching experience of one to five years. This shows that on certain level the senior teachers are more competent than the younger teachers. This result are parallel with previous researches^{16, 17} which state that the more experienced the teacher are, the more competent they are. Results from this study is also consistent with the research results obtained by previous research¹⁸, who found that the more experienced teachers, (teachers with over sixteen years of working experience) outperformed the less experienced teachers regarding the mastery of professional competency.

Is there any significant difference in the LBI English language teachers' competency across gender factor?

Table 7.0: t-test Analysis of the LBI English Language Teachers' Competency based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	t	p
Competency	Male	29	3.92	-0.976	0.331
	Female	112	4.00		

Through the t-test analysis, it shows that the value of $t=-0.976$ with the value of $p=0.331 > 0.05$. This indicates that there are no significance differences if the LBI English teachers' competency based on gender. Meanwhile, the mean value of the mean score for female teachers' competency, of 4.00 was higher than the mean score for male teachers' competency, of 3.92. This suggests that female teachers have the level of competency that is better than male teachers. Conversely, if we look on the competency mean scores of both genders, we can see the female teachers have the highest competency mean scores compare to the male teachers. This shows that on certain level female teachers is more competent than the male teachers. This result is parallel with previous researches such^{19, 20} which state that female teachers are more committed in the teaching profession compared to male teachers¹⁵.

V. RESEARCH IMPLICATION

The research findings have identifies the level of competency of the LBI English language teachers in the district of Pontian, Johor. It provides in-depth insights on the readiness of the teachers to carry out the LBI program effectively. The followings are some implications for the stakeholders involved, including the LBI English language teachers, school administrators, local education authorities (district and state level) and the Ministry of Education. In this research, it is found out that although in general the LBI English language teachers have a high level of competency; there are still rooms for improvements that can be done especially in the assessment and evaluation aspect. The teachers can attend courses related to assessment and evaluation. They can also refer to the excellent or more experienced teachers in each school as a resource to help them carry out the LBI assessment and evaluation activities successfully.

Although the teachers are the one that needed to go for courses in order to develop and increase their competence, the schools administrators also play important roles in supporting them to do so. The administrators should give ample opportunities for teachers to attend such courses. Such courses can be conducted by other related parties or it can be conducted in a in-house training manner. However, they should also bear in mind that each teacher have different needs in order to increase their competency. To address this issue, the administrators have to customize any training or in-house training courses to suit the needs of their teachers. This is to ensure that the trainings are conducted to the targeted groups and subsequently improve the teachers' competency. Besides that, the school administrators should change their practices in only appointing experienced teachers (those who have been teaching for more than five years) to teach the exam classes. The lower primary students are also in need of such experienced teachers to improve the LBI program effectiveness. When an experienced teacher is appointed alongside a new young teacher (less experienced ones), they will be able to cooperate and work together.

For the local education authorities like the District Education Office and the State Department of Education can be proactive in promoting higher competence level among the LBI teachers. They can introduce a carefully designed

LBI Teacher Competency Index to be followed by the teachers. This index serves as guidelines for the LBI English language teacher to achieve the stipulated level of competency in order to successfully implement the LBI program in the schools. Motivation is one of the factors that needed to be look into when it comes to increase the competency level of the LBI English language teachers. The Ministry of Education should provide special rewards to teachers who have achieved the highest level of competency in school. These rewards may be given in the form of promotion or special allowances. This in turn will provide a motivation for teachers to improve their respective competencies for the betterment of the students and the schools.

VI. CONCLUSION

The success of the LBI programme depends on the skills of teachers to implement it because the teacher is the main agent in delivering and impart knowledge. So, LBI English language teachers must have a high level of competence to carry out the responsibilities that have been given. They also must always be ready to face the changes in the education field and trying to adapt them in every situation they will face. Therefore, all the changes introduced by the ministry require all educators to understand, appreciate and implement as soon as possible. This means that the responsibility of educators to realize all the changes to be made. Finally, we hope that this research will provide information and a clear picture of the level of competence of the LBI English language teachers. In addition, it is expected that the results of this survey are used by the parties involved to rectify the shortcomings so that the level of effectiveness can be improved in the future.

