The Micro Skill of Conducting Variability by Student Teachers Attending a Preparatory Course for Teaching Practice Program

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Abstract

Educating student teachers to become exciting and dynamic teachers requires intensive practice to focus on the micro-skill components. To create exciting and dynamic teachers, student teachers need to improve their skill of variability. There are three types of skill variation: variation in the teacher's manner and style, variations in the media and materials of instructions, and interaction and activity variation. The variation in the teacher's manner includes voice, gesture, pausing, eye contact, movement, and verbal marker. While for the variation in media and material of instruction, there are visual, aural, and tactile variations. Teachers can change the interaction pattern with the students for interaction and activity variation. This paper focused on analyzing the student teachers' performance in teaching practice classes in conducting variation in teacher's manner and style. The class consisted of 20 students preparing for teaching in Senior High School. All their performance was video recorded. Then this recording was analyzed using the component of skill of variability. At the end of the practice session, students reflected on their practice in class. This way, student teachers prepare themselves to become teachers aware of making interesting classroom situations.

Keywords: Micro Skill, Skill of Making Variability, Student Teachers, Preparatory Course, Teaching Practice Program

Abstrak

Mendidik mahasiswa calon guru menjadi guru yang menarik dan dinamis memerlukan latihan yang intensif dengan menitikberatkan pada komponen keterampilan mikro. Untuk menciptakan guru yang menarik dan dinamis, guru siswa perlu meningkatkan keterampilan variabilitas mereka. Ada tiga jenis variasi keterampilan: variasi cara dan gaya guru, variasi media dan bahan ajar, dan variasi interaksi dan aktivitas. Variasi sikap guru meliputi suara, isyarat, jeda, kontak mata, gerakan, dan penanda verbal. Sedangkan untuk variasi media dan bahan ajar terdapat variasi visual, aural, dan taktil. Guru dapat mengubah pola interaksi dengan siswa untuk interaksi dan variasi aktivitas. Makalah ini berfokus pada analisis kinerja calon guru di kelas praktik mengajar dalam melakukan variasi sikap dan gaya guru. Kelas tersebut terdiri dari 20 siswa yang sedang mempersiapkan diri untuk mengajar di SMA. Semua penampilan mereka direkam dengan video. Kemudian rekaman ini dianalisis menggunakan komponen keterampilan variabilitas. Di akhir sesi praktik, siswa merefleksikan praktik mereka di kelas. Dengan cara ini, calon guru mempersiapkan diri menjadi guru yang sadar membuat situasi kelas yang menarik.

Kata Kunci: Keterampilan Mikro, Ketrampilan Membuat Variabilitas, Guru Murid, Kursus Persiapan, Praktek Mengajar Program

INTRODUCTION

Qualities of good teachers, Harmer stated that good teachers could give exciting classes, provide explicit and well-staged instruction, and make variety within a secure setting. (1998:6). Based on that qualities, the primary attention on preparing student teachers will be on making them

enjoyable and dynamic teachers. This goal will require a long practice process at the campus and experience in actual or real classes.

To make good teachers, teachers training colleges will prepare their student teachers through some courses to learn how to teach and become good teachers. Microteaching is the'/;. preparatory course for students interested in teaching at high school. It prepares them to practice in class. At the end of every student's performance, there will be students' reflections and comments from the lecturer and the peer as the observers. Microteaching as a subject name got different name such PPL1, and Magang 1, and it is caused by the curriculum changes. The difference is only in the credit, but the core is the same. Right now, the preparatory course for teaching is named Microteaching. This course objective is to change the teaching behavior or the behavior potential in specified types of classroom situations, and it tends to facilitate the achievement of specified objectives.

Microteaching has been employed as a technique to provide a scled-down teaching context where training is reduced in scope, done for a short period of time (usually 10-15 minutes), normally limited to one skill or lesson aspect at a time (such as teaching vocabulary, or doing on ly the pre - reading tasks), and the learners being usually fellow trainee (He&Yan, 2011; Roberts, 1998;Singh, 2010). In the course, student teachers which are also called as trainees usually go through four stages in the microteaching process. In the first stage is the "preparation" stage in which the trainee receives theoretical information about the skills to practiced and the method(s) to be used. In the "teach" stage, the trainee is expected to put into practice what s/he has planned and the other trainee play the role of learners. At this stage, the microteaching can be videotaped. The third stage is the "critique" stage in which the trainee's microteaching is reviewed, analyed, and discussed in a constructive manner. Finally, in the "re-teach" stage, the trainee re-teaches the microteaching, not necessarily immediately, applying those points given in the previous stage (He&Yan, 2011; Wahba, 1999; Wallace, 1991)

