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Micro-teaching videos in EFL teacher education methodology courses: Tools to enhance English proficiency and teaching skills among trainees

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Abstract

The main goal of the study presented in this paper was to investigate the opinions of 40 prospective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers about the effectiveness of micro-teaching videos in two English language teaching methodology courses. The study was conducted at a state university in Turkey and the data collection was mainly done via a questionnaire. Quantitative data analysis done on participants’ responses to the questionnaire items show that absolute majority of participants believed in the usefulness of micro-teaching videos. The paper reports and discusses the English proficiency and English teaching skills enhanced by micro-teaching videos in detail.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language; Digital Videos; Micro-teaching; Teacher Education

1. Introduction

With the introduction of digital videos, incorporating teaching and learning activities with videos and video editing tools has been relatively easier and more popular. Videos in teacher education in particular can be powerful tools in enhancing professional development as videos can be used in several ways in teacher education and training programs. For example, videos can be used to allow trainees to watch “best practices” of experienced and effective teachers. In this way trainees can see the links between theory and

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practice in teaching (Dymond & Benz, 2006; Hsueh-Hua & Rosenbusch, 2005). Trainees can also watch and comment on peers’ teaching videos, which can improve collaborative and reflective learning.

Another use of videos in teacher training can be on the videos of trainees’ own teachings. Whether in inservice or preservice teacher training programs, trainees can watch and reflect on their own performances in teaching, which has several benefits. First of all, the teaching videos can provide trainees with a permanent record of their own teaching that they can watch and reflect on anytime (Hung et al, 2004; Wu and Kao, 2008). Furthermore, by watching their own teaching videos, trainees can have a more objective perspective on their own teaching practices (Dymond & Benz, 2006; Clarke, 2009; So, Pow, and Hung, 2009). This objective approach to one’s teaching can also be accompanied by reflecting on one’s teaching in a “non-threatening way” (Rich and Hannafin, 2009), which in return would result in an increase in awareness (Hernandez-Ramos, 2007; Kong, Shroff, & Hung, 2009; Liu, 2012; Tripp & Rich, 2011) for acquiring the necessary skills to become an effective teacher.

The use of videos in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education is additionally important because with the help of videos trainees can listen to and watch native speakers, learn culture-bound non-verbal language (Clarke, 2009). Moreover, EFL teachers can monitor and self-correct their language use with the help of videos because one of the most important components of being an EFL teacher is having a good command of the language that they are teaching. In addition to the proficiency in English, EFL teacher trainees can also reflect on their teaching skills that are specific to language teaching. Thus, it can be stated that videos are potentially effective teaching and learning tools in teacher education programs from a teacher educator’s view.

Whether teacher trainees find videos as powerful tools of learning in teacher education programs—specifically in EFL teacher training programs—needs to be studied in detail so that trainees’ experiences and opinions are also taken into account. Therefore, the main purpose of the study presented in this paper was to investigate the perceptions of 40 EFL teachers on the effectiveness of the use of videos in micro-teaching activities in English Language Teaching (ELT) methodology courses. An EFL teacher has to have the necessary knowledge and skills in at least two areas: being proficient in English and being competent in teaching English skills.

Thus, the specific research questions for the study presented in this paper were designed as follows:

1. Based on the perceptions of 40 EFL teacher trainees
   - are micro-teaching videos effective in improving EFL teacher trainees’ English proficiency?
   - are micro-teaching videos effective in improving EFL teacher trainees’ teaching English skills?

The rest of the paper covers the details of the methodology and findings of the present study followed by the discussion and conclusions sections.

2. Methodology

In this section the study presented in this paper is described in detail in relation to the context it was conducted in, the participants, data collection procedure including the data collection instrument, and the data analysis methods.

2.1. Context and the Micro-teaching Video Activity

The study was conducted in a Foreign Language Department at an English medium state university in Turkey. The micro-teaching videos were recorded and the data was collected in “ELT Methodology Course II” in which participants were trained on how to teach reading and writing to EFL students. All communication including the instruction, micro-teachings, and data collection procedure was conducted
in English. The micro-teaching activity lasted for one academic semester and it was carried out mainly in four steps. The steps followed by the instructor-researcher can be seen in Figure 1 below:

Fig. 1. Overview of micro-teaching video activity

As Fig. 1 above illustrates the study involved a micro-teaching video-recording activity carried out in mainly four steps through one academic semester. Throughout the semester each teacher trainee micro-taught one lesson (either Reading or Writing in English) and their micro-teachings were recorded via a digital camcorder by the instructor-researcher. Each lesson recorded had been planned in pairs and one of the pairs took the role of the teacher so that each trainee had the chance to teach at least once in class in
front of peers. Trainees’ peers acted out as the learners in the micro-teaching. In addition, 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 trainees in class and time constraints. After the micro-teaching was over, each trainee received oral feedback by both the instructor and peers which was also recorded. One week after the micro-teaching each trainee received a DVD that contained two videos burned by the instructor-researcher: Video A (trainee’s micro-teaching video) and Video B (instructor and peer feedback video). All trainees watched their videos at home and wrote a reflection report on their performances and handed in the reflection report to the researcher two weeks after the micro-teaching. Reflection reports were used to ensure that trainees watched and reflected on their videos.

2.2. Participants

Participants of the study were 40 third year students in a four year B.A. program majoring in Foreign Language Education. Six of the participants were males and 34 of them were females. Their ages ranged between 21 and 22. The English proficiency level of the participants was advanced as they were prospective EFL teachers who were studying in an English medium university. All participants of the study were familiar with the micro-teaching video recording procedure as they had been through this procedure previous year in “ELT Methodology I” course in which they had been trained on how teach “vocabulary, listening”, and “speaking” to EFL students. At the time of the study, each teacher trainee had gone through the micro-teaching activity shown in Fig. 1 twice.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The main data collection instrument used in the study was a survey. Before the survey was conducted, all participants were given a consent form explaining the study. Only the volunteer trainees were included in the data collection procedure. The survey was implemented at the end of the academic semester during class time and it was organized under two main sections:

Section A: This section was designed to gather demographic data about participants and their previous experiences with being video-recorded while speaking and teaching in English.

Section B: This section included statements that require responses from the participants in the form of four Likert scale options which were “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree”. The statements in section B were organized under two sub-sections: Items 1-5: Statements about the effectiveness of Micro-teachings in relation to improving English proficiency and Items 6-15: Statements about effectiveness of Micro-teachings in relation to improving teaching in English.

Data analysis done on the participants’ responses to the survey was done via 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, the duration of each teacher trainee’s micro-teaching and feedback videos were written down using the video play software and all trainees’ video durations were added. Finally, the average number of minutes for each video was calculated via dividing the total duration by the number of participants in the study.

3. Results

Data analysis done on the participants’ responses to the survey questions and statements showed that 70% of the participants had had no experience in video-recording their performance while speaking in
English and/or teaching in English before their ELT methodology courses. In other words, the majority of the participants had experience with video-recordings only during their micro-teachings in ELT Methodology courses. The average duration of micro-teaching videos (Video A) recorded for the present study was 17 minutes since each trainee taught the first half of his/her lesson plan in class due to time constraints. Peer and instructor feedback videos (Video B) for each trainee lasted for approximately six minutes. Table 1 below shows both the total and average duration of each video type in minutes.

Table 1. Duration of micro-teaching activity videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of Videos in Minutes</th>
<th>Video A (MT videos)</th>
<th>Video B (Feedback videos)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Minutes</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number of Minutes for each Trainee</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1. Participants’ responses to survey statements in relation to the effect of micro-teaching videos on improving English proficiency

Table 2 presents the results to the statements between 1 and 5 in the survey. As it can be seen in Table 2 responses to statements between 1 and 5 in the survey revealed that the majority of the participants thought the micro-teaching videos helped them to improve their English proficiency. For example, in all statements more than half of the participants selected either “strongly agree” or “agree” for the statements on all sub-skills of English mentioned in the survey. Particularly, the participants believed that the videos were helpful in improving their “speaking” and “pronunciation” in English. Overall, the results of the data analysis done on the responses to the statements between 1 and 5 showed that micro-teaching videos were effective in improving English proficiency skills of EFL teacher trainees, which is the answer to the first research question of the study.

Table 2. Participants’ responses to survey statements in relation to the effect of Micro-teaching videos on improving English proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my grammar in English.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52,5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my vocabulary in English.</td>
<td>32,5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my listening in English.</td>
<td>27,5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my speaking in English.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32,5</td>
<td>7,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my pronunciation in English.</td>
<td>57,5</td>
<td>37,5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2. Participants’ responses to survey statements in relation to the effect of micro-teaching videos on improving teaching in English

Similar to the responses to statements between 1 and 6, participants’ responses to statements between 6 and 15 showed that micro-teaching video activity had a positive impact on improving participants’ teaching English skills. Table 3 presents the participants’ responses to the statements on the sub-skills of English language teaching skill asked in the survey.

