

Original Paper

Developing EFL Pre-service Teachers' Self-efficacy through Microteaching

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Abstract

The aim of the study presented in this paper was to examine the self-efficacy of 95 EFL pre-service teachers in relation to the utilization of microteaching in two English language teaching methodology courses. The study was conducted at a university in Thailand. This study combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. Likert Scale Survey was used to collect quantitative data and open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data from the respondents. The findings showed that microteaching affected the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

Keywords

EFL pre-service teacher, self-efficacy, microteaching

1. Introduction

Teachers can learn about teaching by discussing it and talking about materials and techniques but, teachers cannot learn it without doing it. Thus, before student teachers teach students in real classrooms, teaching practice should be provided beforehand in a supportive atmosphere. Teaching practice can range from informal practice of a particular technique, perhaps with other trainees acting as students, to a formally assessed lesson. As teaching practice can be organized in different ways, so the term teaching practice can be referred to as peer teaching and microteaching. Peer teaching is a teaching practice in which one trainee takes the role of the teacher, and the part of the students is taken by his or her fellow trainers (Gower et al., 2005; Richards & Farrell, 2011).

Microteaching was first developed by Dwight Allen of Stanford University in the mid-1960s. It has been defined as a system of control practice that makes it possible to concentrate on specified teaching behaviors and practices (Davis, 2017). Microteaching generally involves planning and teaching a short lesson or part of a lesson to a group of fellow student teachers. The microteaching session is followed

by feedback on teaching by the supervisor and fellow student teachers. It is often conducted as part of group activity on teacher-training courses, where students are put into groups and asked to plan and teach certain parts of a lesson. They then observe each other and provide peer feedback. The purpose of planning to teach a short lesson is generally to help student teachers to focus on a specific teaching skill and get immediate feedback on how well student teachers managed to do so, something that may be difficult to do when student teachers teach a full lesson. Microteaching can thus be regarded as “teaching in miniature” and is intended to provide a safe and stress-free environment in which to develop and practice basic teaching skills (Richards & Farrell, 2011).

Microteaching has proven to be an effective method that is widely used for the professional development of pre-service teachers. In the past few decades, microteaching has been used worldwide as an instrument for teacher development, as well as a tool for teacher reflection (Davis, 2017). Numerous studies indicate that microteaching is an effective method for improving the teaching skills of pre-service teachers (Agnes et al., 2020; Arsal, 2015; Coşkun, 2016; Koross, 2016; Kourieos, 2016; Mender, 2010; Mergler & Tangen, 2010; Setyaningrahayu et al., 2016).

It has been found that the relationship between theory and practices is often not made explicit during university teacher preparation programs (Korthagen, 2010; Flores, 2017; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2007), leaving pre-service teachers under-prepared may result in pre-service teachers feeling less efficacious about their ability to teach. Since efficacy beliefs play a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. The feasibility that people will act on the outcomes they expect prospective performances to produce depends on their beliefs about whether or not they can produce those performances (Bandura, 2001). Bandura (1993) defined self-efficacy as people’s belief about their capabilities to exercise control over their level of function and over events that affect their lives. In addition, Bandura asserted that the stronger people’s belief in their efficacy, the more career options they consider possible, the greater the interest they show in them, the better they prepare themselves educationally for different occupations, and the greater their stay power and success in difficult occupational pursuit. Findings from microanalyses of enactive and emotive modes of treatment support the hypothesized relationship between perceived self-efficacy and behavioral changes (Bandura, 2001).

Teacher self-efficacy is an important motivational construct that shapes teacher effectiveness in the classroom. There is evidence that teachers with a high level of teacher self-efficacy are stronger in their teaching and likely to try harder to help all students to reach their potential. In contrast, teachers with a low level of self-efficacy are less likely to try harder to reach the learning needs of all their students. It is for this reason that the investigation of the development of teacher self-efficacy in pre-service teacher education is important. During this time pre-service teachers undergo an “apprenticeship of learning” (Pendergast et al., 2011). Teacher self-efficacy is the extent to which teachers, including pre-service teachers, believe they are capable of achieving certain specific teaching goals. This concept has been applied as a subjective indicator of how well prepared a teacher is to carry out actions in order to

achieve future teaching goals (MA & Cavanagh 2018).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) stated that a teacher's sense of self-efficacy has three mechanisms: self-efficacy for student engagement, self-efficacy for instructional strategies, and self-efficacy for managing the classroom. The self-efficacy for student engagement refers to a teacher's self-confidence to engage students in learning. The self-efficacy for instructional strategies refers to a teacher's self-confidence to use different teaching methods effectively. The self-efficacy for managing the classroom refers to the teacher's self-confidence to control student unwanted behaviors and to sustain the behaviors under control to produce a secure place for all students to feel comfortable.

