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Are Pre-service English Teachers' Perceptions Reliable?: A Credibility Gap between the Objective and Subjective Sides of Perception^{*}

Hyunjeong Nam (Associate Professor, Dong-A University)

I. Introduction

Providing English learners with high-quality education has long been an important issue in Korea. In order for the quality teaching to be guaranteed, training of pre-service teachers is seen as an essential prerequisite.

The education of pre-service English teachers should not be limited to theoretical knowledge of teaching methodology since their ideas of 'good teaching' needs to be materialized through practice. In this regard, microteaching may serve a significant role in a pre-service teacher training program. Previous research has suggested the importance of pre-service teachers' microteaching experience not only in their teaching performance (e.g., Chang & Jeon, 2015) but further in their sense

^{*} This work was supported by Dong-A university research fund.

of self-efficacy (Arsal, 2015).

It should be noted that simple practices of microteaching cannot guarantee the improvement of pre-service teachers' teaching, and thus careful evaluation with meaningful feedback may be critical. The evaluation in this regard should go beyond just correcting the pre-service teachers' shortcomings in their microteaching but further to include developing the ability to identify 'good teaching' not only for their own teaching but also for others. Regarding this, various attempts have been made to find a more effective way such as providing immediate evaluation on the spot (Subramaniam, 2006), promoting self-reflection through reflective journals (Kim & Yi, 2010; Paek, 2009) or video-recording (S. Lee, 2017), and providing videos of examples of good teaching practices (Hwang, 2018).

Previous research has enlightened pre-service English teachers' understanding of teaching and evaluation (e.g., Yi, 2017; Zhang, 1995). However, questions may arise regarding the reliability of pre-service teachers' perceptions of their practice and as to whether these perceptions reflect their subjective preferences rather than objective judgements. For example, it is possible that certain criteria of evaluation or a particular type of feedback may be perceived by pre-service teachers as 'fitting' because of convenience or being less demanding. Any disparity between their self perception and when they are asked to make objective judgements from a third-person point of view should call for careful considerations regarding the direction that the teacher trainers should follow. To this end the study aims to investigate a credibility gap between pre-service English teachers' subjective perception from the student point of view and when it is judged objectively from the perspective of a third person. The research questions the present study seeks to answer are as follows.

1. Is there any gap between pre-service English teachers' subjective perceptions and their objective judgements of feedback types¹)?

2. Is there any gap between pre-service English teachers' subjective perceptions

and their objective judgements of evaluation criteria²)?

II. Literature Review

2.1. Microteaching

Previous research concerning pre-service English teachers' microteaching has mainly focused on the effect it has on their own teaching. For example, studies have investigated the effect of microteaching by comparing pre- and post-experience of microteaching (e.g., Chang & Jeon, 2015). Further, the effect of microteaching seems to provide a lens through which the pre-service teachers sense their self-efficacy (Arsal, 2015).

In particular, 'teacher talk' in microteaching has received significant attention by many researchers. H. J. Kim (2010) analyzed thirty two pre-service teachers' teacher talk. Among the seven types of interaction identified in her analysis, 'repetitions' and 'comprehension checks' were the most frequently observed in their microteaching. Similar analysis of pre-service teachers' interaction during micro-teaching was found in Rha (2010) suggesting that 'asking questions' was frequently used in the teacher talk.

Teacher talk in microteaching further concerns pre-service teachers' English proficiency (I. O. Kim, 2007; J. A. Lee, 2018, Rha, 2015). The analysis of Choe (2015) suggests that higher English proficiency of pre-service teachers leads to higher quantity of teacher talk during micro-teaching. H. J. Kim (2010) also observed the differences of English proficiency in teacher talk, indicating that reciprocal understanding between teachers and their students was attempted more by

¹⁾ Feedback types are self-reflection, self-evaluation through video observation, peer-evaluation, a professor's evaluation.

²⁾ e.g., teaching strategies & techniques, teacher's English skills, teacher's eye contact or gesture.

the pre-service teachers with higher proficiency than lower proficiency ones. In addition to pre-service teachers' English proficiency, their anxiety about teaching in English affects the characteristics of teacher talk (e.g., H. J. Kim, 2009, 2010)

The analysis of teacher talk in microteaching does not seem to be limited to the identification of patterns or differences for the purpose of research. As Choe (2015) found that pre-service teachers' own analysis of their teacher talks during microteaching yielded positive effects on their improvement of teaching. In this vein, the importance of evaluation of microteaching and feedback seems far reaching.

