

LA INTEGRACIÓN DE LA SIMULACIÓN Y LA DOCENCIA COMPARTIDA EN LA FORMACIÓN DOCENTE EN INGLÉS

THE INTEGRATION OF SIMULATION AND MICRO-TEACHING IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

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Abstract

Experiencing the power of simulation and micro-teaching first hand usually allows future teachers to adopt a role and gain insight into the educational world in a worry-free environment. Over several sessions, the pre-service teachers performed as if in real classrooms to master storytelling and EFL teaching. This paper presents a quantitative study of the pre-service teachers' responses to a questionnaire. The innovative element of this approach is its integration of both simulation and micro-teaching in teacher instruction. The theoretical foundations underpinning English as a second language EFL methodology were better assimilated when the pre-service teachers solved practical problems in the simulations. In addition, micro-teaching offered a springboard for "safe" practice prior to entering a real classroom. The pre-service teachers reported that they assimilated notions and concepts of how to teach speaking skills in EFL and classroom management better than they assimilated the other skills considered in this study.

Keywords: micro-teaching; simulation; active learning; EFL

Resumen

La simulación y las micro sesiones proporcionan un entorno de aprendizaje seguro de la didáctica del inglés a los futuros docentes. Las micro sesiones de formación consistían en la práctica de cuentacuentos en inglés. La presente contribución presenta un estudio cuantitativo de las respuestas a un cuestionario tipo Likert. El elemento innovador resulta en la integración de la simulación y las micro-sesiones previa la intervención en aula real con niños de un colegio de la zona. Los fundamentos teóricos de la didáctica y metodología del inglés se asimilaron de forma más efectiva a través de su estudio y aplicación en la simulación que de la manera tradicional mediante un examen tipo test o de desarrollo. A través de la simulación los futuros docentes tuvieron que resolver problemas prácticos. Seguidamente, las micro-sesiones ofrecieron un entrono de práctica seguro. Los futuros docentes reconocieron asimilar las nociones y conceptos de la enseñanza del inglés, especialmente el desarrollo de la destreza de expresión oral y el manejo del aula.

Palabras clave: *micro-sesiones; simulación; aprendizaje activo; EFL*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning today is perceived as a challenge that must be addressed on numerous fronts simultaneously. Optimising class time and providing opportunities for meaningful learning through simulations and micro-teaching sessions have become the cornerstones of English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher training.

Simulations have long proved a great pedagogical strategy (Quinn, Wilkenfeld, Smarick & Asal, 2006; Knowles, Torney-Purta & Barber, 2018; Angelini & García-Carbonell, 2019). A simulation is an activity in which participants are assigned roles and are given enough information to solve a specific problem. A simulation is based on a representation of a model that imitates a real-world process or system. Key information is provided so that participants can carry out tasks, debate, negotiate from different points of view and solve a specific problem (Klabbers, 2009). It is the participants' responsibility to perform duties and thereby solve the problem without play-acting or inventing key facts (Jones, 2013).

Simulations are ideal for addressing educational issues, environmental threats, sustainable economics and human rights. Through simulations, students are introduced to a reality in which they must find solutions to certain problems. They must do so by learning about the topic, proposing ideas, negotiating and making decisions. Participants are exposed to reading material, audio-visual resources and recent online news to familiarise themselves with pertinent topics (Crookall & Oxford, 1990).

Micro-teaching, on the other hand, is an effective, practical and scientific method to improve pre-service teachers' teaching skills (Xu & Zhou, 2016). This method provides trainees with an efficient way to master teaching skills, endowing teachers with different ways to put into practice new teaching protocols and good practices to gain self-confidence (Kumar, 2016). Micro-teaching consists of a method in which pre-service teachers have the chance to assess their teaching strengths and weaknesses whilst applying the theoretical knowledge they have learnt (Saban & Çoklar, 2013). It not only covers the whole process from planning to reflection with both peers and tutor feedback (Al-Humaidi & Abu-Rahmah) but also forces trainees to deal with students' misbehaviour, work with meaningful materials and develop a positive attitude in their teaching work (Elias, 2018).

In this study, pre-service teachers in the third year of a teaching degree participated in a classroom simulation over two weeks. The topic simulation dealt with answering several questions arising from an educational community. Subsequently, prior to the storytelling, micro-teaching sessions were conducted with pupils from a local school. The innovative element of this approach lies in its integration of both simulation and micro-teaching in English as a second language (ESL)/EFL teacher training. A quantitative study was performed. It consisted of an exploratory study of the instrument dimensionality (questionnaire of Likert-type items) using categorical principal component analysis (CATPCA) and correlation analysis of the dimensions using the Pearson product moment correlation.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

A group of 26 pre-service teachers enrolled in university education were trained in EFL didactics and methodology in the official undergraduate course *Teaching EFL and Children's Literature*. After revising the specialised literature, they underwent a classroom simulation. The simulation consisted of analysing an educational institution and the numerous problems identified by different agents in that educational community. Pre-service teachers in groups of four to five members adopted the following roles to solve these problems:

1. Head of the National School of Valtance;
2. ValPE, the Valtance Pedagogical Advisory Board;
3. ValPAR, the Valtance Parent Association; and
4. ValED, the Valtance English Department (x2).

