
MICROTEACHING LESSON STUDY: THE EFL STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTION

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Abstract

As a variation of lesson study, microteaching lesson study is applied by student teachers in microteaching course where they practise teaching to their peers or real students. Thus, it incorporates the aspects of microteaching and lesson study, i.e., the teaching of small group of peers or real students, the shortened length of time for teaching (approximately 25 to 30 minutes), the division of student teachers in group of three, the cycles of collaborative lesson planning, teaching, and reflecting, and the use of video to capture teacher lesson for later analysis. In addition, it encompasses the features of learning to teach such as reflective teaching, classroom research, and action research. In other words, it provides student teachers with environment that might enable them to be adaptive teachers who can adapt and adjust to the complexities of teaching learning activities. This present study aims to investigate the EFL student teachers' perception of microteaching lesson study. The participants were eighteen EFL student teachers who enrolled in microteaching lesson study course at the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University. The data were gathered using feedback questionnaire on microteaching lesson study adapted from Molina (2012). The findings reveal that the EFL student teachers perceive microteaching lesson study positively.

Keywords: *microteaching lesson study, perception, EFL student teachers*

1. INTRODUCTION

Microteaching lesson study is a variation of lesson study which is applied by student teachers in microteaching course where they practise teaching to their peers or real students. It combines the aspects from microteaching and lesson study. Those aspects are the teaching of small group of peers or real students, the shortened length of time for teaching (approximately 25 to 30 minutes), the division of student teachers in group of three, the cycles of collaborative lesson planning, teaching, and reflecting, and the use of video to capture teacher lesson for later analysis.

Furthermore, microteaching lesson study also encompasses the features of learning to teach such as reflective teaching, classroom research, and action research. As one of the steps in lesson study is reflection, microteaching lesson study also carries reflective inquiry in it. In Japan, lesson study is called *jogyokenkyu* which means research about a lesson. That's why, basically lesson study is a classroom research done collaboratively on a lesson which applies the same to microteaching lesson study. The features of classroom action research is already included as the focus of lesson study is to improve student learning or the lesson. To sum up, microteaching lesson study provides student teachers with environment that might enable them to be adaptive teachers who can adapt and adjust to the complexities of teaching learning activities.

Microteaching lesson study was mostly conducted with preservice teachers of mathematics and science (Cavin, 2007; MacDowell, 2010; Fernandez, 2010; Molina, 2012). It is rarely done in the field of English. Nevertheless, microteaching lesson study

has been implemented at the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University for three years.

At the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University, microteaching lesson study is offered to the sixth semester English student teachers who take microteaching course. In this course, the student teachers will be grouped heterogeneously based on their Grade Point Average (GPA). Thus, each group will consist of student teachers with various proficiency.

Each group will be involved in three cycles of planning, implementing, and reflecting an English lesson for secondary schools. The curriculum of the secondary schools they refer will be school-based curriculum and 2013 curriculum. The first and the third microteaching lesson study will be assigned for the school-based curriculum, whereas the second one will be for 2013 curriculum. The consideration of applying both curriculums is due to the implementation of those curriculums in secondary schools in Indonesia. Since the student teachers will have their field experience in those schools who apply those both curriculums, they must be familiar with them.

During the cycle of microteaching lesson study, the English student teachers activities will be video-recorded. Every student teacher also has to write reflective journal that will be submitted at the end of semester together with the lesson plans written by their groups.

As microteaching lesson study is quite new in EFL and still rarely conducted, thus it is necessary to have study about it, particularly from the view of the student teachers themselves. This present study aims to investigate the EFL student teachers' perception of microteaching lesson study. Such study will reveal how the EFL student teachers perceive microteaching lesson study which in turn can find out their experiences in implementing microteaching lesson study. In addition, it will inform the benefits the EFL student teachers gain as well as the constraints they face during microteaching lesson study which will be of valuable input for teacher educators to modify or improve their microteaching lesson study implementation for the better result.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

Microteaching Lesson Study

Microteaching lesson study (MLS) is a modification of lesson study to be used for prospective or preservice teachers at university level. Some central features of lesson study maintained in microteaching lesson study, as noted by Fernandez (2008) include an overarching goal for the lesson, collaboration among teachers, the phases of lesson development, implementation, observation, and revision, and a written reflective report on the lesson study work. Molina (2012: 3) also explains that microteaching lesson study is similar to lesson study in that "microteaching lesson study engages preservice teachers in cycles of lesson development, implementation and revision of an assigned topic while teaching to small groups of their peers in their university classrooms or small groups of K-12 students".

