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Portrayal of the Different Types of the Feedback Move (F-Move) in University Classrooms

*Golebamang Galegane*

Indonesian English University Students' Perceptions on Plagiarism in the Online World Era

*Made Hery Santosa, A.A. Gede Yudha Paramartha & Ratih Mas Absari*

International Comparisons of Critical Thinking: Correcting Myths about Asian Students

*David Rear*

English Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Linguistics in Indonesia

*Cahya Komara & Widi Sriyanto*

The Disposition of Motivational Strategies among English Language Teachers in Public Universities in Malaysia

*Suhaida Omar & Nik Ahmad Farhan bin Azim @ Nik Azim*

In or Out of a Classroom? An Ecological Understanding of Foreign Language Creative Writing

*Emmas Mas Pupah, Junjun Muhamad Ramdani & Rahmat*

Listening Comprehension Problems: The Pre-Diploma Students' Insights and Experiences

*Azrina binti Abu Bakar*

Implementing English Morphological Awareness of Derivation in the Teaching of Vocabulary for Adult Learners

*Astrit Maria*

A Meta-Analysis Study: Barriers to Learning Management Systems in EFL Classrooms

*Yildiz Terzioğlu & Mustafa Kurt*

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## English Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Linguistics in Indonesia

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This research studied the English pre-service teachers' knowledge of linguistics in one of private universities in Indonesia. Using open and close-ended questions, this research attempted to figure out the capacity of the English pre-service teachers in dealing with linguistics theory or understanding that is essential for them in giving full description or portrayal of English linguistics for teaching pupils at school. This research involved 100 respondents with 2 main focuses on micro-linguistics studies: the morphology theory & understanding and the phonology theory & understanding. The result showed that English pre-service teachers had limit or paucity of linguistics understanding that can support them with better explanation and knowledge for teaching their future pupils.

*Keywords: linguistics, English pre-service teachers, English language teaching*

*Penelitian ini mengkaji pengetahuan linguistik calon guru-guru bahasa Inggris tentang linguistik di salah satu universitas swasta di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan kuesioner terbuka dan tertutup yang mana sesuai dengan penelitian kuantitatif, penelitian ini mencoba untuk mencari tahu kapasitas calon guru-guru bahasa Inggris dalam menghadapi teori atau pemahaman keilmuan linguistik yang sangat penting bagi mereka dalam upaya memberikan deskripsi lengkap atau penggambaran utuh tentang linguistik bahasa Inggris ketika mengajar siswa di sekolah. Penelitian ini melibatkan 100 responden dalam 2 fokus utama pertanyaan pada studi mikro-linguistik; 1) teori dan pemahaman morfologi, 2) teori dan pemahaman fonologi. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya fakta bahwa calon guru-guru bahasa Inggris tersebut memiliki keterbatasan atau kurangnya pemahaman linguistik yang dapat mendukung mereka dengan penjelasan dan pengetahuan yang lebih baik ketika mengajar siswa mereka di masa depan.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Being a teacher is not as easy as we think. This profession is very challenging, and in some cases it can create frustration or stress, for instance, teaching young learners, primary school, or any other levels (Fisher; 2011, Goutami; 2015; Konior, 2001; Kyriacou, 2000). We know for sure there are a lot of activities at school that a teacher must do with also great responsibility in educating their pupils. They have to be able to manage class situation, recognize their pupils' characteristics, know what materials to teach, and many other activities. Besides, being a teacher must also require and comprehend other aspects related to their teaching performance including the skill to teach students, such as soft skill for communication (Kanokorn, Pongtorn, & Sujanya; 2013, Omić, Dvorski, & Kirinić; 2015), the strategy to deliver materials (Killen, 2006, Orlich, 2018), and the knowledge or field expertise (OECD, 2005; Walshaw, 2012). Hence, becoming a teacher entails seriousness and dedication; therefore, teacher can support the student's achievement toward goal of learning that school has determined.

