
Microteaching Reflective Practices to Enhance the Teaching Efficacy of English Language Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

This study examines the role of microteaching reflective practices in enhancing the teaching efficacy of 22 English language pre-service teachers in the Master of Arts Program in English Language Teaching (MA. ELT) at an international university in Thailand. Twenty-two pre-service teachers' reflection papers, ranging from 350 to 500 words, were analyzed to address the research question. The study utilized a qualitative approach through thematic analysis of reflection papers and investigated how microteaching reflective practices contribute to pre-service teachers' teaching efficacy. The findings indicate several advantages of microteaching. These include pre-service teachers' awareness of the importance of feedback, their ability to reflect on and embrace teaching limitations, the development of teaching competence, the cultivation of a positive attitude toward teaching, fostering self-discipline and responsibility, learning from peers, positioning students as the heart of the lesson, understanding the importance of lesson planning, and autonomy in selecting materials. However, the study also identifies constraints and challenges associated with microteaching. These include concerns about the lack of authenticity in simulated teaching environments and apprehensions about classroom management issues. Pre-service teachers recognize the constructive implications of microteaching reflective practices in enhancing their teaching efficacy. Despite some reservations, the study underscores the importance of providing opportunities for reflection to improve teaching effectiveness. Pedagogically, these findings emphasize the significance of incorporating reflective practices into teaching preparation programs to prepare future educators for the complexities of real-world teaching environments.

Keywords: English language pre-service teacher; English language teaching; microteaching; reflective practices; teaching efficacy

Introduction

Teaching is a multifaceted process crucial for knowledge transfer and fostering learning. Labaree (2000, 2020) highlighted its complexity, deeply rooted in societal norms and expectations. It involves challenges such as catering to diverse student needs, adhering to policies, and working within institutional constraints. Unlike the

hard sciences, teaching relies heavily on interpersonal skills, adaptability, and empathy, making it resistant to reduction to mere theories and axioms. Understanding education's social and cultural contexts is vital, necessitating continuous research and reflection.

Similar to other methods, microteaching offers explicit training for English language pre-service teachers, providing constant feedback in controlled teaching environments (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). Mastery in English teaching does not rely solely on subject knowledge but also on understanding context (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Teachers must navigate diverse student abilities, fostering lifelong learning (Foley & Thompson, 2017, as cited in Deocampo, 2020). Developing a reflexive relationship with context is essential. Teachers must understand situations deeply and adapt their practice accordingly (Farrell, 2018; Mann & Walsh, 2017). Thus, pre-service teachers in the English language must cultivate reflective practices from the outset of their preparation to enhance teaching efficacy.

Literature Review

The Central Notion of Microteaching

Microteaching has a long history of preparing teachers to improve their teaching skills as it deals with real teaching situations (Allen, 1966; El-Koumy, 2022; Kelleci et al., 2018). The rationale for using this particular approach is that pre-service teachers will likely develop a 'pedagogical content' that will adequately reinforce their knowledge of 'the art of teaching' (Daryamenti et al., 2019). Pre-service teachers are trained in several teaching and reflective skills in microteaching. A teacher's educator is a facilitator who guides them in preparing their lesson plan and directs them during the teaching practices (Chen, 2010). Starkey and Rawlins (2012) claimed that pre-service teachers can be well-monitored, supervised, and guided through this approach, whether in an online discussion or classroom teaching observation. Such monitoring is likely to enable them to be well-prepared in preparing their lessons and manage their classroom accordingly (Haigh et al., 2006, as cited in Akmal et al, 2019) as they develop their teaching efficacy gradually.

The central notion of microteaching is letting pre-service teachers teach in a real classroom with controlled settings. Timely feedback was provided based on each practice lesson to help them develop their self-confidence or self-efficacy in teaching English skills (Kelleci et al., 2018; Koech & Mwei, 2019). Microteaching has utilized a repeated practice cycle through the 'teaching, reviewing, reflecting, and re-teaching cycle.' A cycle is the most helpful characteristic as these enhance pre-service teachers' reflective skills (El-Koumy, 2022). The cycle involves micro-lessons and timely feedback from peers and a teacher educator, which function as a means for "reflection and improvement" (Yan & He, 2017, p. 207). This also prepares pre-service teachers to become more reflective (Kavanoz & Yüksel, 2010; Mergler & Tangen, 2010).

Teaching, especially English, is becoming more competitive in local and global settings. This means that when ELT pre-service teachers face the real world of

teaching, they must be equipped with different coping strategies they gain through experience. As there is always a teaching knowledge gap between experienced and new teachers, they need proper assistance, such as mentoring and close supervision (Sterrett & Imig, 2011), to develop their efficacy as teachers.

Nevertheless, some researchers argued that microteaching may look promising but has some shortcomings. Some of these are the artificial nature of teaching, which Bell (2007) viewed as “performance rather than teaching” and Collins and Ting (2010) called “acting rather than enacting” (p. 207). However, as teaching is an art, teaching and acting can go hand in hand. Yan and He (2017) stated this means that a good teacher needs skills that captivate their students, which s/he is acting for. In this manner, a good teachers satisfy students who learn from the teacher’s satisfying performance at the end of teaching. For me, this is an art.

