

Professional Learning Community in Pre-Service Teacher Education:

Learning to become teacher researchers

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Abstract—This present case study investigated how pre-service English teachers perceive feedback provision from their teacher-supervisor during their three-month teaching practice program. Three pre-service English teachers at a public secondary school served as respondents. They served seventh and eighth secondary school graders in the target school. The data were gathered through three audio-recorded post-teaching conferences and three guided grouped interviews. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. The results indicated that regardless few similar foci on the pre-service teachers teaching and their subject-matter mastery, the pre-service teachers mainly perceived the feedback provision differently in different teaching contexts for some reasons. In this regard, the different perceived comments and the reasons and further recommendation are discussed in the paper.

Keywords—*feedback; pre-service teachers; teacher-supervisor; teaching practice program; teacher education*

I. INTRODUCTION

Less qualified and less competent pre-service English language teachers (henceforth PELTs) have been considered a contributor towards teacher quality and teaching quality decline [1]. The PELTs, who are mostly graduated from Teacher Colleges and Universities, were found immature for the standards of English teachers [2]. It results in causing their professionalism is not yet well-established. Their capacity is unable to promote their pupils' learning mastery. They are pedagogically incompetent to conduct their day-to-day duties. Their teaching may only be a ritual that cannot promote any betterment for their pupils.

Teaching practice provides the PELTs to be future teachers with large portion of basic competencies of instructional strategies in courses offered at Teacher Colleges and Universities. This may support them to have high understanding on educational strategies, philosophical thoughts, psychological approaches, teaching methods and instructional techniques to uplift the professional competency and skills in real environment [3]. The teaching practice as part of teacher trainings can equip the PELTs to anticipate and handle problems and barriers in reality that they may encounter in their future teaching career. With regard to the teaching

practice session, it deals with preparing for intricacies in classroom setting [4].

Teaching practice conducted during teacher training at teacher training institutes have contributed to improving PELTs' competence in carrying out instructional activities in their classes [5]. During the teaching practice sessions involving cooperating teachers and university teachers, planning instructions and implementing the instructions are two frequent activities. The two will have a conference later after teaching session. In this session, they discuss issues encountered, which are mostly difficulties found during teaching sessions. By doing so, it contributes to a noticeable progress in improving the student-teachers' capacity in handling their students during class sessions. Unfortunately, there are some times that the conference does not run well (even it does not happen at all). It results in less feedback on the pre-service teachers' performance before and after their classes. In some cases, it demotivates and even discourages them to get the teaching competence required [6].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, feedback refers to inputs about progress making of a learner guiding him/her to areas of improvement [7]. These inputs may help the English language pre-service teachers to train their reflection skills to be a reflective teacher. Lewis asserts that there are five purposes of feedback giving; information for teachers and students, an advice for learner about their learning, a language input for learner, a form of motivation, and source of a learning autonomy [7]. The last purpose is the most fundamental aspect to become a reflective teacher that every teachers needs to develop and cultivate as professionals.

On content, feedback is generally categorized into two; positive and negative feedback. For years, it has been found that positive feedback is much more effective than negative feedback in changing learner's behavior [8]. Nunan suggests that positive feedback has twofold functions: to let learners know that they have performed correctly and to increase motivation through praise [8].

However, traditional feedback notion brings only teachers and marking. However, feedback providers can be in the following forms.

- Teacher feedback (“teacher assessment” in Brown [9], O’Malley and Pierce [10]) consists of marking, conferencing, collective feedback (“one-by-one oral comment” in Nunan [8]), feedback sheet, feedback summary, checklist, marks and grades, and report [11]. Nunan adds as the teacher feedback is rather automatic and its ultimate effect on the learners is doubtful [8].
- Peer feedback (“peer assessment” in Brown [9], “collaborative assessment” in O’Malley and Pierce [10]) consist of exchange papers, role play, pair work, pass papers round, feedback questions, multiple feedback, read/listen/respond, compare writing, summarise and photocopy advice, sentences on board.
- Self-correction/self-assessment/self-evaluation [10].

Regardless the preference feedback provider goes to teacher feedback, some research has shown a number of advantages of self- and peer-assessment: speed, direct involvement of students, the encouragement of autonomy, and increased of motivation because of self-involvement in the process of learning [12,13]. Based on the research, each of the feedback providers offers its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, teacher-supervisors can make use one or can combine two or more in order to promote their students’ reflective teaching.

Based on the above reasons, the present study has investigated how the PELTs perceive feedback provision from their teacher-supervisor during their three-month teaching practice program. The question is expected to lead to identifying factors that play an important factor to teacher training in general. It then provides theoretical bases for teacher education institutions to anticipate any possibilities that may hinder student-teachers to gain the expected qualification and competencies. The study encourages the necessity for such institutions to provide a baseline for the course program. So, it can provide practical knowledge that the teacher-supervisor and pre-service teachers need in their future career.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This present action research investigated how pre-service English teachers perceive feedback provision from their teacher-supervisor during their three-month teaching practice program. Three pre-service English teachers at a public secondary school served as respondents. The PELTs served seventh and eighth secondary school graders in the target school.

