

## MULTIMODAL FEEDBACK PROVISION IN IMPROVING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' COMPETENCE

Fazri Nur Yusuf<sup>1</sup>

Utami Widiati<sup>2</sup>

Teguh Sulisty<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>

Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang, Indonesia<sup>3</sup>

fazrinuryusuf@upi.edu<sup>1</sup>; uwidiati@yahoo.com<sup>2</sup>; teguhforever@yahoo.com<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

Studies on potentials of feedback over English language teaching seem not to have not been well-revealed, including studies on the use of feedback to improve English pre-service teachers' competence. The present study investigates to what extent a multimodal feedback can influence pre-service teachers' teaching, and which teaching aspects are influenced. Twenty five pre-service teachers taking Microteaching Course served as respondents supervised by a course advisor. The data were collected by teacher observation in a rating-scale form, self-appraisal, and interviews. The data were analyzed by using correlated sample *t*-test and the eight teaching components proposed by Brown (2001). The results showed that after multimodal feedback provision, pre-service teachers indicated an improvement significantly in seven out of eight teaching aspects. The provision of multimodal feedback could improve their teaching competence on preparation, instructional objective elicitation, mastery of instructional materials, use of media, and classroom management, including classroom language. But, the results do not indicate that they perform well on reflection and follow-up due to some reasons. In addition, the results evince that multimodal feedback provision could improve pre-service teachers' pedagogical competence when the multimodal feedback is integrated with content, interpersonal relationship, and management.

**Keywords:** feedback; pedagogical content knowledge; teaching competence; pre-service teacher; multimodality

Many studies on feedback have shown that feedback provision is beneficial, but few are alarming. They indicate that most of them focus on improving language learners' proficiency (Moreno, 2004) but not on language teaching (Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen, & Simons 2012). For the last decade, it focused mainly on writing. Unfortunately, the provision of feedback in language teaching is considered under-researched (Chaffin & Manfredo, 2009; Zacharias, 2007; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006; Lee, 2005).

Few studies on feedback revealing alarming issues are those by Voerman et al. (2012), Pauli (2010), Bond, Smith, and Hattie (2000), Hattie (1999), and Kluger and DeNisi (1996). A study by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that one third of 131 studies on feedback interventions serve to decrease learning, and feedback intervention variables influence learning when not used systematically. The effect on learning may also be due to the feedback interventions in the classroom that are considered seldom (Pauli, 2010); and the provision of feedback was only in seconds per day (Hattie, 1999 cf. Voerman et al., 2012). Furthermore, it was also found that the feedback interventions may be ineffective when they draw

more attention to the self rather than to the task (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

The existing studies on feedback do not reveal much on the potentials of feedback onto teacher teaching competence. Voerman et al. (2012) found the use of feedback was considered less common for teachers. When they exist, the most common feedback found is praise (Bond, Smith, and Hattie 2000 cf. Voerman et al., 2012). However, praise appeared to be ineffective in enhancing learning and often had been an intervening variable to learning (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Seeing that there is a gap between the essential role of feedback provision and few studies on feedback over teacher competence, it is necessary to find out to what extent feedback can influence pre-service teachers' competence and which aspect is influenced by.

### Feedback on Teaching

Literature studies on feedback have raised various definitions of feedback. The formulation proposed by Lewis (2002) may best describe what feedback is. It is defined as inputs about progress making of a learner with reference to a goal guiding him/her to areas of improvement. She further asserts that there are five purposes of feedback provision.

First, feedback is information resource for teachers and students. As a multimodal resource, as of different feedback types (verbal-written and direct-indirect), of different feedback resources (teacher and peer, and self-appraisal), and of different dimensions (cognitive, socio-affective, and structural), feedback provides both teachers and students with information about how the classroom works to attain their teaching and learning objectives. Later, they may decide whether to use the same particular teaching and learning strategy or to change it.

Second, feedback promotes advice for students about their learning. Once a student knows what level he/she is at, to some extent, he/she is suggested to improve his/her learning to a higher and better attainment which signals that he/she has reached a certain level of competence. Therefore, feedback will support him/her how to deal with the improvement issues.