Consequently, being a proficient language teacher extends beyond imparting grammar and vocabulary. It requires fostering communication skills, cultural understanding, and empathy. Language teachers guide students through linguistic complexities and create environments where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. They facilitate growth by encouraging engagement beyond the classroom and empowering students to communicate confidently and authentically (Richards, 2017). Hence, preparing pre-service teachers’ teaching education using reflective practices through microteaching can enhance their teaching efficacy, as reflection is an integral part of teacher preparation (El-Koumy, 2022).

Reflective Practices and Teaching Efficacy

Understanding teaching efficacy, teacher efficacy, and self-efficacy in teacher education is crucial to reflecting on pre-service teachers’ beliefs about their teaching abilities (Barni et al., 2019). These beliefs significantly impact instructional practices and student outcomes (Khanshan & Yousefi, 2020). According to McLaughlin and Marsh (1978), *teacher efficacy* is the belief in one’s capacity to affect student performance. It focuses on the teacher’s effectiveness in their profession and ability to influence student outcomes. *Teaching efficacy*, on the other hand, refers specifically to a teacher’s belief in their capacity to implement specific instructional strategies or methods successfully. Although these concepts may sound similar, they differ in focus. Teaching efficacy concentrates on the effectiveness of teaching methods or approaches the teacher employs (Richards, 2011) rather than the teacher’s overall effectiveness in the profession. Therefore, it manifests as an individual teacher's self-efficacy.

Bandura (2006) defined *self-efficacy* as a teacher’s confidence in effectively teaching English and supporting student learning. This belief is influenced by teaching experience, professional knowledge, and English proficiency (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). As Ross (1998) highlighted, teacher efficacy leads to specific behaviors such as setting attainable goals, providing extra help to struggling students, and fostering student autonomy. In contrast, according to Melby (1995), teachers with low efficacy are pessimistic, focus more on discipline, and are less focused on student development (as cited in Yazici, 2019). Positive teaching experiences reinforce this belief, contributing to a teacher’s sense of competence and commitment to teaching (as cited

in Richards, 2023). Thus, teaching efficacy is the confidence teachers have in positively impacting student learning and overcoming challenges in the classroom.

As highlighted by Farrell (2018) and Farrell and Kennedy (2019), reflective practices involve teachers examining their professional actions inside and outside the classroom to understand what they do, why they do it, and how they do it. This process allows teachers to find personal meaning in their practice. This approach is also beneficial for shaping teaching skills, as it involves constant guidance and feedback. It enables teachers to reflect on their practices and offers opportunities for improvement. According to Mann and Walsh (2017), reflection is crucial for teachers to identify and address “context-specific issues” (p. 28) for improvement. Therefore, considering what works best for their situation should be a central aspect of their professional development training.

This study attempts to identify to what extent microteaching reflective practices can develop ELT pre-service teachers’ teaching efficacy and contribute to better teaching performance, as reflected in their teaching reflection at the end of their teaching preparation. Throughout the microteaching period, the teaching cycle, ‘teaching, reviewing, reflecting, and re-teaching cycle,’ was employed as part of the reflective approach to teaching.

Rationale

Reflective practices are essential in teacher education, yet the effectiveness of microteaching in teaching preparation, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts, needs to be studied more. Despite its potential benefits, microteaching is often considered a secondary option, overshadowed by traditional classroom-based practices (Farrell, 2018; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Mann & Walsh, 2017). This study aims to address this gap by investigating the role of microteaching reflective practices in enhancing the teaching efficacy of pre-service teachers in an international university setting in Thailand.

While reflective practices are widely recognized as crucial for professional development in teacher education (Farrell, 2018; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Mann & Walsh, 2017), the specific impact of microteaching on fostering reflective teaching practices among pre-service teachers needs to be better understood. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how microteaching reflective practices influence the teaching efficacy of English language pre-service teachers in a Master of Arts Program in English Language Teaching (MA ELT) in Thailand.

Although microteaching is often overlooked in teacher preparation, it offers distinct advantages by providing a controlled environment for pre-service teachers to practice and receive feedback on their teaching skills (Koech & Mwei, 2019). Understanding the effectiveness of microteaching reflective practices is crucial for optimizing teaching preparation programs.

Given the importance of reflective practices in teacher education (Farrell, 2018; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Mann & Walsh, 2017), this study aims to address the gap in the literature regarding the efficacy of microteaching as a reflective teaching tool, particularly in ELT programs. By examining the impact of microteaching reflective practices on the teaching efficacy of pre-service teachers in an international university

setting in Thailand, this study contributes to our understanding of effective teacher preparation methods.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach. Twenty-two English language pre-service teachers' reflection papers were used as instruments to answer the research question. Each reflection paper was approximately 350 to 500 words, collected at the end of the 15-week teaching practicum (TP) course. Throughout the 15 weeks of TP, the researcher was the teacher's educator. A research question was posed as part of the underpinnings: *To what extent does a microteaching reflective practice help English language teacher-trainees develop teaching efficacy?*

