

ADJUSTING LANGUAGE LEVEL IN TEACHER-TALK IN ELT MICROTEACHINGS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO DISTANCE EDUCATION TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language teacher education requires microteaching practices carried out by teacher trainees for learning and assessment purposes. During microteachings, teacher trainees operate many teaching skills concurrently. Interlanguage compatible teacher-talk in the target language is essential for the production of student talk at elementary and intermediate levels in English language teaching (ELT). It is a demanding task for ELT trainees to adjust the language level according to the given interlanguage level. Nevertheless, during the microteaching sessions observed by the author and other teacher trainers attributed whose impressions are disclosed below, critical unintended flaws in teacher-talk adjustment in reference to the predetermined interlanguage levels were observed. Such a mismatch causes critical problems in the comprehension of the lesson. The recognition and discussion of the matter and the search for ways of teaching at the appropriate level play a big part in foreign language teacher education.

In the first part of the study, the pre-service teaching performance from this perspective is being explored in a two-part questionnaire administered subsequent to language-skills microteachings carried out by the trainees attending the third year of college with maximum attention on language level adjustment. A parallel questionnaire was administered to the teacher trainers who observed and evaluated similar microteachings. The second part of the study argues the skill of language level adjustment from the perspective of distant foreign language teacher training. It suggests a set of pre, while, and, post microteaching adjustment strategies primarily for distance training.

Keywords: English language teacher training (ELT), microteaching, teacher trainees, teacher-talk, language level adjustment, distance teacher training

INTRODUCTION

Foreign Language teaching methodology courses conducted in English language teaching departments of educational faculties necessitate microteachings carried out by teacher trainees. Such presentations delivered in peer groups are their first teaching experiences. The methodology courses mentioned here are offered at the third year of teacher training college. These initial teaching activities provide learning by "doing and discovering" and to a degree "trial and error."

The feedback they receive enables them to revise the teaching strategies they employ in order to create better lesson plans and presentations. Imperfections may arise in many parts of a microteaching. Among them, according to the classroom observations of the researcher, giving instructions, presenting the content material, eliciting, concept checking, classroom management, and adjusting the language level may be the major ones.

The trainees should bear in mind that in communicative language teaching the talk in the classroom should be performed by the learners. The teacher is a mediator who initiates various types of talk related with language activities. Interaction should include every pupil in whole class talk, pair talk, and group talk.

The low profile teacher should sometimes be a generator of ideas, a counselor, a paraphraser, and a summarizer. There is always complicated informative and instructive teacher-talk to be delivered to operate the components of the lesson. Teacher-talk manages discourse for almost all the sections required by the orchestration of the lesson. The use of communicative approach in ELT is a prerequisite for the current discussion. If structural methods such as GTM (Grammar-Translation Method) are employed for teaching, teacher-talk and nearly all class interaction will be in native language.

TEACHER-TALK, INTERLANGUAGE, AND SIMPLIFICATION

The course of training must offer discussions for their clarification before the microteaching sessions start. The following fundamental arguments look into this matter from the perspective of the speech produced by the teacher and its contribution to classroom communication. Although it is a problematic issue, the language level adjustment in microteachings carried out by ELT teacher trainees is an infrequently discussed matter. Sing and Richards (2009) argue that the management of ecology of learning is a challenging task in language teacher education.

The term interlanguage introduced by Selinker in 1972 (cited in Corder 1981) can be briefly explained as the language of the language learner. The interlanguage that occurs and constantly develops in a foreign language class necessitates careful planning and production of teacher-talk. Nunan and Lamb (1996) indicate that classroom talk is a critical tool for teaching and learning, and learning process is managed through it. It is critical to classroom explanations, instructions, grouping, disciplining and feedback. Wright (1987) points out that language instruction is a social activity which includes interpersonal relations organized, maintained and evaluated through communication. Kumaravadivelu (2012) states that although language planners analyze and determine language needs, teachers have to gear teaching to meet the actual needs, motivation and autonomy of any given group of students. Widdowson (1990) asserts that professional qualification determines teacher's authority. In other words, not authority but knowledge shapes teaching. Teacher attempts to make transaction possible within the given objectives. Coulthard (1977) states that verbal classroom communication is obviously distinct from random conversation in that its major goal is to teach and that such a difference is reproduced in the structure of the discourse. Jones (1980) claims that in teacher-talk the teacher tends to initiate and be the centre, and possibly it is essential for a constructive atmosphere to be maintained. However, the talk takes off if the students can exchange views without too much support from the teacher as moderator.

The teacher sometimes rephrases what they say to make the meaning heard by the class, or to ensure that meaning is clearly expressed.

The instructor plays a big part in better organizing and expanding students' utterances or opinions. He can give examples; direct the talk to other learners by asking various questions as well as adding his own opinions, experiences, or information. Wright (2005) states that teachers contribute to classroom talk significantly with their explanations, lectures, instructions, stories, spontaneous summaries, and more. Simplification in ELT is one of the basic tools used in the verbal and written discourse produced by the teacher. It also exists in all types of language materials such as textbooks, workbooks, and teaching aids. Widdowson (1979) describes simplification as an operation on usage in which simplifier reformulates the original communication into the scope of the student's transitional communicative competence.

It is a paraphrasing using the semantic equivalents that exist in the student's interlanguage. Corder (1981) thinks that learner's language must be described in its own terms. Every learner is the native speaker of his interlanguage, and this language undergoes revision and changes constantly.