In this research, microteaching is a scaled-down teaching situation in which the students teach a small group of fellow trainees a brief lesson. The teaching practice last longer than it is suggested in the above theory. Student teachers conduct a practice from twenty to thirty minutes, and it intended to make the class just as close as the real time of teaching at school. The small group may consist of fifteen to twenty peers. Their peers observe them. The lessons are usually video recorded, viewed, discussed, and analyzed by the lecturer and peers. The activities are videotaped so that the students can reflect on their teaching performance. Indiati *et al.* (2011:2) stated some considerations on the importance of attending microteaching as the required course for student teachers. The benefits are as follows:

1. Students will be able to conduct more complicated teaching activities in class if they have acquired the essential teaching skill

2. In microteaching class, the students will be put in a limited classroom situation so that the attention can be focused on the specific teaching components

3. By attending microteaching classes, the students also learn how to behave in the classroom

4. A more systematic, objective, and detailed observation can be done in the microteaching class. The result of the observation can be used as feedback for the students as the novice teachers

To evaluate the student teachers progress during the course, there is an instrument used in this microteaching course. G.A. Brown (1978) stated that student teachers trained by using the microteaching instrument are expected to have more technical teaching skills to overcome day-to-day classroom teaching problems. Based on the Sidney micro skills developed by Turney, C, *et al* (1983) the instrument used for microteaching basically evaluate the student teachers' skill in conducting reinforcement, basic questioning, variability, explaining, introductory procedures and closure , and advanced questioning.

This paper describes the classroom observation result and the video recording of the semester six students' performance in microteaching course. From this observation and video recording, their performance were analyzed on the skill of conducting variability.

Skill in Conducting Variability

The skill of making variation is one of the eighth teaching skills. This skill is crucial since variation will bring different situations in class. The objectives of conducting variation in class, as stated by Turney (1983: 114), are:

1. To arouse and sustain students' attention to relevant aspects of teaching-learning
2. To provide opportunities for the functioning of curiosity motivation through the exploration and investigation of new situations
3. To promote learning by involving students in a variety of appealing and purposeful experiences at varied cognitive levels
4. To build positive attitudes towards teachers, school, and subject through the presentation of an animated and enthusiastic teaching style and a rich classroom learning environment.

Teachers must vary teaching style, teaching media and materials, and teacher-pupil interaction and activity to make exciting teaching. These variations in teaching are called the skill of *variability* (Turney *et al. l*: 1983). The purpose of conducting skill variation in the classroom is to attract the students' attention. This paper focuses on the skill of making a variation in manner and style. The skill of variability in a teacher's manner and style focuses on some ways: voice variations, focusing, pausing, eye contact, gesturing, and movement. (Turney, 1983:122-123).

While according to Shiva (2012:21), there are seven skill components for making variations:

1. Movements

Making movements from one place to another with some purpose. (For writing on the blackboard; conducting an experiment; explaining the chart or model; paying attention to the pupil responding to some question)

2. Gestures

These include head, hand, and body movements to arrest attention, express emotions, or indicate shapes, sizes, and movements. All these acts are performed to become more expressive.

3. Change in Speech Pattern

When the teacher wants to show emotions or emphasize a particular point, sudden or radical changes in tone, volume, or speed of the verbal presentation are brought out, and the change in the speech pattern makes the pupils attentive and creates interest in the lesson.

4. Change in interaction Style

When two or more persons communicate their views with each other, they are said to be interacting. In the classroom, the following three styles of interaction are possible

5. Focusing

6. Pausing

7. Oral-Visual Switching

Based on those categories, the analysis in this research focused on the voice variation or change in speech pattern, focusing, pausing, eye contact, gesturing, and movement.

1. Voice variation

Teachers' voices in class will give a different tone to the class situation, so it is crucial to have the student teachers practice their voice variation. Harmer (2001: 17) stated, "How the teacher speaks and what his or her voice sounds like have a crucial impact on classes. Teachers need to vary their voice quality and the volume, but they depend on the type of the lesson and the type of activity".