Context and Participants

This study was conducted with a master's program at one of Thailand's international universities. The MA ELT is a two-year program. The philosophy behind this program is grounded in the belief that high-quality English language teaching education is essential for personal and professional development. The program aims to cater to the needs of various stakeholders, including prospective teachers, researchers, educators, leaders, and professionals requiring English proficiency in their fields. It seeks to address the growing demand for skilled English language teachers and leaders in Thailand and neighboring countries. The three objectives reflect the program's commitment to providing advanced knowledge, contemporary theories, and practical skills necessary for effective English language teaching in diverse contexts, particularly within the regional socio-cultural and professional settings. Students who have completed the required courses must conduct a 45-hour teaching practicum (TP) in different schools, equivalent to 15 weeks, as part of their teaching preparation. Twenty-two MA ELT pre-service teachers participated in the study. This comprises 14 Chinese, four Thai, and four Myanmar nationalities. Six of the 22 pre-service teachers had only a brief experience of teaching, while 16 needed to gain experience. The researcher assumed the role of the teacher's educator in this study.

Microteaching was an intensive teaching preparation program for ELT pre-service teachers. Part of the organization of the micro-teaching was that pre-service teachers were divided into four groups, each corresponding to a skill: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each group was allowed to choose the skill they would like to teach based on their strengths. They were assigned to teach 3 hours every week for 15 weeks. The three hours were divided into two sessions. Each session was for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Thus, two pre-service teachers would teach each week. Furthermore, the 22 pre-service teachers would function as teachers and students and take turns teaching for 15 weeks. This means they would be students when it differed from a group's teaching turn.

Part of the teaching preparation was for ELT pre-service teachers to develop their lesson plans and teaching materials for the masters' level students. Part of mentorship was for teacher educators, assisting and giving them feedback. However, feedback was not only from the teacher educator but also from their peers. Feedback

is one of the essential aspects of micro-teaching and was given at the end of each session. Although all teaching preparations were done in groups, the teaching was done individually. Moreover, each ELT pre-service teacher had individual assignments such as teaching reflections. Thus, reflection papers varied as they reflected on their personal experiences throughout the teaching preparation period.

Data Collection and Analysis

Teaching reflection papers served as the primary data source for this study, with 22 papers collected after a 15-week teaching preparation. Each paper was labeled according to the corresponding pre-service teacher, TT1 through TT22. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. Drawing from Dawadi (2020), six steps of thematic analysis, including familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up, facilitated the identification of emerging themes reflecting both the importance and constraints noted in pre-service teacher reflections. Initially, familiarizing oneself with the text necessitated reading and re-reading teaching reflection texts to enhance the researcher's comprehension of the content. Subsequently, codes were identified and generated to capture the ideas or patterns within the data. These codes were then organized into potential thematic categories and "overarching themes" (Dawadi, 2020, p. 66), fundamental in encompassing and influencing the interpretation of "multiple sub-themes within the data, and identified by examining connections, similarities, and contrasts between different codes. This was followed by identifying themes. Each theme was named to represent the data accurately. Then, relevant data excerpts or quotes were extracted and interpreted through the research question's context.

Peer debriefing or evaluation was employed throughout the analysis to ensure the findings' reliability and validity. Two faculty members experienced in teacher training across countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia conducted this to validate the identified themes, confirming their alignment with the data. Ahmed (2024), Hendren et al. (2023), Morse et al. (2002), and Rose and Johnson (2020) suggested various methods to ensure the neutrality and objectivity of research findings. Peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling can enhance confirmability. Peer debriefing involves seeking input from colleagues or experts to validate interpretations and reduce researcher bias, while member checking entails participants thoroughly reviewing and confirming the accuracy of findings. In addition, the pre-service teachers reviewed the themes to mitigate biases and ensure accurate interpretation (Hendren et al., 2023; Rose & Johnson, 2020). Finally, the coherently structured report of the thematic analysis findings was presented, supported by relevant quotes or excerpts, to underscore the extent to which micro-teaching reflective practices contribute to the development of teaching efficacy among English language pre-service teachers.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are divided into two parts: the advantages of microteaching and the constraints and challenges of microteaching. They are presented from the most prominent themes in the data to the least.

One interesting aspect of this study was examining pre-service teachers' reflections to gain insight into their perspectives on reflective practices in microteaching. The findings indicated that microteaching positively affected the teaching efficacy of English language pre-service teachers, although some expressed mixed feelings about this approach, highlighting certain constraints. To address the research question, it became evident that pre-service teachers recognized the constructive implications of microteaching reflective practices in enhancing their teaching efficacy.

Advantages of Microteaching

Several advantages of microteaching have been identified. These include 'awareness of the importance of feedback,' 'being reflective and embracing teaching limitations,' 'building teaching competence,' 'teaching with a positive attitude,' 'fostering self-discipline and responsibility,' 'learning from peers,' 'positioning students as the heart of the lesson,' 'understanding the importance of lesson planning,' and 'autonomy in selecting materials.'

1. Awareness of the importance of feedback

Whether positive or negative, feedback offers valuable opportunities for self-awareness and improvement among pre-service teachers (Hamid & Mahmood, 2010). While both forms of feedback are constructive, positive feedback has been indicated to impact ELT pre-service teachers (Khan & Yildiz, 2020). Notably, lesson planning emerges as a challenging aspect of teaching preparation, underscoring the importance of effective feedback in guiding pre-service teachers through this complex process.

