

## Formative Microteaching in Teaching and Foreign Language Anxiety

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**ABSTRACT** The aim of this study was to reveal the effects of video-taped micro teaching, if used as a tool for formative assessment, on preservice language teachers' both teaching and foreign language anxiety. By the use of Student Teacher Anxiety Scale (STAS) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS), the data were collected from the non-native preservice language teachers in a state university. The results showed that these preservice teachers felt a high teaching and foreign language anxiety before and during their micro teaching sessions. However, after formative use of video-taped micro teaching, preservice language teachers' teaching and foreign language anxiety lowered to a moderate level. The study suggests that micro teaching, one of the most effective ways in teacher training, can be a more effective way if it is assessed formatively.

### INTRODUCTION

Each student in a preservice teacher training programme in higher education is expected to practice their teaching skills. Before going to a primary or secondary school for practice, preservice language teachers' first step is generally to complete some micro teaching sessions with their classmates and lecturer in their higher education institutions, and these sessions can be considered to be the first teaching experience of those preservice teachers.

One of the problems faced during the micro teaching sessions is teaching anxiety. Although most preservice teachers in different fields encounter teaching anxiety, which can also be called as "trait anxiety" (Cheung 2011: 395), this problem doubles when it comes to non-native EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher training programmes. This anxiety emerges not only because these preservice teachers lack of enough formal classroom teaching experience, but at the same time English is not their mother tongue (Gregersen et al. 2014; Yoon 2012). There are several studies related to students' teaching practices and their teaching anxiety (Ngidiand Sibaya 2003). In his study, Yoon (2012: 1099) states that "assuming that ESL teachers keep a high anxiety level during the class, it may cause much more problems related with such affective factors as confidence, motivation, self-esteem, and risk-taking ability, which ends up with losing a great interest, confidence towards language teaching".

### Literature Review

Microteaching, one of the most effective ways in training undergraduate teacher nominees, is a technique used in pre-service teacher training for some decades. Invented in the mid-1960s at Stanford University by Dr. Dwight Allen, micro-teaching has been used with success as a way to find out what has worked well, which aspects have fallen short, and what needs to be done to enhance teaching technique. He and Yan (2011: 291) state that "the theoretical basis for microteaching was initially related to the psychological theory of behaviorism, and subsequently it was used more as a technique for professional reflection than as a technique for shaping behavior".

Microteaching is a fast, resourceful, and fun way to help prospective teachers for a strong beginning and reflection tool for their teaching ways, and the aim is to give future teachers confidence, support, and feedback by giving them chances to try out among friends a short slice of what they plan to do with their future students (Arsal 2014). Fernandez (2005: 37) explains in his study that "microteaching engages prospective teachers in a collaborative and recursive process of lesson development, implementation, analysis, and revision". Also, as a tool for teacher preparation, microteaching shapes teaching behaviors and skills in small group settings aided by video-recordings. This technique is helpful to offer students both oral and written feedback from their classmates and the lecturer on their

micro-teaching sessions. In terms of comments from other students as feedback; peer collaboration is an important component of microteaching. Nierstheimer et al. (2000) demonstrated that when peers observed each other's teaching and subsequently discussed the experience during a course in literacy instruction; they demonstrated increases in confidence in their teaching abilities.

In literature, micro teaching technique has long been used not only in-service teacher trainings (Bell 2002), but it is also found to be especially beneficial for preservice teacher training. There have been many studies on this technique that proved to have positive effects on preservice teacher education programs. In their study, Karçkay and Sanli (2009), for example, aimed to find out the effects of micro teaching on preservice teacher trainees' competency levels. Early childhood teaching department students participated in micro teachings sessions (15-20 minutes), discussions, group works. They found a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of teacher competency levels of preservice teachers attending the micro teaching practice. This study also pointed out that the micro teaching activity may affect early childhood preservice teachers' teacher competency levels positively.

