

Exploring Self-Efficacy of Early Childhood Education Teachers in Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesian Kindergartens: A Mixed-Methods Approach

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Abstract: This study is aimed to analyze early childhood education (ECE) teachers' self-efficacy in teaching English for young learners in kindergarten context. The mixed method was chosen as the research design to answer the research question to what extent do ECE teachers believe in their ability to teach English to young learners seen from three dimensions of self-efficacy, magnitude, generality, and strength. The participants in this study were ten kindergarten teachers in a school located in Central Java. In collecting the data, they were given a questionnaire adopted from Bandura's theory that proposes the level of self-efficacy containing three dimensions, magnitude dimension, generality dimension and strength dimension. Then, an in-depth interview was conducted to validate and gather more data from the questionnaire filled in by participants. Findings showed that the level of self-efficacy of teachers was adequate in the three dimensions of self-efficacy, magnitude (score 3), generality (score 3), and strength (score 3). However, participants showed lack of self-efficacy in the two statements in strength dimension, feeling comfortable to help their students learning English and teaching English is not frustrating. On going professional developments are needed, such as regular workshop and English proficiency test for teachers to improve ECE teachers' self-efficacy in teaching English for young learners.

Keywords: ECE, English, self-efficacy, teachers, young learners

INTRODUCTION

English is the most widely used language in the world. It is the universal language of worldwide communication in all fields, including education, politics, science, the media, and the arts. It is also frequently used in socialization and entertainment. Gaining knowledge of English will help people to build network more effectively, participate in conversations, and raise their opportunity to get a job or elevate their career (Saddina, 2021). Mastering English broadens chances to continue education abroad either through scholarship or independent funding.

Awareness of the importance and benefits in mastering English make schools in Indonesia to teach English to students as early as possible (Musiman et al., 2021). Diniyah (2017) conducted research to find out about parents and teachers' perspectives in teaching English since early years. The results showed that they share positive opinions about it. This demand is followed by educational institutions, including early childhood education (ECE) settings such as kindergartens. Learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia has begun to introduce in the ECE stage (Nurul Aini et al., 2023). More kindergartens have included English as a part of subjects or even using English a language instruction to children in the class.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language. English is usually taught since elementary school to the university. It becomes a challenge for ECE teachers in teaching English for the

children. Fikroni (2022) argued that in some instances, it became evident that certain Indonesian teachers at the ECE level lack the essential skills required to effectively teach English. This is worsened by the fact that in the reality, the educational backgrounds of ECE teachers in Indonesia are highly diverse. They range from formal to non-formal education, with some being graduates from education-related fields and others from non-education fields. There are even cases where ECE teachers are high school graduate (Indriani & Kuswanto, 2021).

On the other hand, the success of the English language learning process in early childhood is influenced by many factors. One of the most important factors is teachers. Teachers need the ability and self-efficacy in teaching English for early age as the English is the foreign language. The more self-efficacy that teachers possess, the more confident they will teach English for young learners.

Self-efficacy refers to “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura as cited in Artino (2012). Another definition of self-efficacy shared by Lipscomb et al. (2022). They define self-efficacy as “individuals’ perceptions that they can competently meet demands in a given context and may therefore be an important personal resource that contributes to work engagement” (p. 677). From those two definitions, it can be said that self-efficacy is the conviction that one can plan and carry out the actions necessary to achieve the kinds of performances that are intended.

Self-efficacy beliefs serve as the foundation for selecting and persevering in a particular action. They also shape an individual's perceptions, behaviors, and emotions (Reyhing & Perren, 2021). The higher the self-efficacy the bigger the effort of people will do when facing difficulties in completing task (Bandura, 1977; Medyasari et al., 2021). In this context, no matter how challenging teaching English for young learners may be, ECE teachers with high self-efficacy will persevere in trying to complete it. They have an optimistic outlook about their own abilities to be cautious at work, to be resilient, and to be able to concentrate, think clearly, and not give up quickly. On the other hand, teachers with low self-efficacy will tend to avoid the task when they see as challenging and unable to complete.