Krashen (1978) points out that being a native speaker of a language is an inadequate condition for being a teacher of it unless teacher monologues are controlled for syntax and vocabulary. Jones (1980) says that talk in the classroom may take many forms, and learners should be exposed to as large a variety as possible. Widdowson (1990) discusses the restricted process of learning and states that learner autonomy is only possible within the limits set by the instructor. Corder (1981) discusses the possibility of presenting some data prematurely and as a result it cannot create part of the intake. Sometimes it may not be readily obtainable when it is rationally necessary. He states that for better results there must be correlation between the nature of the data offered and the state of the learners' grammar. Cook (1991) describes language teaching classroom as distinctive since it is designed for language learning to occur.

In this vein, the learner treatment, the method of instruction employed, the language heard, and the environment in which learning takes place affect language learning success. Krashen (as cited in Brown 1994, p. 280) defines comprehensible input in language acquisition as "i+1" that is "what learners know plus one." It functions better if the affective filter is low, specifically, when there is low anxiety. This explanation is very popular in ELT. Littlewood (1984) approaches strictly graded and controlled input with skepticism and appraises the views that consider the input which is not strictly graded but comprehensible, interesting, and relevant. Littlewood (1984) states that instructors should encourage students to compensate the gaps in their foreign language competence by employing communication strategies even if their speech sounds "foreign." Communicative effectiveness should have priority over formal accuracy. Distant English teacher education is globally an inevitable means of teacher training when the demand for teachers is considered. Bıyık (2007) explains that high standard of quality has been maintained in the Distance English Language Teacher Training Program conducted by Anadolu University without abandoning the essentials of foreign language teacher training. Prescott and Robinson (1993) report that Open University teacher education courses in UK have been considered as relevant and useful for teaching and educational administration. McGrath (1995) and Haworth and Parker (1995), besides many others, argue that (cited in Hall and Knox 2009) in order to develop classroom skills, face to face contact is required for teacher trainees.

Moreover, distance teacher trainees face logistical difficulties in conducting observed practicums. Perratton, as early as 1981, discussed that the medium of teaching is of secondary importance when compared with relevance and intelligibility of course materials and the learners' motivation (as cited in Hansson and Wennö, 2005, p.290).

METHOD

Aim of the Study

This study attempts to analyze foreign language level adjustment in teacher-talk in ELT microteachings performed by ELT teacher trainees from the perspective of class communication, learners' comprehension, and foreign language instruction. It was carried out in Ankara, Turkey where English is taught as a foreign language. Finally, it attempts to suggest some strategies to be used for language level adjustment in teacher-talk by trainees in distance teacher education.

Problem

During microteaching sessions, the author observed that a good number of trainees had unintended language adjustment problems. The mismatch between the designed interlanguage level and the teacher talk produced was observed frequently. In a few cases, the trainees lost the track of the preplanned level entirely and delivered the lesson without any simplification. Despite the declarations of the trainees disclosed in the parts below, the observations of the great majority of the attributed trainers also indicate that language mismatch observed in teacher-talk in ELT microteaching practices is a real issue to be dealt by teacher education programs.

According to the authors' experiences, observations, and the findings discussed below, it is assumed in this discussion that it may unintentionally be problematic for many trainees to micro-teach at a predetermined level mainly due to high communicative competence and performance of the peer group. Even if the trainees' teacher-talk contains unintentionally higher levels of English than the target level, they mostly get good response from their peers, who act as learners within the artificial environment of microteachings. Taking this as the point of departure, this research focuses on the problems that roughly represent the unintended imperfections regarding the language level in teacher-talk in ELT microteachings. This particular problem should be observed, discussed and solved in ELT methodology courses to avoid habit formation. In other words, the language level mismatch in teacher-talk should not become chronic. The problem is double fold when foreign language teacher trainees in distant education are considered. Mostly they do not have access to a microteaching based methodology program. Distance English teacher training varies in different geographies. Some programs offer distance training whereas some offer semi-distance training, but in many cases language teaching methodology courses are in the distance program. From the perspective of the research issue in this study, the trainees who do not microteach all language skills individually, as discussed in the first part of the paper which argue on-campus training, and in integrated fashion need alternative ways to develop the skill of language adjustment in teacher talk.

The Subject Group

The subject group consists of 43 teacher trainees who take ELT methodology courses in their third year at college where they perform several microteachings. After in-class discussions, they plan and present vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening microteachings in their classes.

They are given twenty-five minutes for each presentation. The microteachings may include lesson components such as warm-up, contextualization, skills activities, elicitation, clarification, concept checking, controlled practice, free practice and other drills depending on the language skill taught.

The levels of the language used in the microteaching activities mentioned here varied in different stages of intermediate level. The trainees who acted as learners pretended as if they were intermediate level students of the given stage in the lesson plan.

The microteachings were observed and evaluated by the researcher in a semester. The questionnaire about "language adjustment in teacher-talk" displayed in details below was implemented to all the trainees instructed by the researcher.

All the trainees in the subject group presented microteachings and acted as learners during all the microteachings conducted. In other words, they all taught and were taught in the microteaching experience described here. This enabled them to look into this issue from the learners' and teachers' perspectives. The English levels of the trainee group were ranging from upper-intermediate to advanced. They were asked to assess their own performances on the basis of types of the problems and their causes. The trainees' ideas about their future teaching in real classes were also reflected on. The subject group conveyed their opinions through a questionnaire displayed below. Assessment of other trainees' performances was out of the scope of the research.

