Eclectic matrix application for single-skill and integrated-skills ELT microteachings

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Abstract

Experiencing and experimenting how to teach a foreign language in methodology courses in the undergraduate programs of ELT departments is a complex and confusing task at microteaching level. Trainees utilize their instructional capacity using the collection of techniques they compile for the simulation of this sort. Such a construction and presentation require a micro FLT cosmos which encloses a lot of assumptions, a collection of techniques, and a technical course of action. The hypothesis in this argument is that the technical construction of single-skill and integrated-skills based microteachings which resemble units requires a complicated procedure in teacher training, and the eclectic matrix (EM) may assist trainees with the technical selection and support well-designed microteachings. The suggested eclectic matrix template may assist them in synchronizing the techniques to be utilized and other variables such as ordering, timing, assessing, modifying and fine-tuning. The unit-like structure, the eclectic density, and the length of such microteachings may cause problems in methodology courses. This study displays the reactions of the teacher trainees to utilizing the eclectic matrix in ELT microteachings. Their responses have been collected through a questionnaire after a long period of matrix applications as described here.

1. Introduction

Microteaching applications in ELT departments are among the most important end products. They can be mainly divided into two parts. These are single skill and integrated skills microteachings. They are generally designed considering TEFL courses for young learners and teenage groups. During the design and implementation of such micro lessons, more complexities than the ones in real lessons may be experienced. The points such as choosing the language point to be taught, creating the context, technique selection, making the outline, sequencing and balancing the techniques collection,

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interlanguage stabilization, material development, rehearsals, and actual teaching before peers may produce issues.

1.1. Problem

Sarıgöz (2015) argues that the FLT programs in the post-methods era require eclectic teaching matrixes for unit design. The same application may be required for single-skill and integrated-skills microteachings in order to create methodologically applicable designs. The problem is that the paradoxical design of a microteaching may not fully generate the intended chain of action which supports communicative language teaching. The wide range of techniques suggested in the methods era and the new techniques freely developed and used in contemporary instruction suggest a wide range of paths to the same end. This variety can be perplexing when narrowing down to the intended microteaching prototype. Furthermore, there are many other factors that affect the assembly of the most beneficial collection of techniques for this sort of simulation as mentioned elsewhere and they may create problems for higher order planning skills.

1.2. Microteaching in ELT

Microteaching design has become a standard application in many ELT departments. However, it may be experienced in different formats due to its dynamic nature and the resources of the institutions. Hall (2011) discusses that recently the concept of method has been gradually more challenged and instructors' beliefs about the nature of language affect teaching applications. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that approaches and methods reproduce dissimilar suppositions about the language to be learned, the ways of learning, and the results of learning. Lakshimi and Rao (2009) discuss that such a simulation is 'a scaled down teaching encounter' which has been used in pre-service and in-service training since its invention by D. W. Allen, Robert Bush, and Kim Romney in 1960s at Stanford university.

Bell (2007) claims that what microteaching is yet to be examined and discovered by researchers despite it is generally seen as an efficient means of teacher training. He and Yan (2011) argue that microteaching is an effective instrument for teacher training but not without flaws. Sarıçoban (2016) suggests that trainers assist pre-service teachers with efficient managerial and instructional support. Harmer (2007) maintains that skill combination is a key aspect in lesson design. Blending various skills and themes is an important ability of instructors who plan for a sequence of lessons. The ideal instructional sequence, then will offer both skill integration and also language study based around a topic or another thematic thread.

2. Method

The argument about eclectic matrix design depends on a two-year microteaching application supported by eclectic presentation plans. The research was designed by the author and implemented in methodology courses where ELT trainees prepared and presented integrated-skills microteachings after single-skill microteachings. Single language skill presentations such as 'teaching reading' are generally prepared in the pre-while-post fashion. Their application does not represent teaching a unit however, integrated-skills microteachings are extremely complicated from methodological perspective. First of all, the integrated-skills design is almost similar to a unit which contains all the main and sub language skills and more. They symbolize a unit which is generally taught in one week in a real school even if they cannot contain every component in a unit due to the time constraints.