A growing number of researchers have claimed that the efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers may be significantly influenced by microteaching. For example, Mergler and Tangen (2010) found the microteaching experience beneficial for pre-service teachers to increase self-efficacy as well as develop teacher identity. Arsal (2014) examined the effect of microteaching on pre-service teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching using a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design. The results revealed that the pre-service teachers in the experimental group showed statistically significant greater progress in terms of a sense of self-efficacy in teaching than those in the control group. Takkaç-Tulgar (2019) examined how microteaching practices affect the self-efficacy levels of EFL pre-service teachers. The data were collected through the 45 participants' answers to open-ended questions, instructor observation notes, and peer observation notes. The content analysis of the data revealed that microteaching helped the participants develop their self-efficacy. Balcı et al. (2019) investigated EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The research was a descriptive study based on a survey model. Two hundred ninety-one EFL pre-service teachers participated in the study. Research results revealed that EFL pre-service teachers had relatively high-level self-efficacy perceptions in general and for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies subscales. Cinici (2016) explored the nature of changes in pre-service science teachers' self-efficacy beliefs toward science teaching through a mixed-methods approach. Thirty-six participants enrolled in a science method course that included collaborative peer microteaching. Results suggested that microteaching sessions provided a supportive and rich environment to develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills in terms of professional teacher behaviors.

It is clear that microteaching seems to be a factor related to EFL teachers' self-efficacy. Thus, the present study aims to examine how microteaching affected the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management separately. The following questions were proposed for this study:

1. Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement? How?
2. Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for instructional strategies? How?

3. Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management? How?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. The participants were 95 second and third-year EFL pre-service teachers taking Teaching English as Foreign Language I-2. Twenty-nine of the participants were males and 66 of them were females. Their ages ranged between 21 and 23. After receiving the theoretical aspects related to the courses, the participants were asked to conduct microteaching practices as a course requirement. They created their lesson plans and practices according to the theoretical framework of the courses and the instructor's presentation of the theories of teaching English as a foreign language.

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

The microteaching activities lasted for two academic semesters and it was carried out in two steps. Firstly, pre-service teachers prepared their lesson plans as a take-home project. Secondly, each pre-service teacher taught his/her lesson in class to their peers who assumed the role of learners in an EFL classroom. Each lesson was designed to fit within 50 minutes whereas the micro teacher taught 15 minutes of the lesson due to the high number of pre-service teachers in class and time constraints. After the microteaching, each pre-service teacher received oral feedback from both peers and the instructor. At the end of the second semester, all the pre-service teachers who took the courses were asked to respond to a survey in the form of four Likert scale options, including strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Participants were also asked to answer three open-ended questions to provide additional support for the quantitative data received and to examine explicitly their perception of the microteaching task. These questions included: 'Do microteaching practices help the development of your self-efficacy for student engagement? How?' 'Do microteaching practices help the development of your self-efficacy for instructional strategies? How?' 'Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management? How?'

2.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis done on the participants' responses to the survey was done by frequency analysis. Each participant's response was counted and the total number of responses to each option in every statement was calculated in terms of percentages. In addition, qualitative responses given to open-ended questions were analyzed by means of content analysis. The transcribed data were grouped under the topics outlined in the three questions: student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

3. Results

3.1 Quantitative Data

Participants evaluated their self-efficacy through microteaching practices by indicating their level of agreement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) with relevant statements presented below.

Table 1. Participants' Responses Concerning the Effect of Microteaching on Improving Student Engagement

Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Microteaching:				
1. helped me set up the classroom in a way that facilitates learning.	3	84	11	2
2. helped me manage classroom interaction.	4	81	14	1
3. helped me learn how to use a variety of tasks and manage time appropriately.	5	81	13	1

Table 1 demonstrates that participants positively evaluated the benefits of microteaching activities in terms of student engagement. All the items were agreed upon by more than of the participants.

Table 2. Participants' Responses Concerning the Effect of Microteaching on Instructional Strategies

Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Microteaching:				
1. allowed me to use computers and technology in classes.	42	54	4	0
2. allowed me to use a variety of assessment strategies in class.	15	76	7	2
3. helped me improve my listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.	6	92	2	0
4. allowed me to implement alternative instructional strategies when a certain strategy does not work.	2	30	25	43
5. helped me improve classroom language.	19	75	6	0
6. allowed me to provide an alternative explanation or example when my students were confused.	8	60	19	13
7. helped me improve my questioning skills.	6	63	27	4
8. allowed me to improve lesson planning skills.	3	86	9	2

Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
9. helped me learn how to organize small group work and individual.	7	87	4	2
10. allowed me to provide feedback on student actions.	4	28	34	34
11. helped me learn how to create creative and innovative activities for students.	6	56	28	10
12. helped me improve my opening and closing skills.	1	36	40	23
13. helped me improve control class skills.	1	70	23	6

As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the participants thought that microteaching helped improve their instructional strategies. For example, 42% strongly agreed that microteaching allowed them to use technology in classes. In addition, 92% of the participants agreed that microteaching helped them improve their listening speaking reading, and writing skills.