Third, feedback supports language input provision for students. In terms of language input, feedback is rich with different modes of language inputs. It works not only to provide students with what students need to improve, or negative feedback, but also serves students with how to reach a particular competence as a role model. Feedback on language input in a language classroom is highly encouraged. Students get examples on how the language works in classroom contexts so that they will possibly use it in their daily communication.

Fourth, feedback promotes a form of motivation. Motivation in a learning process is like a roller coaster; sometimes it is up, the other time it is down. With feedback, students are promoted to maintain their high self-motive so they are able to keep their achievement. Furthermore, feedback encourages them to survive in encountering problems in their academic and social life.

Fifth, feedback leads students towards learning autonomy. Through negative and positive feedback, students are promoted to self-regulate or self-control their learning. They set up their own learning goals and create strategies to achieve them. This self-regulation in learning supports them to be independent. They will not depend too much on either their teachers or their peer; they become resourceful to access any information needed and to train themselves skillfully to be autonomous learners.

In addition, feedback can be classified into different dimensions. Yang and Carless (2013) propose three dimensions of feedback: cognitive, social-affective, and structural dimensions. Cognitive dimension is concerned with the content of feedback, i.e. student's engagement and self-regulation. Social-affective dimension deals with the interpersonal negotiation of feedback, i.e. trust and emotional relationship. Finally, structural dimension

manages the organization of feedback, i.e. flexible and mobilizing resources.

In terms of content, feedback can be categorized into positive and negative feedback, and focused and unfocused feedback. Positive feedback can be in the forms of praise, repetition of the student's correct answer, or request for further information. Meanwhile, negative feedback can be in the forms of correction, request for repetition, or evaluation of behavior (Lewis, 2002). For many years, it is found that positive feedback is much more effective than negative feedback in changing students' behavior (Nunan, 1998). Nunan suggests that positive feedback allows students to know that they have performed correctly and increases motivation through praise. He further added that feedback is rather automatic for teachers and its ultimate effect on the learners is doubtful. Meanwhile, focused and unfocused feedback is concerned with what to address in feedback provision. Lewis (2002) suggests some issues addressed in feedback session which, among others, are concerned with errors, student's performance, competence, socio-affection, attitudes, and goal setting.

As regards interaction, feedback can be categorized into teacher feedback, peer feedback, and self-correction or self-appraisal. Although it is preferable that feedback is given by the teacher, research has shown a number of advantages of self-correction and peer-assessment on speed, direct involvement of students, the encouragement of autonomy, and increased motivation because of self-involvement in the process of learning (Brown & Hudson, 1998, cf. Brown, 2001). Furthermore, many research have indicated that each feedback provider offers its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, teachers can make use one or combine two of them or more.

With regard to organization, feedback can be categorized into verbal and written feedback and direct and indirect feedback. The latter, direct and indirect feedback, is closely related to whether the feedback is corrective or not. In many cases, direct feedback is identical to corrective feedback. Meanwhile, indirect feedback is also called expanded feedback, where the feedback is not delivered straightforwardly rather by providing clues through elaboration or questions for the feedback receivers to revise.

Those types of feedback are also applicable on teaching in teacher education context. Course instructors can make use of those kinds of feedback for their pre-service teachers teaching competence. But, occasionally, feedback provision is not well understood by feedback receivers. Therefore, Lewis (2002, p. 31) described clues to the meaning of the feedback given; they, among others are:

- Using various modes in feedback giving. Some answers are written on the board and others are not

- Feedback with advice or explanation can be more powerful than locating and showing student's errors. Instead of correcting a student, a teacher can add to the wrong answer to make it right
- Giving emphasis on what should and should not be. Where a word may be ambiguous, the teacher's intonation can be altered to give a clue.

As a part of a learning process, from time to time, teachers should examine feedback provision, either by themselves or by their students. They can take into account the important features of the feedback and revisit them by giving comments on their forms and purposes. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggests that feedback providers address these three questions in order to optimize the feedback provision: (1) "where am I going?", (2) "how am I going?", and (3) "where to next?".