According to Bandura (1977) self-efficacy varies across multiple dimensions, namely, magnitude, generality, and strength dimensions. Magnitude is the degree to which an individual finds it challenging to take up a particular behavior. This element relates to the behaviors that a person chooses to attempt depending on how tough they perceive their duties to be. Individual self-efficacy disparities may be restricted to easy, moderate, or high tasks when tasks are assigned to an individual that vary in difficulty. The person will try to complete things that are deemed doable and refrain from circumstances and actions that are beyond his or her ability.

Strength is an indicator of one's level of confidence in one's ability to complete a task. Even though they may not yet have lasting experiences, a person with steady aspirations will strive to accomplish goals consistently. While unsustainable experiences have the potential to quickly deflate low expectations of one's own competence (Bandura, 1977).

Generality is the degree to which self-efficacy beliefs are positively correlated within or across time. A person's self-assurance in their skills is dependent on their comprehension of their ability in a specific/limited activity or a range of bigger and varied activities/situations (Bandura, 1977; Medyasari et al., 2021).

A research done by Nurul Aini et al. (2023) investigated the self-efficacy of pre-service ECE teachers. The results of this study indicated that the factors that influence pre-service ECE teachers’ self-confidence in speaking English are self-concept factors, anxiety, vocabulary mastery level, environment, and experience. Two factors, anxiety and vocabulary mastery

factors are the factors most often expressed/shown by pre-service ECE teachers. The findings of this study implied the need for ongoing training for pre-service ECE teachers.

A similar condition found in the research conducted by Febriyanti et al. (2022) in a bilingual kindergarten in Bandung, West Java. They found some challenges in the implementation of English teaching in kindergarten in which the study located. One of the challenges is related to teacher readiness in teaching English to early childhood. The teachers have ECE educational that is more focused on early childhood development than English teaching.

Another study conducted by Fitriati et al. (2023) also found some challenges. In their study, a pre-survey was given to 50 respondents of ECE teachers in the city of Salatiga, West Java. The survey results showed that 100% of respondents introduced English in learning at school, 40% of respondents stated that English teaching is included in the core curriculum that is integrated with the learning theme and 60% of respondents stated that English teaching is only carried out as an extracurricular activity that is scheduled periodically. Based on the results of the pre-survey, two challenges were found, namely first, most ECE teachers are not qualified from the English study program. Second, all respondents stated that they had never participated in interactive English learning techniques training so that their English teaching competence really needed to be improved.

ECE teachers play a crucial role as primary and secondary schools level in teaching English for learners. To ensure children effectively learn English, several key factors are essential. Children learn languages most effectively through interactions with adults or skilled individuals around them, and scaffolding provided by adults further enhances this process. In this context the adults are ECE teachers. They are responsible for maximizing their interactions with children during school sessions to support the acquisition and development of English learning (Mustafa et al., 2018). As more ECE schools in Indonesia teach English to children, the demand for ECE teachers with ability in teaching English is rising. For this reason, it is interesting to explore self-efficacy of ECE teachers in teaching English for young learners from those three dimensions stated by Bandura (1977) magnitude, generality, and strength dimensions.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Mixed research was used as the method of this research. Mixed research refers to a research methodology where a researcher or a group of researchers integrate qualitative and quantitative research approaches for example in the use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purpose of breadth and depth of comprehension and validation (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). By doing mixed research, it is expected that this study can explore the self-efficacy of ECE teachers in teaching English for young learners from those three dimensions comprehensively despite the small scale of this study.

Participants

This study was a small scale as it is a pilot project of a bigger scale study concerning a similar topic. Ten ECE teachers from a kindergarten school in Central Java participated in this project. For this purpose, ten ECE teachers from a kindergarten in Central Java were selected as participants. These teachers were specifically chosen because their school integrates English into its curriculum for young children, making them highly relevant to the study's aims.

Participant selection adhered to research ethic principles, ensuring that the sampling process was equitable and respectful. The researchers provided clear information about the study's objectives, methods, and potential implications to all participants before obtaining their informed consent. Confidentiality was assured by anonymizing responses in all stages of the data collection and analysis processes. This was crucial to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their honest insights.