The author launched a simple eclectic matrix in the beginning of the research. Based on the initial class experiences and observations which lasted a few semesters, the format was developed in the last two semesters. In practice, the trainees place the collection of techniques on a grid (see Sarıgöz 2016). The grid has columns as seen in Table 1 and trainees fill in each column for each technique employed in the microteaching plan. The number of the techniques may change according to the time period at trainees' disposal and the integration range. The information in each box can be changed flexibly by the trainee in order to formulate the best combination considering the aims and contents of the lesson. In order to call such an outline 'eclectic matrix' the information in the boxes should be changed many times during the initial drafting. This process of transformation enables the trainee to see the whole picture in depth and pursue the best mixture. If this formulaic permutation does not exist, the production does not serve as 'eclectic-matrix.' The sequencing of skills and techniques should definitely be arranged on the basis of communicative language teaching. Coherence and cohesion of the whole technical program should reflect 'contextual contact first' principle, as reviewed by Sarıgöz (2015), which fosters offering cognitive clues and elicitation in the opening and other initial stages of the unit.

Table 1. Eclectic Matrix Template (Sarıgöz 2016)

Skill	Activity	Technique	Method	Aim	Instructions	Student Response Type	Communication	Materials	Time

Organization of the combinations and the transformation of all variables in the matrix require thorough methodological knowledge including approaches, methods, and techniques besides the instructional acculturation on behalf of the trainee. Integrated skills presentations are the last macro scale practices before the practicum. For this reason, rehearsing and finalizing transformational combinations and presenting them before peers may be a multi-benefit activity for teacher training.

In this study, a Likert-type questionnaire was administered to 42 teacher trainees at the end of the year-long microteaching program which included utilization of the suggested eclectic-matrix applications. Every trainee had operated the matrix in several microteachings before the administration of the questionnaire displayed below.

2.1. Data

The author who was also the lecturer of the mentioned methodology courses observed that the forty-two teacher trainees attending methodology courses in ELT programs successfully prepared and used the single-skill and integrated-skills based matrixes during the microteachings. After year-long piloting of the matrix they were technically equipped to respond to the twenty-four statements in the questionnaire which were organized into three sections. The first section is about their eclectic matrix experience and contains fifteen statements. The next section is about their suggestions for the improvement of the eclectic matrix. This feedback part contains five statements. The remaining four statements seek estimations about the future personal use of the matrix by ELT trainees when they start real instruction after college. This post-grad section is about the future potential of the suggested matrix.

2.2. Discussion

The action research for EM consists of two parts: the implementation of EM in methodology courses and the trainees' reactions to it. This study mainly explores their reactions. The core subject of ELT programs is "the teaching methodology" in theoretical and applied manners. Microteachings are the closest experiences to the instruction in real schools. The author claims that microteachings must be designed and presented in a more professional manner than the actual lessons taught by long-time instructors. ELT microteachings naturally display the experimental operation of language skills by the trainees. They are practitioners in training. They can employ the EM in order to compensate this gap. The EM system, particularly at the final stage after technical drafting and rehearsals, may help the trainee reproduce a complete and near-professional applied teaching simulation in the methodology course.

The following part displays the statements about the application, design and future potential of the EM with the frequency and percentage of the replies from the trainees. Further arguments about the data take place in the results part of the study.

Table 2. Questionnaire for Eclectic Matrix Applications

Questionnaire for Eclectic Matrix Applications									
5 Strongly Agree		4 Agree		3 Undecided		2 Disagree		1 Strongly Disagree	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%

Part-A   Opinions about your current Eclectic Matrix experience

1. The collection of techniques I employ in the EM lets me consider the methodological acculturation in TEFL.

9	21%	30	71%	2	5%	1	2%	0	0%

2. Eclectic Matrix application in integrated-skills presentations helps the trainees see the whole system analytically and holistically.

18	43%	20	48%	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%

3. I believe that the EM is the smallest macro methodological design.

7	17%	26	62%	9	21%	0	0%	0	0%

4. I organize the relationship between techniques, aims, materials and timing better through EM.

15	36%	22	52%	2	5%	3	7%	0	0%

5. The EM lets me revise the techniques that have been developed so far and keeps me updated in terms of FLT methods.

11	26%	24	57%	6	14%	1	2%	0	0%

6. Being able to create freelance techniques in the EM fosters personal contribution and resourcefulness.

7	17%	20	48%	14	33%	1	2%	0	0%

7. The EM may facilitate smooth transitions between the implementation of techniques.

7	17%	24	57%	3	7%	8	19%	0	0%

8. The flow of action in terms of "stir and settle" is organized better through the EM.

8	19%	24	57%	6	14%	4	10%	0	0%

9. The EM makes the placing of each single input into the grid simple.

10	24%	26	62%	5	12%	1	2%	0	0%

10. This application enables trouble-free rotation of techniques and other variables used in EM chart.

7	17%	24	57%	8	19%	3	7%	0	0%

11	Through the EM grid, I can easily detect what is missing in the plan.								
	14	33%	25	60%	2	5%	1	2%	0	0%
12	The EM is practical to draft and rearrange.								
	13	31%	25	60%	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%
13	The EM design may recover poorly made microteaching plans.								
	8	19%	20	48%	8	19%	5	12%	1	2%
14	To display the EM on the classroom wall during the presentation helps the instructor and peers follow the microteaching.								
	10	24%	23	55%	5	12%	4	10%	1	2%
15	The EM makes receiving feedback easier.								
	8	19%	20	48%	10	24%	3	7%	0	0%