The inquiries and requests for clarification were classified into:

1. ESL teaching methodologies: language teaching, skills and resources;
2. Classroom management;
3. Shared teaching through the lesson study method; and
4. Storytelling and drama in English.

The main aim of using the simulation was to assimilate and apply the notions and concepts learnt in the subject in a real-life context, making learning more meaningful. The simulation consisted of three parts: briefing (learning about the scenario and gaining insight into the inquiries/problems), action (the simulation itself) and debriefing (reflections post-simulation).

2.1. Procedure

The briefing took place one week in advance to give students the opportunity to become acquainted with the simulation scenario and to perform research to find sound solutions to the problems presented. However, the roles were given to each member on the same day of the action/simulation. After analysing their roles and responsibilities for 20 minutes of the lesson and answering any questions, the pre-service teachers were ready to start the action phase of the simulation. The simulation negotiation lasted one hour. The debriefing came afterwards and lasted approximately 40 minutes. This last stage encouraged pre-service teachers to reflect upon their experiences. This was performed orally and intergroup.

During the course, the pre-service teachers carried out two simulations following the procedure outlined in Figure 1. The roles were rotated amongst the group members each time, although the groups remained the same. This rotation was suggested by the pre-service teachers to experience different points of view.

After the simulation, pre-service teachers started planning a lesson with real children from a local school through storytelling. Pre-service teachers were now in charge of designing a complete lesson that followed the teaching sequence of pre-telling, actual telling and post-telling. During the pre-telling stage, activities were designed to anticipate vocabulary and grammar structures that would be reinforced in the subsequent stages. The actual telling stage consisted of interactive storytelling in which children were invited to participate actively in the activities. During the post-telling stage, activities were planned to assimilate the story plot and the language that had already been introduced. This last stage provided pre-service teachers with an indication of how effective their proposal was from a learning point of view. It also provided them with instant feedback on the use of language and teaching techniques from the course instructors and the rest of the pre-service teachers. Four micro-teaching sessions were devoted solely to rehearsing the complete teaching sequence.

During the debriefing session after the storytelling, the 26 pre-service teachers were asked to respond to a questionnaire of Likert-type items (Appendix 2) and to the open question: *What are your perceptions of the subject Teaching EFL and Children's Literature?* A future qualitative study will analyse pre-service teachers' answers.

In the present study, we carried out descriptive analysis of pre-service teachers' perceptions of the different methodologies applied in the course in relation to the pre-service teachers' own learning. The answers to the questionnaire of Likert-type items were analysed using SPSS V.24.

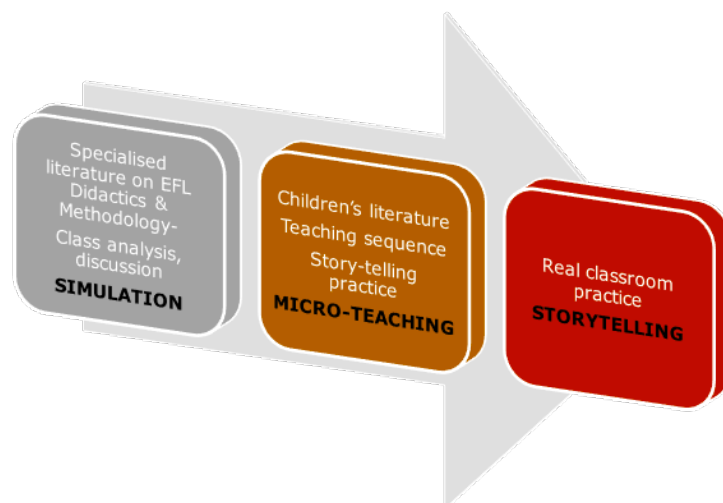


Figure 1. Procedure followed in the course

3. RESULTS

The quantitative study of pre-service teachers' perceptions yielded the following results. In the exploratory study of the instrument dimensionality, we used CATPCA as an alternative to conventional ANOVA. Principal component analysis (PCA) is widely used for pattern recognition. It was applied to the ordinal variables of the instrument, as suggested by Almerich, Suárez, Jornet, and Orellana (2011).

Four groups were identified in relation to their position in the two-dimensional plot. Figure 2 shows the basic dimensional structures of pre-service teachers' scores.