Another research showed that micro teaching helped the prospective mathematics teachers further understand and begin teaching practices; also, it offered a relevant context to improve their subject matter knowledge of high school mathematics topics (Fenandez 2005). In his study, Golightly (2010) sought for the effects of micro teaching on teacher trainees' planning, design and implementation of learner-centered instruction in the classroom. He found that the trainees were more inclined to plan, design and implement learner-centered instruction. Another finding in the study (Golightly 2010: 241) was that micro teaching also "gave students the opportunity to make thoughtful judgments on their own and fellow-students' lesson presentations and help them to develop their teaching abilities. In addition, the results of this study indicated that microteaching assists trainees to bridge the important gap between theory and practice".

If videotaped, the micro teaching session may help the students assess and reflect on their own teaching experience and yield discussions with their classmates and the lecturer. Videotaped micro teaching may have further benefits for En-

glish as a Foreign Language (EFL) preservice teacher's education. For instance, with the help of watching their own videos, students not only improve their speaking and acting skills on the stage in English, but they also master adjusting their language level for the students in different grades, which is an important aspect if you are teaching English as a foreign language as in Turkey. Amobi (2005) stated in his study that video-taped micro teaching is useful in that it is a meaningful learning experience for preservice teachers and it helps them to self-correct specific elements in their emerging teaching skills. This development and adjustment process is possible through both self-reflections after watching their own micro teachings and feedback from their peers -as peer assessment- or friends and the lecturer. According to Wu and Kao (2008), peer assessment and feedback are adequately reliable and valid, and their effects were as good as or better and more informative than teacher assessments and feedback. Moreover, peer assessment has shown positive formative effects on student achievement and attitudes (Buyukkarci 2010) when peers offer comments to their fellow students.

The studies mentioned above show that micro teaching, by means of videotaping, can be used as a tool for enhancing student learning, which is the main aim of formative assessment (assessment for learning). Shepard (2000) links formative assessment with the constructivist movement which suggests that learning is an active process, building on previous knowledge, experience, skills, and interests. Due to the fact that formative assessment is not used for grading student learning, it aims to foster student learning (Threlfall 2005). According to Black and Wiliam (1998) three of the main headings for formative assessment practices are: self and peer assessment, and feedback.

If videotaped, micro teaching not only offers the students the chance to reflect on their own teaching experience (self-assessment), but it also gives the students the chance to get immediate verbal/written feedback and comments from their classmates (peer assessment) and the lecturer. As said by McLoughlin and Luca (2004: 630): "peer assessment involves individuals deciding on what value each of their colleagues has contributed to a process or project. Self-assessment refers to people being involved in making judgments about their own learning and progress,

which contributes to the development of autonomous, responsible and reflective individuals”.

There have been many studies on (video-taped) micro teaching (Kpanja 2001; Lee and Woo 2006) and formative assessment (Black and William 1998; Hancock 1994; Shepherd 2005; Stiggins 2007). However, there are very few, if any, studies examining the effects of video-taped micro teaching, as a tool of formative assessment, on preservice non-native EFL teachers' teaching and foreign language anxiety. Although there seems to be a controversy between the theories of micro teaching (behaviorism) and formative assessment (constructivism), it is intended in this study to use behaviorist theory (video-taped micro teaching) to create a constructivist learning environment (formative assessment).

### Aim of the Study

The current study is designed to examine the possible effects of videotaped micro teaching, when used as a tool for formative assessment, on non-native preservice EFL teachers' general teaching anxiety and foreign language anxiety in the classroom. In order to reveal these effects after videotaped micro teaching experience, these research questions were formulated:

1. Does formative assessment of video-taped micro teaching sessions have any effect on pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety?
2. Does formative assessment of video-taped micro teaching sessions have any effect on pre-service teachers' foreign language anxiety?

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Participants of the study were twenty one preservice teachers in their third year of ELT (English Language Teaching) B.A. program in Foreign Language Education Department at a state university in Turkey. The participants were referred as “preservice teachers and student teachers” interchangeably in the text. Four participants were male and the rest, seventeen, were female. The average age of the participants was twenty one. All participants of this study were majoring at ELT department in 2012-2013 academic years, and they were taking “Teaching Language Skills I” course in fall semester. The participating preservice teachers had not made any videotaped

micro teaching activity before the application. The participants volunteered to participate in the study. The sampling was done in accordance with *volunteer sampling* that is a type of non-probability sampling design (Cohen et al. 2007).