Data collection began with a questionnaire distributed to all ten teachers to gather general insights about their self-efficacy in the three dimensions, magnitude, generality, and strength dimensions. There are 16 statements in total, 5 statements in the magnitude dimension, 5 statements in the generality and 6 statements in the strength dimension. Participants chose strongly disagree (point 1), disagree (point 2), agree (point 3), and strongly agree (point 4) for each statement. The statements in the questionnaire developed by adapting items from the questionnaire designed by Siboro et al. (2019) focusing on the similar issue but different participants. In their study, Siboro et al. (2019) explore students' self-efficacy regarding their speaking abilities. The participants in their study consisted of 28 undergraduate students from a suburban area in West Borneo, Indonesia that enrolled in a third semester speaking class.

Recognizing the relevance of these dimensions to the teaching context, the questionnaire was modified to suit the specific needs of ECE teachers. Modifications involved rephrasing items and adding new ones to ensure they addressed the context of teaching English to young children, while still maintaining alignment with the theoretical framework established by (Siboro et al., 2019). This adaptation ensured that the instrument was both contextually relevant and theoretically grounded, providing a robust tool for exploring ECE teachers' self-efficacy.

To ensure the depth-of data collection, four teachers were selected for in-depth interviews after giving questionnaires. The four teachers teach in different classes. These four were deliberately chosen to represent different classroom contexts within the school. By doing that, the data gathered from the interview was expected to be varied despite the small numbers of participants filling out questionnaires or being interviewed. The interview objective was to provide clarification on the information given by the participants in the questionnaire and to acquire more thorough data. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used.

Data Collection Method

The data for this study were collected using two different types of instruments: a questionnaire and in-depth interview. The collection of the data was done in July 2024. The questionnaire covers three dimensions of self-efficacy, magnitude, generality, and strength dimensions. The Likert-style 4-point scale that made up the measurement scale of the questionnaire was described as follows:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly agree

After filling in the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was conducted. The researchers employed semi-structured interviews to carry out the study. In a semi-structured interview, the researchers have prepared some questions based on the need of this study but open for the opportunity to discuss further based on the answer from the participants.

Data Analysis

The next step is analyzing the data. The data gathered was analyzed based on the type of data. Several steps were taken by researchers. For the questionnaire, the researcher employed a Likert scale that usually a range of 1 to 5, but only four degrees of agreement, "strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree" in the degree version. The option "fairly agree" that usually has a score of three was intentionally excluded to minimize potential bias and ensure more precise data collection. The decision was based on the concern that participants who are uncertain or hesitant in their responses may be inclined to select "fairly agree" as a default, middle-ground option. This tendency, often referred to as central tendency bias, could compromise the reliability and validity of the responses by masking participants' true attitudes or perceptions.

Including "fairly agree" may inadvertently create ambiguity, as it can be interpreted as either a mild form of agreement or a neutral stance, leading to inconsistent responses. To address this, the scale was designed by the researchers with clearer distinctions between agreement levels ranged from strongly disagree up to strongly agree to encourage participants to more accurately reflect their actual opinions. By excluding "fairly agree," this research aims to reduce the likelihood of participants defaulting to an ambiguous option and to promote more deliberate and meaningful engagement with the questionnaire items. This approach ensures that the collected data more accurately represents the participants' true perspectives, enhancing the overall quality and interpretability of the findings.

After that, the researchers tallied the data using descriptive statistics and displayed the participants' answers as percentages. For each question, the researcher tallied the number of ticks next to the terms "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Participants who selected "agree" or "strongly agree" were thought to have slightly high/ very high levels of self-efficacy. Conversely, participants with low/very low self-efficacy are more likely to select "strongly disagree" and "disagree". The rating scale of interpretation of the data from participants can be seen in the table below adapted from Siboro et al. (2019).

Table 1. Rating Scale Interpretation

Rating Scale	Range of Perception	Level of Students' Self-Efficacy
4 3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
3 2.50-3.49	Agree	Slightly High
2 1.50-2.49	Disagree	Low
1 1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

While, for the data from the interview, the three steps of data analysis, namely, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Using the information gathered from the interviews, the researchers coded the information, identified themes based on the study questions, and classified the information into groups during the data reduction phase.