First, the "where am I going?" refers to the purpose of feedback. Basically, it aims at putting things right (Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010). It is to encompass not only correcting learners, but also offering them an assessment of how well they have done. This kind of feedback plays a positive impact to help learners minimize the gaps between current and desired outcomes (Yang & Carless, 2013). In addition, it makes learners able to change their behavior, leading to appropriate desired actions ("discrepancy feedback", Voerman et al., 2012).

Second, the "how am I going?" refers to behaviors, which should be applied by feedback receivers upon feedback provision. Learners have choice upon receiving the feedback given and work on it (Price et al., 2010). The reactions may be different: positive (i.e. pride or satisfaction) or negative (i.e. anxiety or anger). Yang and Carless (2013) suggest that they can also be influenced by cognitive dimension (i.e. content of feedback, technique, and procedure of feedback provision), social-affective dimension (i.e. emotional state during interaction with others), and structural dimension (i.e. timing, sequencing, and modes of feedback provision).

Third, the "where to next?" addresses which activities need to be undertaken to make better performance. It is to raise awareness why learners apply certain instructional strategies, how they can improve their teaching competence that leads to their students' improvement (Lee, 2005), and which activities lead to self-regulated learning to control and influence their learning process positively (Nückleus, Schwonke, Berthold, & Renkl, 2004).

## **METHOD**

### **Research site**

The present study was conducted at an English Department of one top-rank private university in Malang, Indonesia. The Microteaching course

offered in the sixth semester by the Department served as the research site. The course was a teaching practicum—a course offered in the series of pedagogical content knowledge course supervised by an advisor. The main purpose of the course was to provide an exposure on how to teach in practice in a limited context. The course focused on providing undergraduate students as the pre-service teachers an initial opportunity to practice their knowledge and skills in teaching simulation. The course was a prerequisite of teaching practice (offered in the following semester, or seventh semester) as a part of field experience, which was at a school out of campus and involved more supervisors—a university teacher and a cooperating teacher.

### **Research Subject**

Twenty five undergraduate students, enrolled as pre-service teachers, and a Microteaching Course advisor served as respondents. The pre-service teachers were third-year undergraduate students taking Bachelor Program on English Language Teaching. Before the course began, they had been trained not only to be familiar with pedagogical related courses but also immersed in teaching practicum. The students had got courses on pedagogical content knowledge beforehand, such as, among others, EFL methodology, instructional media, materials development, and language testing besides four English language skills: listening comprehension, speaking skills, reading comprehension, and writing skills. This course was one of those series of pedagogical courses.

### **Data collection**

As indicated in the last two sub-sections, the data were collected in two microteaching sessions. These two teaching sessions gave the assigned pre-service teachers opportunities to show their teaching based on the chosen topic of their own. The topic chosen should be in line with the suggested ones for secondary school students. Their teachings were also based on the preferred language proficiency to teach. After getting a debriefing from their course advisor a week before their first teaching sessions, they prepared a lesson plan for the two sessions, including the selection of teaching and learning materials and instructional media, and assessment for the session. The second lesson plan was the revised version of the first lesson plan after they got feedback from their course supervisor and their peer in the class.

The data were gathered from a rating scale of two teaching observations, self-appraisal, and interviews upon the completion of the two microteaching sessions. They were employed after going through a validation process in the form of close reading by two experienced English university lecturers with expertise on English Teaching

Methodology and have an experience as teaching practicum and teaching practice advisor. The rating was in five scales (i.e. 4=excellent, 3=good, 2=average, 1=poor, N/A=not applicable) adapted from Teacher Observation Form A: Observing other Teachers (Brown, 2001) and interviews. The two instruments cover the following teaching components: classroom preparation, teacher-student interaction, presenting instructional activities, teaching material mastery and presentation, making use of instructional media, monitoring and assessing learning. The pre-service teachers got direct verbal feedback right after their teaching and written feedback from their peers and their course supervisor after the calculation of their rating scale score of their teaching. They also had self-assessment using similar rating scale.