2.2. Evaluation of Microteaching

In order for pre-service English teachers to implement high quality teaching, the ability to identify what can be described as the characteristics of 'good teaching' should be developed through the teaching evaluation. Acknowledging that their professors' modeling may not suffice to acquire the artistry of good teaching, microteaching may provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to develop the teaching evaluation skills not only for their peers' teaching but also for their own.

Effective ways of teaching evaluation have been discussed in research in addition to various suggestions for its effectiveness. In particular, feedback for micro-teaching has received significant attention (e.g., Chang, 2008; Jung, 2015; Kim & Park, 2010). For example, Subramaniam (2006) suggested that feedback is effective when it is provided on the spot. Paek (2009) insisted that pre-service teachers' teaching journals can be an effective way of their own evaluation in order to foster their reflective teaching (Kim & Yi, 2010). S. Lee (2017) recommended video-recorded microteaching for the pre-service teachers' own evaluation. Hwang (2018) further suggested presenting videos of good teaching examples to student teachers. In particular, Paek's (2008) findings seem noteworthy in that the stimulated-recall interviews in which the pre-service teachers evaluated their teaching through their video-recorded microteaching drew three times more rigorous

evaluation than reflective journals. Nevertheless, the pre-service teachers' evaluation in the study appeared to have been based mainly on their emotions rather than impartial and objective appraisals to identify issues during their microteaching (e.g., Jung, 2015). In this regard, there is a need for a third-person objective point of view.

2.3. Providing Feedback on Microteaching

While the importance of feedback has been widely acknowledged, the channels of feedback and effective ways of giving feedback seem controversial. Many researchers have compared feedback from professors, peers, pre-service teachers themselves. For example, Yi and Kim (2011) found that the pre-service teachers in their study evaluated most stringently when they self-evaluated but most generously when they did for their peers. Y. M. Kim (2018) also observed more generous evaluation from peer feedback than their professors. There are some researchers who are in favor of peer evaluation (Park & Oh, 2012; Y. M. Kim, 2018); however concerns about peer evaluation have been raised (e.g., Jung, 2015; Kim & Yi, 2013; Zhang, 1995) such that student teachers may not consider the peer evaluation reliable. Therefore, training for objective teaching evaluation should be beneficial to pre-service teachers (Butler & Lee, 2010; Jung, 2015).

Feedback from professors has also been suggested as the most effective channel of teaching evaluation. For example, in a study of Kim and Yi (2013) pre-service teachers perceived their professors' evaluation to be most effective. Jung (2015) also observed similar pre-service teachers' preference for their professors' feedback. His findings are interesting in that the pre-service teachers preferred to receive the professors' feedback via e-mail rather than in person so as to keep it anonymous and confidential. In addition, they preferred one way and passive feedback from professors rather than other ways for fear of inducing self-correction. This implies that pre-service teachers seem to prefer the less demanding way of feedback. As such, the consensus regarding the effective ways and channels of teaching evaluation has not been reached. It should be noted in this regard that many studies have been based on pre-service teachers' perception (e.g., Jung, 2015; Kim & Yi, 2013; Yi, 2017; Zhang, 1995) which in turn can be based on their convenience and personal preference. As such, the findings may not be illuminating enough for the educators to benefit from in teacher training programs. Thus, the present study aims to investigate any credibility gap between pre-service teachers' subjective perception and their objective judgments.

III. Method

3.1. Participants

A total of thirty-six university students (male=16, female=20) participated in the study. They were English majors who were in an English Teaching Methodology course in their fourth year. The class met twice a week and each lesson lasted for 75 minutes. Since the class was designed for the pre-service teachers to learn teaching methodology and practice teaching through microteaching, the classroom was specially designed for various group work and communicative activities to take place. The textbook that the class used was 'How to teach English' (Harmer, 2007). All of the pre-service teachers were given a chance to practice microteaching three times during the semester. Each microteaching was followed by group discussion for evaluation and feedback from both peers and the presenting teachers themselves. Since the class was conducted in English including lecture, discussion, class activities, and the microteaching, the student teachers were at or above an intermediate level of English proficiency³).

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Thirty five participants were at an intermediate level and one participant was at an advance level according to their self-evaluation.