In the data display phase, the data was gathered and presented by the researchers. The data was displayed based on the three criteria or dimensions, namely, magnitude, generality, and strength.

The last step is verification or conclusion drawing. This stage's conclusion procedure was modified based on a more thorough analysis of the evidence. Finally, the researchers double-

checked their findings by going back and rereading the transcripts of the four participants' interviews, the relevant literature, and the participants' responses from the questionnaire.

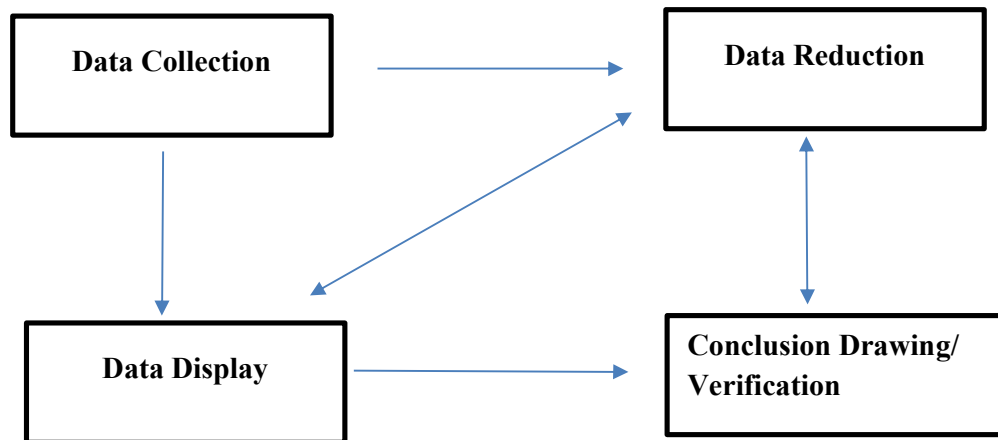


Image 1. Miles and Huberman (1994) Qualitative Data Analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Magnitude Dimension

Self-efficacy was measured from the three dimensions: magnitude, generality, and strength. The magnitude dimension consists of four statements. Table 2 followed by image 2 provides an explanation of the statement filled by participants in magnitude dimension together with the percentage.

Table 2. Magnitude Dimension

No	Statement	Frequence
1.	I can teach challenging subject in English	3
2.	I can teach easy subject in English	3
3.	I do not avoid difficult subject when teaching English for children	3
4.	I prefer challenging activities to easy activities when teaching English for children	3
5.	I am confident in teaching English for children	3

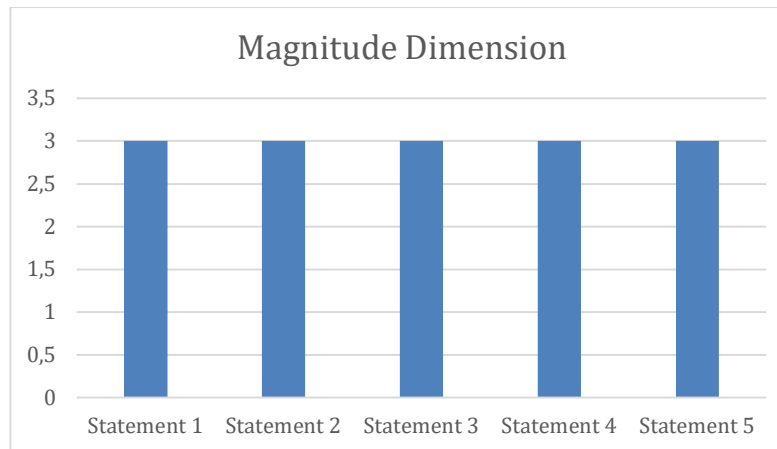


Image 2. ECE Teachers' Self Efficacy in Magnitude Dimension

Table 2 and image 2 indicate that in the magnitude dimension, the level of ECE teachers' self-efficacy is slightly high level indicated by most participants tend to choose the option agree for the statements in magnitude dimension. Given the consistent agreement across all statements, it appears that participants exhibit moderate confidence in their ability to teach English, handle challenges, and prefer engaging in challenging activities.