Microteaching lesson study also draws elements from microteaching. Those elements include the reduced class size (5-10 student peers or students), the reduced lesson length (15-20 minutes), and videotaped lesson.

The differences between microteaching lesson study and microteaching is on the complexity of the content tasks, the focus of the experience, and the way of conducting it. In microteaching lesson study, the complexity of the content task is not simplified. Fernandez (2010: 352) explains that "the content for microteaching lesson study lessons is selected purposely in order for the students or student-peers being taught to lack knowledge of the content" so that "the prospective teachers are able to navigate the

complexities of authentically teaching content to students within a simplified setting”. The second difference is that the focus of microteaching lesson study is not on demonstrating any one particular teaching skill. The last difference lies in the nature of microteaching that is for one individual teaching, whereas microteaching lesson study is collaborative. The following table represents the different elements among microteaching lesson study, microteaching, and lesson study explained by Fernandez (2010).

Table 1. Design Elements for MLS, Microteaching, and Lesson Study
(Fernandez, 2010: 352)

	Microteaching Lesson Study	Microteaching	Lesson Study
Lesson Content	Overarching student-learning goal, selected purposely for prospective teacher development Focus on student learning related to actual teaching	Reduced complexity of content to be learned Focus on teacher practising a teaching skill	Overarching student-learning goal Focus on student learning related to actual teaching
Structure of Experience	Repeated cycles of planning, implementation, analysis, revision Collaboration among MLS group	Planning, teaching, analysis Individual	Repeated cycles of planning, implementation, analysis, revision Collaboration among lesson study group
Forms of Feedback	Instructor is knowledgeable advisor Feedback from peers in MLS group Videotape of lesson required	Mentor or instructor Feedback from student-peers taught, optional Videotape of lesson, optional	Knowledgeable outside advisor Feedback from peers and others invited to lesson presentation Videotape of lesson, optional
Implementation Setting	Reduced class size sufficient for group work (5-10 students or student-peers) Reduced lesson length (at least approx. 30 min)	Reduced class size (e.g. 5-10 students or student-peers) Reduced lesson length (5-20 min)	Usual classes Usual lesson length
Products	Written reflective report and lesson plans to be shared	No requirement of written report	Written reflective report available for use by others

Fernandez (in Molina, 2012: 20) explains that microteaching lesson study forms an experience that is designed to challenge preservice teachers’ conceptions regarding teaching and learning while simultaneously encouraging their connection between theory and practice. In microteaching lesson study, preservice teachers work in groups of at most three in conjunction with a microteaching lesson study mentor. The microteaching study

mentor is the same as the outside specialist in lesson study because they are knowledgeable in the lesson content, content area teaching, and lesson study.

The Cycle of Microteaching Lesson Study

As the cycles of microteaching lesson study is the same as the cycles of lesson study, there are three main phases of microteaching lesson study. They include research lesson planning, teaching and observing, and reflecting and refining the research lesson plan. The following figure shows the cycles of microteaching lesson study.