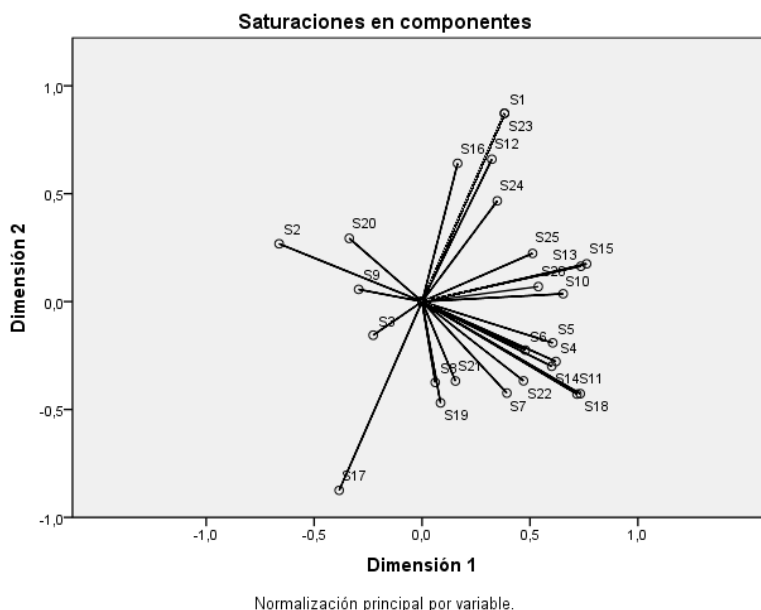


Figure 2. Basic dimensional structures of pre-service teachers' scores

These dimensions were used to determine the dimensionality of the instrument. The fourth dimension lies in the negative area on both x and y axis. Consequently, the internal consistency study was performed to determine the dimension reliability.

Subsequently, a correlation study was carried out to identify relationships amongst dimensions (SD1, SD2, SD3, SD4). The Pearson product moment correlation was used (Table 1).

Table 1.

Pearson product moment correlation between the 4 dimensions

		SD1	SD2	SD3	SD4
SD1	Pearson correlation	1	.374	.083	-.567**
	Sig. (bilateral)		.060	.689	.003
	N	26	26	26	26
SD2	Pearson correlation	.374	1	.583**	-.324
	Sig. (bilateral)	.060		.002	.107
	N	26	26	26	26
SD3	Pearson correlation	.083	.583**	1	.092
	Sig. (bilateral)	.689	.002		.653
	N	26	26	26	26
SD4	Pearson correlation	-.567**	-.324	.092	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.003	.107	.653	
	N	26	26	26	26

Note: ** indicates significance of the correlation at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

4. DISCUSSION

Interesting conclusions may be drawn by analysing the correlation between SD2 and SD3. The results indicate that pre-service teachers highly valued simulation in EFL teacher training. During negotiations, they did not necessarily prioritise their responsibilities in the negotiation and their personal goals. There was some dispersion in their perceptions, probably associated with the interference of their personal interests (i.e. their roles) with the group goals. Nonetheless, the pre-service teachers showed their flexibility to change their points of view to seek a better solution to the problems presented in the simulation. The vast majority agreed that they felt highly motivated during the simulation and would like to participate in more simulations in different subjects. Most pre-service teachers found the simulation relevant to their specialisation and were satisfied with the subject because it provided opportunities for practising the language and teaching techniques through the micro-teaching sessions and provided immediate feedback prior to teaching the model lesson with children.

As for the correlations between SD1 and SD4, most pre-service teachers did not encounter major difficulties with the simulation but were critical about the time allotted. We believe that this issue was not due to the simulation itself but rather the responsibilities associated with the roles, as stated earlier in the study of internal reliability. Again, most pre-service teachers agreed on the benefits of this proposal for the teaching of EFL didactics because language skills were applied in a meaningful way in a classroom-based approach.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that the pre-service teachers found the simulations useful as an introduction to real-life educational contexts. They were able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses during the course. They were able to assess their own learning processes both linguistically and in relation to the teaching competencies that were presented and implemented through the combination of different methods (i.e. simulation and micro-teaching) used in the subject. The pre-service teachers internalised the theory they learnt in class to support their ideas during the simulation interaction. They developed solutions to some of the educational problems that arose.

As for the pre-service teachers' realisation of their own progress and learning, they were satisfied with the use of simulations to develop fluency in English and vocabulary acquisition. Most pre-service teachers were grateful for the other participants' feedback. The pre-service teachers also agreed that micro-teaching and storytelling had enabled them to assimilate notions and concepts of how to teach speaking skills and classroom management more than the other skills that they studied and practised.

Despite the dispersion of some variables, all sub-variables tended to have high scores. The highest score for satisfaction was for micro-teaching lesson studies and simulations in other subject areas.

Broadening the sample and successive analysis over time, as well as incorporating more mixed studies, may increase reliability in the results of studies using simulation and micro-teaching as a teaching strategy.

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