3.2. Materials and Procedure

A two-page-long questionnaire including two sections was deployed in the study. The first section concerned effective feedback types (self-reflection, self-evaluation through video observation, peer-evaluation, a professor's evaluation) based on previous research (Jung, 2015; Kim & Yi, 2013). The second section explored criteria of teaching evaluation (e.g., teaching strategies & techniques, teacher's English skills, teacher's eye contact or gesture, which was adopted and revised from Yim, 2017).

In order to investigate any gap between the pre-service teachers' subjective perception and objective judgement, the questionnaire was run twice on the same day at the end of the semester. First, the participants were asked to express their personal opinions (e.g., "When I evaluate an English teaching, 'teacher's interaction with students' is important") and second, they were required to judge each item in a third-person objective viewpoint with expertise (e.g., "When I evaluate an English teaching as an education expert, 'teacher's interaction with students' is important"). The participants expressed the extent of their perceptions based on a five-point Likert scale for each question. There was no time constraint and it was handled with the guarantee of anonymity.

Since the mean inter-item correlation is more appropriate for short scales with fewer than ten items as Briggs and Cheek (1986) suggested, the inter-item correlation of .2 within the optimal range (.2 to .4) was yielded for the first section (feedback types). The study has acceptable internal consistency of the scales with the Cronbach alpha coefficient .8 for the second section (criteria of teaching evaluation).

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

First, all of the 36 participants' responses were manually scored and organized

in Microsoft Excel (2010). Second, to compare the ranks of the effectiveness of the feedback types in the first and second survey, non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (SPSS 25) was used. Third, the same test was repeated to compare ranks of the importance of each criteria of teaching evaluation in the first and second survey.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Gap between Objective and Subjective Sides of Perception regarding Feedback Types

The types of feedback on microteaching investigated in the study were self-reflection (Type 1), self-evaluation through video observation (Type 2), peer-evaluation (Type 3), and professor's evaluation (Type 4). The first survey inquired the pre-service teachers' perception of the feedback types while the second session queried their third-person objective viewpoints.

Es de cherre	N	1 st Test M SD		2nd Test	
Feedback types		Μ	SD	М	SD
Type 1- Self-reflection	36	3.56	.88	3.39	.99
Type 2- Self-evaluation through video observation		2.42	1.20	3.83	.85
Type 3- Peer-evaluation		3.92	.94	3.75	1.00
Type 4- Professor's evaluation		4.33	.54	4.42	.65

Table 1. The pre-service teachers' subjective perception and objective judgement: Feedback types

Table 1 shows the pre-service teachers' perception of the feedback types in the 1st survey and their objective judgement in the 2nd survey. In the 1st survey, the type No. 4 'professor's evaluation' was the most perceived to be good while the type No. 2 'self-evaluation through video observation' was perceived to be the least.

In the 2nd test, the type No. 4 'professor's evaluation' was the most while the type No. 1 'self-reflection' was perceived of as the least beneficial. The finding that the type 'professor's evaluation' was most acknowledged both in the 1st and the 2nd survey is in line with Kim and Yi (2013) and Jung (2015) who observed pre-service teachers' preference for their professors' evaluation. A notable finding in the present study is that the type 'self-evaluation through video observation' which was the least acknowledged in the 1st survey was judged to be important in the 2nd survey.

Table 2. A gap between subjective and objective perception						
	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2		
	(Type 1)	(Type 2)	(Type 3)	(Type 4)		
Z	70 ^b	-4.05 ^c	77 ^b	63°		
Sig (2-tailed)	.49	$.00^{*}$.44	.53		

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a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on positive ranks

c. Based on negative ranks

Table 2 shows the difference between the two different viewpoints (subjective perception vs. objective judgment). A Whilcoxon Signed Rank Test revealed a statistically significant difference in the type No.2 'self-evaluation through video observation', z=-4.05, p<.001. The results indicate an increase in the type No. 2 from their subjective perception in the 1st survey (average rank of 7.33) to their objective judgment in the 2nd survey (average rank of 14.83). This suggests that the type No.2 became more acknowledged in a third-person viewpoint.

The existence of a gap of the feedback type between the 1st and the 2nd survey may call for an explanation. In the 1st survey the pre-service teachers may have considered the type 'self-evaluation through video observation' taxing or even painful. Reluctance to perform this demanding extra work may have resulted in low acknowledgement in the 1st survey. However, in the second test that investigated their third-person objective judgement, the participants may have felt detached and free from any burdensome work and thus were able to disinterestedly judge its

importance. Considering that the effectiveness of self-reflection through video-recorded microteaching was confirmed in Paek (2008), teacher trainers' attempts to reflect the pre-service teachers' subjective perception as shown in the 1st survey would not be beneficial. As such, the gap leads to a need for closer examination of pre-service teachers' perception.