Table 3. Participants' Responses Concerning the Effect of Microteaching on Classroom Management

Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Microteaching:				
1. helped me learn how to provide help to students who need it.	34	63	3	0
2. allowed me to use specific and genuine praise.	9	81	9	1
3. helped me learn how to guide students with a clear purpose.	1	63	35	1
4. helped me learn how to communicate clear expectations.	1	68	28	3
5. helped me learn how to make learning goals clear to students.	2	51	28	19
6. helped me learn how to implement meaningful learning goals.	30	65	4	1
7. helped me learn how to plan for a high level of student participation.	34	63	2	1
8. helped me learn how to use non-controlling informal language.	10	71	16	3
9. helped me learn how to make the subject interesting by using resources and activities that promote student interest.	4	84	10	0
10. helped me learn how to provide an optimal challenge.	4	82	11	3
11. helped me learn how to incorporate student collaboration in learning.	40	56	2	2
12. helped me learn how to incorporate real-world instruction and activities.	8	80	10	2

Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
13. helped me learn how to create activities relevant to the students' lives and experiences.	7	79	12	2
14. helped me learn how to support the students' personal goals, interests, and preferences.	15	65	16	4
15. helped me learn how to provide prompt tasks and specific feedback.	6	64	24	6
16. helped me learn how to incorporate fun into learning.	3	58	32	7
17. helped me learn how to incorporate humor into teaching and learning.	4	58	26	12
18. helped me learn how to adjust teaching to meet students' needs.	9	55	25	11
19. helped me learn how to assess students' understanding frequently and in different ways.	10	64	18	8
20. helped me learn how to encourage students to ask questions.	0	43	42	15

Analyzing the EFL pre-service teachers' views about the effects of microteaching on classroom management in Table 3, it was realized that the level of EFL pre-service teachers' agreement with all items was very high, especially with the item "Microteaching helped me learn how to make the subject interesting by using resources and activities that promote student interest".

3.2 Qualitative Data

The participants were asked to respond to the question "Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement? How?" Eighty-four percent of the participants reported that they improved their learning environment management skills. They gained some ideas about how to set up the classroom in a way that facilitates learning. They also learned how to use an appropriate variety of resources and equipment to facilitate learning. Two of them wrote:

Microteaching allowed me to make use of varied tools and materials to gain students' attention.

For example, I used authentic materials to expose students to English in the real world.

Moreover, I took advantage of technology to find excellent ESL teaching tools online.

(Participant 1)

I tried to make learning fun by incorporating many engaging activities throughout my lessons.

When beginning a new topic or unit to teach, I tried to plan so that students would become immersed in the topic. For example, I start topics and units by playing entertaining videos that

relate to the topic. I also incorporated games and group projects where students had to work together to develop something related to the topics and units. (Participant 2)

Some participants reflected on their experiences in managing interaction in various roles according to the type of learners and stages of the lesson. For example:

Microteaching gave me a chance to create the activities of the lessons into many types: group work, individual work, and pair work. I was often aware of student talking time. Whenever I talked without having any interaction with the students, I always had them join in by asking them some questions or casually talking with them to make them feel relaxed. (Participant 3)

Moreover, eighty-one percent of participants described how they had successfully managed the lesson and activities using a variety of tasks and managing time appropriately.

I designed tasks for students depending on how they performed the task. This means there were so many types of tasks in my classroom such as individual, pair, and group tasks. According to my experiences in my peer teaching class, I have been trained to let students talk as much as teachers talk. (Participant 4)

I usually used hands-on activities to engage students in the lessons and to reduce classroom disruptions such as computer games that allowed them to use their fingers to click and drag a mouse and use a keyboard to write answers. (Participant 5)

I provided role-play and simulations to engage in active learning. These activities helped them improve their speaking skills and creative thinking. (Participant 6)

As for the question “Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy for instructional strategies? How?”, ninety-two percent of the participants agreed that microteaching helped them improve their English skills, especially classroom language skills.

I think my classroom language is improved, as I could notice from my speaking speed. In the first semester, I was speaking too fast that others could barely understand. However, I have tried to be aware of my talking speed and slow it down. (Participant 7)

I was a talkative person who always talked fast and was hard to understand. After I have attended peer teaching training, I found myself improving in speed or rhythm of talking and how to use the appropriate word choice with students at a particular level. (Participant 8)

My classroom language skills have improved a lot from the first day of peer teaching. For example, I learned that to teach primary school students, I need to use YES-NO questions to ask them and let them participate in class. (Participant 9)

Eighty- seven percent of participants indicated that microteaching helped them learn how to organize small group work and individual.