### Data Collection Tools

Planned as a quasi-experimental research, the study employed a mixed methods design that used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. As Bryman (2008: 606) states: “the technical version of qualitative and quantitative research essentially views the two strategies as compatible. As a result, mixed-method research becomes both feasible and desirable.” Therefore, this study employed quantitative research tools to get an overview of the participants' perceptions in relation to their teaching and foreign language anxiety in the classroom and qualitative research tools to illustrate the effects of the formative micro teaching sessions in more detail.

The first tool used to gather quantitative data was the modified form of *Student Teacher Anxiety Scale (STAS)*, which was originally used by Hart (1987). It is an instrument to measure preservice teachers' anxiety during the teaching practice. The analysis showed that this scale has a high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .88). The modified form of the scale included 26 items placed on a 5-scale from “always” to “never”. Nbidi and Sibaya's work (2003) was the basis of the framework of this study: “The highest possible score on this scale is  $26 \times 5 = 130$  and the lowest possible score is  $26 \times 0 = 0$ . This continuum 0–130 was arbitrarily divided into five categories namely: 0–25 indicating *very low anxiety*, 26–50 *low anxiety*, 51–75 *moderate anxiety*, 76–100 *high anxiety*, and 101–130 *very high anxiety*. Thus, the respondent's summated score was classified accordingly into one of the three categories” (p. 19). This procedure yielded data to fulfill this study's aim.

The second tool for quantitative data was the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS)*. This scale was originally developed by Horwitz (1983). However, the adapted form of this scale (Yoon 2012) was used in the current study for the fulfillment of the aim of this study. The analysis showed that this scale has a high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .87). The adapted form consisted of 24 items all of which were placed

on a 6-point likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The highest possible score on this scale is  $24 \times 6 = 144$  and the lowest possible score is  $24 \times 0 = 0$ . As in STAS, this continuum 0–144 was also arbitrarily divided into five categories namely: 0–30 indicating *very low foreign language classroom anxiety*, 31–60 *low foreign language classroom anxiety* and 61–90 *moderate foreign language classroom anxiety*, 91–120 *high foreign language classroom anxiety*, and 121–144 *very high foreign language classroom anxiety*. Thus, the respondent’s summated score was classified accordingly into one of the three categories.

The qualitative data were collected by the use of lecturer observations and reflective writing assignment about preservice teachers’ video-taped micro teaching sessions and in-class discussions with their classmates and the lecturer. This assignment was to be prepared by the preservice teachers by answering three main reflective questions:

- ♦ What are the effects of self-assessment that you did after watching your own micro teaching session on your personal and professional development?
- ♦ What are the effects of peer assessment that your friends did after watching your micro teaching session on your personal and professional development?
- ♦ What are the effects of written and verbal feedback that you got from your instructor after your micro teaching session on your personal and professional development?

### **Instructional Procedures**

The video-taped micro teaching procedure lasted fourteen weeks (Fall Semester, 2012). In each week, the students had four class hours for the course (Teaching Language Skills I), and the two of class hours were completed on Wednesday, and the other two on Thursday. During the first two weeks of the course, the preservice EFL teachers were informed about the concept of micro teaching, different age groups (young, adolescent, and adult language learners) in terms of their linguistic and psychological features, learner styles, the roles of a language teacher while teaching English. Then the students were explained what was expected in their individual micro teaching experiences. In order not to increase the student teachers’ anxiety as this would be their first

teaching experience in front of a classroom and would be recorded, they were told that they would be free to choose their topic (mostly focusing on teaching some grammatical structures, prepositions, etc.), their students (in terms of age and language level), their teaching approaches (which were based on their knowledge they learned in “Approaches to ELT 1-2 courses last year), and the materials to be used during teaching process. Before the micro teaching sessions began, the students completed STAS and FLCAS.