2. Focusing

Turney *et al. l* (1983: 116) state that to focus attention on significant or critical aspects, the teacher may use 'verbal markers of importance' often accompanied by gestural focusing. Using verbal markers is very helpful to capture students' attention when teaching. The students can use some verbal markers as follows: "Are you ready?", "Listen to me, please.", "Do you get it?", "Is it clear?", "Are you with me?", "Please be attractive," "Is there any problem?", "Look at the whiteboard."

3. Pausing

Student teachers also need to learn how to conduct pausing in their teaching activity for some reasons. Pausing can be done to capture the students' attention by changing the stimulus from one noise to quiet or from one activity to inactivity. It can break teaching into quickly processed units, marking the end of one teaching *segment* and preparing the pupils for the next.

4. Eye contact

Some student teachers still lack self-confidence. They are afraid of making eye contact with the students. In this class, the student teachers will have practices to have eye contact with their peers in teaching activities. Turney et al. l (1983: 116) stated, "When talking to or interacting with pupils, the teacher should gaze around the classroom, meeting pupils' eyes, establishing a positive relationship and avoiding impersonality." According to Sumardiyani and Indiati (2011:

27), a teacher must communicate well with all students. Moreover, eye contact may convey information and respond to an answer or comment.

5. Gesturing

Variation of gestures as follows facial expression, hand, head, and body movements are very important in teacher-pupils communication.

6. Movement

In the first practice, almost all the student teachers make only a few movements, even none when teaching. Some of them are standing still in the same position or sitting till the end of the lesson and ignoring the importance of moving in class. In microteaching class, they must earn to practice moving in classes. The movement is to check students' work, get closer to students reading the text during the teaching and learning process, or walk from the front to the middle or behind the classroom.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive method to identify the student teachers' skills in conducting variation. The data were collected from 20 students' performances in microteaching course, which were video-recorded. The recordings were analyzed for the components in conducting variability using the following checklist.

Table 1. Skill observation of making a variation

Variation	For usage	Comment
1. Voice: pitch, volume, speed		
2. Focusing		
3. Pausing		
4. Eye contact		
5. Gesture		
6. Movement		

(Turney, 1983 122-123)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part discusses how the student teachers conduct variations in Microteaching Class. The analysis is presented regarding the skill of making variations used by 20 student teachers in the Microteaching course.

Based on the observation conducted in Microteaching course, it can be summarized that the students' teachers conducted the skill of variability in manner or style by making variations of voice such as making different volumes during the lesson. They make use of different speeds when talking to the students. Sometimes the speed of talk is slower when they explain the material of the lesson. Different intonations are also noted. They made use of different intonations such as rising, falling, and sustaining. These different intonations have a great impact on the student's attention. In focusing, verbal markers are used. The student teachers also used appropriate gestures, such as saying Listen carefully, Are you with me? Can we start now? Look at this picture while pointing to the picture, Give

applause to you all while clapping your hands. Pausing can be noted when they put the interval of silence. Conducting variability is also observed in their eye contact. Eye contact includes how the teachers spread their eyes contact to all students. focused eye contact on a group of students, and focused eye contact on the teaching media. They use gestures by nodding, shaking hands, and raising eyebrows. Finger pointing/counting, and the last one is movement, such as moving around the classroom, sitting on the chair, or standing in front of the classroom.

The following table is the observation summary of 20 student teachers attending the Microteaching course- a preparatory course for teaching in high school.

Table 2. Student teacher's skill of variability

No	Variability in Manner or Style	Total Students Conducted Variability	Percentage
1.	Voice Variation	11 students	55%
	- Volume	16 students	80%
	- Speed	10 students	50%
	- Intonation	15 students	75%
2.	Focusing	15 students	75%
	- The use of verbal marker	19 students	95%
	- The use of appropriate gestures during focusing	15 students	75%
3.	Pausing	20 students	100%
4.	Eye contact	9 students	45%
5.	Gesturing	18 students	90%
	- Facial expressions	20 students	100%
	- Gestures (hand and body)	18 students	90%
6.	Movement	13 students	65%

Based on the above table, it can be concluded that the student teachers have a very low variation in voice and eye contact. The variation of gestures and pausing are no problems at all. Almost all of the student teachers conducted pausing and gestures in their teaching activities. The percentage is not high or at the average level for the variation of movement and focusing.