After the first microteaching session, each of them got feedback and the results of rating scale of their performance from their course supervisor, from their peers, and from their self-assessment. The following week, they had the second microteaching session. After the second microteaching session, they got the results of the similar rating scale scores from the three parties, but they did not get any verbal feedback.

After conducting the microteaching sessions and administering the rating scale, individual and group interviews were conducted. The individual interview was conducted after the first microteaching session. Meanwhile, the group interview was administered after the second microteaching session.

The feedback provision in the two instruments include information on the eight aspects of their teaching competence suggested by Brown (2001) that were expected to be improved.

### **Data analysis**

The results of the two microteaching sessions of the pre-service teachers were then computed by correlated sample *t*-test. Those eight aspects were further classified into three stages for data analysis purpose: pre-teaching activities covering points (1) and (2), main-teaching activities covering points (2) to (6), and post-teaching activities covering points (7) and (8). Further, the scores of rating scale on the three stages were compared by using similar statistic computation. The interview results were analyzed by using the three stages of pre, main, and post-teaching activities to reveal more data of the participants' teaching performance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of comparing all scores of the above mentioned rating scales comprising of the eight teaching aspects using correlated sample *t*-test showed a sig. value of .000 at .05 significance level. This value indicates that there is a difference

between the pre-service teachers' teaching competence before and after multimodal feedback delivery.

After comparing the scores of the three teaching stages, all assigned pre-service teachers confirmed that the feedback provision was considered really insightful and helpful for their teaching competence improvement. Before they got feedback, they felt that there was nothing wrong with their lesson plan. Everything was quite alright. Furthermore, they were also confident that they could implement the lesson plan well in the microteaching session. After feedback provision, they came to realize that they had missed some points in their microteaching sessions. Their minds were widely opened by the provision of feedback upon the microteaching sessions. They started to think over and over again that there was something wrong with their lesson plan and they came to realize that they had no capacity and did not know how to make their teaching right during their microteaching session. Upon the multimodal feedback delivery from their course supervisor and classmates, they got insightful comments on teaching components. Many of the inputs in the feedback indicated that there were missing points in and the weaknesses of their teachings.

The study further showed that improvements occur in seven out of the eight teaching aspects. They were (1) class preparation, (2) elicitation of instructional objectives, (3) mastery and presentation learning material, (4) instructional activities, (5) use of instructional media, (6) classroom management including classroom instruction, and (7) monitoring and assessment. These improvements were indicated by a higher rating scale score of each assigned pre-service teacher in the second microteaching session compared to the score of their first rating scale of the first microteaching session. Secondly, the improvements were also signaled by less amount of negative feedback, either from their course advisor or their classmates, and more comments on better competence of their teaching.

Pre-service teacher (PST) #1 improved seven out of eight aspects of his teaching competence—class preparation to monitoring and assessment, except reflection and follow-up—as indicated by reduced amount of negative feedback (51 to 21 comments). He got more positive feedback on “classroom interaction” aspect. Meanwhile, PST#2 improved seven out of eight aspects of his teaching competence—class preparation to monitoring and assessment, except reflection and follow-up—as indicated by reduced amount of negative feedback (52 to 22 comments). He also got more positive feedback on “classroom interaction” aspect.

Furthermore, PST#3 improved all aspects of her teaching competence with reduced amount of negative feedback (31 to 27 comments). She got

more positive feedback on “interactional activities” and “mastery and presentation of learning material” aspects. In addition, PST#4 improved all aspects of her teaching competence with increased amount of positive feedback, from 22 to 48 comments. She got more positive feedback on “interactional activities” and “mastery and presentation of learning material”, and “classroom management including classroom language” aspects.

In spite of the improvements indicated by the pre-service teachers, it was also revealed that some information delivered during feedback session was considered confusing and unclear. It was also found that the pre-service teachers’ course supervisor gave further explanation, including advice and/or suggestions to clarify the concepts of ELT in their teaching and put emphasis on their teaching competence. The confusion was mostly because each assigned pre-service teacher could not understand at once what was commented or suggested on their teaching competence. It was not easy for them to immediately identify and adjust the feedback provided to their lesson plan and their teaching. It was also indicated that the pre-service teachers got confused of how to make an action over the comments or suggestions made immediately. It seemed that they got difficulty to review their teaching and needed some time to identify and make resolution between their lesson and their teaching with the comments delivered in the feedback provision session (“feedback discrepancy” as suggested by Voerman et al., 2012).