The finding in magnitude dimension suggests they are relatively self-assured and open to growth in their teaching practices. However, since all responses are rated at point 3 ("agree"), it might indicate that there is still a need for further enhancement of their confidence or more thorough evaluation in future surveys. There might still be space for development in some areas, including advanced training or confidence-building, as the data shows agreement rather than strong agreement or higher ratings.

A space for development of ECE teachers' self-efficacy in the magnitude dimension was supported by the finding from the interview. Based on the interview, participants still found difficulties in memorizing and pronouncing words in English although in the questionnaire they answer that they do not find any difficulties in teaching English for children.

English is foreign language in Indonesia. English is different from Indonesian language in which there is no differences between how to write and to pronounce a word. In English, the pronunciation and the writing can be different. English pronunciation can be a challenge for ECE teachers as found in the research conducted by Fikroni (2022) and also in this research. To overcome that challenge, usually participants practice how to pronounce a word correctly before teaching English for children in the class.

"It is hard sometimes to remember how a word says in English. So, we gather to discuss and prepare the material before delivering it to the children. We imitate the pronunciation and repeat to make sure the utterance and vocabulary pronounced well" (ND)

Challenge in pronouncing words in English also faced by ECE teachers that participated in a study conducted by Mustafa et al., (2018). They studied the challenges faced by Malaysian ECE teachers in using English as a second language to interact with students. In the pre-observation interview, the teacher shared her challenges with pronunciation. She admitted that she often struggled to determine whether her pronunciation was correct. Lacking confidence, she would typically rely on her instincts and, occasionally, seek guidance from her colleagues on how to pronounce certain words (Mustafa et al., 2018). However, teacher's lack of

confidence in using English impacts the students' pronunciation accuracy, as young learners often view the teacher as a role model for speaking English (Mutiah et al., 2020).

Generality Dimension

The generality dimension consists of five statements. The following table and chart will provide an explanation of the statement filled by participants together with the percentage.

Table 4. Generality Dimension

No	Statement	Frequence
1.	I can teach four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English	3
2.	I believe I can complete four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) task in English	3
3.	I am interested to teach four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English	4
4.	I am diligent to learn four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English	4
5	I can improve my four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English	3

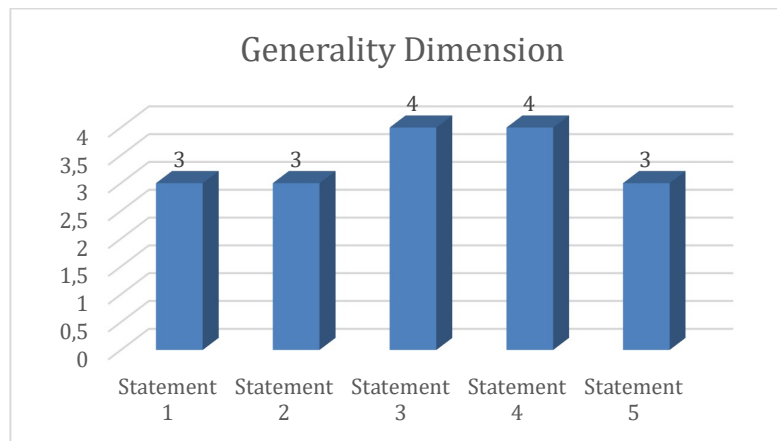


Image 3. ECE Teachers' Self Efficacy in Generality Dimension

Table 5. evaluates participants' confidence, interest, diligence, and perceived ability related to teaching and learning the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English. Participants show strong interest and diligence (strongly agree) in teaching and learning the four skills, indicating motivation and a proactive approach. Meanwhile, participants' confidence in teaching, completing tasks, and improving their four skills receive three scores or agree. This suggests that participants feel capable but may need additional training or practice to further build their competence.

Participants explained further in the interview that they observed how other teachers teach English in those four skills to children in their class. By observing other teachers, participants

believe that in kindergarten especially when English is a foreign language, children only need to learn daily and simple vocabulary and expression such as greeting, animal, colors, and saying goodbye.