And the following are examples of the skill of making variations conducted by student teachers of Microteaching course

Variation in voice

The following is the example of a summary of the voice variation conducted by student no.20

Table 3. Variation in voice

Voice Variation	Comments
Volume	The volume was low in greeting the The volume was medium in explaining the lesson The volume was high in closing the lesson.
Speed	The speed of the speech was average in opening and closing the lesson. The speed was slower at some crucial points of explaining the lesson
Intonation	The intonation was falling in greeting. The intonation was normal in conducting the lesson. The intonation was rising in closing the lesson

Focusing

The following is the example of focusing conducted by student no 2

Table 4 Focusing

Focusing	Comment (Expressions used in class)
Using 'verbal markers' of importance	"Are there any problems with the last meeting?" "Give applause to your friend" "Enough?" (asked students' work) "Have you finished?" (asked students' work) "Please take a note and rewrite...." "Take a look on..." "Listen carefully" "Are you sure?"
Appropriate gestures (such as raising or pointing a finger)	Became wide-eyes ("Are you sure?") Finger pointing (Take a look on...")

Pausing

The following is the example of pausing by student no 10

Table 5. Pausing

Pausing	Comment
The student teacher purposefully inserted brief intervals of silence in the talk.	Pause was used when asking the students' condition Giving the question Giving the students time to look for the answer ("Anybody knows?") Waiting for the students to complete the task.

Eye Contact

The following is an example of how eye contact is made as the variation in a class by the student no 8.

Table 6. Eye Contact

Eye Contact	Comment
Eye contact is given to some group	Eye contact focused on the projector and some group of students.

Gesture

The examples of variation by making use of gestures which is conducted by student no 3

Table 7. Gestures

Gesture	Comment
Gestures are used to help convey meaning by : facial expression	Smiled when opening the lesson. Smiled lively and cheerfully. Laughed while saying "Is the gorilla in the picture cute?" Nodded the head ("That's right", "OK, thank you.") Turned the head to focus on a certain student who was answering the question.
gesture (hand and body)	Folded hands when opening. The finger points to the picture of the gorilla's eyes to show that his eyes show his loneliness. Put hands on the table while waiting for the students' was working.

Movement

The example of variation by making movement which is conducted by student no 14

Table 8. Movement

Movement	Comment
Student teachers moved to different spaces to serve different purposes	Stood in front of the class in doing opening, and closing. Moved to the students' seats while distributing hands out. Walked or moved to the back rows seat Moved around to check the students' work. Walked nearby to the student when posing questions. I stood beside the student who was answering.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the classroom observation during the student teachers' performances in teaching practice, it can be concluded that they are aware of the importance of making a variation in the classroom activities. It can be seen from the observation result that variations were made in almost all their performances and for all types of variation in manner and style - voice variations, focusing, pausing, eye contact, gesturing, and movement.

In some parts of the skill variability or skill of making a variation, the result is not satisfactory and it can be seen from the percentage of the student teachers who were able to make the variation. The variations with low percentages are on the skill of voice variation and eye contact. Based on the student teacher's reflection after the practice in class, it can be found that the main reason for those results was because the student teachers were still lack of confidence and nervous.

Finally, it can be concluded that student teachers need intensive practice to improve their skill of making variations so that self-confidence and nervousness will not be the problem or obstacle for them to conduct skill of making a variation in class.

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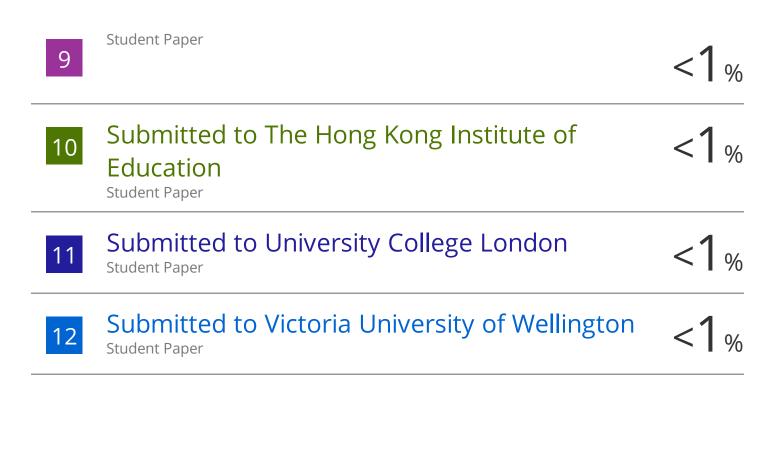Turney, C. *et al* (1983). Sydney Micro Skills (Series 1). Redeveloped. Sydney University Press.

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