The Research

Initially, the trainees attended methodology classes instructed by the researcher where they practiced teaching reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary. They were instructed to carefully watch the teacher-talk they produced.

The aspect of teacher-talk was treated with clinical care. That is, the importance of watching the language level in microteaching practices was overtly marked and reminded by the trainer on all occasions, not only in the feedback provided.

The microteachings were planned and carried out by the trainees using the principles discussed in methodology sessions. Throughout the microteachings, strengths and weaknesses, various problems, and problematic parts were observed, and these points constituted the frame of the questionnaires.

The questionnaires displayed below were prepared by the researcher as a result of these observations that lasted three months and previous professional experiences. The researcher observed the subject group when they were attending the methodology courses in their third year at college.

They were assigned these tasks in the beginning of the courses in order to have enough time for preparation and rehearsals. The microteachings constituted the applied part of the courses.

In foreign language teacher education, the microteaching experiences in methodology courses are the peak level of the applied class work where strengths and weaknesses are evaluated. They are conducted for learning and assessment purposes which promote perfection of teaching simulations.

Roughly, the observation and assessment criteria are; a proper written lesson plan, the existence of the required ELT lesson components in the microteaching, consistency of their order with the communicative language teaching, appropriateness of their presentation, mediation of the subject, conveying the subject language matter, facilitation of the classroom interaction and communication, checking the learner response, classroom management, and specifically managing appropriate teacher talk.

These are not integrated-skills microteachings. They teach only one skill at a time but all trainees teach all skills.

Secondly, a questionnaire of thirty-one items was implemented to ELT department trainees. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is about teacher-talk they produced during their own microteachings.

The second part is about the teacher-talk they would produce in their actual teaching after they graduate and start teaching. This prospective part was included in the class discussions and in the questionnaire for trainees in order to conjecture about the potential effects of the effort discussed in this study. Teacher education, in a sense, simulates future and prepares them for the future teaching experiences by offering insight into actual teaching in real classes.

Subsequently, a questionnaire about "teacher-talk in microteachings" was administered to the teacher trainers who teach the methodology courses in the ELT department. All the trainers observed and evaluated microteachings of the same sort.

The first sixteen items in trainees' and trainers' questionnaires are the same. As a result, the responses from the trainees and the trainers were analyzed and evaluated comparatively since the first sixteen questions in both groups are the same. The argument on the reflections on distant foreign language teacher training finalized the discussion.

THE TRAINEES' AND THE TRAINERS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE IN MICROTEACHINGS

The part below reports the responses to the first sixteen statements both in Questionnaire 1 for the trainees (Table 1) and Questionnaire 2 for the trainers (Table: 3). The following part of the research attempts to disclose problems experienced in the English teaching microteachings carried out by teacher trainees.

This section looks into this matter from the trainees' perspective. The statements here are about the type of problems experienced in different parts of the microteaching experience and their reasons.

The findings are explained and argued in the "Discussion of Results" section below in details.

Questionnaire 1, Part 1

Language Level Adjustment In Teacher-Talk

First Experience - The statements in this part are about the microteachings carried out by the teacher trainees in their ELT methodology course. A Likert-like scale was used for responses.

F= Frequency,

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1- In my microteachings, I always indicate the language level in the written lesson plan and attempt to keep the same level during the presentation stage.	1	2,3	4	9,3	23	53,5	15	34,9		
2- During my microteachings I have problems in adjusting the teacher-talk according to the pre-determined language level.	1	2,3	15	34,9	12	27,9	12	27,9	3	7,0
I sometimes tend to speak or use English which is lower than the required level.	3	7,0	10	23,3	12	27,9	15	34,9	3	7,0
I sometimes tend to speak or use English which is higher than the required level.	3	7,0	9	20,9	16	37,2	12	27,9	3	7,0
Simplification of my speech down to students' level is a demanding task.			2	4,7	4	9,3	20	46,5	17	39,5
I may use inconsistent level of English in the warm-up section of the lesson.	4	9,3	14	32,6	14	32,6	10	23,3	1	2,3
I have level adjustment problems when I give instructions.	6	14,0	12	27,9	6	14,0	18	41,9	1	2,3
I have level adjustment problems during the presentation of the content material.	7	16,3	12	27,9	12	27,9	12	27,9		
I have level adjustment problems during the communicative activities.	4	9,3	12	27,9	6	14,0	18	41,9	3	7,0
I have level adjustment problems when I ask questions.	5	11,6	21	48,8	6	14,0	10	23,3	1	2,3
I have level adjustment problems during wrap-up section.	5	11,6	19	44,2	12	27,9	6	14,0	1	2,3
Level adjustment problems may partly depend on my stage fright.	8	18,6	6	14,0	6	14,0	18	41,9	5	11,6
Level adjustment problems may partly depend on my being inexperienced in teaching.	1	2,3	5	11,6	6	14,0	20	46,5	11	25,6
Level adjustment problems may partly depend on high level communicative competence of my peers who are acting as learners during the microteaching.	2	4,7	6	14,0	8	18,6	16	37,2	11	25,6
Level adjustment problems may partly depend on lack of real interlanguage.			1	2,3	8	18,6	20	46,5	14	32,6
Maintaining teacher-talk consistency and stability is a demanding task during microteachings where there is no real interlanguage, and it is one of the major problems that arise in practice of this sort.	1	2,3	7	16,3	23	53,5	12	27,9		

The Trainees' Ideas about their Future Teaching in Real Classes. The part below displays the responses to the last nine statements (17-25) in Questionnaire 1 for the trainees.