Source of Funding: Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) Ministry of Higher Education (FRGS/1/2014/SS109/UTM/02/14)

REFERENCES

- [1] Kiymet, Selvi.(2010).Teachers' Competencies. *International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*. Vol. V11, 120.1/2010.
- [2] Malaysia. (1979). Cabinet Report. *Malaysian Government*.
- [3] Malaysia. (2011). Annual Report Government Transformation Programme. *Malaysian Government*.
- [4] Anne Muller & Murtagh, T. (Ed.). (2002). Literacy — The 877 million left behind. In *Education Today* (2nd ed., pp. 4–7). *ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 468232*.
- [5] Ministry of Education [MOE]. (1979). Laporan Jawatankuasa Kabinet Mengkaji Pelaksanaan Dasar Pelajaran(Penyata Razak). *Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*.
- [6] Koh Boh Boon. (1981a). Pengajaran Pemulihan dalam Bahasa Malaysia. *Kuala Lumpur: Utusan*.
- [7] Ministry of Education [MOE]. (1979). Laporan Jawatankuasa Kabinet Mengkaji Pelaksanaan Dasar Pelajaran. *Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*.
- [8] Nazariyah Sani. (2014). Pelaksanaan Program Literasi dan Numerasi (Linus): Satu Analisis. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). *University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*.
- [9] Rahmat, R. (2012, November 25). Primary schools to get Linus 2.0 next year. *Daily Express*. Retrieved October 1, 2015, from <http://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news.cfm?NewsID=83358>
- [10] Ministry of Education [MOE]. (2014). Dialog Pelaksanaan Intervensi Program Linus 2.0 Tahun 2014 Bersama JPN/PPD. Retrieved September 31, 2015 from <http://www.ppdbd.edu.my/>
- [11] Rosseliiah Bokhari, Sabariah Md Rashid & Chan Swee Heng. (2015). Teachers' Perception on the Implementation of the Literacy, Numeracy and Screening (LINUS LBI 2.0) Programme among Lower Primary ESL Pupils. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*, 11(1), 108-121.
- Nazariyah Sani & Abdul Rahman Idris. (2013). Implementation of Linus programme based on the model of Van Meter and Van Horn. *The Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Science*, 1(2), 25-36.

- [12] National Staff Development and Training Association [NSDTA]. (2001). Human Services Staff Development and Training Roles and Competencies: Manager. *Washington D.C., America: American Public Human Services Association.*
- [13] Arnab Pan. (2014). A Study on Professional Competency in Relation to Self Efficacy of Madrasa Teachers in West Bengal. *International Journal for Research in Education.* 3 (4). 26 – 31.
- [14] Sukla Roy Choudhury, & Susanta Roy Chowdhury. (2015). Teaching Competency of Secondary Teacher Educators In Relation To Their Metacognition Awareness. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention.* 4 (1). 17 – 23.
- [15] Manullang (2002). *Dasar-dasar Manajemen*, Ghalia Publisher, Indonesia.
- [16] Tillman, C. Linda (2002). *Culturally Sensitive Research Approaches An African-American Perspectives.* American Educational Research Association.
- [17] M. Nur Mustafa. (2013). Professional Competency Differences among High School Teachers in Indonesia. *International Education Studies.* 6 (9). 83 – 92.
- [18] Anderson, R. John. (2010). *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implication (Seven Edition).* Carnagie Mellon University. Worth Publisher.
- [19] N. Bakalis, G.S. Bowman, D. Parock. (2003). Decision Making in Greek and English Registered Nurses in Coronary Care Units. *International Journal of Nursing Studies.* Vol. 40, Issue 7, September 2003, Page 749-760.