Teaching practice in the present study is a part of a course on English Language Teaching Methodology offered to fourth-year college students. The course was in four credit hours. The course was administered after the PELTs were grouped based on school levels; lower secondary school and higher secondary school. They were supervised by one cooperating teacher of the targeted school.

The data were gathered through three audio-recorded post-teaching conferences and three guided grouped interviews. The first instrument was to reveal modes of feedback delivery, types of feedback, and effects of feedback provision. The latter instrument was to unpack the observed findings that need to clarify.

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis based on feedback triangle proposed by Yang and Carless [14] and were further discussed mainly based on reflective teaching proposed by Lewis [7] and Nunan [8].

However, the focus of the present study was limited to two competences; professional competence and pedagogic competence, which are considered as the most influential issues during teaching practice. The foci encompass the PELTs on how to be a reflective teacher for their future teaching career.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Teaching Practice, the PELTs began their work with lesson planning and it was followed by real teachings. In lesson planning session, they had opportunities to cooperate with their peers and had consultation sessions with their teacher-supervisor. While preparing their lesson plan, they started selecting, deciding, and making the teaching materials to present, instructional media to use, and assessment tool to utilize. In teaching sessions, they had to present their classroom instruction in English and had the opportunity to get feedback from their teacher-supervisor after the real teaching session in both orally and in written. The following are the teaching components foci in the audio-recorded post-teaching conferences.

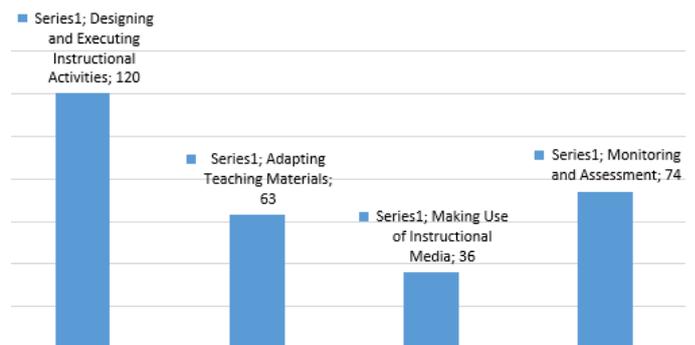


Fig. 1. The foci of feedback provision in teaching practice.

The study shows the feedback provision in the post-teaching conferences focused on all teaching components. The figure indicates that the feedback provision in the Teaching Practice Program focused on the competence on designing and executing instructional activities at the highest in frequency and making use of instructional media at the lowest.

Furthermore, in the following excerpts, it can be seen the positive feedback excerpts given during the Teaching Practice. To some extent, these feedbacks can elevate the PELTs’ motivation. These findings are in line with Nunan who found that positive feedback could change learner’s behavior to be

much better compared to negative feedback [8]. The detailed excerpts are presented in the following table.

TABLE I. POSITIVE FEEDBACK SAMPLES IN TEACHING PRACTICE

Sample Excerpts	Feedback	
	Focused	Modes
I think your voice was clear.	Yes	Oral
Your instruction was perfectly understood by your students.	Yes	Oral
Great! It was a nice and lively class.	No	Oral
I love when you gave your students the example on telling a story.	Yes	Oral
I think you gave a systematic instruction.	Yes	Oral
I like your instructional media. It really helped your students to follow the instructional activity.	No	Oral
You successfully formulate the lesson objectives.	Yes	Written
You have arranged the learning activities very sound.	Yes	Written
I think you are now aware of how to assess your class.	No	Written
I love it (your lesson plan). It is very neat.	No	Written

In the present research context, the PELTs got feedback during teaching practice from their teacher-supervisor. Each gave them different advantages. Contradictory tensions are apparent during the feedback given to pre-service English language teachers by trainers following their practice teaching [15]. They preferred teacher feedback as they thought that the feedback was based on the best practice of the teacher-supervisor's experience in various ELT contexts [16]. They found that the teacher-supervisor was more sensitive in all teaching components especially during classroom observations. Some considered teacher feedback as significantly more effective than peer comments [17]. Furthermore, they urged "to get more instructive comments from the teacher" [18]. By means of feedback delivery, teaching practice, to some extent, can uplift the PELTs awareness of what a good performance is by identifying their potentials and constraints. The feedback provision helps them improve their competence to fix their low performance by whichever feedback they got.

The PELTs took more lessons from the following excerpts as they provide more clues on what is not "on the track" with their performance and on how to fix the problems encountered.