This section analyzes what the trainees think that they will do in terms of teacher-talk appropriateness and stability when they start teaching after graduation. This is the post-grad projection part of the research.

The statements below attempt to remind trainees that teacher education is about preparation for the future that is, for real teaching where they will be to a certain extent on their own. Their opinions about their future performance are as valuable as their present teaching performance. From the perspective of teacher education, the author believes that status consciousness about future teaching will enable them to be cautious about such critical teaching skills during education and develop them in advance.

Questionnaire 1, Part 2

Future Projection

This part is about ELT trainees' ideas about their future teaching in real classes.

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I know I should pay special attention to adjust language level in order to express meaning clearly.							13	30,2	10	9,8
I have to remember that the interlingua will limit my students' comprehension, expressing what they think, and speaking capacity during the lesson.			5	11,6	26	60,5			2	7,9
In order to create communication in the class level I have to do a lot of simplification.			1	2,3	3	7,0	24	55,8	5	4,9
Methodologically it will not be correct to use native language due to the requirements of the content I teach.	3	7,0	5	11,6	1	2,3	15	34,9	9	4,2
The teacher and the learners should meet in the language patterns and vocabulary available in learners' interlanguage to express their thinking.	1	2,3	1	2,3	5	11,6	23	53,5	3	0,2
As a teacher I have to develop a problem solving approach in creating meaningful teacher-talk such as developing some routine semantic clues.					5	11,6	20	46,5	8	1,9
During the modification or simplification I have to keep unity and the coherence of the original discourse as well as other linguistic properties.			3	7,0	23	53,5			7	9,5
The level of the new language to be introduced should generally be "plus one."			6	14,0	19	44,2			8	1,9
In my future microteachings and actual teaching, I will always be careful with the language level modification in all parts of the lesson in order to avoid teacher- talk and interlingua mismatch.			1	2,3	17	39,5			5	8,1

The Trainers' General Opinions about Teacher-talk and Language Level Adjustment

The part below displays the responses to the last four statements (17- 20) in Questionnaire 2 for the trainers.

The table below discloses the opinions of the teacher trainees who observed similar microteachings.

The first sixteen items in trainees' and trainers' questionnaires are the same.

In this way, the details of the research problem become clearer.

They are discussed in the following part comparatively.

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1- In microteachings, trainees always indicate the language level in the written lesson plan and attempt to keep the same level during the presentation stage.	3	30,0			2	20,0	4	40,0	1	10,0
2- During microteachings trainees have problems in adjusting the teacher-talk according to the pre-determined language level.	1	10,0	2	20,0	1	10,0	3	30,0	3	30,0
3- Trainees sometimes tend to speak or use English which is lower than the required level.	2	20,0	1	10,0	3	30,0	4	40,0		
4- Trainees sometimes tend to speak or use English which is higher than the required level.			3	30,0	1	10,0	4	40,0	2	20,0
5- Simplification of speech down to students' level is a demanding task.							5	50,0	5	50,0
6- Trainees may use inconsistent level of English in the warm-up section of the lesson.					2	20,0	7	70,0	1	10,0
7- Trainees have level adjustment problems when they give instructions.			1	10,0	5	50,0			4	40,0
8- Trainees have level adjustment problems during the presentation of the content material.					1	10,0	6	60,0	3	30,0
9- Trainees have level adjustment problems during the communicative activities.					2	20,0	5	50,0	3	30,0
10- Trainees have level adjustment problems when they ask questions.					1	10,0	7	70,0	2	20,0
11- They have level adjustment problems during wrap-up section.					1	10,0	6	60,0	3	30,0
12- Level adjustment problems may partly depend on their stage fright.			3	30,0	2	20,0	3	30,0	2	20,0
13- Level adjustment problems may partly depend on their being inexperienced in teaching.			2	20,0	2	20,0	1	10,0	5	50,0
14- Level adjustment problems may partly depend on high level communicative competence of their peers who are acting as learners during the microteaching.			3	30,0	1	10,0	3	30,0	3	30,0
15- Level adjustment problems may partly depend on lack of real interlanguage.			1	10,0	3	30,0	4	40,0	2	20,0
16- Maintaining teacher-talk consistency and stability is a demanding task during microteachings where there is no real interlanguage, and it is one of the major problems that arise in practice of this sort..					2	20,0	5	50,0	3	30,0
17- Attaining "plus one" as new input in presenting the new content is a demanding task to achieve in microteachings.			1	10,0	2	20,0	3	30,0	4	40,0
18- Trainees need to know alternative ways of making teacher-talk comprehensible by all students at the given level and at all levels.							4	40,0	6	60,0
19- Language level adjustment must be one of the essential discussion topics in FLT methodology courses.							4	40,0	6	60,0
20- It is an essential teaching and evaluation item in my microteaching observation and grading system.			1	10,0	1	10,0	5	50,0	3	30,0

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this section the Likert-like scale options "Agree" and "Strongly agree" are presented altogether as "Agree" to represent positive responses when percentages are given. The options "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree" are given as "Disagree." There are 10 trainers, so any number of trainers mentioned below refers to the same percentage. As seen above, the trainees and the trainers detect significant problems and problematic parts in ELT microteachings.