The excerpts from their reflection papers below illustrate pre-service teachers' awareness of the importance of feedback.

TT1: *The teacher's interesting advice and suggestions inspired me to think further and work harder (...). My friends' feedback made me inventive. I tried strategies I never learned from my teachers in the past (...).*

TT2: *Planning a lesson plan was tedious and frustrating (...). I would not have managed my teacher training without my peers and advisor, who gave me prompt feedback. I tried to think a lot about not only what activities I should use for my lesson but also what activities would engage students (...). The suggestions from my advisor and feedback from my friends helped me a lot to think further. I was grateful for that, as that helped me think and plan ahead.*

TT3: *Hands-on feedback helped me a lot (...) at the end of my teaching turn; my teacher provided feedback immediately, so I knew what part of my lesson planning did not go according to plan. This allowed me to modify the activities that didn't work and focus more on this area (...).*

TT10: (...) The teacher monitoring skills of each teacher-trainee were excellent. *She provided timely feedback each time each teacher's lesson ended. Because of these, we were able to see immediately what we had to modify, sometimes activities, sometimes strategies, for the next round of teaching (...). It helped me to become better and better every time I taught.*

TT12: *I have improved my skills in creating my lesson plan and teaching due to my teacher's feedback and guidance (...). I think it is one of the best practices before entering the real classroom because as we teach, we can review our lessons, and the teacher lets us reflect on our teaching through her feedback and other friends' feedback.*

TT19: Chinese people are always focused on accuracy, such as imitating the accents of native speakers. However, *feedback from my teacher helped me remember that it is all right if students make mistakes when they speak. I should not stop them in the middle and tell them what to do (...). I think I am strict, but luckily, my friends did not feel offended.*

Analysis of pre-service teachers' reflection papers reveals the pivotal role of feedback in enhancing their teaching efficacy during microteaching. Examples from these reflections demonstrate the varied feedback that the teachers, educators, and peers provided. Regardless of whether feedback was directive or non-directive, such as offering suggestions, it played a crucial role in raising awareness of areas needing improvement in teaching practices. With vast experience in teaching, teacher educators offered diverse suggestions to assist pre-service teachers in creating engaging activities for their students. These findings align with previous research by Mena et al. (2017) and underscore the positive effects of feedback garnered from microteaching on novice teachers' teaching ability and their students' learning performance, as emphasized by Jin et al. (2022). Moreover, feedback is perceived as beneficial for teaching efficacy and overall professional development, aligning with Hamid and Mahmood's (2010) and Shortland's (2010) studies.

2. Being reflective and embracing teaching limitations

In the area of English language teaching preparation, the practice of reflective writing is of paramount significance. Embedded within this pedagogical approach lies the opportunity for pre-service teachers to introspectively analyze and evaluate their teaching performances. As posited by Astika (2014), reflective writing is a pivotal component of teacher development, offering a platform for individuals to scrutinize their instructional methodologies and identify areas for improvement. Moreover, Deocampo (2020) and Pang (2020) emphasized the dual purpose of reflection: not only does it aid in the refinement of pedagogical skills, but it also cultivates a culture of introspection among educators. Examining pre-service teachers' teaching practices and acknowledging limitations, they embark on continual growth and self-discovery, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom. Thus, the integration of reflective writing exercises catalyzes professional development, equipping educators with the tools to navigate the complexities of English language teaching with confidence and proficiency.

The excerpts from their reflection papers below illustrate pre-service teachers' understanding of how being reflective and embracing teaching limitations has benefited them.

TT1: *Don't be afraid to make mistakes, as they teach me to be more motivated in what I do. Through my advisor's feedback, I was able to see what was wrong with my activities immediately, so I was able to change them the next time I taught. My shortcomings made me more confident in my teaching, as they challenged me to do it better.*

TT3: *This micro-teaching helped me tackle the challenges of teaching with a positive attitude. I thought I was good, but I realized that teaching was not about how good we are as students but how good we are at knowing our students' needs and integrating that into our teaching. I realized that we only know the real teaching situation once it is in front of us, and we cannot assume.*

TT9: *I fear making mistakes, so I must practice before teaching...I realized that we are human, so we are not perfect. Teachers, unlike other professions, we cannot practice because questions just popped up in the discussion. I learned to embrace those shortcomings of mine. So, upon reflection, I told myself I needed to be prepared...my teacher said it is okay to make mistakes and let those mistakes make you a good person, in my case, a good teacher... so next time, I know what to do and not to do.*

TT13: *My friends and teacher told me my voice was not loud enough, and they could not understand me.... I realized that to become a good teacher, I have to work on this part. So I practiced and practiced and practiced. My voice and how I speak are still problems, but I will try my best to improve them.*

TT16: *I thought I was good at teaching because I had teaching experience, but I realized I was not. I saw lots of weaknesses in my teaching because I was just following how I taught in the Chinese classroom. I realized that MA is about finding a contemporary way to teach English... I have reflected on my lesson plan, reviewed my activities, especially the one highlighted by my teacher, and modified my strategies, so the next round I taught was more engaging.*

The excerpts from the interviews with pre-service teachers underscore the importance of reflection in English language teaching preparation. Reflective practices allow educators to assess their teaching performance and catalyze pedagogical skill development and self-awareness (Astika, 2014; Deocampo, 2020; Pang, 2020). Through reflection, pre-service teachers acknowledge their shortcomings and embrace growth opportunities, as demonstrated by their willingness to learn from mistakes and adapt their teaching approaches accordingly. Furthermore, reflection fosters a positive attitude toward challenges in teaching, encouraging individuals to prioritize the needs of their students and continually refine their instructional methods (Tompkins, 2009). Incorporating reflective practices into teaching preparation programs can lead to more effective teaching strategies and create dynamic learning environments conducive to student engagement and success.