4.2. The Gap between Objective and Subjective Sides of Perception regarding Teaching Evaluation Criteria

Table 3.	The	pre-service	teachers'	subjective	perception	and	objective	judgement:
			Teachir	ng evaluatio	on criteria			

Evaluation criteria		1st Test		2nd Test	
		Μ	SD	М	SD
No.1-Teaching strategies & techniques	36	3.86	.83	4.06	.67
No. 2-Teacher's English skills	36	3.56	.91	4.11	.85
No. 3-Timing	36	3.22	.96	3.64	.93
No. 4-Appropriacy for the students' level		4.03	.85	4.28	.88
No. 5-Teacher's tone of voice, speed, loudness		4.11	.75	4.19	.92
No. 6-Teacher's eye contact or gesture	36	3.92	.87	4.06	.89
No. 7-Teacher's interaction with students	36	4.22	.68	4.34	.76
No. 8-Teacher's preparedness	36	3.94	.86	4.28	.70

Table 3 shows the pre-service teachers' subjective perception and objective judgement over the importance of teaching evaluation criteria. They are 'teaching strategies & techniques' (No.1), 'teacher's English skills' (No.2), 'timing (eg., the time the teacher spends on each activity)' (No.3), 'appropriacy for the students' level' (No.4), 'teacher's tone of voice, speed, loudness' (No.5), 'teacher's eye contact or gesture' (No.6), 'teacher's interaction with students' (No.7), and 'teacher's preparedness (e.g, whether the teacher fully practiced the teacher talk and sounded natural)' (No.8). In the 1st test, the pre-service teachers perceived 'teacher's interaction with students' (No.7) the most important and 'timing' (No.3) to be the least important. In the 2nd test from the third-person point of view with expertise,

they judged both 'appropriacy for the students' level' (No.4) and 'teacher's preparedness' (No.8) the most and 'timing' (No.3) to be the least important. Compared with the 1st test which probed the pre-service teachers' opinions, in the 2nd test requiring a third-person objective point of view, the importance of 'appropriacy for the students' level' and 'teacher's preparedness' were more acknowledged.

A closer look into the classroom atmosphere may aid explaining these findings. The English Teaching Methodology class in which the pre-service teachers practiced the microteaching was the least conventional both in teaching methods and in classroom configuration. The classroom which was called 'Cooperative Classroom' was built specially for those classes that promote interaction and cooperation and thus its layout was adequate for group work and various communicative activities. For instance, each group had a computer portal available to them on their table for online research purposes. In addition, the class was dynamic and interactive, a far cry from a one-way lecture type. This atmosphere of freedom in the class allowed the pre-service teachers to express their opinions freely and actively interact with each other even during the micro-teaching. Considering that the pre-service teachers felt comfortable with such interaction, their acknowledgement of 'teacher's interaction with students' which was found in the 1st test should therefore not be surprising.

However, the pre-service teachers seemed to consider 'appropriacy for the students' level' challenging. For instance, some of them designed activities which were deemed inappropriate for their learners' level and others even failed to include the careful considerations in designing their microteaching. In contrast, in the 2nd test which required a third-person objective judgement, the importance of this may have been more acknowledged as a detached evaluator when the pressure to meet the criteria as a student teacher was removed. In addition, 'teacher's preparedness' whose importance was also more acknowledged in the 2nd test can be understood in the same way. Teacher's preparedness was specified in the survey as 'whether the

teacher fully practiced the teacher talk and sounded natural'. Considering that the pre-service teachers found this challenging, it is understandable why they attached more importance to this in the 2^{nd} test rather than in the 1st.

