

EMPOWERING CLASSROOM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE PEER ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

Problems of delivering instructions have been faced by student teachers as the prospective EFL teacher candidates in many teaching practicum cases. This phenomenon has led to challenging discussions on how to cope with the problems. It also in one side brings about an awareness of the importance of empowering student teachers with good classroom English proficiency as one of the required skills that should be owned by English teacher candidates. This study reveals how Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) works for developing the Classroom English proficiency of EFL teacher candidates. Referring to the research result CPA has been proven to give significant contribution to the teacher candidates in terms of some learning experiences, i.e. (a) allowing them to perform intensive communication practice; (b) stimulating the efforts of improving the classroom English performance through the peer teaching reflections; and (c) contextualizing the instructional English expressions.

Keywords: classroom English proficiency, Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA), student teachers, peer teaching

Introduction

Communication skill is highly required by English teacher candidates since they should be able to deliver various instructions in various context of real classroom interactions. Through a good communication skill student teachers will be able to provide appropriate directions, listen to feedback and adjust the next set of instructions (Love, 2012). A good communication skill also helps student teachers conduct an interactive English Language Teaching (ELT). An interactive ELT is an English class which facilitates and encourages students to give active participation in a classroom's communicative setting as suggested by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model which conditions classroom activities to be meaningful and able to involve real communication (Richard, 2006, p. 2). In this case, a teacher has an important role as a facilitator to stimulate students to communicate actively in the class, such as putting forward questions, answering teacher's questions, giving suggestions, and presenting a learning result. As a learning

facilitator, a teacher is endorsed to give effective instruction, meanwhile as suggested by Xhemajli (2016) effective instruction can work with active students which in turn can result in an active learning. Active learning usually occurs when the class is designed in such a way that allows students to have interaction and active cooperation so that there is an intensive exposure for students to practice their speaking skill. In terms of preparing student teachers with good communication skill, empowering classroom English proficiency is then an important thing to do because it contributes to student teachers' ability to deliver effective instructions to realize interactive teaching. In addition, one of the components of teachers' ongoing learning and development is the importance of teacher preparation (Kwangsawad, 2017).

Pre-Service Program for teacher candidates conducted by English Education Department in Higher Educations should put the effort of developing classroom English proficiency in a high priority since it is a major requisite for student teachers to be

able to facilitate an interactive ELT. One of the practicum subjects in the Pre-Service Program for student teachers is micro teaching class which gives them intensive opportunities to rehearse their teaching skill. There have been various techniques suggested to be implemented in micro teaching class, more specifically in terms of empowering student teachers' classroom English proficiency. This study tries to propose an alternative technique named Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) by highlighting the contributions of the technique in assisting EFL teacher candidates to develop their proficiency of classroom English in peer teaching practices.

Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) is an oral assessment towards a peer teaching performance based on several indicators/criteria. The technique is considered effective to expose students in an interactive communication setting during the reflection session of a peer teaching. The CPA technique is applied by teacher trainer in the session of teaching reflection conducted after peer teaching performance. Regarding teaching reflection activity, it is highly recommended activity to be done in a micro teaching class since it gives student teachers chances to analyze and evaluate any information given by their colleagues which may in turn lead to better changes and improvements in ELT performance (Tice, 2004). Furthermore, the comments from peer will give significant opportunity for gaining experience (Gocer, 2016).

In micro teaching class, peer teaching practice is the main activity done by student teachers successively. Peer teaching practice allows student teachers to have a role play in a classroom setting in which each student teacher should in turns serves as a teacher practicum, an attending student and an assessor. Love (2012) points out, "peer teaching has students take on a teaching role in a school setting in order to share their knowledge with other students". Peer teaching practice should be followed up with a session of reflection in which

Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) technique is implemented. What is tried to be explored in this study is how Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) works for developing the Classroom English proficiency of EFL teacher candidates. The study is conducted to give a highlight of learning experiences which are got through by student teachers during the use of Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) in their micro teaching class. It is to find out what contributions given by the technique to the effort of improving student teacher's classroom English proficiency.

Methodology

It is a case study with qualitative research design which describes a case in micro teaching class at the English Education Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty at Universitas Muria Kudus. The study gives a highlight on the implementation of Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) in peer teaching activity in micro teaching class. CPA is an oral assessment towards a peer teaching performance based on several indicators/criteria. The indicators or criteria of the assessment in CPA include the following elements:

- a. The performance of using classroom English in opening a class and introduce the topic of learning
- b. The performance of using classroom English to deliver learning material
- c. The performance of using classroom English in engaging the learning material with context
- d. The performance of using classroom English in giving instructions
- e. The performance of using classroom English in giving feedback to the students' learning performance
- f. The performance of using classroom English in engaging students with learning activities
- g. The performance of using classroom English in giving instructions for the follow up of the learning

CPA technique is conducted in the session of peer teaching reflection in which the performing student teacher is assessed by their colleagues, serving as assessors, using the above criteria of assessment.