3. Build teaching competence

Teaching competencies encompass various elements, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ross, 1998). These components are vital for educators, especially in English language education, and should be cultivated from the outset of their teaching journey (Richards, 2017; Van Werven et al., 2021). Knowledge refers to a teacher's grasp of the subject, while skills encompass lesson delivery, communication, and interpersonal abilities. Attitude reflects a teacher's professionalism and role modeling. Essentially, teaching competence is a blend of these factors, transforming a mundane learning environment into an engaging and supportive atmosphere by catering to students' needs and motivating them (Guzman & Nussbaum, 2009; Ross, 1998).

The excerpts from their reflection papers below illustrate pre-service teachers' knowledge of how microteaching builds their teaching competence.

TT5: Teaching face-to-face and online was a very good experience for me. *This training helped me anticipate what I should face in the future...* whether I teach in the classroom or online. *Having this experience built my competence to face the actual teaching situation...*

TT7: I feel anxious about my speaking ability because of the influence of my mother tongue, but *posing as a teacher and student at the same time improves my teaching confidence as I become more competent in delivering my lesson as a teacher and answering questions if I pose as a student.* I love this TP; it was fun and exciting.

TT14: Micro-teaching gave me *a profound understanding of teaching and built my competence*, especially since we had to do this training with an MA. Students. If I can teach MA, I can also teach primary and high school students.

TT22: I am so grateful for this teaching training as *it helped my competence in teaching* a great deal... I thought teaching was easy, but without good lesson planning, it is not easy. So, *reflecting on what I taught made me a more competent teacher.*

TT19: *This teaching practicum provided me with many teaching experiences*, both in the classroom and online. *It helped me see my weaknesses and think about my teaching styles, which guided me to be a competent teacher, especially in teaching English.* It was challenging, but I felt great after the term ended.

The excerpt highlights the multifaceted nature of teaching competencies, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective teaching, particularly in English language education. Teacher-trainees emphasized how their experiences in face-to-face and online teaching contexts enhanced their competence, enabling them to anticipate and address challenges. This reflects the importance of reflective practices in refining teaching approaches and building confidence. Competence goes beyond mere knowledge; it includes adapting teaching methods, engaging students effectively, and reflecting on one's practice. The testimonies underscore how reflective teaching contributes to developing a dynamic and competent educator capable of navigating diverse learning environments.

4. Teaching with a positive attitude

Moskowitz (2012) posited that attitude encompasses how individuals react to stimuli, either positively or negatively, which correlates with learning outcomes (Slamento, 2015). Teachers' positive attitudes are vital for fostering a welcoming classroom environment (Richards & Bohlke, 2011) and influencing student motivation (Sarpong & Sarpong, 2020). This positive demeanor facilitates effective teaching and learning by creating a supportive atmosphere where students feel cared for academically and emotionally (Richards, 2023).

The excerpts from their reflection papers below illustrate pre-service teachers' awareness of 'teaching with a positive attitude' as one of the benefits of microteaching.

TT4: I was nervous the first time I taught in this microteaching. I started with a smile, as *I learned from my advisor that a positive attitude always makes your plan successful (...)*. I think so because instead of thinking about how to teach the MA students, I just carried on teaching and handled the situation well. (...) *My positive attitude helped me to complete my turn in teaching happily.*

TT1: *My positive attitude helped me finish my TP, and I realized how vital this can be to my future teaching career.* Now I know why the teacher always told us to ask questions if we were confused (...). In teaching, knowing means 100% clear and not just so-so. That was a positive attitude (...). I appreciate her more than before.

TT6: *I learned that having a positive mindset at the heart of teaching is very important, as this influences the learning environment.* So don't be grumpy if you teach; smile, and everything will be okay.

TT7: *The most precious lesson I learned in this micro-teaching is about having a positive attitude... not letting your personal problems affect your teaching profession....* As our teacher said, "Your personal life is your personal life; don't bring it into the classroom. I have to remember these words forever."

The excerpts from the teacher-trainees reflections align with the literature on the significance of a positive attitude in teaching. Moskowitz (2012) and Slamento (2015) emphasize attitude as a crucial predictor of learning outcomes. The trainees' experiences illustrate how maintaining a positive mindset enhances teaching performance and fosters a conducive learning environment. Their reflections highlight the importance of attitude in handling challenges and maintaining professionalism, as echoed by Richards and Bohlke (2011).

