

**TEACHING STRATEGY AWARENESS AND LANGUAGE
TEACHER**

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ABSTRACT:

Training student teachers for using appropriate teaching strategies is among the goals and principles of teacher training programs. Teaching strategy is directly interrelated with intentional behavior of the teacher who is approaching while teaching. Teaching strategies are outlined in two categories: macro-strategies, the general guideline on teachers' classroom procedures; micro-strategies, the application of the predetermined macro-strategies. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to evaluate teaching strategies awareness of student teachers. The participants were questioned about the issue through a questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions. The data gathered in the study are to be used to redesign the methodology courses for training proficient teachers.

Key words: teaching strategies, macro-strategies, micro-strategies, teacher training

Teacher training programs are assumed to be operating for providing students teachers with theoretical knowledge in the form of teaching theories and methods. Student teachers, thus, experience learning to teach by participating in the teaching practice in classroom and school settings and develop professionally. Traditionally, the professional development of teachers has been thought of as something that is done by others for or to teachers (Johnson, 2009). If teachers are to be effective in whatever approach they decide to take, it seems reasonable to expect them to act consistently in accordance with their expressed beliefs (Williams & Burden, 1997).

The teacher is the most authoritative person with many different roles to play such as organizing, providing security, motivating, instructing, guiding, monitoring, informing, explaining, giving feedback, and evaluating (Edge & Garton, 2009); nevertheless, the best teacher does something else for increasing positive attitude toward learning both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Whatever training is implemented in teacher training programs, it is a case for teachers to develop and operate their own teaching strategies in their identification of teaching.

Teaching strategy that is potentially intentional behavior is the choice of a technique or method for approaching while teaching.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) outlines the teaching strategies into two categories: macro-strategies that is a broad guideline generated on the base of teachers' classroom procedures and micro-strategies that are designed for implementing in the classroom regarding the objectives of a specific macro-strategy. The objectives of macro-strategies are designed for maximizing learning opportunities, minimizing perceptual mismatches, fostering language awareness and learner autonomy, raising cultural awareness, activating intuitive heuristics, contextualizing the input, while micro-strategies are conditioned for the possibility, particularity, and practicality of macro-strategies regarding learners' needs, lacks, and expectations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Microstrategies are classroom procedures that are designed to realize the objectives of a macrostrategy, and microstrategies are suggested as samples such as language use and levels of formality, language use and doublespeak (Kumaravadivelu, 2006:210-212). Thus, the purpose of using those strategies is to construct a post-method pedagogy in order to be able to teach language regarding the conditions of the context (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, Larsen-Freeman, 2005). By using these strategies, teachers behave both as creators of learning opportunities for their learners and users of learning opportunities created by learners (Birjandi & Hashamdar, 2014). As Swan (2012) discusses the need for language teachers is not only to have a detailed explicit knowledge of the grammar, phonology and lexis of the languages they are teaching, but also to have meaning, freedom, expression, and communication chains; in other words, in language teaching and learning there is an eternal and inevitable pendulum-swing backwards and forwards between form and meaning, control and freedom, imitation and expression, knowledge and skill, learning and using, that is, a post method condition. Teaching strategies awareness can also be evaluated as the focal indication of being a good teacher. In teacher training process, prospective teachers' awareness on these issues needs to be increased and examined. Therefore, in this study it was aimed to investigate teaching strategy awareness of student teachers in teacher training process.

Methodology

In this study, survey method was used in order to examine whether the student teachers felt themselves competent enough to apply teaching strategies while teaching. The student teachers were questioned about their awareness of teaching strategies through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher regarding the strategies suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2006) both at macro level and micro level. The macrostrategies were defined in separate items such as planning the lesson, setting their goals and objectives, contextualizing the input for the learner,

etc. As for the microstrategies, the items were defined as designing the activities regarding the needs and expectations of students, making classroom assessment, fostering students to build confidence, interacting with students, and allowing opportunities for students, etc.

The participants of the survey were eighty two fourth year student teachers who were attending a Turkish university. Those student teachers were recruited from two classes. All fourth year student teachers participated in the survey.

Findings

The data gathered through the 32-item questionnaire were evaluated and displayed in Table 1 with the percentile values for each item. The items focus on the components of the teaching setting: the student, the teacher, and teaching experience.

Table 1. Teaching strategies awareness of student teachers

Teaching strategies	Agree %	Undecided %	Disagree %
1 I can use immediate changes in teaching	17	41	42
2 I prefer interacting with students while teaching	25	26	49
3 I can allow opportunities for the student to learn more about things	32	24	44
4 I try to make positive statements about students' performance	52	11	37
5 I explain goals and objectives of the lesson	49	31	20
6 I plan for my lesson regarding the needs of students	65	5	30
7 I try to listen to students' ideas	59	11	30
8 I reward students after they have finished the task	40	17	43
9 I use checklists to evaluate students	9	41	50
10 I ask for clarification when I do not understand what is said	22	19	59
11 I like cooperating with students	25	21	54
12 I prefer guiding students to learn by questioning	51	18	31
13 I want to establish trust as a teacher	75	-	25
14 I keep teacher portfolio	10	42	48
15 I monitor myself while teaching	15	26	59
16 I evaluate my teaching process	21	40	39
17 I try to increase the student's experience for learning	72	7	21
18 I try to give corrective feedback for students' output	75	-	25
19 I notice students' feelings about my teaching performance	47	3	50
20 I try to use praise for students' performance	68	14	18
21 I encourage students to determine their own learning expectations	65	24	11
22 I try to design projects for students in order to benefit personally	10	40	50
23 I usually express the importance of learning	90	-	10
24 I discuss my teaching performance with students	18	12	70
25 I design activities regarding the expectations of students	82	1	17
26 I encourage students to build confidence	16	29	55
27 I encourage students to continue learning outside the classroom	67	33	-
28 I try to understand the learning conditions of students	86	5	9
29 I evaluate the outcomes of my teaching	41	14	45
30 I try to increase the motivation level of my students	92	8	-
31 I try develop appropriate materials regarding the needs of students	88	3	9
32 I teach the lesson in a logical and coherent sequence	51	21	28