The procedures for conducting CPA technique are as follows:

- a. Student teachers perform peer teaching successively.
- b. While a student teacher is performing a teaching practice, an observation is done by the lecturer (pre-service teaching trainer) and 2 students serving as the assessors of the teaching practice performance.
- c. The activities in micro teaching class which include peer teaching practice, teaching reflection and CPA are recorded by using a audiovisual recording tool to support further analysis.
- d. After a teaching performance is completed, oral assessment is then given by the observers, i.e. two student teachers serving as the assessors. However, the other student teachers are also allowed to give comments, suggestions, or even criticism to their peer's performance of teaching.
- e. Final remark is then delivered by the lecturer (trainer) as the major assessor.

The above procedures of conducting CPA technique have been determined to see and explore to what extent CPA contributes to develop student teachers' classroom English proficiency.

Findings and Discussion

The study has found that Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) contributes to empower student teachers' classroom English proficiency through some learning experiences, i.e. (a) allowing student teachers to perform intensive communication practice; (b) stimulating the efforts of improving the classroom English performance through the peer teaching reflections; and (c) contextualizing the instructional English expressions. The three aspects of student's learning experiences are

highlighted qualitatively during the proceedings of micro teaching class which are realized by conducting the series of peer teaching practice as the main activities done by the student teachers. The three aspects of learning experience shows that CPA technique works well in allowing student teachers to be exposed to intensive collaborative teaching practices which in turn practically enables them to rehearse their skill of delivering good and effective instructions in a classroom setting. The core point which is addressed in the study is the process of culturalizing collaborative learning efforts that encourages a collaboration of "learning by doing" process in ELT practices as further explored in the following discussions.

Regarding the first aspect of learning experience, i.e. how CPA works in allowing student teachers to perform communication practice, it is actually reasonable since CPA is an oral model of peer teaching assessment which creates a classroom communicative setting for the student teachers. Student's motivation to practice communication skill may be internally or externally driven. The external stimulation that motivates students to practice delivering ideas and suggestions allows them naturally improve their communicative competence. Though it is possible to count on the internal drives of learning motivation, but giving assignment (learning project) is to a certain extent more effective to endorse student's learning motivation. There is a perception which says "if you want to make your students learn, make them do it by giving a task". The perception is then familiarly addressed as the technique of "task based learning" or "project based learning". These learning model has been proven to be effectively create the awareness of autonomous learning and collaborative learning (if it is done in group). Since communication skill is the basic requisite for student teachers which scaffolds their instructional skill, then CPA is found to be an alternative technique to

develop student teachers' communicative competence.

Discussing the second aspect of learning experience, it is the way CPA works to stimulate the efforts of improving student teachers' classroom English performance through the activity of peer teaching reflection, it cannot be separated from the perspective that classroom English is the medium of instruction in ELT that should be well mastered by a teacher candidates. In this case, giving a broad opportunity for student teachers to improve their classroom English proficiency has found its effectiveness since opportunities always give a learning challenge for students. Most passive students prefer not to give ideas or comments voluntarily in the class but they can actually be encouraged by giving them opportunities to do so through a classroom setting which gives less psychological gap to them. CPA practically helps the passive students to participate in a classroom discussion which is designed with appropriate seating arrangement such as the U-shaped seating arrangement or circled seating arrangement. CPA enables student teachers to practice their classroom English skill since they are given a task to do a role play, i.e. serving as the performing teacher, attending students and the assessor. When playing the role as the performing teacher, they practice using classroom English. In the moment of playing the role as the assessors, they are given a broad opportunity to give comments, suggestions or even criticism to their colleagues who perform a teaching practice. They will naturally practice evaluating the use of classroom English by the performing colleagues. It is in practice a model of peer review or peer evaluation which allows them to do corrections for better performance of classroom English without a psychological gap hindering since they work with their own colleagues.

Finally, the third aspect of learning experience, that is the work of CPA to contextualize the student teachers' instructional English expressions. The seven

criteria of assessment as mentioned above shows how CPA technique directs the assessment of to what extent student teachers engage the learning context with the appropriate expressions in giving instructions. CPA leads the assessors to score the relevance of the learning topic with the expressions of classroom English used during the teaching practice. It consequently also helps student teachers enrich vocabularies which are close to appropriate context of the learning material. For example, when they teach narrative text they should be familiar with the expressions commonly used in telling stories, legends, and fables. In giving the oral assessment, the assessing students also get the chances to enrich their vocabularies since they have to suggest appropriate vocabularies when they found their colleagues making mistakes in expressing words, phrases or sentences. CPA brings about a collaborative efforts to the student teachers to work together in form of a reflective assessment to adjust the english expressions with the context of the learning material.

Conclusion

The result of the study shows that Communicative Peer Assessment (CPA) has been empirically found to give significant contribution to student teachers in terms of three (3) aspects of learning experiences, i.e. (a) allowing student teachers to perform intensive communication practice; (b) stimulating the efforts of improving the classroom English performance through the peer teaching reflections; and (c) contextualizing the instructional English expressions. It reveals that collaborative learning gives a meaningful support to the students to improve their achievement through a peer review or peer evaluation learning model.

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