Close examination of these spots will help both groups think about the weaknesses and strengths claimed in the questionnaires. When the rarity of literature about this very specific matter is considered from the viewpoint of teacher education, discussions about language adjustment analysis may lead to the improvement of teacher-talk in microteachings by creating more reception in applied linguistics.

The Microteachings Carried out by the Teacher Trainees in their ELT Methodology Course

The part below comparatively evaluates the responses to the first sixteen statements both in Questionnaire 1 for the trainees (Table 1) and Questionnaire 2 for the trainers (Table 3) and presents some implications for teacher training.

There is a disagreement between the trainers and the trainees about the determination of the language level of the microteachings presented. Although a great majority of trainees assume that they indicate the level properly and attempt to attain it during the microteaching, half of the trainers do not think so. A methodical approach to indicate the language level suitable for the intended target group and their would-be interlanguage may resolve this problem.

The trainee should clearly indicate the language level and briefly describe the language learning history of the target group in the written lesson plan for the better adjustment of the language input. At this point, the trainee should keep in mind that the instructor has to have a good sense of the class interlanguage. Even if the teacher is new in the class she or he should be familiar with the language material covered in previous years. The syllabi records and other documentation including exam papers may be examined. From the perspective of teaching management, maintaining the balance between the input and the interlanguage should be under the responsibility of all the English teachers in the department not only the English teacher of the class.

Coming back to microteachings, attempting to keep the same level during presentation stage is a complicated task, and it may take time to perfect it in pre-service training. More than half of the trainers think that the trainees experience problems in adjusting the teacher-talk according to the pre-determined language level, but almost only one-third of the trainees believe so. This finding necessitates a very careful approach to this matter during each microteaching since it constitutes the core of the research problem. Firstly, the trainees should realize that there is a big difference in the perception of this problem by both groups. The factors that create the language mismatch may partly be caused by anxiety and lack of experience. But such problems may be solved by repeated rehearsals before microteaching. The main criterion here is determining the virtual language level of the class and keeping it in mind at all times; during preparation and presentation. This can be realized by letting all the trainees in the group plan and present according to a fixed interlanguage level made clear long before the microteaching sessions. In order to teach like professional teachers, the trainee should rehearse many times during this period deliberately considering the preservation of language match. Repeated focused practice is crucial for inexperienced trainees to fine tune the dynamics of the microteaching such as the language level adjustment.

Forty percent of both the trainees and the trainers think that the trainees sometimes tend to speak or use English that is lower than the required level. There is a correlation between the findings, but there is also a big problem assumed by both groups.

The problem is the fact that the English level of teacher-talk is sometimes lower than the intended interlanguage level of the target group of students. Students in English class may underestimate the effectiveness of the activities due to such a mismatch. As for speaking or using higher level English, six trainers out of ten observe a problem whereas only 34.9 percent of trainees observe so. As a result, it is understood from the data about using lower and higher levels of English that there are level adjustment problems in microteachings. Moreover, differences of perception exist in the data concerning 'higher level of English' in the trainees and trainers parts. Most of the trainees think that they do not use English higher than the intended level whereas trainers think that they do so. The findings in these two parts are extremely important in the confirmation of the main problem discussed in this research. Most probably trainees cannot recognize the level of language they are using since they are focusing on other aspects of the lesson at the time. For pre-service teachers, it is not an easy task to operate many teaching skills concurrently. This part of the data indicates that the ability of doing many things at the same time must be rehearsed more often by the trainees in order to perform better. They should dwell on recognizing their own language level during teaching. It is likely that this may be done in a real class by persistently watching the students' response to teacher talk while teaching. According to the findings, all the trainers and 86 percent of the trainees think that simplification of teacher-talk down to students' level is a demanding task. These microteachings are the first language skills presentations of the subject group and they have many similar presentations ahead. Definitely, they have a chance to develop strategies for language level adjustment and test them in case this issue is considered as a focal methodological point.

Although this sort of language mismatch is very real, this issue is still not well recognized and sometimes neglected.

As for the performance in different parts of a microteaching, 80 percent of the trainers think that there may be problems in the warm-up section but 41.9 percent of the trainees do not think so. Differences of perception occur again. Warm-up section is the starting of the lesson; it breaks the ice, warms the class atmosphere, and signals the coming theme. For all these reasons, it is vital and should definitely be understandable in order to connect learners to the approaching lesson components. The trainee's energy is high at this stage. A good lesson planning and full concentration can solve the problems in this part. Nevertheless, since it partly contains free speech, the level can easily go out of control.

Corrective interruptions by the trainer would not be a sound approach during the microteaching. They can damage the fluency of the presentation and distort other parts of the microteaching. A control mechanism that includes preventive strategies can be formed and implemented in pre-microteaching discussions on what to do to avoid mismatch at different parts of the presentation.

If the teacher-talk development attempt is divided into three as pre, while, and post domains, a parallel checklist to be prepared specifically for the target trainee group can be used as an organizer. The items in the checklist should include the narrowed down reminders of the aspects discussed in the methodology course. These points represent both the expectations from and outcomes of the task concerning the type of microteaching assigned. Nevertheless, it may be unrealistic to utilize a single checklist for every teaching skill that affects the microteaching.

There are dozens of such considerations in teacher education. In this case, the teacher talk checklist can be used once as a model and the trainees may use it later in their job-hunting activities and actual teaching. Alternatively, a few very specific reminders can be included in a general checklist and in most cases they may be stimulating.