	Part-B The EM design improvement								
16	The EM should include "technique, method and aim" columns.								
	18	43%	21	50%	2	5%	1	2%	0	0%
17	The EM should include "learner response type, materials, and time" columns.								
	12	29%	17	40%	10	24%	3	7%	1	2%
18	The EM should include "communication type" column.								
	6	14%	17	40%	12	29%	6	14%	1	2%
19	The EM should include "instructions" column.								
	4	10%	4	10%	15	36%	16	38%	3	7%
20	The integrated-skills EM should not exceed ten techniques.								
	6	14%	17	40%	8	19%	8	19%	4	10%

	Part-C The EM prospective (future potential)								
21	The EM application may facilitate making better unit plans in the future.								
	16	38%	23	55%	1	2%	2	5%	0	0%
22	The EM application may facilitate better syllabus design.								
	16	38%	19	45%	4	10%	2	5%	0	0%
23	I may use it in regular lesson planning.								
	8	19%	25	60%	7	17%	2	5%	0	0%
24	I may modify it for my future teaching profile.								
	7	17%	27	64%	6	14%	2	5%	0	0%

3. Results

The eclectic matrix devised and implemented by the author attempts to offer ultimate experience in ELT microteaching design and implementation. The great majority of the participants displayed a positive approach to the statements in the questionnaire which focus on the goals of EM as presented and argued below.

3.1. Items 1-15

A great majority of participants think that the technique organization process lets them consider the methodological acculturation in TEFL. It also helps the trainees see the whole system analytically and holistically. The microteaching design requires a complex system which operates many techniques and

their sub-domains depending on the methodological acculturation. For this reason, such an approach and technical diagnosis of the selected elements support improved designs. The author believes that the EM is the smallest macro methodological design and so do the 79% of the respondents. The percentage of the undecided ones is 21. Due to the fact that particularly the integrated skills presentation resembles the teaching of a unit in actual schooling, it should be further discussed from methodological perspective. Units are obviously affected by approaches and methods. Eighty-eight percent think that they can organize the relationship between techniques, aims, materials and timing better through EM. This response indicates that the EM may offer the chance for better management of these features.

The EM lets 83% of the trainees revise the techniques that have been developed so far and keeps trainees updated in terms of FLT methods. In this way the trainees recycle the techniques they have studied and pursue enhanced combinations which is the main goal of the EM.

According to 65%, being able to create freelance (newly or personally developed) techniques for the EM fosters personal contribution and resourcefulness. Thirty-three percent are undecided. These are the techniques that are out of the popular methods zone. Considering post-methods era and employing newly created techniques is inevitable. Trainees should exercise creating their own techniques using the current instructional and academic resources.

Seventy-four percent think that the EM may facilitate smooth transitions between the implementation of techniques. Such transitions are essential for giving more sense to all components designed. The flow of action in terms of 'stir and settle' is organized better through the EM according to 76 %. Fourteen percent are undecided and ten percent do not agree with this statement. The stir and settle principle may not be an approach each trainee is accustomed to. It has to be emphasized in the methodological feedback sessions. According to 86%, the EM makes placing each single input into the grid simple. The parts of information about a single technique in each line of the grid are essential for the better design of the microteaching. Therefore, developing the practicality of placement in order to create the ultimate combination is among the main goals of EM. Consequently, EM application should enable trouble-free rotation of techniques and other variables used on EM chart. According to 74%, it does but 19% are undecided and 7% do not think so. The rotation of techniques in order to suggest a better technique instead of the chosen one is among the critical processes in EM design. The results suggest that some trainees should revise and develop their technical repertoire and practice placing the most suitable technique in the grid. Ninety-three percent state that through the EM grid, they can easily detect what is missing in the plan. It may be argued that the compact and complete planning method exercised in the EM enables troubleshooting. Accordingly, 91% think that EM is practical to draft and rearrange. Sixty-seven percent think that the EM design may recover poorly made microteaching plans. However, 19% are undecided and 14% disagree. The recovery function after the detection of problems needs further discussions and exercises to improve since it is among the key processes in the EM experience. To display the EM chart on the classroom wall during the presentation helps the instructor and peers follow the microteaching easily. Seventy-nine percent agree with this statement whereas 12% are undecided and 12% disagree. According to 67%, the EM makes receiving feedback easier. Twenty-four percent are undecided and 7% disagree. Trainees are free to hand out personal feedback forms to peers and collect them after the presentation. Nevertheless, this simple system is rarely employed by the trainees. They prefer to receive feedback only from the trainer.