The findings also depicted that some inputs—the comments and suggestions delivered in the feedback session—needed further explanation and clarification. The pre-service teachers seemed to encounter problems to make contingent between the theories they had learned before and their real teaching problems. However, these inputs in the feedback session could make them realize their strengths as well. The comments and suggestions could encourage and gear them to immediately make revisions on their teaching competence. The pre-service teachers confirmed that sometimes they could easily make immediate action over the comments or suggestions made, but some others could not. They needed some time to think or needed help to specify what was wrong and what should be done as an action plan. It was hard for them to reflect on their own teaching.

The results from this study confirm previous research studies on feedback provision on teacher competence. In line with Voerman et al. (2012), the feedback provision has resulted in improvement on pedagogical competence of the pre-service teachers. Furthermore, the study revealed that the pre-service teachers found it helpful to solve their problems in pedagogical competence in the microteaching sessions, i.e. identifying weaknesses on the lesson plan, formulating instructional objectives, defining

instructional activities, selecting and developing learning material, instructional media, and assessment, and classroom management, including the use of proper and appropriate classroom language. The feedback session makes them able to make connection between what they have studied about English as their subject matter and how to teach it and the problems encountered in their microteaching session.

The positive and the negative feedback provided during the feedback session has helped the pre-service teachers to identify which teaching component should be emphasized and focused on and which one has settled or improved already. It further helps them unpack their potentials and limitations in teaching. As the microteaching sessions were their first experience in teaching, they found that the feedback provision was so insightful; they latter realized what to do in the next teaching. Nunan (1998) proposes that positive feedback has two principal functions: to let students know that they have performed correctly and to increase their motivation. The results confirmed that positive feedback affects one’s teaching performance. It may make him/her more confident and may have him/her solid in his/her understanding on concepts and in his/her beliefs on what a good teaching performance is. He further added that feedback is rather automatic for teachers and its ultimate effect on the learners is doubtful. That is the reason why, in the present study, the pre-service teachers would rather take feedback from their course supervisor than from their peers, and they made further action based on the feedback, such as making revision on their lesson plan and making improvement in their teaching in the second microteaching session.

However, the results of the present study contradict those of Kluger and DeNisi (1996) that it is not only positive feedback that can affect better performance of the pre-service teachers in their teaching. The present study revealed that negative feedback may affect one’s teaching competence, too. This might happen due to several reasons. First, by negative feedback, one can locate his/her weaknesses in teaching when he/she could not identify the weaknesses by himself/herself. Second, the negative feedback might provide better argument for why he/she should change his/her competence. In this case, he/she might question his/her choices on teaching components he/she has performed. Third, the negative feedback provision might change his/her wrong belief on what he/she should do in teaching that has been fossilized and build up further new concepts on what a good teaching should be.

The results further reveal that problems in seven out of the eight components of teaching as suggested by Brown (2001) decreased. The multimodal feedback provision allowed the pre-service teachers to identify the problems in their

teaching competence, through feedback provided by their course supervisor, their peers, and through their self-appraisal. The information gathered helped them allocate and relocate the problems and make necessary alteration to suit their teaching capacity and their teaching context. Furthermore, the results suggested that feedback provision focusing on pedagogical competence could reduce the pre-service teachers' problems in their teaching. The information provided during feedback sessions may help to clarify the confusion and misconceptions and provides more insights on how to do better in teaching competence, thereby confirming the study carried out by Yusuf (2014).