Instruction giving can be considered as a challenging skill for many beginning teachers in all types of classrooms due to the fact that they are the tools for activation of the learners and the tasks. In this respect, it is a teaching skill which operates on "instruct and let them start learning" basis. If they do not include all the requisites, it is impossible to start a task productively. Giving instructions are problematic according to 44.2 percent of the trainees and 4 trainers. Five trainers are undecided, and 42 percent of the trainees do not report such problems. This finding necessitates a thorough examination of the language level adjustment strategies by the trainees and the trainers because mismatch between the language used for instruction and students' interlanguage may block the task. After all, instructions include many dimensions that describe what to do, how and when to do. Giving instructions may require a short or a long discourse. Both require alternative ways to reach everyone in mixed ability and mixed intelligence classes. Oral, written, visual, and demonstrated explanations may be required for the same instruction.

Presentation of the content material may be the most strategic part of a microteaching and an actual lesson. Almost 44 percent of the trainees are not pessimistic about their performance in this part, but 90 percent of the trainers are. During microteaching activities the consistency between "content" as the teaching context and "teacher-talk" as one of the important tools for instruction must be observed. Class interlanguage is naturally the highest common denominator for both of them.

Eight out of ten trainers state that trainees have trouble with communicative activities, but almost half of the trainee group thinks so. These findings can absolutely be considered a serious warning to ELT trainees due to the large number of trainers and trainees who think that it is a problem and due to the role and importance of the activities of this sort. In order to create and maintain the social dimension of the lesson, the trainee has to produce appealing topics, information gap activities, debates, and other requirements of real-like communication. After all, they are not teaching grammar only; for the most part, they are teaching communication through group interaction in the target language. From the point of English language teacher education, all the students have to use the target language in real-like communication. Language level should not go out of control unintentionally.

In a real class, incompatible teacher-talk that may appear during hard-earned and fragile communication may not be linguistically tolerated by students and requires semantic and pragmatic restoration quite often. To offer stable teacher-talk at the required level, the trainee should never forget the target level during the lesson and always follow whether the interaction is at a mutually understandable level. There is a delicate balance between the consistency and inconsistency of language level in teacher-talk, which depends on the synchronic familiarity of the input.

In the end, the ELT instructor should be accustomed to operating many linguistic and non-linguistic systems altogether at the same time. The acute and chronic imperfections that might emerge in teacher-talk during the microteachings and their causes must be recognized and sorted out.

The whole problem can be broken down into parts, conceptualized, and argued in feedback sessions and healing practices that follow.

In teacher education, developing the skill of asking questions is crucial in terms of facilitating teaching, checking comprehension, and encouraging learner contribution and creativity. In FLT, questions personalize the lesson into every student. In communicative foreign language teaching, the questions asked during the lesson bring out the meaning created by the students. The chance of such a constructivist elicitation should not be missed as a result of problems of language mismatch in teacher-talk. Ninety percent of the trainers observe problems in asking questions, and it makes this finding significant. It is a big contradiction that only 25.6 percent of the trainees notice such a problem. This lack of agreement attracts attention. Asking questions is an indisputable part of instruction. Questions must be overt and well-leveled in order to attain communication. An unclear question may block the instruction and necessitate a lot of explanation that may well cause instructive chaos. This is partly different from a first teaching experience during practicum in a real classroom observed by the English teacher of the class. In such a setting, problems will immediately occur since the students will not be able to understand the question. In microteachings carried out in peer groups, the trainee may not recognize the language level problems that arise when questions are asked since other trainees who act as learners will understand and answer them correctly as discussed elsewhere.

For this reason, the trainees may be misled by the almost problem-free environment among peers. In order to solve this problem the trainees must predict the real comprehension difficulties due to unintended level digressions in teacher-talk and prepare a set of questions that comply with the class interlanguage level and include them in the written lesson plan. Some of these questions may not be used in the rush of the lesson but they may serve as a model for the other questions that will appear.

The management of the wrap-up section of the lesson is also a very critical issue in teacher education since summaries, last remarks and some important messages appear in this section. In a sense, it marks and binds the past, present, and future fractions of the chain of instruction. It must always be understandable by all. Nine trainers state that wrap-up section is also problematic. On the contrary, only 16.3 percent of the trainees detect problems in this part.

These conflicting findings indicate that the level adjustment in the wrap-up section of the microteaching should be examined with care. Most of the problems that emerge in this part can be eliminated by dividing the wrap-up part into two. The first part may include the pre-designed wrap-up that includes the final remarks which summarize the lesson and the use of the newly learned concepts. If this part is clearly outlined and put in writing in the lesson plan considering the appropriateness of the teacher talk, language management will be easier.

The second part which may be optional but extremely beneficial includes the very short summary of the extraordinary things that happened in the lesson which promoted learners' creativity in using the target language freely.

This part which can be appealing to students is prone to generate language mismatch due to the speech shift from relatively controlled to free. The trainee should calculatingly try to keep the teacher talk under control here.

This is a critical last-minute fraction of the presentation since it is the finale to the microteaching or its closure which also includes the praising of the students' efforts. Its consistent management accompanied by appropriate language use affects students' acquisitions and observers' impressions since it has the last-minute power to stimulate learners' cognition.

Moreover, the remarks here are easier to remember due to their compactness and class-specific significance. Briefly, division of the wrap-up section into two, as discussed above, may make the language level control more manageable.