3.2. Items 16-20

Ninety-three percent support the idea that the EM should include 'technique, method and aim' columns. Such a strong support to this idea strengthens one of the pillars of the EM which is "technique" and its methodological source. According to 69%, the EM should include "learner response type, materials, and time" columns but 24% are undecided. The learner response type is a critical aspect from the perspective of communicative language teaching. Materials column lists the realia, teaching aids and other materials developed for the microteaching. It is a reminder to avoid 'dry' presentations. Fifty-four percent think that the EM should include 'communication type' column. The percentage of undecided ones is 29 and 14% disagree. The trainee must create and design the maximum amount and possible types of communication intended. According to 20%, the EM should include "instructions" column and 36% are undecided. The percentage of trainees who do not want to include instructions in EM is 45. Instructions that require long sentences may not be suitable for the grid. Instructions for the techniques are important but may not be vital for a compact matrix design. Twenty percent think that the integrated-skills EM should not exceed ten techniques. Thirty-six percent are undecided and 45% do not agree with this statement. In this respect, the majority think that it can exceed ten techniques. Integrated-skills microteachings simulate teaching almost full units. However, participants think that very long microteachings may cause problems.

3.3. Items 20-24

As for the future impact of EM, ninety-three percent think that the EM application may facilitate making better unit plans in the future. Furthermore, 79% may use it in regular lesson planning. Eighty-three percent may also modify it for their future teaching profiles. From future valorization perspective, the EM can easily play an important part in preparing lesson and unit plans. Finally, from a broader perspective, the EM application may facilitate better syllabus design according to 83%.

4. Conclusion

The eclectic matrix experience and the research on its implications for teacher training focus on how to design single-skill and integrated skills ELT microteachings in terms of producing flexible plans from eclectic perspective. The elasticity comes from its combinatorial design that enables trainees to draft and redraft the collection of freelance techniques and the ones from popular methods until they reach the perfect mixture. Technical mismatch is very real during merging and drafting. Nevertheless, eclectic approach offers trainees a wide range of techniques to use and also opportunities to create new ones freely taking into account the target learner group and the dynamics of the instruction suitable for them. The EM may assist trainees with the technical selection and promote well-designed microteachings.

The EM study is a long term action research. ELT teacher trainees' opinions about EM are vital for its further development and implementation. This research focuses on trainees' views on current eclectic matrix experience, the EM design improvement, and its future potential. The analysis of these issues, as presented above, suggests that throughout the experience the trainees developed flexibility in microteaching planning in terms of constructing the efficient combination of techniques. Experiences of this sort are their initial applied attempts of instructional planning.

The responses from the teacher trainees display a highly positive reaction to the points in all parts of the questionnaire. They assert that the suggested system is analytically and holistically constructive.

Its convenient frame makes drafting and rearranging unproblematic. The views on its future potential are also particularly affirmative.

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İngiliz dili eğitimi mikro-öğretimlerinde entegre ve tek beceriler için seçmeci matriks uygulaması

Öz

Yabancı dil becerilerinin tek tek ve tümleşik biçimde öğretimi birçok İngilizce öğretmenliği programında önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Mikro-öğretim seviyesindeki bu deneyimler klasik ders planının ötesinde daha detaylı bir planlama gerektirir. Önerilen tasarımda seçmeci matriks yöntemi ile öğretmen adaylarının ders ya da ünite şablonlarına gerekli bağlamlarda bilgi girmesi ile uygulama planın sorunsuz bir yapı haline gelene kadar geliştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma seçmeci matriks uygulamaları ile mikro-öğretim deneyimi olan öğretmen adaylarının sistem hakkındaki düşüncelerini üç bölümlü bir sormaca ile belirleyip sonuçları tartışmaktadır. Adaylar matriks uygulamasının akademik olarak etkili olduğunu belirtmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Seçmeci matriks; İngiliz dili eğitimi; yöntembilim, mikro-öğretim; öğretmen adayı; mikro-öğretim tasarımı; yabancı dil öğretim teknikleri

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