5. Fostering self-discipline and responsibility

Effective teaching entails more than just fulfilling duties; it also encompasses qualities such as self-discipline. Damrongpanit (2019) defines *self-discipline* as enhancing one's capacity to utilize reasoning and decision-making skills. Furthermore, self-discipline and responsibility align with teachers' professional standards (Richards & Bohlke, 2011) and contribute to their self-efficacy (Burton et al., 2005). These qualities are integral to creating a helpful learning environment and fostering student success.

As illustrated by the excerpts from their reflection papers below, pre-service teachers have acknowledged that ‘fostering self-discipline and responsibility’ is one of the advantages they have gained from microteaching.

TT7: Teaching MA students was quite an experience for me. Besides preparing lessons that were at the level of my students, I had to make sure that I learned the topic so that when students asked, I could answer. It was different from being a student in my MA course. In this training, *I became responsible, maybe because we worked in a group, so I wouldn't want my friends to feel unfair*. At the end of our teaching turn, we really were happy.

TT13: When I reflect back on this teaching practicum, *I learned a lot from it, especially about being responsible for what a teacher should do*. I have no teaching experience, so I take this training seriously. *I discipline myself to do what a teacher should do every time I teach, and it helped me become a responsible teacher....* I read my students’ writing every time we finished teaching and gave feedback immediately.

TT20: I am a sort of lazy person, but *microteaching helped me to be responsible and disciplined*. I have to remind myself that if I want to succeed as a teacher, I need to be responsible not only for doing my lesson plan but also for making sure that I can deliver the lesson well... make my students understand, and get something from it. *Responsibility comes with self-discipline, so I said I should have both to be a teacher*.

The excerpts highlight how microteaching cultivates self-discipline and responsibility among teacher trainees, essential qualities for effective teaching (El-Koumy, 2022). Trainees emphasized the need to prepare thoroughly, engage with the material, and provide timely feedback to students, showcasing a heightened sense of accountability toward their teaching roles. Through micro-teaching experiences, trainees recognized the importance of being proactive in lesson planning and delivery, demonstrating a shift from passive learners to proactive educators. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of the demands of the teaching profession. It underscores the transformative nature of reflective teaching practices in fostering professional growth and readiness for classroom challenges.

6. Learning from peers

One advantage of microteaching is group learning, which influences cooperative learning (El-Koumy, 2022). In the teaching preparation, pre-service teachers realized the importance of peer support for solving problems, sharing knowledge of materials, and practicing collaboration skills (Coyle, 2018, as cited in Strom et al., 2019).

From the excerpts of pre-service teachers’ reflection papers provided below, they highlighted how ‘learning from peers’ helps them to be creative.

TT5: *Working in a group was the best part of this micro-teaching, as we exchanged different ideas to create our lesson plan and present our lesson*. We were lucky to have this teaching practicum, as we had a lot of passionate and creative teacher-trainees... I learned from them very much, and I would like to do the same activities next time, maybe for young students.

TT10: I learned many ideas in this micro-teaching, but *the most important aspect I am grateful for was learning from my peers, especially their explanations, demonstrations, and questioning strategies*. All of these helped me to continue the challenging classroom and online teaching activities.

TT18: I could be more creative, but *the micro-teaching helped me think differently as I observed other teacher-trainees. Their creativity helped me think beyond what I learned from my previous teachers*, and I would like to continue this way when I teach in the actual classroom (...). My friends showed me many teaching strategies I can use in the future. *Learning collaboratively with peers was a good experience*.

As indicated from the excerpts, teacher trainees underscore the invaluable role of collaboration among peers during microteaching sessions. Working in groups facilitated the exchange of diverse ideas, fostering creativity and innovation in lesson planning and presentation. Pre-service teachers expressed gratitude for learning from their peers' teaching strategies, explanations, demonstrations, and questioning techniques, which enhanced their ability to navigate classroom and teaching challenges. Moreover, the collaborative learning environment encouraged pre-service teachers to think differently, inspiring them to explore new approaches beyond traditional teaching methods. Ultimately, this collaborative dynamic boosts confidence (Coyle, 2018, as cited in Strom et al., 2019) and cultivates a culture of experimentation and creativity among pre-service teachers, preparing them for future teaching endeavors.

7. Positioning students as the heart of the lesson

One of a teacher's most essential skills is prioritizing their students' needs. This means that the teaching should be the heart of the teacher's lesson. Acknowledging the students' different needs and learning styles may take time; thus, reflecting on lessons helps to know the diverse abilities of students (Richards & Bohlke, 2011).

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about knowing that positioning students as the heart of the lesson is one of the essential skills they have acquired through microteaching and is illustrated in the excerpts from their reflection papers below.

TT8: Before conducting this TP, I knew how to plan my lesson and choose my teaching materials. In reality, I don't, as before I decide what lesson plan I should do, I have to know my students first... In the preparation part, the teacher always said, "Know your students" ... "your objectives" ... *This made me realize that students are the center of everything we do as teachers. So, it is not about what I would like to teach, but their needs are... Everything that a teacher would do in the classroom revolves around the students....* I realized why the objectives of the lessons are imperative.