A class hour was 45 minutes, and the students were told that their micro teaching sessions were expected to be 15-25 minutes and be in English all the time. The rest of the class hour was used for peer assessment and lecturer comments, which were at least 15-20 minutes for discussion. They were expected to create a communicative classroom environment as much as possible, but they could use different approaches for different age groups. Besides, each student had to prepare a basic lesson plan including the topic, the age/language level of the students, aim of the lesson, timing for each activity, materials, etc. After micro teaching sessions, other students were required to fill in a *micro teaching grading rubric* to assess their friend on the stage, which included some main headings such as: knowledge of content area, organization and clarity of presentation, interaction, individual style. Besides, each teaching session was evaluated verbally by both other preservice teachers and the lecturer just after the session. Also, the written rubrics filled by other student teachers and the lecturer were given to that day’s preservice teacher.

All preservice teachers finished their first micro teachings at the end of eight weeks including the first two weeks of the semester. Before the second micro teaching sessions began, all the students were given the recordings of their own micro teaching session. Then, each student was expected to complete another teaching session. Considering their first sessions in the light of the verbal/written comments of their peers and lecturer and the videos of their teaching sessions, they had to choose another topic for teaching and prepare a lesson plan. At the end of 14 weeks, all the preservice teachers completed two micro teaching sessions, and they were asked to fill in STAS and FLCAS again. Lastly, they completed the written assignment based on the questions given to them.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the data are presented in relation to each research question as follows. First, the findings from the preservice language teachers' scales (STAS and FLCAS) are summarized. These are then compared to the qualitative evidence which was collected independently—from student teachers' written assignments. Mean scores were computed for pre- and post-test results for the whole sample. Paired-samples t-test was employed to ascertain the confidence that may be held in this data. The findings were summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: STAS pre- and post-test results**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pre-test	21	83.80	14.61	20	5.15	.000
Post-test	21	64.38	14.29			

- *Do formative assessment of video-taped micro teaching sessions have any effect on pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety?*

Table 1 shows the mean scores of STAS. Parallel with other studies (Cheung and Hui 2011; Nigidi and Sibaya 2003), one of the findings is that preservice teachers felt high teaching anxiety before their micro teachings. The pre-test mean ( $X=83.80$ ) indicates that preservice teachers had a *high teaching anxiety* before their first micro teaching experiences. However, their post-test mean ( $X=64.38$ ) showed a certain decrease after formative evaluation of their video-taped micro teaching sessions, which means that they had a *moderate teaching anxiety* in the end. This decrease in teaching anxiety means showed a statistically significant decrease ( $p=.000$ ).

The qualitative data collected from preservice teachers reflective written assignments and lecturer observations were consistent with this picture. Information from lecturer clearly indicated a belief among preservice teachers that the formative assessment of video-taped micro teaching sessions brought considerable benefits in terms of student teachers' self-perceptions. The lecturer typically referred to them being *more confident, more comfortable in teaching the topic and discussing their views and more positive*.

The idea of being more confident was often present in the comments in the questions (the effect of self/peer assessment, and lecturer feedback) of the written assignments, frequently ex-

pressed in terms of preservice teachers' taking greater ownership of their work. One preservice teacher explained the difference between the first and second micro teaching experience as:

*T1: ...in my first micro teaching, I saw the difficulties of my job; I had so many mistakes in my teaching. One of them was that I was very excited, and I stopped and could not speak at first. I could not remember what I would say...but in the second time, I could direct the class well, and I could use the time well. In addition, I explained some important points on board...*

Another point in the written assignments was that their voice was not enough to be heard in a classroom, not answering students' questions—due to having high anxiety:

*T2: I was very excited. I should overcome my anxiety. My voice was sometimes low. I could not answer some of the student questions...*

Another preservice teacher explains why she could not handle the sequence of the lesson:

*T3: after my first teaching some of my friends' comments were about lack of connection between my warm up and rest of the lesson plan. They were right; I could not handle the sequence of the lesson because of my anxiety. I forgot what I wanted to do...but in my second teaching my anxiety level was lower, and I could remember what I would do...*

As several student teachers did, one also commented on feedback received from the lecturer about their voice and classroom management:

*T4: Instructor commented about my rate of voice. Sometimes it was too low to hear. Another comment was that I always stood up in front of the class, and did not move much. In my second teaching, my voice was easily heard, and I moved more often in the classroom, which helped me not to lose class control...*

From such statements, it can clearly be pointed out that there was an increasing sense of belief in one's own competence. Moreover, there was almost total agreement that student teachers' experiences of formative assessment techniques after micro teaching sessions had made them more positive about their work, which certainly yielded a less teaching anxiety.