As for the anxiety factor, 50 percent of the trainers describe stage fright as one of the causes of level adjustment disorders, and 53.5 percent of the trainees agree with them. It is clear that half of both groups observe this cause. This is not a small percentage. Stage fright may be considered as a natural feature of all initial applied academic presentations as well as microteachings. Nevertheless, trainees have to overcome stage fright in a short period of time when the number of the microteachings they will carry out is considered. This is a non-linguistic factor affecting performance. Trainees should develop their self confidence through a calm approach to the task. As discussed elsewhere, a well prepared lesson plan and repeated rehearsals may be helpful. If some trainees are displaying excessive anxiety due to various negative academic experiences, language control may unintentionally go out of control. In this case, the trainer should help them restore their self-confidence. As a conclusion, the peer group and the trainer should never ignore this non-linguistic factor.

Sixty percent of the trainers and 72.1 percent of the trainees state that being inexperienced in teaching plays an important part in level adjustment problems in teacher-talk. Twenty percent of the former group and 14 percent of the latter group do not think so. The teacher trainees may not perform like experienced teachers in early language-skills microteaching practices. At least, they are not expected to do so in the first trials. Nevertheless, they have to do their best to perform successfully. The solution lies, unsurprisingly, in being very well-prepared, mostly through repeated and well self-monitored practices. According to six trainers and 62.8 percent of trainees, the high level of communicative competence of the peer group may partly cause level adjustment problems. It can easily be observed in microteachings that other trainees who act as students always understand the language whether it is higher or lower than the intended level as discussed elsewhere. For this reason, six trainers and 79 percent of the trainees think that lack of real interlanguage may cause problems. Generally, the trainee who unintentionally speaks or uses English at an inconsistent level gets a good response.

To solve such problems, the student group should be trained not to act as if they understand everything when the level of the teacher-talk goes out of control. Eighty percent of the trainers and 81.4 percent of the trainees agree that maintaining teacher-talk consistency and stability is a demanding task during microteachings where there is no real interlanguage, and it is one of the major problems that arise in practice of this sort. These findings indicate that stability and consistency in teacher-talk is difficult to attain.

On the other hand, ups and downs in the language level may cause meaning loss, loss of mutual understanding, construction of incomplete discourse, communication gaps, weak class interaction and other instructional failure.

Supported by the similarities and disparities displayed in the rest of the data, the finding above summarizes the main discussion in this research on behalf of ELT teacher trainees as well as trainers. The items in the questionnaires and the breakdown of the findings symbolize the details of this real teacher education issue.

The Trainees' Ideas about Their Future Teaching in Real Classes

The part below evaluates the responses to the last nine statements (17-25) in Questionnaire 1 for trainees (Table 2).

The awareness discussed in this research directed subject group's attention to the notion of adjusting language level in actual teacher-talk in their future careers in order to maintain mutual understanding to create real learning. A great majority of them might remember that the interlanguage will limit their students' comprehension, expressing what they think, and speaking capacity during their future teaching. Most of them also now believe that in order to create communication in the classroom they will need to do a lot of simplification. In order to solve comprehension problems, 79.1 percent of the trainees will not code switch by using their mother tongue to repair communication. In this vein, most of them also think that the teacher and the learners should meet in the language patterns and vocabulary available in learners' interlanguage to express opinions. That is, the limited vocabulary and syntax mastered by a class until a certain time constitutes the language of that specific group of learners and it is their interlanguage. The language beyond the limits of this class-specific language is incomprehensible. For this reason, the class interlanguage is the meeting zone for the teacher and students for that time period.

A great majority think that language teachers have to develop a problem solving approach in creating meaningful teacher-talk such as developing some comprehensible routines. They believe that while doing the modification or simplification they have to maintain the unity and coherence of the original discourse as well as other linguistic properties.

According to 86.1 percent of the trainees, the level of the new language input should generally be plus-one. The plus factor itself is not very important here. This is significant, because, by thinking so, they imply that in the future they will not overload the class with incomprehensibly high level of English.

As a result, the subject group will always tend to be careful with the language level modification in all parts of the lesson in order to avoid teacher-talk and interlanguage mismatch in the future microteachings and the actual teaching.

The Trainers' General Opinions about Teacher-talk and Language Level Adjustment

The part below argues the responses to the last four statements (17- 20) in Questionnaire 2 for trainers (Table: 3). Seven trainers out of ten think that attaining "plus one" as new input in presenting the new content is a demanding task to achieve in microteachings. From the perspective of teacher education, this finding shows the importance of level adjustment awareness in teacher-talk and marks the need to include such discussions in methodology courses and its practice in microteachings. By this way, they can develop alternative ways of making teacher-talk comprehensible by all students at the given level and at all levels.

A great majority of trainers believe that language level adjustment is an essential teaching and evaluation item in the microteaching observation and grading system.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTANCE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

In distance English language teacher education, the lack of applied microteaching practices necessitates the practice and acquisition of many teaching skills autonomously. Although this is a controversial issue, the trainees definitely should consider alternative ways to compensate the acquisition of the teaching skills only available through pre-service practice based on face to face peer interaction and learning by doing and discovering.

Teacher education requires application of the subjects that are studied at all levels in college in various ways. These on-campus activities can be principally classified into four applied stages. The first stage is represented by the cognitive-energy applied by the educators and teacher trainees in lectures. The second level is the applications of the personal acquisitions in exams and projects and the educators' responses to these. The third level is the applications in microteaching practices and the feedback from the educators and the peers. The last level is the practice-teaching experience in real classes and the observers' assessments.