TT11: The teacher said, "Before you create your lesson, know your students first. Part of this micro-teaching enables me to better understand what this word *means*. A natural teaching environment is all about students, and our knowledge and skills guide us in dealing with our students' needs and abilities." So, I kept this in mind, and

it became my inspiration when planning my lesson...*asking who my students are, what they need to learn, and their ability level.*

Reflecting on their reflections, pre-service teachers have realized the importance of placing their students at the heart of their lessons and finding appropriate activities practical for their students' needs. As Richards and Bohlke (2011) articulated, learners are the ones who create the direction of the lessons. This is why teacher-trainees need to be aware that it is not about how good they are but how much students learn according to their needs (Labaree, 2020).

8. Understanding the importance of lesson planning

The lesson plan mirrors the professional standards and teaching philosophy in the teaching profession, particularly as an English teacher (Richards & Bohlke, 2011). A well-crafted lesson plan facilitates effective teaching and learning and contributes to good classroom management (Iqbal et al., 2021). Therefore, pre-service teachers must grasp the entire concept of English language teaching and learning to develop lesson plans that align with students' learning objectives.

Pre-service teachers have illustrated their understanding of the importance of lesson planning. The examples from reflection papers are shown below.

TT1: I realized how useful it would be if we had more lesson plans. We will never know whether what we have prepared will work for our students, especially when dealing with graduate students. *Lesson plan preparation was the most challenging part of our micro-teaching, but it helped me think further.* I always remember what our advisor said, "You must have plan A, Plan B or whatever Plan... *just remember in every activity you do, this should support the objectives of your lesson.*" After this micro-teaching, I understood why.

TT17: *I found this micro-teaching very good training for me as I have no teaching experience. So, when I teach in a real classroom environment, I will know what types of lessons and teaching materials I should use based on my students' needs, abilities, and culture.*

Pre-service teachers' reflections underscore the significance of effective lesson planning in microteaching experiences. TT1 highlights the importance of having multiple lesson plans to cater to diverse student needs, echoing the advisor's emphasis on aligning activities with lesson objectives. Similarly, TT17 emphasizes the value of microteaching in preparing for real classroom scenarios by considering students' needs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. These insights align with Dornyei's (2001) emphasis on learner-centered lesson planning, highlighting how microteaching fosters awareness and preparedness in creating pedagogically sound lesson plans.

9. Autonomy in selecting materials

Autonomous teachers can instill in students a sense of responsibility for their learning and encourage independence. A crucial aspect of the professional growth of pre-service teachers involves reflection, focusing not only on students' needs but also on the lesson's objectives (Oates, 2019). The freedom to select learning materials for students can foster creativity and satisfaction, ultimately empowering teachers

(Salokangas et al., 2020). This autonomy allows educators to tailor their teaching methods to suit their students' interests and needs.

As pre-service teachers indicated in their reflection papers, another benefit they have acquired from microteaching is 'autonomy in selecting materials.' Excerpts are provided below.

TT5: I felt like I could bring out the best part of me about creativity as *we were given the freedom to choose our teaching materials and create our activities (...)*. Given that we were dealing with graduate students like us, *finding a more challenging and engaging topic for discussion* was not difficult. This might not be easy to do when you teach in a real classroom where you need to follow the curriculum and use the materials given by the school (...).

TT5: *I created an exciting lesson*. At first, I was hesitant, but during the class, it was successful, as engagement among students was excellent. It was fun, and discussion kept coming, although we were already running out of time. I think *this should be teaching about to give teachers freedom to choose their teaching materials and resources for the sake of students' interest (...)*. I loved the microteaching we did. *It brought back my creativity (...)*

Pre-service teachers' reflections highlight the empowering effect of autonomy in shaping teaching practices. Educators can effectively unleash their creativity and cater to students' interests by allowing the freedom to select teaching materials and design activities. The autonomy afforded during microteaching sessions led to successful and engaging lessons, fostering a collaborative learning environment where teacher-trainees directed their learning journey. This autonomy enhances professional development and encourages innovation and satisfaction among educators. However, it is essential to acknowledge that despite its benefits, microteaching may present constraints and challenges, as reflected in students' feedback, underscoring the need for a balanced approach to teacher training.

Constraints and Challenges of the Microteaching

Microteaching, a widely employed method in teacher education (El-Koumy, 2022), offers a simulated yet controlled environment for novice educators to hone their teaching skills (Allen, 1966; Kelleci et al., 2018). However, inherent constraints and challenges warrant careful consideration beneath its structured facade. Pre-service teachers frequently express concerns regarding the authenticity of microteaching simulations compared to natural classroom settings (Yan & He, 2017). Issues such as limited time for training, doubts about their readiness to handle diverse student needs, and the discrepancy between teaching peers and actual students feature prominently in their reflections. Furthermore, pre-service teachers grapple with the challenge of adapting to the rigid constraints of school curricula and prescribed teaching materials, which may differ from the flexibility in microteaching scenarios. These constraints impact the effectiveness of skill development and raise questions about how microteaching adequately prepares pre-service teachers for the dynamic and unpredictable nature of real-world teaching environments. Thus, a critical examination

of these constraints is imperative to enhance the authenticity and efficacy of teacher education programs.

Excerpts from the reflection papers of pre-service teachers are provided below to support the findings.