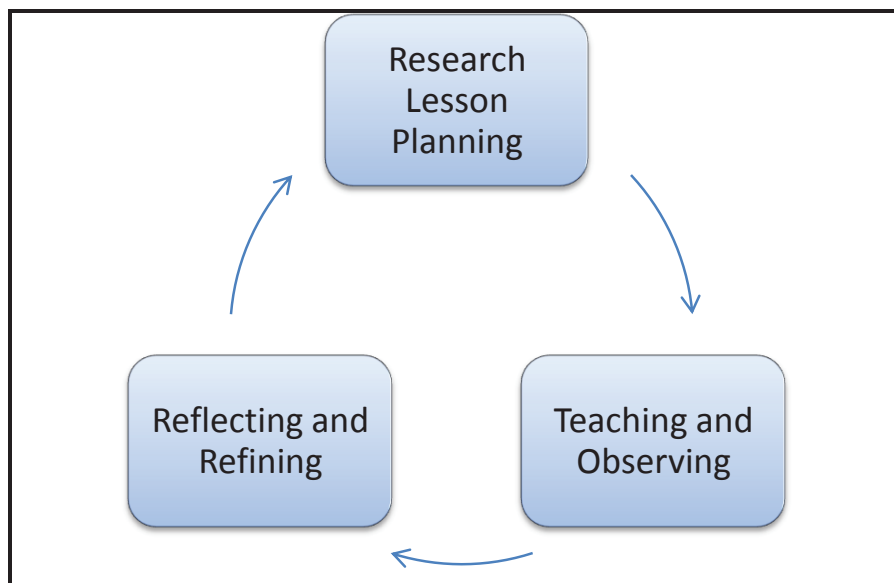


Figure 1. The Cycles of Microteaching Lesson Study

In research lesson planning, the plan of the lesson is discussed collaboratively among the student teachers. The discussion also includes the anticipation of the students' responses when teaching learning process occur and the focus of the observation from the next step. The lesson is then taught by one of the members of the group, while the other two members will observe. Even though what to observe has been discussed in the research lesson planning, the essential key of observation is on the student learning, not on the teacher teaching. In the next step, the result from the observation will be discussed and reflected by the group. This step will bring about the points of weaknesses and strengths from the teaching learning process that leads to the refinement of the lesson plan. The other member of the group will then teach using this refined research lesson. The process will be iterated again.

The Benefits of Microteaching Lesson Study

Just as lesson study that results in many benefits, microteaching lesson study also brings about some benefits. Cavin (2007) notes that microteaching lesson study enables student teachers to gain collaboration experience. This is obvious as microteaching lesson study is conducted in group and requires collaboration among student teachers.

Fernandez and Robinson (2006) state similar benefit as Cavin's that microteaching lesson study makes student teachers experience collaboration. In addition, they also reveal that microteaching lesson study gives student teachers abilities in doing analysis and reflection on shared experience. These abilities are gained through the phases of microteaching lesson study like observation and reflection after the teaching session.

Furthermore, Wood and Cajkler (2013) assert that microteaching lesson study helps to understand “the transition of student teachers into their chosen profession, into pedagogic communities of practice”. This transition is necessary regarding that student teachers are not yet teachers and so they need to have ‘the feel’ of being teachers and being part of the teaching world.

The previous studies in microteaching lesson study are mostly in the field of study of Mathematics and Science. Stafford-Plummer (2002) revealed the influence of lesson study on preservice secondary mathematics teachers’ beliefs. Fernandez and Robinson (2006) also conducted a study on secondary mathematics preservice teachers and the result showed that microteaching lesson study is beneficial to their learning to teach as they felt the collaboration, analyses, and reflection on shared experiences.

The recent research by Fernandez (2010) reported that mathematics preservice teachers’ engagement in microteaching lesson study deepened their understanding of the content and enhanced their ability to teach. Other benefits include the development of preservice teachers’ ability to recognize teaching a lesson as a learning process not building a skill, textbooks are not the authority on curriculum, and preservice teachers began to integrate classroom management strategies into their lesson design.

Molina (2012) found that elementary preservice teachers participating in microteaching lesson study grew in content knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge. This finding is in alignment with MacDowell’s (2010) that shows preservice teachers deepened their pedagogical content knowledge after experiencing microteaching lesson study focused on teaching and learning nature of science. Meanwhile, Cavin (2007) explored the development of technological pedagogical content knowledge in preservice teachers as they participated in microteaching lesson study and revealed that they developed awareness of the nuances of teaching with technology in a student-centered learning environment and expanded their views on mathematical knowledge.

In the field of English Education, Suryani and Rismiyanto (2014) conducted a study to find out the constraints of microteaching lesson study faced by English student teachers. Their study indicated that there are four constraints in microteaching lesson study perceived by student teachers, namely time, personal relationship, lack of content pedagogical knowledge, and unresolved different opinion.

3. METHOD OF THE STUDY

The subjects of this study were eighteen sixth semester EFL student teachers who enrolled in microteaching lesson study course at the English Education Department of Muria Kudus University: 7 males and 11 females. The length of the microteaching lesson study course was 16 weeks with three hours per week. The EFL student teachers were grouped in three heterogeneously based on their Grade Point Average (GPA) so that each group consisted of student teachers with various proficiency.

Each group conducted three cycles of microteaching lesson study: research lesson planning, implementing (teaching and observing), and reflecting. Each EFL student teacher had three time turns for teaching practice performance. The first and the third teaching practice were assigned for the school-based curriculum, whereas the second one for the 2013 curriculum.