Experience in peer teaching classroom, I have learned many ways to bring group work into my classroom. I used games and cooperative learning activities to encourage varying English levels could work together to support each other. (Participant 10)

I learned a lot about learning styles and multiple intelligences. These theories help me to know each student as an individual and also know how to design activities to meet each student's interests. (Participant 11)

From my teaching practices, I incorporated as much group and partner work into lessons as possible so that students could both complete their tasks and socialize. However, if students talked continuously when I was teaching to the entire class, I addressed them individually.

(Participant 12)

When asked “Do microteaching practices help the development of EFL pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy for classroom management? How?” Eighty-four percent of participants agreed that microteaching helped them learn how to make the subject interesting by using resources and activities that promote student interest. Three of them wrote:

I used technology in my peer teaching to motivate my students. I also taught them to use technology for learning by assigning them to use technology to complete their work. For example, I taught them how to edit videos with Canva. (Participant 13)

What I learned from microteaching was using cooperative learning activities in which each student was responsible for his or her part of the group activity and trying a hands-on science experiment. These activities made my lessons interactive and became more interesting.

(Participant 14)

I used a lot of games in my peer teaching. I believe that games are a great way to keep lessons interesting and make learning fun. I used games for improving vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. (Participant 15)

I used multiple resources in my peer teaching including videos, music, slideshows, games, and storytelling to motivate my students. I also used kinesthetic learning activities and I found that movement worked well to engage sluggish students. A quick bit of physical activity made them more alert for learning. (Participant 16)

Eighty-two percent of participants agreed that microteaching helped them learn how to provide an optimal challenge. The following are examples of participants’ responses to the open-end questions.

I had a chance to employ task-based learning which allowed my students to improve their problem-solving skills. I observed that when I asked them to struggle through a task I was

teaching them that with effort and perseverance they could rewire their brains and learn.

(Participant 17)

I challenged my students by using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) which provided an efficient and effective framework for learning while solving real-world challenges.

(Participant 18)

I integrated thinking skills into all of my lessons. I provided a safe space for all learners to think creatively and try new ideas. (Participant 19)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the self-efficacy of EFL pre-service teachers in relation to the utilization of microteaching. The EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy perceptions were found high in all dimensions of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The results of the data analysis on instructional strategies showed that ninety-two percent of the participants in the study believed in the effectiveness of microteaching in improving their English skills, especially, classroom language skills.

In terms of student engagement, it was found that pre-service EFL teachers felt confident in their student engagement. Eighty-four percent of participants reported that they gained some ideas about how to set up the classroom in a way that facilitated learning. Regarding classroom management, it was revealed that the EFL pre-service teachers had a high level of self-efficacy. Eighty-four percent of participants agreed that microteaching helped them learn how to make the subject interesting by using resources and activities that promote student interest. Thus, it can be said that the participants in this study believe that they had the ability to engage students, use instructional strategies, and manage the classroom. Bandura (2001) suggested that efficacy beliefs play a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. The feasibility that people will act on the outcomes they expect prospective performances to produce depends on their beliefs about whether or not they can produce those performances. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. Pendergast et al. (2011) indicated that teachers with a high level of self-efficacy were stronger in their teaching and likely to try harder to help all students to reach their potential. In contrast, teachers with a low level of teacher self-efficacy were less likely to try hard to reach the learning needs of all their students.

The findings of the present study showed that microteaching contributes to the self-efficacy beliefs of the EFL pre-service teachers. The results were in concordance with a previous study by Takkaç-Tulgar (2019) which reported that microteaching practices helped the participants develop their self-efficacy. Also, the results of the present study are in line with those in Balcı et al. (2019) which found that EFL pre-service teachers had relatively high-level teacher self-efficacy perceptions in general and for

classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies subscales. Moreover, similar to the results of this study, Ghasemboland and Hashim (2013) examined the efficacy beliefs of non-native EFL teachers in terms of personal capabilities to teach English as a Foreign Language and their perceived English language proficiency. A modified version of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was used to assess efficacy for classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies. The results showed that the teachers rated their self-efficacy in teaching English at a rather high level in all dimensions of instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. In other words, they believed that they could have some influence on the three dimensions.

5. Limitations and Further Suggestions

A limitation of the current study is that the surveys were completed before the EFL pre-service teachers went out on practicum. A follow-up survey should conduct after practicum to follow the same group of EFL pre-service teachers to determine if personal and environmental factors influence their efficacy at different points throughout the teacher development process. In addition, this study was based on self-reported data. Observations of teaching performance, teaching techniques as well as interviews should be used as other sources of data to explore EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. More importantly, future research can be conducted with higher numbers of pre-service teachers studying in different contexts to gain a deeper analysis of the effects of microteaching practices on the development of professional self-efficacy.

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