In the area of language teaching, particularly English as foreign language (EFL), the competency that teacher must have is most likely on the content or subject matter knowledge, the teaching skills, and the ability to teach in English (Richards, 2017). The content or subject matter knowledge covers the mastery of concept and discipline of English (skills, components, discourse, linguistics, school and pedagogy relevant materials) that helps the teacher's candidate or known as student's teacher or English pre-service when teaching English subject for students (Lee, Lee, & Low, 2014). Meanwhile, with regard to the teaching skills and the ability to teach in English, an English pre-service teacher must prepare himself with a good knowledge of teaching methodologies as he must deliver the material with good English proficiency. English teaching methodology helps teacher with the understanding of activities that teacher can apply during teaching and learning process including the strategy, the methods, techniques, approaches, the role of teacher, and many more (Scrivener, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the meantime, teacher must transfer the materials in good English delivery for providing students to get used to English they learn in class. Without the ability to deliver the materials in good English capacity, teachers cannot provide their students with good level of English aptitude. Thus, English pre-service teachers are expected to have subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, and the capability to teach the materials with good delivery as the strong basis competence for teaching their students.

One of the standards of competency or criteria that English pre-service teacher must have and aware of is linguistics competency. It seems that in Indonesia, the competency of linguistics as a part of English knowledge is still neglected by English pre-service teachers. However, in the university level, English pre-service teachers are given fundamental knowledge that covers not only English, teaching, and research skills but also the competency of linguistics. English linguistics is expected to expand and strengthen their knowledge, so they will have better understanding of the language.

In general, linguistics can be defined as the study of language and how the language works (Crystal, 2008). However, linguistics is more about studying the internal system of language in either micro or macro levels. For English pre-service teachers, having a good knowledge of linguistics can help them with the potential questions asked by students about English subject with reasonable and understandable answers. For example, a student in class who asks teacher, "Sir, could you explain why in English, the comparative and superlative (-er

and -est) in the word *good* (good - better - best) or *bad* (bad - worse - worst) is different from other words such as *smart* (smart - smarter - smartest) or *tall* (tall - taller - tallest)?" This question can be problematic if teacher cannot have linguistic knowledge.

The question above can be easily answered by a teacher if he has studied morphology of English. It is inaccurate for teacher to answer the question with universal truth or statement that creates bias such as "it is the rule or English can be just like that", and teacher puts formal grammar convention to be their savior. Frankly, the best answer for the preceding question is because of the blocking system that exists in English influenced by British's language culture and development (Katamba & Stonham; 2006).

Another question which may be asked by students in class can be "Sir, could you explain why in English there is different word class for the same word such as *report* or *import* that can be classified as noun and verb?" Teacher with good phonology knowledge can answer the question since the word class of *report* or *import* can be distinguished from the stress mark (*report* or *import* = noun, *report* or *import* = verb) when a speaker pronounces the words (Roach, 2001). These two examples show that English linguistics knowledge is essential at least in the micro level: morphology and phonology. Mastering English morphology is important for English pre-service teachers since it is related to the word formation that can be applied by students for writing or vocabulary building. Meanwhile, mastering phonology, which is related to the English sound system, is important for students to learn listening, speaking, reading, or pronunciation. Through the deep understanding of English linguistics, English pre-service teachers can have more knowledge to transfer the English subject to their future students.

Based on the description mentioned above, this study aimed to figure out the English pre-service teachers' knowledge about linguistics, particularly in the area of English morphology and phonology that they have studied in university. Hence, this research proposed two main questions to state: 1) Do the English pre-service teachers truly study linguistics (English morphology and phonology) at university? 2) Do the English pre-service teachers have a good level of linguistics knowledge, in this context, mastering concept and understanding of English morphology and phonology? Thus, this research can reveal the level of English pre-service teachers' competency of linguistics as a part of knowledge that is important for them when teaching their future students.

## **Literature Review**

Linguistics is defined as the scientific study of language (Aronoff & Miller, 2001; MacGilvray; 2005), and it becomes the conventional term underlining the area of language studies. Many language users, researchers, or language teachers concentrate on studying linguistics that can help them to understand various aspects, such as speaker's units of sounds (phonetics and phonology), how units of words being formed (morphology), sentence construction (syntax), meaning making word and its function to success in communication (semantic pragmatic), or the use of it with other interdisciplinary studies, for instance, social-cultural (sociolinguistics, anthropology-linguistics), psychology and medical (psycholinguistics, clinical linguistics), forensic linguistics or any other applied linguistics (second language acquisition, translation). Thereby, studying linguistics is very useful to support their works toward language area they focus on.

At the beginning, the study of linguistics simply identified diachronic or historical viewpoint. Then, in early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) with his phenomenal book written by his students “*Course in general Linguistics*” changed the viewpoint to synchronic or generative or structural linguistics whereas language could be studied as a system, described, and analyzed through its elements or units at a particular moment. This is known as the era of modern linguistics (Aitchison, 2003). The study of morphology, phonology, and syntax are examples of the structural linguistics emergence that grew significantly, not only for English linguistics but also other languages studied across America and Europe in a short period of time. Until this day, the study of structural linguistics still becomes the fundamental source of knowledge that can be used, especially for language teachers in supporting their teaching and learning activities.