The instrument of the study was feedback questionnaire on microteaching lesson study adapted from Molina (2012). The questionnaire was designed to get the perspectives of the EFL student teachers on microteaching lesson study in such categories as the research lesson planning phase, observing phase, reflecting phase, the lecturer input, and the benefits of microteaching lesson study. It consists of ten Likert type format statements ranging from 1 to 5 with (1) a rating of strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree,

and (5) strongly disagree. Each statement was followed by a request to explain the choice. Thus, after rating for the statements, the participants could explain about their choice further in the space given below their choice. The questionnaire was administered at the end of microteaching lesson study.

4. DISCUSSION

In a general sense, the EFL student teachers perceive microteaching lesson study positively. The following discussion of their perception is organized based on the categories in the questionnaire.

The majority of the EFL student teachers (67%) agree that the stage of planning together in the beginning of microteaching lesson study benefit them in broadening their knowledge of teaching the lesson. While the rest of 33% student teachers strongly agree with that statement. The collaborative lesson planning seems to be the reason the student teachers have such a perception. As noted by Cavin (2007), through microteaching lesson study, student teachers will acquire collaboration experience. Those EFL student teachers mention that they can get and share idea, information and knowledge with their peers during the session of planning. Furthermore, they get suggestions from their peers not only on the way how to teach but also on the making of lesson plan. One student teacher wrote that since he did not have teaching experience before, he could get knowledge from those who ever taught.

The other benefit that the student teachers gain through the collaborative lesson planning is deepening their knowledge of English. It can be seen from most of the answer which is 78% agree and 11% strongly agree. Through the collaborative lesson planning, the student teachers can learn more on their knowledge of English from their peers. Some student teachers note that they are even able to improve their knowledge of English due to their lesson planning together. This perception is in line with Fernandez' (2010) study indicating that microteaching lesson study deepened the preservice teachers understanding of the content and enhanced their ability to teach. Although Fernandez conducted her study for mathematics preservice teachers, the result is similar for EFL student teachers.

However, there is one student disagreeing that planning helped deepening the knowledge of English, whereas another one choosing to be neutral. Their reason is that they rarely had the lesson planning with their group members. Therefore, the activity of collaborative lesson planning might not bring them any benefit in term of deepening their knowledge of English.

In perceiving the observation of their group member teaching, most of the EFL student teachers (67%) agree and 28% strongly agree that it helped them think more deeply about their own teaching. This is due to that they can learn from their peers' mistakes during the teaching and so enable them to teach better. In addition, they can see their peers' problem in teaching and try to find solution for it. Some student teachers explained that observing their peer teaching made them more open-minded and get ideas to find teaching techniques that they will be able to use for their own teaching. One student teacher found out that the observation helped her to see the students' response which improved her later teaching. Through observation phase in microteaching lesson study, the student teachers gain abilities in doing analysis and reflection on shared experience (Fernandez and Molina, 2006).

During observing the teaching of their group member, the student teachers were required to give assessment and feedback. Their concern for their group member's feelings might influence their assessment and feedback. Most of the student teachers either agree or neutral in perceiving such phenomenon, while 6% strongly agree, and the

rest 6% disagree. The student teachers who agreed with the influence of their concern on the assessment and feedback given to their peer stated that it was such a hard thing to assess their friends. The relationship they have with their peers made them difficult to give honest opinions about their peer teaching. On the other hand, the student teachers who were neutral in this case perceived that they assessed and gave feedback based on what they saw in reality. One student teacher disagreeing that his concern influencing his assessment for his peer wrote that he was not afraid of giving assessment and feedback. This implies that the other student teachers might be afraid of giving honest assessment and feedback to their peers. The fear might come from their reluctance to have conflict with their group member if she or he can not accept the assessment and feedback given.

However, the fear mentioned above is not supported by the fact that the EFL student teachers can not accept their peers' honest assessment and feedback on their teaching. This is shown in the result of the student teachers' perception on the statement that feedback from their group member helped them understand their teaching strengths and areas for improvement. All of the student teachers either agree (67%) or strongly agree (33%) with that statement. They find that the feedback from their peers help them to learn more, especially to identify their weaknesses and mistakes during teaching. Moreover, it provides them with suggestions for their improvement in teaching. One student explained that the feedback even motivated her to be better in her teaching practice.