All these stages shape the teaching skills trainees develop. The author indeed does not intend to divide these into theoretical and applied stages. They are all applied in many respects. That is, theoretical and applied features symbiotically affect the personal acculturation of the trainee. The chunks of knowledge learned by the trainees in all parts of their teacher education always intersect or overlap. It is the same with microteachings.

They need all the professional acculturation from the very first day of college in order to accomplish microteaching tasks. From the methodological point of view, it is a demanding task to accomplish the acculturation discussed above through distance English language teacher training. As noted earlier language teaching requires establishing real-like communication in social dimensions. Distance teacher training may not offer such settings all through the training. Lack of peer and trainer feedback also is a major drawback.

If there is no chance of conducting language-skills microteachings in a distance training program, the pre-service teachers should create alternative ways to practice and test their teaching skills. There are some alternatives, the trainee can attend an on-campus course as a special student or attempt to conduct microteaching practices in a commercial language course if officially possible. There may be other practical alternatives to try personal teaching skills, otherwise the teacher training remains at theoretical level.

Finding alternative ways of microteaching is the self-directed part of the personal development effort. The English teacher trainee in distance education may get assistance from the environment she or he is living in because there are millions of English learners in all geographies. For instance, English teaching sessions can be offered to the friends at the work place. The mixed English proficiency levels of the colleagues constitute no problem because real classes also consist of mixed ability learners.

The trainee in distance education who manages to microteach as suggested above should consider that many imperfections are observed during the performance of microteachings that have an important role in teacher education. The trainee must be preemptively-warn herself or himself against possible drawbacks. The next step is detection of the problems during the presentation and their correction. The following section suggests some strategies for microteaching management. It divides the microteaching management from the perspective of teacher-talk adjustment into three parts; pre, while, and post. A detailed chart for these stages and strategies is given below.

Teacher-talk Level Adjustment Strategies for ELT Microteaching Activities
<i>Pre-microteaching</i>
Recognition and/or discussion of the potency of teacher-talk in ELT microteachings.
Attending discussions on interlanguage and simplification or reading about this subject.
Getting accustomed to operating many skills at the same time.
Watching trainer demonstrations from if available.
Watching model microteaching recordings featuring effective teacher-talk
Developing a brief checklist
Inclusion of this matter in the written lesson plan.
Conducting repeated rehearsals before the presentation.
Reminding the peers or available group of students to react like real learners.
Evaluating the rehearsals using the checklist.
<i>While-microteaching</i>
Paying utmost attention to teacher-talk appropriateness and stability.
Remembering the items in the checklist as much as possible and trying to keep the level steady at all parts.
Paying attention to the free-flowing parts of teacher-talk to avoid unintended mismatch.
Checking students' response to teacher talk.
Checking students' comprehension of instructions and questions.
Making corrections if mismatch occurs.
<i>Post-microteaching</i>
Getting feedback from peers or available group of students.
Getting feedback from the trainer, the class teacher, or the observer available.
Checking the performance using the checklist again
Determining strengths and weaknesses.
Taking action to correct the problems.

The Teacher-talk Level Adjustment Strategies for ELT Microteaching Activities above was prepared by the author for both on-campus and distance programs.

CONCLUSION

The data obtained in this research indicate that the trainees have to focus on making necessary level adjustments in teacher-talk in order to make the task as realistic and effective as possible.

The parts above display the observations and opinions of the subject trainee group and ELT teacher trainers. The differences in the findings gathered from both groups indicate that there is lack of agreement on many of the impressions examined in the research. The data definitely draws attention to a detailed academic collaboration of both groups to perfect the methodological examination and implementation of teacher-talk from the perspective under consideration.

In other words, a procedure for the production of smooth, consistent, and, interlanguage-compatible teacher-talk in microteachings may be developed in the methodology courses wherever microteaching practices are conducted.

This can be done together with the teacher trainees in a negotiated fashion in order to consider all group-specific factors. This procedure which may be utilized through a questionnaire or another suitable tool must be very brief and user-friendly considering that this is not the only skill to be operated by the trainee during the presentation.

Peer group teaching and observation is the only chance for ELT trainees to test their teaching skills at college and receive feedback. A microteaching is a teaching simulation that requires concurrent operation of many other foreign language teaching skills besides language level adjustment.

The trainee has to simultaneously operate linguistic and non-linguistic skills such as creating the context, conveying the language material, elicitation of vocabulary and grammar rules, facilitating their practice, concept checking, organizing class communication, dealing with errors, timing, classroom management, and many others. There will absolutely be some imperfections during the operation of such a complex mechanism. Microteaching activities may not be offered to the English language trainees in distance education. In this case, they may consider the strategies suggested in the previous section when practicing their language level adjustment skills in self organized practices. The applied aspect of teacher training should be created by the trainee in an autonomous way.

The suggested breakdown of developing teacher-talk appropriateness displayed in the on-campus research above highlights many aspects to be considered in experiences of this sort.

Developing the skill of adjusting language level in ELT microteaching experiences may increase the effectiveness of the trainees, the instructors, the lessons, the syllabus, and the teaching system since teachers operate the teaching system using this tool. From the perspective of teacher education, the ultimate end product in this chain relationship is students' ability to understand and speak the foreign language within the smooth syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic growth of the interlanguage due to the very fine tuned teacher-talk.

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