The question arising is then how significant linguistics can help teachers in language teaching. It is important to firstly know that there is strong connection between language teaching and linguistics. Language teaching is part and narrowing focus of studying linguistics which started in the late 1950s, known nowadays as applied linguistics (Davies & Elder, 2004). Basically, language teaching is the application of studying linguistics. Although there are some authors who disagree with the idea that linguistics can be used in language teaching area and be the basis of strategy in language learning (Johnson, 1967; Lamendella, 1969), it should be noted that linguistics is powerful study that can provide teachers with descriptive explanations underlying certain language cases while teaching their students. Widdowson (1978) stresses the importance of linguistics but says that it depends on language teachers’ needs.

Manu studies have been conducted to show the interaction or the interference between linguistics studies and language teaching area. For instance, Lewis (2008) studied teachers’ knowledge of English phonology and attitudes by trying to find its relation toward reading instruction and outcomes. Hung (2009) has explored the role of phonology in the teaching of pronunciation to bilingual students. Another study by Masny (2010) has successfully found the effects on the linguistic awareness for foreign language learners in writing. Oz (2014) and Akbulut (2017) discovered the positive implication of having morphological awareness on English language teaching area and on second language vocabulary knowledge. These all show the benefits of linguistics that can facilitate the best process in language teaching area. Thus, teachers need to realize that by involving linguistics studies, they can make the students comprehensively understand the language being learned.

## **METHOD**

The method of this research was quantitative method through the use of open and close-ended questioner (Likert’s ordinal scale). Conducted at University of Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA, Jakarta, this study involved 100 respondents in 8 semesters who already passed the courses of Linguistics and English Morphology & Phonology. The first procedure done was asking the respondents to respond to the questioner by submitting in the Google form questioners’ format (Likerts’ ordinal scale from 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Neither agree nor disagree (Neutral /N), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly agree (SA)), followed by tabulating and calculating the responds. The writers calculated and put the 100 data of questioner that had been submitted by English pre-service teachers to the tabulation forms. The next procedure was analyzing and discussing the data. After calculation and

tabulation were done, the writer analyzed the data and finished it by doing final discussion that could prove the English pre-service teachers' level of linguistics knowledge, especially in the area of English morphology and phonology.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The findings of this study were showed in following table, and the discussion was explained afterward. Based on the close-ended questionnaire, it can be seen as follows:

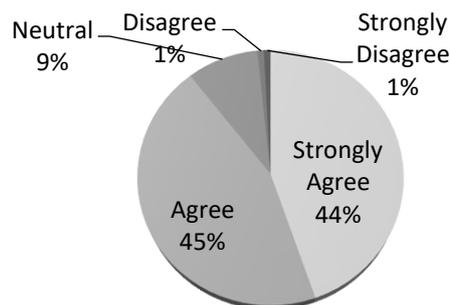
- a. 89% English pre-service teachers confirmed (strongly agree and agree) that they learned linguistics before graduating from the university as the requirement before they become teacher. It was also found that they had already known all aspects of linguistics, such as history, branches, and particularly morphology and phonology areas.

*Table 1: Students' responses in learning linguistics in their study*

	M	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I study linguistics at campus.	4.45	0.54	57 (57%)	41 (41%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (1%)
2. I know the history of linguistics study.	4.37	0.53	39 (39%)	59 (59%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3. I know every branches of linguistics study; phonetics, phonology, morphology, semantic, syntax, applied linguistics, and many more.	3.97	0.82	27 (27%)	47 (47%)	23 (23%)	2 (2%)	1 (0%)
4. I have learned morphology.	4.38	0.81	54 (54%)	34 (34%)	9 (9%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
5. I have learned phonology.	4.38	0.8	52 (52%)	38 (38%)	8 (8%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
			45%	44%	9%	1%	1%

Below is the visualization of English pre-service students' average score from item number 1 up to 5 that shows their responses to learning and knowing linguistics (morphology and phonology).

*Figure 1: The average score of students' responses to linguistics learning*



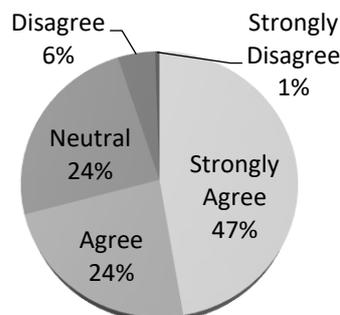
b. English pre-service teachers' linguistics morphology knowledge was categorized as adequate since 71% (strongly agree and agree) of the respondents confirmed that they knew some aspects of morphology.