As displayed in the table, for the items about teachers, most of the participants believed that they might not be capable enough to use the strategies such as interacting and cooperating with students, allowing

opportunities for students to learn by questioning efficiently, making evaluation by the use of checklists competently, asking for clarification, designing projects for students to benefit personally, and encouraging students for building confidence. The participants claimed they were not competent enough to use strategies for making immediate changes in their teaching when necessary, keeping teacher portfolio for tracking their teaching process, monitoring themselves while teaching, evaluating their teaching process, and discussing their teaching performance with students. Such recorded negative responses display that most of the student teachers cannot accomplish both macrostrategies and microstrategies skillfully for the benefits of students and for developing professionally in teaching practice.

The responses for the items about students were mostly in a positive manner: the students teachers stated that they would praise for students' performance and make positive evaluation, give importance to students' ideas, do their best for increasing students' experience for learning, give feedback when necessary, encourage students to determine their own learning expectations, inspire them to learn outside the classroom, and motivate them for learning.

As for the positive responses about their teaching experiences, they declared that they can successfully set the goals and objectives of the lesson and explain the decisions to students because they would like to establish trust as a teacher; they observe to notice students' feelings about the teaching process; the materials they use for the course are designed regarding the needs and expectations of students; and they stated they try to teach the lesson in a logical and coherent sequence by focusing on the importance of learning.

Results and discussion

The attempt in this study to seek answers to the questions "Are student teachers aware of teaching strategies and how efficiently do student teachers use teaching strategies?" were searched for by a 32-item questionnaire. The results indicated that the student teachers were aware of the teaching strategies both at macro level and micro levels which are outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2006). They declared they felt themselves component enough to apply macrostrategies in terms of planning the lesson, setting their goals and objectives, contextualizing the input for the learner. In most of the macro strategies, they reflected positive responses. As for the microstrategies, they felt they could design the activities regarding the needs and expectations of students and make assessment appropriately, although some microteaching strategies such as fostering students to build confidence, interacting with them, and allowing

opportunities for them were found to be challenging for the student teachers. Depending on these results, it could be stated that the student teachers in this study tend to develop supportive and suitable teaching strategies. It is also important to keep in mind that the items in the questionnaire might have been directive for the student teachers for increasing their awareness on teaching strategies.

Since the macrostrategic framework has the potential to empower teachers with the knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to devise themselves as systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), in teacher training process, student teachers' awareness needs to be increased. Accordingly, they will be able to generate locally grounded, need-based microstrategies, ultimately developing the capacity to theorize from their practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Based on this survey results, some suggestions can be proposed for teacher trainers. The particular focus of the data analysis suggests that in teacher training process, approaches and methods should not be taught to student teachers theoretically all the time, instead approaches and methods need to be practiced by focusing on teaching strategies. As Swan (2012) reports language teachers do not need merely detailed explicit knowledge of grammar, phonology, and lexis; instead they need to have the knowledge of meaning, freedom, expression, and communication chain in order to foster communicative competence of students and develop suitable teaching strategies. Accordingly, student teachers as prospective teachers need to be able to apply a post-method pedagogy and to behave as creators of learning opportunities for their students. For further research, student teachers need opportunities offered for distinguishing their strengths and weaknesses for professional development. Furthermore, they may be engaged in discovering their professional knowledge. On the whole, the study suggests that teacher training is not merely to impose theoretical knowledge, but to incorporate considerable effort to localize in the post-method pedagogy to shape teaching competence.

Conclusion

The attempt in this descriptive study was to investigate student teachers' teaching strategies awareness which is assumed to be among the main goals of teacher training process. In general, teaching strategy can be described as the intentional behavior of a teacher who is approaching while teaching. In particular, teaching strategies, as Kumaravadivelu (2006) outlines, are listed in two categories: macro-strategies, the general classroom procedures that teachers approach; micro-strategies, the application of the scheduled macro-strategies. In the present study, the

data displayed that the student teachers are mostly aware of teaching strategies both at macro and micro levels; however, while implementing microteaching practice, they could use macroteaching strategies such as planning the lesson, setting their goals and objectives, contextualizing the input for the learner more efficiently than microstrategies which were assumed to be challenging such as fostering students to build confidence, interacting with them, and allowing opportunities for them, and etc. Therefore, in teacher training process, student teachers' teaching strategies awareness need to be investigated and supplementary support should be given in order to impose post-method pedagogy on student teachers.

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