TABLE II. CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK SAMPLES IN TEACHING PRACTICE

Sample Excerpts	Feedback	
	Focused	Modes
I think you can help your students with a clearer classroom instruction.	Yes	Oral
No, you were not supposed to say "guys"/use it. You'd better say/use "class" or "students".	Yes	Oral
I think you could make your students work in groups instead of working individually.	Yes	Oral
I don't think "that's enough for today" is the appropriate classroom language.	No	Oral
You could give your students more opportunities to ask questions.	No	Oral
You could give your students more opportunities to show what they could do instead of giving too much instruction. 'Learning by doing' may work better.	No	Oral
Are you okay? You should be more energetic.	No	Oral
You should be aware of gender bias.	No	Written
I don't think that was a good way to assess the skill.	No	Written
Make sure you synchronize the lesson objectives stated and the instructional activities developed	Yes	Written

For the PELTs involved in this study, getting feedback in Teaching Practice with explanation or advice gave them opportunity to find alternatives from different perspectives in ELT. In the program, they found alternatives of how to design various lesson plans, how to develop a good lesson plan, how to select teaching materials and instructional media, how to develop a set of meaningful and hands-on but joyful learning activity, and how to select and utilize proper language assessment. Moreover, the program helped them develop their confidence, decision making, and becoming more reflective on their teachings.

In the following table, there are PELTs' comments on the feedback on teaching components during the feedback session. It depicts what comments, on what teaching components are and whether the feedback suits their needs or not.

TABLE III. THE SUITABILITY OF FEEDBACK PROVISION IN TEACHING PRACTICE

Sample Excerpts	Feedback	
	Teaching Components Foci	Suitability
There is some improvement regarding the participation of the students in class.	Designing and executing instructional activities	Yes
The supervisor reminded me a lot about what should I write on my lesson plans.	Designing and executing instructional activities	
Supervisor wrote down some important points in the lesson plan that I have given before teaching.	Designing and executing instructional activities	Yes
At first it was hard for me to manage a big number of students and on the next meeting (after the feedback session, ed.), the learning process was more conducive.	Designing and executing instructional activities	Yes
My supervisor told me to creatively use media and always have preparation a week before the D-day. She sometimes told me to give students more time to spend for drawing and so on.	Designing and executing instructional activities Making use of instructional media	No
I used various activities and involved students. The teaching material (was) also already mastered, by relating material to students' real life or daily activity to show students the moral value (of the materials).	Adapting teaching materials	Yes
The media that I used (were) also (in) varieties, for instance video, picture, and real things that involve students and all of the media improved my teaching.	Making use of instructional media	Yes

Table 3. Cont.

Sample Excerpts	Feedback	
	Teaching Components Foci	Suitability
Well, the post-teaching conference helps me to be more comfortable and prepared for teaching practices.	Designing and executing instructional activities	Yes
I think I need to find another source for my teaching materials in order to make the activities varied.	Adapting teaching materials	Yes
(In a class) I was suggested to use a proper language when I do icebreaking activity, in this case I use song, so my supervisor suggest me to show or tell students the lyric first before we sing together.	Designing and executing instructional activities Making use of instructional media	No
Because my supervisor always warned me in repeatedly delivering media through music. She said I need to explore other media.	Making use of instructional media	No
Unfortunately, there is still one weakness from my teaching this time, which is I did not do the language correction form the students when they were committing mistake in writing sentences in the front of the class.	Monitoring and assessment	No
In the class, as usual I did a review of today's lesson and told students what they are going to learn in the next meeting.	Monitoring and assessment	Yes

In the Teaching Practice Program, the feedback was delivered orally and in written. The feedback was mostly corrective. The table shows that the PELTs responded the feedback provision differently although they realized their strengths and constraints of their teachings.

Oral feedback was mostly topical in accordance with the topic or language skills taught by each PELT in the Teaching Practice. Meanwhile, written feedback was based on list of issues provided in advance by the teacher-supervisor. However, the PELTs preferred oral feedback to written feedback; they considered that oral feedback was more focused especially on their teachings.

All PELTs considered that the feedback gave them an immediate opportunity to identify their weaknesses of their teachings including what they had missed during lesson planning session. By identifying their weaknesses, they immediately came to realize that there were points to improve especially when feedback was accompanied with explanations or advices. This finding is in line with Straub, he states explanations and advices accompanying a feedback enhance pre-service teachers' certainty on their low performance and on how to improve it [19]. When explanations or advices do not follow a feedback, as given to general feedback, many pre-service teachers do not realize what to do to fix their weaknesses of their performance. At this point, feedback delivery gives them hints and inspires them to be reflective in their teaching. Similar findings revealed that feedback gives supports to get greater improvement [20] and induces the most substantive revision [21]. In other words, feedback in Teaching Practice to some extent is powerful when it is followed by explanations or advice as this helps pre-service teachers identify their constraints and barriers and fix their performance immediately. In addition, feedback provision promoted the PELTs' self-confidence as they attained of their own strengths back to cope with their constraints and barriers.

V. CONCLUSION

Feedback in Teaching Practice Program conducted at Teacher Colleges and Universities has offered various benefits for English language pre-service teachers. It can promote and contribute to teachers' quality improvement. The results of the present study imply that feedback provision may contribute to

teachers' quality when it is managed well, dialogic, more focused, and timely. The quality of Teaching Practice may also contribute to better teacher education, especially to teachers' quality improvement. The more well manage feedback provision in Teaching Practice is, the more competent pre-service teacher and the higher the quality teaching will be.

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