MICROTEACHING AND STRUCTURED REFLECTION IN PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. Future English teachers in Uzbek pedagogical universities learn methodology mainly through lectures and written assignments, and their first real teaching usually happens during a short school practicum with little feedback. Peer teaching does exist, but it often consists of a full demonstration lesson followed by general praise or criticism. This thesis proposes a microteaching cycle for methodology courses that focuses on one teaching skill at a time, uses phone video and an evidence-based observation sheet, requires a short written reflection and always includes a second attempt.

Keywords: microteaching, reflective practice, pre-service teacher education, feedback, English language teaching.

Introduction.

A student at an Uzbek pedagogical university may study methodology for three years before she stands in front of a real class. She learns about methods, principles and lesson planning, writes essays and passes examinations. Then, on her practicum, she suddenly has to give instructions, check understanding and correct errors in a class of thirty pupils, often for the first time, with a busy mentor who has little time for feedback.

The gap between knowing about teaching and being able to teach is an old problem. Microteaching was developed at Stanford University in the 1960s to deal with it: trainees teach short lessons to small groups, concentrate on one skill and get feedback before trying again (Allen & Ryan, 1969). Reflective approaches, which go back to Schön's (1983) idea of the reflective practitioner and were brought into language teacher education by Wallace (1991), add a second element: systematic examination of one's own teaching.

Aim and methods.

The aim is to design a microteaching model that fits methodology courses in Uzbek universities. The literature on microteaching and reflective practice was reviewed to derive design principles. These were compared with the way peer teaching is usually organised locally (full-length lessons, general feedback, no second attempt), and a six-step cycle with a semester plan and assessment criteria was developed. The model has not yet been evaluated.

Main part.

The original microteaching cycle was "teach – critique – re-plan – re-teach – re-critique", with lessons of five to twenty minutes built around a single skill (Allen & Ryan, 1969). It was later criticised for breaking teaching into isolated behaviours, and this is where reflection helps. Schön (1983) distinguished reflection-in-action from reflection-on-action, and Wallace (1991) described professional growth as an interaction between received and experiential knowledge. Farrell (2015) warns, however, that reflection easily turns into a mere description of what happened unless trainees are pushed to link their lessons with principles and beliefs.

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The proposed cycle has six steps. (1) The tutor introduces one skill, for example giving instructions, with a short demonstration and a video example. (2) Each trainee plans an 8–10 minute micro-lesson at home. (3) The trainee teaches it to a group of six to eight peers while another student films it on a phone. (4) Two peers complete an observation sheet that records evidence rather than impressions: the exact words of the instructions, whether the task was demonstrated, whether checking questions were asked (Are you working alone or in pairs?), how many students started correctly within thirty seconds, and one strength and one suggestion tied to a specific moment. (5) The trainee watches the recording and writes a one-page reflection guided by four questions adapted from Richards and Lockhart (1994): What did I plan, and what happened? What worked, what did not, and why? Which principle from my methodology course explains this? What will I change, and how will I know it worked? (6) The trainee teaches a revised version to a different group.

In a 15-week course, five three-week cycles can cover giving instructions, eliciting and questioning, checking the meaning of new vocabulary, correcting spoken errors, and managing pair and group work. Assessment gives 40% to the micro-lessons, with credit for improvement between the two attempts, 40% to the reflections and 20% to the quality of the evidence trainees record for their peers. Rewarding improvement rather than a polished first performance encourages trainees to take risks. The model needs no special equipment: phones are enough for recording, and several groups can work at once in different corners of a room. Its real cost is time, which may mean giving up some lecture hours.

Conclusion.

A cycle that narrows the focus to one skill, bases feedback on evidence, asks for structured reflection and always includes a re-teach gives trainees the kind of practice they now get only on the practicum, and in a safer setting. Comparing the practicum lessons and reflections of trainees who follow the cycle with those of trainees on the usual course would show how much difference it makes.

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