Table 3. Participants’ responses to survey statements in relation to the effect of micro-teaching videos on improving teaching in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my teaching English.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22,5</td>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my giving instruction in teaching English.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my classroom management in teaching English.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>27,5</td>
<td>7,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my giving feedback in teaching English.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7,5</td>
<td>2,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my material design in teaching English.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my activity design in teaching English.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37,5</td>
<td>17,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my board use in teaching English.</td>
<td>52,5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my monitoring student while teaching English.</td>
<td>62,5</td>
<td>27,5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my time management in teaching English.</td>
<td>52,5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Watching my MT videos helped me to improve my problematic areas in teaching English.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in Table 3 majority of the participants thought the micro-teaching videos were helpful in improving their EFL teaching skills. For example, more than half of the participants (75%) strongly agreed that watching their micro-teaching videos helped them to improve their teaching English and giving instructions in teaching English. In fact, only one participant did not agree with these statements and none of them strongly disagreed. In addition, 65% of the participants strongly agreed that with the help of micro-teaching videos their classroom management skills were improved while teaching English. The positive impact of micro-teaching videos on improving teacher trainees’ problematic areas in teaching English was another statement that participants’ responded mainly homogeneously. 80% of the participants thought that these videos helped them to improve their problematic areas in teaching English. In all other statements, more than half of the participants favored the use of micro-teachings in improving their English teaching skills. Thus, it can be stated that based on the participants’ perceptions micro-
teaching videos were effective in improving teacher trainees’ teaching skills, which is the answer to the second research question of the study presented.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the data analysis showed that the participants in the study overwhelmingly believed in the effectiveness of the micro-teaching videos on improving both English proficiency and teaching English skills among EFL teacher trainees. In terms of English proficiency “pronunciation” in English was found to be mostly improved with the help of micro-teaching videos. Ninety-five percent of the participants either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with this statement in the survey. If “strongly agree” and “agree” responses are added and calculated in percentages for each sub-skill investigated in the present study, the positive effect of micro-teaching videos on improving English language proficiency can be better observed, which is illustrated in Figure 2.

Based on the results shown in Figure 2 the sub-skills of English that were improved by the micro-teaching videos were (in the order of the degree of improvement) a. Pronunciation (95%), b. Speaking (92,5%), c. Vocabulary (82,5), and d. Grammar (77,5) as well as Listening (77,5%) in English. Thus, teacher educators who wish to monitor and enhance teacher trainees’ English proficiency can make use of video-recording activity. Kapanja (2011) and Wu, Yen, and Marek (2011) found that the use of video can lead to an increase in positive attitude toward instruction and motivation among EFL teachers and learners. In addition, Collins et al (2004) concluded in their study that teacher trainees found video reflection highly valuable. Similarly, in this study micro-teaching videos were found highly effective and favorable by the teacher trainees and there is a possibility that the use of this type of activity may motivate and encourage teacher trainees to excel in their performance in micro-teachings that are done in methodology courses. In addition, these video recordings give teacher trainees a record that they keep in their training as well as a chance to monitor their own progress in English language.

Furthermore a similar calculation can be done for the second sub-section of Survey section B; that is, both “strongly agree” and “agree” responses can be added to see the positive effect of micro-teaching videos on improving teaching English skills. This calculation is given in the chart presented in Figure 3. The chart shows that the most improved skill among teacher trainees is “giving instructions while teaching English” as all participants (100%) believed that watching their micro-teaching videos helped
them to improve giving instructions in teaching English. Similarly, 97.5% of the participants believed that their overall teaching English skills had improved with the help of watching their own micro-teaching videos.

Figure 3 also illustrates the effectiveness of micro-teaching video-recording and watching activity on improving other sub-skills of teaching English. For example, videos were found effective especially in teacher trainees’ overcoming problematic areas in teaching English as 95% of the participants either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they could overcome these problematic areas after watching their own micro-teaching videos. Overall all statements in relation to improving teaching English skills were responded as positively by over 80% of the participants in the study. Therefore, micro-teaching videos were clearly found effective by the teacher trainees in improving their teaching English skills and teacher educators can make use of video-recording as a tool to enhance teaching skills in their classrooms.

The findings and results of the study presented in this paper are limited to 40 teacher trainees in one institution. A similar study can be carried out across institutions and/or with different groups of learners in other disciplines to test whether similar results will be achieved. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study imply that the micro-teaching tools have great use and potential to enhance language proficiency and language teaching skills among EFL teacher trainees. Thus, based on the perceptions of the participants who took part in this study, it can be recommended that micro-teaching video activity may be used in methodology courses of teacher education programs.

References