The comparison of each teaching component of the pre-service teachers' competence in the first microteaching session and the second one indicated that there were improvements in the assigned pre-service teachers due to multimodal feedback provision. In doing revision on lesson plans and the aspects of the pre-service teachers teaching competence, the assigned pre-service teachers were likely to be stimulated by feedback with explicit advice or explanation. With the insights in the feedback sessions, they were then able to focus on which aspect they have strengths at and they are weak at. With the understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and how to cope with them in their teaching, they are likely to make changes towards betterment in their teaching, thereby supporting studies by Tok (2010) and Ogonor and Badmus (2006).

The results of the current study are also in line with those of Yusuf (2014). He found that feedback provision, especially from their course advisor, provided pre-service teachers with opportunities to identify their strengths and weaknesses on lesson plans and their teaching components and all aspects of their teaching competence. It was also found that feedback with advice or explanation has helped them revise their teaching, as it has given them specific, focused, and directive inputs on how to fix their weaknesses in teaching. But, Shute (2008) alerts the feedback providers that the effective feedback in general in improving learning is "specific but not too elaborate". Moreover, she adds the feedback is presented in manageable units, meaning that it is based on sub-components that will be easily and clearly comprehended by the learners. Providing much feedback will not help pre-service teachers at all when the feedback is not managed in such a way that it can identify what teaching components to be improved. Managing the feedback in units of action plans may help the pre-service teachers to make gradual and scaffolded steps to invest their time, efforts, and energy to make use of their potentials to minimize their weaknesses in dealing with teaching barriers and hurdles ("discrepancy feedback", Voerman et al., 2012)

The feedback provision process could help students become familiar with key assessment task words. The feedback provision process has helped to encourage and promote the pre-service teachers to make details of every single component of the teaching process. The feedback provision could assist them to locate their shortcomings and make improvements on the teaching components being observed. Therefore, this study's finding is in line with that of Richards and Pilcher (2015) who propose "dialogs of discovery".

The findings of the present study indicates that the multimodal feedback provision has addressed the notion of zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between a learner's current development level, as determined by independent problem-solving, and the learner's potential level of development as manifested in problem-solving with assistance. As proposed by Vygotsky, it suggests that what one can mentally attain in the future is far more important than one's current achievement. It is crucial for identifying each learner's readiness to benefit from instruction, such as feedback provision, and as long as one can be guided effectively regarding his/her ZPD, he/she can develop progressively (Chuang, 2007).

This study also revealed that there was no improvement in one of the teaching components—reflection and follow-up. It may be due to, firstly, low frequency of feedback provision. The low frequency may indicate it was not worth to focus on. Therefore, it may be viewed not that important to emphasize on. Thereby, it confirms Voerman et al.'s (2012) findings. In addition, it is because reflection and follow-up are rarely paid an attention to get feedback on (Hattie, 1999). This may result in building a misleading or wrong view on putting emphasis on certain aspects of teaching and ignoring the rest. Meanwhile, all teaching aspects as proposed by Brown (2001) are "the blocks" that teachers need to have to build "the house" of teaching as a whole process comprehensively. Thereby, the results confirm the studies carried out by Pauli (2010) and Bond, Smith, and Hattie (2000).

The low frequency of feedback interventions was often given by teachers without explicitly reviewing the answer or statement of the learners (Pauli, 2010). When the multimodal feedback exists, it is not specific, focused, neither directive in most cases. This may lead to "don't know where to go" situation. Even worst, it may not help the learners at all. This fact implies that there is an essential need to find out further appropriate ways of how to deliver feedback properly in order to develop pre-service teachers' reflective thinking towards their teaching competence.

Secondly, the most possible reason for no improvement in the teaching component of reflection and follow-up is the feedback provided is not meaningful. No matter how many times and how

much the pre-service teachers get feedback, when the feedback is not understandable, it is hard for them to make betterment. Therefore, the feedback provision is highly recommended to be manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant (Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, pre-service teachers should be given more chances to obtain feedback and ample time to have self-reflective thinking since the main objective of being reflective pre-service teachers is to cultivate their awareness of the need to develop their teaching competence. Therefore, it is considered very important for their course instructors to support pre-service teachers to get engaged in reflective thinking activities, not only to pass a course but also to grow their professional teaching competence after they complete their study and become future reflective teachers.

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