Table 2: Students' linguistic knowledge in morphology

	M	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. I know and master the concept of English morphology; the study of word formation.	3.79	0.83	21 (21%)	42 (42%)	32 (32%)	5 (5%)	0 (0%)
7. I know about the terms of free morpheme, bound morpheme, morph, root, stem, or base in morphology.	4.02	0.77	28 (28%)	48 (48%)	22 (22%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
8. I understand how to different each English word formation; derivational and inflectional process.	4	0.78	27 (27%)	49 (49%)	21 (21%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
9. I understand English affixations (prefix – infix – Suffix) and its meaning.	4.15	0.76	32 (32%)	55 (55%)	10 (10%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
10. I know and master the other English word formation, such as: reduplication, compounding, blending, acronym, Borrowing, Coinage, Clipping, Conversion, and many more.	3.68	0.9	18 (18%)	42 (42%)	31 (31%)	8 (8%)	1 (1%)
11. I know and master the English morphological tree.	3.69	0.85	15 (15%)	48 (48%)	29 (29%)	7 (7%)	1 (1%)
			47%	24%	24%	6%	1%

Below is the visualization of English pre-service students' average score from item number 1 up to 5 that shows their responses to knowing and mastering some knowledge in morphology area.

Figure 2: Students' responses to linguistics knowledge of morphology



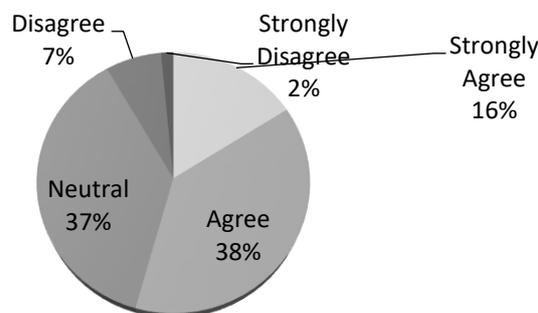
c. Next, English pre-service teachers' linguistics phonology knowledge was also adequate since this research found 54% of respondents confirmed 'knowing and mastering some knowledge in phonology'.

Table 3: Students' linguistic knowledge in phonology

	M	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. I know and master the concept of English phonology; the study of sound system of language.	3.66	0.81	14 (14%)	44 (44%)	37 (37%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)
17. I understand the speech sound mechanism (respiratory, phonatory, articulators) and its phonetics.	3.55	0.82	11 (11%)	42 (42%)	39 (39%)	7 (7%)	1 (1%)
18. I know about the terms of phoneme in phonology; segmental and suprasegmental.	3.42	0.85	11 (11%)	32 (32%)	46 (46%)	10 (10%)	1 (1%)
19. I understand how to different between English consonants and vowels.	3.94	0.97	32 (32%)	40 (40%)	20 (20%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)
20. I understand how to classify English speech of intonation, stress, rhythm, pitch, juncture, and tempo.	3.57	0.91	15 (15%)	39 (39%)	36 (36%)	8 (8%)	2 (2%)
21. I know and master the syllable concept and analysis, and English IPA transcription.	3.49	0.87	13 (13%)	33 (33%)	46 (46%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)
			16%	38%	37%	7%	2%

Below is the visualization of English pre-service students' average score from item number 1 up to 5 that shows their responses to knowing and mastering some knowledge in phonology area.

Figure 3: Students' responses to linguistics knowledge of phonology



With regard to the three points above, it can be concluded that (a) English pre-service teachers study linguistics (English morphology and phonology) at university. (b and c) English pre-service teachers stated that most of them know and master basic concepts in English morphology and phonology although there were some students who were still confused with their competency (neutral response).

However, to make sure whether or not English pre-service teachers had good knowledge of linguistics (morphology and phonology area), the researchers gave some deeper questions about morphology and phonology understanding in the questionnaire. The results are as follows:

- d. English pre-service teachers' linguistics morphology knowledge was low since the study found 50% of the respondents stated 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. This shows they didn't know the answer of morphology questioned given.