1. Lack of authenticity

The excerpts from the data highlight the pre-service teachers' concerns about the need for more authenticity in microteaching simulations compared to real classroom experiences. Limited time for training, doubts about their ability to handle diverse student needs, and the difference between teaching peers and actual students all contribute to this perception. Pre-service teachers prefer natural classroom environments, providing valuable opportunities to confront genuine teaching challenges and interact with authentic student dynamics. While microteaching fosters teamwork and skill development, its effectiveness in preparing trainees for real-world teaching scenarios remains questioned (Koech & Mwei, 2019). These reflections underscore the importance of incorporating more authentic teaching experiences into teacher preparation programs better to equip future educators for the complexities of classroom instruction.

TT5: ... *limited time is one of the limitations of this training. We need more time to absorb everything we do and can teach other skills. It should be great...*

TT12: *My understanding of teaching in a natural classroom environment has improved. But honestly, I still question myself if I have the ability to teach students in an actual classroom. I know that my friends motivated me to prepare my lesson plans well, but I don't know if I would face students, especially younger ones. Will they listen to me? What if I handle students with different learning styles? I cannot imagine how actual teaching would feel.*

TT15: *Teaching in a natural classroom environment with real students is better as this prepared me to face students who are students and not just pretending to be students.*

TT21: *Micro-teaching can be good if you would not like to teach in a real classroom. It was fun and lots of teamwork building. However, if we teach in a real classroom with real students, the environment changes, so this can be a real problem in the future, especially when it comes to knowing how to handle real students, especially young students.*

TT13: *It was quite strange for me to teach my fellow classmates. I found it challenging, too. Also, I really tried finding lots of materials both online in the library but in the real teaching environment we need to follow school's curriculum and we need to use the school teaching materials. So at the end of the day, our teaching might differ once we face the real classroom, so I think this is one of the issues of micro-teaching.*

As indicated, the pre-service teachers' apprehension about the disparity between microteaching and natural classroom environments raises essential considerations for English language teaching programs. While microteaching is a valuable pedagogical tool for skill development and peer collaboration (El-Koumy, 2022), its limitations in

replicating authentic teaching contexts must be considered. Efforts to bridge this gap involve integrating more immersive teaching preparation experiences, such as extended teaching internships or co-teaching opportunities in actual classrooms. Additionally, mentorship programs pairing pre-service teachers with experienced teacher educators could provide invaluable guidance and support as they navigate the complexities of real-world teaching. By addressing these concerns and enhancing the authenticity of teacher training experiences, education programs can better prepare aspiring teachers to meet the diverse needs of their future students and thrive in dynamic classroom environments.

2. Classroom management issue

Practical exposure to managing diverse student behaviors would better equip pre-service teachers to navigate the complexities of real-world teaching environments. The excerpt from TT19 highlights a common concern among pre-service teachers regarding the transferability of skills learned in micro-teaching to actual classroom situations, particularly in classroom management. Pre-service teachers need to be more apprehensive about handling challenging scenarios such as unruly or disruptive behavior in an actual classroom setting.

TT19: Although microteaching was very useful, *I still have doubts about how I would transfer the knowledge I gained to classroom management.* So far, we have yet to encounter classroom management problems, especially me. *What if I deal with a real classroom where students are naughty and uncontrollable? How do we deal with them? (...)* As part of our training, we were advised different approaches, *but if you did not encounter them during your training, this can be hard in my situation. I know that one of the challenges that the teacher will face someday is managing her students.*

While they receive guidance and advice on various approaches during training, the need for firsthand experience with such situations poses a significant challenge. This underscores the importance of incorporating more authentic and diverse teaching experiences into teacher education programs, as effective classroom management is critical to successful teaching.

Pedagogical Implications

The key themes emerge, such as the importance of feedback in refining teaching performance and lesson planning and reflective practices fostering a constructive attitude toward challenges. The data highlight the role of reflective teaching in showing the significance of microteaching for the teaching profession. Pedagogically, the implication is that microteaching has positive implications in enhancing teaching efficacy among pre-service teachers, despite some expressing reservations due to identified constraints. Moreover, microteaching builds teaching competence, particularly in diverse teaching environments. Through reflective practices, the cultivation of self-discipline and responsibility and nurturing professionalism among pre-service teachers are demonstrated. Collaborative learning

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with peers also emerges as beneficial for fostering creativity and confidence. However, constraints such as needing more authentic teaching environments and classroom management concerns surface. Nonetheless, the study underscores the value of reflective teaching in promoting continual improvement and professional development among future educators, highlighting microteaching as a valuable component of teaching preparation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings underscore the impact of reflective teaching practices, particularly in microteaching, on the professional development of English language pre-service teachers. Through rigorous reflection and analysis of their teaching practices, pre-service teachers could discern effective strategies from ineffective ones, enhancing their teaching efficacy. The study highlights the fundamental role of feedback, reflective practices, and collaborative learning in fostering a positive attitude toward teaching challenges and promoting continual improvement. However, identified constraints such as the need for more authentic teaching environments and concerns about classroom management underscore the ongoing need for refinement in teacher preparation programs. Despite these challenges, the study emphasizes the enduring value of reflective teaching in nurturing professionalism and self-efficacy among future educators. As pre-service teachers continue to engage in reflective practices, they are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession and contribute meaningfully to the educational landscape.

Author

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