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	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2
	(No. 1)	(No. 2)	(No. 3)	(No. 4)
Z	1.17 ^b	-2.41 ^b	1.86 ^b	1.38 ^b
Sig (2-tailed)	.24	.02*	.06	.16
	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2	Test 1-Test 2
	(No. 5)	(No. 6)	(No. 7)	(No. 8)
Z	36 ^b	64 ^b	74 ^b	-2.15 ^b
Sig (2-tailed)	.72	.52	.46	.03*

Table 4. A gap between subjective and objective perception

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks

Table 4 shows difference of the importance of evaluation criteria between the two different perspectives (subjective perception in the 1st test vs. a third-person objective judgement in the 2nd test). A Whilcoxon Signed Rank Test revealed a statistically significant difference of 'teacher's English skills' (No.2), \geq -2.41, p<.05 and of No.8 'teacher's preparedness', \geq -2.15, p<.05 between the two tests. The results indicate an increase of their acknowledgment of importance in No.2 (average rank of 10.17 vs. 16.00) as well as in No.8 (average rank of 9.43 vs. 9.75) from the 1st to the 2nd test. This finding also suggests that the criteria involving the pre-service teachers' efforts can be difficult to be acknowledged in the 1st survey which required their subjective perception. This suggests a need for careful consideration when obtaining more precise data in future research.

V. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The study raised a question as to whether pre-service English teachers'

perception may reflect their subjective preferences for the convenience of their own and not necessarily reflecting their objective judgement. This is critical since any pedagogical suggestions made based on the findings that fail to reflect their objective judgment may result in undesirable pre-service teacher training.

The findings in the study support a possibility of a gap between objective and subjective sides of perception. The gap was evident in the issues in which the pre-service teachers were the concerned party particularly with the issues which they may consider demanding or challenging.

Provided any attempts to map the pre-service teachers' perception onto the their education are made based on the research that does not consider this credibility gap, the education may serve only for the sake of the pre-service teachers' convenience. For example, the feedback type 'self-evaluation through video observation' where the gap was evident should not be disregarded just because the pre-service teachers would not view it as importance. It should be noted that they did not favor it because it was demanding and painful but they admitted the importance in a third-person perspective.

Regarding teaching evaluation criteria, the gaps were evident in 'teacher's English skills' and 'teacher's preparedness-whether the teacher fully practiced the teacher talk and sounded natural'. If these criteria are overlooked in pre-service teacher education because the pre-service teachers did not perceive it to be important, the education may fall short of reflecting on their objective judgement in a third-person perspective. It is understandable that those criteria require the pre-service teachers' efforts and thus the student teachers may want to circumvent them; however, complacency may hider their development towards the goal of becoming competent English teachers.

Although the evidence from this study lend themselves as convincing, it has limitations. Most of the pre-service teachers in this study were at/above an intermediate level because they were in an English-medium class (rather a strong version of Content-Based Language Teaching). Although the study did not concern the participants' proficiency effect, future research may investigate the proficiency effect on the extent of the gap. Finally, the teaching method and the classroom in the study were conducive to creating an atmosphere full of interaction and active participation. Thus future research may explore the gap in a different context.

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Abstract

Are Pre-service English Teachers' Perceptions Reliable?: A Credibility Gap between the Objective and Subjective Sides of Perception

Hyunjeong Nam (Associate Professor, Dong-A University)

Previous research has enlightened pre-service English teachers' perceptions of teaching and evaluation. This study raised the question of a possible credibility gap between the pre-service teachers' subjective perceptions and their third-person objective judgements. To this end, thirty-six English majors in a university English Teaching Methodology course completed a two-page questionnaire with a section on feedback types and another on teaching evaluation criteria. The questionnaire was administered twice: first to determine teachers' subjective perceptions, and later to measure their third-person objective judgements. The results suggest statistically significant gaps between the two different perspectives. The gaps were evident in 'self-evaluation through video observation' in the section on feedback types, and 'teacher's English skills' and 'teacher's preparedness' in the section on teaching evaluation criteria, all of which the pre-service teachers may consider demanding or challenging. The results reveal that their perception may have been expressed for convenience sake and thus were different from their judgements from a third-person perspective. Therefore, the study makes suggestions to educators in pre-service teacher training programs, both for their research and for adaptation to their education practice.

► Key Words: pre-service English teacher, perception, microteaching, feedback, teaching evaluation

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|발행인| 배현

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58554 전라남도 무안군 청계면 영산로 1666 국립목포대학교 인문대학 영어영문학과

|전 화| 010-9877-2120/paehyun@mokpo.ac.kr(회장) 010-8649-9608/english21st@naver.com(편집위원장) 010-2605-8472/english21st@naver.com(총무이사)

은행온라인구좌번호

|우리은행| 1002-355-366260 예금주: 이현주

인쇄처 도서출판 동인

|전화| (02) 765-7145

|FAX | (02) 765-7165

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