Dealing with lecturer input, the role of the lecturer in microteaching lesson study is the same as that of an outside advisor in lesson study. Outside advisor usually specializes in one content area. The job of the outside advisor is to provide ongoing professional development and advice for the schools doing lesson study (Fernandez and Yoshida, 2004). In microteaching lesson study, thus, the lecturer will give input concerning the design and the content of the lesson. This input can be given specifically in the phase of reflecting after teaching and observing phases.

Most of the EFL student teachers perceive the role of the lecturer during microteaching lesson study in giving input as positive and helpful. In designing the lesson plan, the input from lecturer is viewed as helping the student teachers. They state that the input are useful for them to decide what techniques or methods they will implement in their teaching, or the media they will use. In addition, the input functions as a correction for the lesson plan they were designing. One student teacher perceives the input from the lecturer as the solution if she and her group members disagree on particular matters. In other words, the student teachers prefer to take their lecturer's opinion rather than their own opinions as they trust in the lecturer's expertise on the matters.

The same result is also indicated on the majority of the student teachers who agree (56%) that the input from the microteaching lesson study lecturer is helpful in understanding the content of their lesson. Some other student teachers (28%) strongly agree with the statement, whereas the rest 33% of them choose to be neutral in perceiving it. None of the student teachers either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. This fact reveals that the student teachers still hold the view that their lecturer is one of the sources for their knowledge of English. They rely on their lecturer's input as their lecturer is seen as the expertise in English.

Most of the student teachers (67%) feel that they need more input from their microteaching lesson study lecturer during the reflection phase after they complete their teaching practice. They state that they need more input to improve their teaching practice performance as they might still find the lack in their teaching practice. Some other student teachers wrote that they learn more from the input given by their lecturer. The rest 33%

student teachers perceive the more input from the microteaching lesson study lecturer during the reflection phase as neutral. They prefer not to give any comment about it.

In viewing microteaching lesson study benefits, the majority of the EFL student teachers either agree or strongly agree that microteaching lesson study gives them benefits in term of their teaching ability. 84% student teachers see that microteaching lesson study help them learning teaching strategies that will be useful when they teach in secondary school. They learn those teaching strategies not only from their own teaching practice performance, but also from observing their peers' teaching practice. Furthermore, the discussion and sharing with their group members during the lesson planning and reflecting phases result in ideas for teaching strategies that they might be able to apply on their teaching out of the microteaching course.

The other benefit of microteaching lesson study that the student teachers gain is that it deepened their ability to anticipate student responses to English questions and tasks. Most of the student teachers (78%) either agree or strongly agree with this statement. As the student teachers design their lesson plan, they also make anticipated student response in their lesson plan. The aim is for the student teachers to focus on student learning as well as to anticipate how the students will respond to their teaching. The student teachers found this as enhancing their ability because they can also find solution to anticipate the problem they might encounter during the teaching learning process. Similar to the principle in lesson study, microteaching lesson study also emphasizes student learning. Teaching is seen as "a series of activities of inquiry around student learning" which "is not a one-way and didactic path, but a two-way integration of student ideas and content exploration meaningfully facilitated by teachers, an endeavor that can be extremely challenging" (Murata, 2011: 4).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the result of this study indicate that the EFL student teachers perceive microteaching lesson study positively. In other words, most student teachers feel that microteaching lesson study benefits them in terms of acquiring the knowledge of teaching and the knowledge of English as well as the ability of teaching and anticipating student response.

Moreover, the collaborative nature of microteaching lesson study shown in its phases of lesson planning, observing, and reflecting enable the EFL student teachers to take those benefits mentioned above. By sharing and discussing together with their group members, the student teachers not only share ideas and knowledge, but help improving one another's ability also.

The role of the lecturer in microteaching lesson study is perceived as significant by the EFL student teachers. Functioning similarly as an outside advisor in lesson study, the lecturer provides input to the student teachers in designing their lesson plan. Furthermore, the lecturer input helps the student teachers make their decision of teaching practice and broaden their knowledge both about teaching and English.

As this study revealed the positive perceptions of the EFL student teachers on microteaching lesson study, it is in need for lecturers or teacher educators to design microteaching lesson study that enables the lecturer to be able to participate in every discussing phase of microteaching lesson study, i.e. research lesson planning and reflecting. The lecturer participation together with the input given will not only motivate the EFL student teachers, but also will help them in developing their research lesson and English topic as well as will foster their collaborative experience.

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