- *Do formative assessment of video-taped micro teaching sessions have any effect on pre-service teachers' foreign language anxiety?*

FLCAS scores were showed in Table 2. While the preservice teachers showed a *high foreign language anxiety* in their means in the pre-test ( $X=96.70$ ), their mean in the post-test ( $X=80.05$ ) showed a high decrease after the formative application, which shows that they had a *moderate foreign language anxiety* in the end. This decrease in preservice students' foreign language anxiety showed a statistically significant difference ( $p=.000$ ).

**Table 2: FLCAS pre- and post-test results**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pre-test	20	96.70	19.48	19	5.30	.000
Post-test	20	80.05	16.53			

The qualitative data collected from preservice teachers were also in parallel with the data from FLCAS. In their written assignments, most of them mentioned about the language mistakes in their speeches during teaching. One of the preservice teachers explains his pronunciation and grammar problems in her first micro teaching as:

*T5: ...during my teaching, I made grammar and pronunciation mistakes because of trying to speak fast. Then I realized that when I tried to speak slowly, I corrected some of my grammar mistakes...*

Although many students explained their English speaking anxiety as a non-native speaker in different ways, some of them noticeably wrote what they felt while they had to teach in English as:

*T7: at first, I was very nervous. When I spoke English, I have worried about making mistakes. Sometimes I hesitated to speak English. Also my heart beat faster. My voice was heard hardly.... When I made a mistake while speaking, I became more nervous...*

Similar to the findings of Nierstheimer, Hopkins, Dillon, and Schmitt (2000), after evaluating their own videos, their peers' assessments, they wrote that they realized what they lack and have to develop in their English speaking abilities as future teachers of English. One student teacher states that after watching her micro teaching she had the chance to restructure her teaching and language speaking pace:

*T6: ...thanks to my video, I observed my mistakes (such as not giving appropriate instructions, not using the board effectively, and not*

*giving the students enough time to write), and I tried to speak slowly, and teach more effectively...*

Another one similarly states that:

*T1: ...when my friends observed me as outsiders, they said so many things about me. But they helped me in many ways for being a successful English teacher in the future. When they made comments on my teaching, I asked myself "am I really making such mistakes in my speaking English?" Both their comments and my own micro teaching video help me realize my pronunciation and grammar mistakes I did during my teaching...*

As the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data indicates, preservice teachers had a high teaching and foreign language anxiety before their micro teachings. As found in Karckay and Sanli's study (2009), after micro teaching sessions the student teachers' anxiety levels showed a statistically significant decrease. The statements in the written assignments supported this positive decrease in their teaching and foreign language anxiety.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find out the effects of video-taped micro teaching, when used as a tool for formative assessment, on non-native preservice language teachers' teaching and foreign language anxiety. One of the results is that preservice teacher felt high teaching anxiety before their micro teachings, and these video-taped sessions, if used formatively, were found to decrease their teaching anxiety to a moderate level of anxiety. Although student teachers felt such effects of teaching anxiety as *very low voice in class, forgetting what to say and do, etc.*, formative assessment of their video-taped micro teaching sessions helped them lower their teaching anxiety and such anxiety-related behaviors' in the classroom.

Another finding of this research is that although the preservice teachers felt a high foreign language anxiety before and during micro teaching sessions as they are not native speakers of English, this anxiety level decreased to a moderate level after formative mode of assessment. The student teachers in this current study did not feel confident and felt anxiety about speaking and teaching in English at the beginning of the semester. As found in data analyses,

most of them made a lot of pronunciation and grammar mistakes, which are really unexpected as they have been learning English more than 8 years. But watching and evaluating their own micro teachings and doing self-assessment based on these videos, their peers' assessment, and lecturer's written and verbal feedback had a significant and positive effect on their foreign language anxiety, and therefore, this kind use and assessment of video-taped micro teaching lessened grammar, pronunciation and other language mistakes caused by foreign language anxiety.

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