Table 4: Morphology knowledge

	M	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. I can explain and describe the question about: Why? - Piano + ist = Pianist (A person who play piano) - Guitar + ist = Guitarist (A person who play guitar) - Violin + ist = Violinist (A person who play Violin) But, why? - Drum + er = Drummer (A person who play drum)??	2.46	1.13	6 (6%)	11 (11%)	28 (28%)	33 (33%)	22 (22%)
13. I can explain and describe the question about: Why? - two car + s = two cars (plural) - two book + s = two books (plural) - three plane + s = three planes (plural) But, why? - two child + en = children (plural) ?? two mouse = mice (plural) ??	2.59	1.17	9 (9%)	10 (10%)	31 (31%)	31 (31%)	19 (19%)
14. I can explain and describe the question about: Why? - small → smaller → smallest = er – est	2.79	1.22	13 (13%)	14 (14%)	24 (24%)	37 (37%)	12 (12%)

- high → higher → highest = er – est
- fast → faster → fastest = er - est

But, why?

- good → better → best = good → gooder → goodest?
- bad → worse → worst = bad → badder → baddest?

15. I can explain and describe the question about: Why is different between irregulars verb?

Examples:

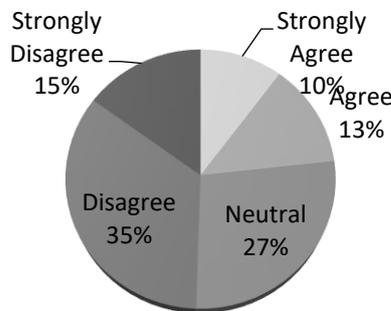
Irregular →	2.92	1.17	13	17	26	37	7
swim swam swum			(7%)	(%)	(39%)	(7%)	(1%)
v <sub>1</sub> v <sub>2</sub> v <sub>3</sub>							

Irregular →							
read read read ??							
v <sub>1</sub> v <sub>2</sub> v <sub>3</sub>							

			10%	13%	27%	35%	15%
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The average responses can be seen in the following chart.

Figure 4: Morphology knowledge of the students



e. English pre-service teachers' linguistics phonology knowledge was also low, showed by 69% of the respondents who stated 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree.' It means they didn't know the answer of morphology questioned given.

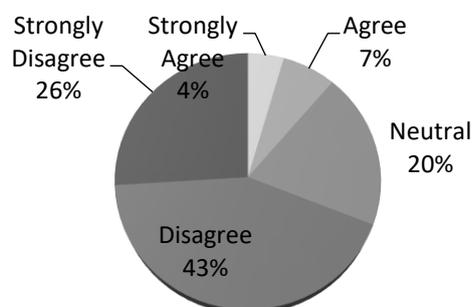
Table 5: Phonology knowledge

	M	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
22. I can explain and describe the question about: Why is different between English speech strong form and weak form?	2.03	0.78	13 (13%)	14 (14%)	24 (24%)	37 (37%)	12 (12%)
Examples:							

Bat → /bʌt/ weak form → /bət/								
23. I can explain and describe the question about: Why is different between English word class? - Import → as Noun (The <u>import</u> is ....) N - Import → as Verb (I <u>import</u> ....) V Is there any relation to phonology?	3.4	0.97	11 (11%)	16 (16%)	16 (16%)	40 (40%)	17 (17%)	
24. I can explain and describe the question about: Why “t” sound in some English word is pronounced with “n” or “s”? Examples: International → /innernasional/ Potential → /potensial/	1.91	1.17	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	20 (20%)	45 (45%)	33 (33%)	
25. I can explain and describe the question about: Why is different form between English prefix “in/im/il” for the same meaning → (not)? - Im + Possible → Impossible - In + Active → Inactive - Il + legal → Illegal	2.25	1.14	6 (6%)	8 (8%)	20 (20%)	37 (37%)	29 (29%)	
			4%	7%	20%	43%	26%	

The average responses can be seen in the following chart.

Figure 5: Phonology knowledge of the students



To support the validity of responses above, the researchers used some open-ended questioner dealing with English pre-service teachers' point of view as to linguistics knowledge. When they were asked about their preference in learning linguistics, they stated that they like studying linguistics, as follows:

*"It's the system of a language. It's tedious work to learn, but it's very necessary to understand if we wanna become a language teacher. Don't like it so much".*

*"Linguistic is study of the word. I like it"*

*"Linguistics is a lesson that explains about knowledge of a language. I do like it literally"*

*"How to pronounce the words, etc. Yes, I do"*

Moreover, they stated the importance of linguistics and commented that it is very important and necessary to be studied especially for them who will be an English teacher, as follows:

*"Important, cause we need to know about the meaning and the words in target language"*

*"It is necessary for identifying errors and making corrections and identifying student language weakness and areas that need improvement."*

*"It is very important for Students especially English Department, but as far as I see at my campus still there is no a lecturer which competent on that lesson. So, I wish for next time will be better in choosing a lecturer."*

*"As I said before that, learning linguistics is difficult enough and a bit bored, i prefer to learn grammar or the others. It is important to language teaching areas because we should know the background of where the words are created so we can know the sentence that we make is true or false."*

They also said that morphology was helpful for English pre-service teachers to teach the students such as correcting students' sentences, as can be found in the excerpt below:

*"Help students how to vocalize words by pointing out the places from which sounds originate and which organs are involved when producing a sound."*

*"We can know how to arrange the sentence well and teach our students easily."*

*"Benefit of learn linguistic is make us understand how the first words or how come make a sentence"*

*"The benefits of studying morphology for teaching in class someday are you as a teacher can make a correct sentence while you giving an example to your students, instead of learning grammar only."*

Finally, they stated that their linguistics level of understanding was in low, as can be seen below:

*"low"*

*"very low"*

*“Not good, actually I don’t like this lesson”*

*“I think I’m in low level. When I’m studying linguistics there were some materials that I don’t really understand.”*

## **Discussion**

Data showed that all respondents of English pre-service teachers studied linguistics in the college. With regard to morphology and phonology, 89% students responded ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ to the close-ended question (no. 1-5). The university, in this context English department, provides linguistics subjects since they will be an English teacher. Meanwhile, based on close-ended question asking English pre-service teachers’ knowledge of morphology and phonology (no. 6-11 and 16-21), the finding showed that most of them knew morphology and phonology fundamental concept (71% and 54% of the respondents responded ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’). Based on the finding of open-ended question, the respondents stated that it was important to have morphology and phonology knowledge. These results are supported by Fillmore & Snow (2002) who argue that teachers should be aware of the principles and cases of morphology word formation in English such as the patterns of *d/s* alternation in words like *evade* and *evasive*, *conclude* and *conclusive* or accent placement regularities involving the suffixes written *-y* and *-ic*. Grabe, Stoller & Tandy (2000) argue that understanding how languages can change and how dialects vary in their phonological rules provide teachers with insights into the pronunciation patterns of learners in a classroom, as well as an explanation for the consistent difficulties that language students experience in speaking. The study, however, found that 24% (morphology) and 37% (phonology) of English pre-service teachers responded neutral to basic concept of morphology and phonology. It might be caused by several factors, including the way they study, lecturer, or any other influences.

Although English pre-service teachers said that they learned and knew linguistics and they knew and mastered fundamental concept of morphology and phonology, it seems that they were still confused when they were asked with deeper questions related to morphology and phonology understanding. These types of questions (no. 12-15 and 22-25) are useful to show the English pre-service teachers’ linguistics level of knowledge, in this case, morphology and linguistic area. The data showed 50% (morphology) and 69% (phonology) of the respondents stated ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ toward questions given. It could be stated that English pre-service teachers had a low level of linguistics knowledge. They might lack curiosity to know more about aspects of linguistics especially in morphology and phonology. They might be able to understand the basic concept of morphology and phonology, such as English words formation or sound system, but in fact, they cannot master the full concept and understanding of English morphology and phonology although they already learn linguistics in the classroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has discovered the English pre-service teachers’ linguistics level of knowledge in one private university in Jakarta, Indonesia. Based on the findings and discussions, it is known that, firstly, English pre-service teachers are provided with linguistics subject, particularly morphology and phonology area which is essential for them in teaching their future pupils. English pre-service teachers know or understand the basic concept of morphology and phonology. However, in terms of deeper understanding about morphology and phonology, it

can be concluded that English pre-service teachers have low level of knowledge. They understand the basic concept of morphology and phonology such as English words formation or sound system, but they have limitation to fully understand the concept of English morphology and phonology which is again very crucial to support and facilitate their teaching and learning process in class.

Being aware of the importance of linguistics as the study can help pre-service teachers in ELT area. It is also suggested that linguistics lecturers provide them with suitable method or media that can enhance their linguistics knowledge. Thereby, the quality of teachers can be improved. Other researchers interested in this issue can further investigate the pre-service teachers or even ELT practitioners as regard their knowledge of linguistics, especially aspects which are needed in teaching and learning, so thorough understanding of this issue will be more robust.

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