“I observe another teacher. From there, I learn some topics and how to teach English for children. We teach greetings and basic vocabulary in English. I used a song to greet and begin learning. Goodbye song is used when the students will go home.” (FT)

Madya (2023) mentions that collaboration provides a variety of inputs, leading to the best possible solutions for the issues at hand. Collaboration between teachers also helps shift teachers' mindsets toward open discussions and set aside personal egos to improve the quality of learning.

Strength Dimension

The strength dimension consists of six statements. Table 5 and the image provide an explanation of the statement filled in by participants.

Table 5. Strength Dimension

No	Statement	Frequency
1.	I feel comfortable to help my students learning English	2
2.	Teaching English is not frustrating	2
3.	I do not feel discouraged when I think about teaching English	3
4.	I motivate myself when I find difficulties in teaching English for children	3
5	I am never worried about my understanding the learning needs of my students in English	3
6	I do not feel stressed when I think about teaching English	3

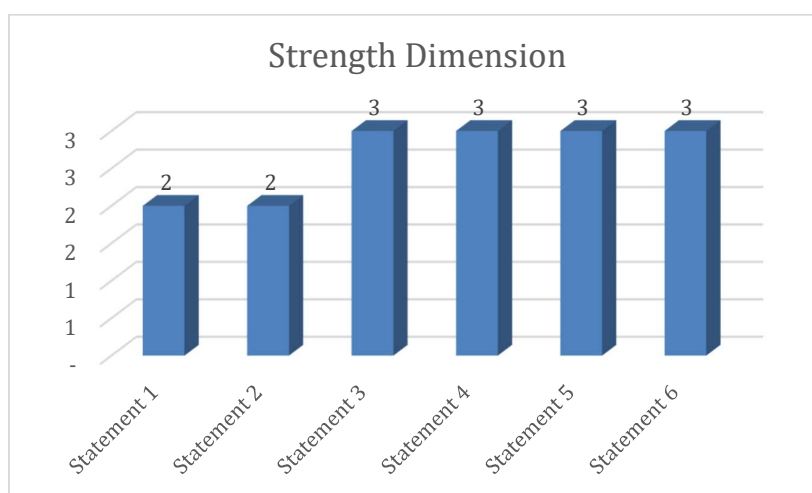


Image 4. ECE Teachers' Self Efficacy in Strength Dimension

Table 5 indicates that participants generally do not feel comfortable helping their students learn English. Participants also find teaching English sometimes frustrating. This suggests a

lack of confidence or ease in their ability to provide effective support to students, which could be an area for improvement through training or mentoring. This could contribute to stress and a negative teaching experience.

“I do not graduate from English. This sometimes make me not confident with my abilities in teaching English for children. But I motivate myself. I used gestures in teaching vocabulary to attract my students and help them to understand the meaning easily. However sometimes I change the learning by using songs and games. It depends on the situation in the class while the learning happened” (MA)

The success of the English language learning process in early childhood education context is influenced by many factors, including the quality teachers (Susfenti, 2021). Therefore, it is important to understand how confident of teachers in teaching especially when English is foreign language in Indonesia because self-efficacy of teachers can optimize the chance of success in children’s learning and how well they teach English to children (Siboro et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study adopted Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to explore the self-efficacy of ECE teachers in teaching English for children. Findings showed that ECE teachers tend to have high levels of self-efficacy in three dimensions, magnitude, generality, and strength. However, in strength dimension, there are two statements that indicate teachers still have low self-efficacy. On going professional developments are needed, such as regular workshop and English proficiency test for teachers to improve ECE teachers’ self-efficacy in teaching English for young learners especially in the strength dimension. Therefore, they can be more confident in teaching English to young learners and optimize the quality of English teaching in ECE level. However, the study involved a relatively small sample of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. A larger sample size could provide a more comprehensive understanding of ECE teachers' self-efficacy in various settings across Indonesia. Another limitation was lack of classroom observations. Although the data were collected using a mixed-methods approach, including both questionnaires and in-depth interviews, the absence of classroom observations is a limitation. Future research could address these limitations by including a larger sample size and incorporating classroom observations to gain a more holistic understanding of the self-efficacy of ECE teachers in teaching English to young learners.

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