

Teaching Languages and Cultures

Teaching Languages and Cultures:

*Developing Competencies,
Re-thinking Practices*

Edited by

Nina Lazarević,
Tatjana Paunović
and Ljiljana Marković

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INTRODUCTION

The series of *Teaching Languages and Cultures* international conferences was started with the aim to contribute to keeping alive a long and fruitful tradition of applied linguistic research in the Balkan region. It brings together academics, scholars, researchers and practitioners in applied linguistics and language and culture teaching methodology, as well as experienced and novice language teachers of different backgrounds and from different educational contexts. The changes in the globalized world, the creation of job opportunities that were not even present a few years ago, and the increased mobility of people and information all set difficult tasks for both practitioners and researchers of language and culture: how to best prepare learners for such fast-changing environments, what competences to develop, and how to adapt the latest theoretical and empirical findings for practical classroom practices. These questions remain important as the friction between the contrasting views on the validity of the research and its application in practice (Medgyes 2017; Paran 2017) has not been reduced.

Teaching Languages and Cultures in the Post-Method Era: Developing Competencies, Re-thinking Practices is a volume comprising eighteen contributions by authors from different linguistic, academic, and theoretical backgrounds and from eight different countries: France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Norway, Russia, and Serbia. As a selection of papers, it represents just a snapshot of the inspiring discussions conducted within the second one in the series of international conferences organized and hosted by the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia.

Conceived as a meeting point of diverse perspectives in language and culture teaching worldwide, this volume brings forward topics of interest for language teaching as well as teacher education. These range from different aspects of foreign language instruction, over language skills and learning strategies, to issues of teaching and learning foreign languages in professional contexts, and the role of intercultural competence in language teaching and teacher education, that is, the importance of sociolinguistic and socio-cultural contexts for the study of specific languages.

In addition to this variety of topics, the volume also offers research findings and insights concerning teaching foreign languages other than English, as well as sundry descriptive displays and very different theoretical

approaches, thus reflecting the devotion of the *Teaching Languages and Cultures* conferences to the promotion of diversity and the recognition of substantially varied perspectives and contexts in language and culture teaching today.

The eighteen contributions in this collection are organized into five chapters. The five papers grouped in the first section of the book, titled *Teacher education*, focus on several issues relevant for pre-service teacher training and development.

In their discussion of Lesson Study, **Deborah Larssen** and **Ion Drew** describe the implementation of this developmental tool in EFL teacher education, and highlight its positive outcomes in pre-service teacher development, as it enhances the quality of the teaching practice experience for the student teachers. In addition, it transpires that Lesson Study contributes to the professional development of the supervising teachers.

Nina Lazarević describes a study conducted with EFL teachers, involving the possibilities of applying Integrated performance assessment to strengthen the assessment process and the teaching practice as a whole. Her results show that teachers most often assess speaking over other skills, and that there is room for diversifying the testing techniques, with a heavier focus on integrated skills and formative assessment.

Discussing EFL teachers' feedback on students' writing, **Lydia Mitits** presents a study of teachers' views on the importance of error feedback and the factors that may influence it. She points out that the majority of teachers offer only content-based feedback and do not mark errors selectively, contrary to what is recommended in the literature.

Motivating students to talk about their emotions is discussed by **Feiderikos Valetopoulos**, from the perspective of the process of vocabulary teaching and learning. The findings of his study show that lexical variation was very limited in the task that asked the students to describe their happiest moment, and the author concludes that this may be the result of L1 influence, due to different conceptualizations of emotions.

In the last paper of this section, **Tatjana Paunović** analyses the curriculum for higher EFL teacher education at a Serbian state-funded university, and presents the findings of a study in which students were asked to reflect on and analyse the development of their communicative skills during their BA studies. She concludes that specific communicative skills, although often emphasised as central in both EFL teaching and teacher education, are neither explicitly stated as aims and outcomes nor included in the content of specific courses in pre-service teacher

education. She concludes that students' awareness of all the relevant aspects of communication skills and strategies should be raised.

Part two of the book presents papers focusing on *Language skills*.

Biljana Radić-Bojanić and **Jagoda Topalov** investigate the use of listening, speaking and vocabulary learning strategies in first-year English Department students. The authors point out that the students who are more successful in their interaction in the target language also tend to use listening and speaking strategies more frequently, employing a strategic approach when they learn, review, and recall new vocabulary.

The use of context to discover the meaning of unknown words while reading, i.e. lexical guessing, or the use of inferencing strategies is investigated by **Brikena Xhaferi**, with intermediate-level EFL learners. The author also discusses the positive attitudes students express towards vocabulary learning, and their success in using contextual clues, word features, general word knowledge and intrinsic clues as different vocabulary strategies.

Lastly, **Rebecca Charboneau Stuvland** discusses the increased expectations in EFL teaching, especially regarding the reading competence, introduced with the implementation of the *Knowledge Promotion curriculum* in Norway. She presents the findings of a qualitative study in which primary-school teachers using different approaches to reading instruction were interviewed about their use of materials, reading practices, grouping methods, learning aims, and views on reading instruction.

The **third section** of the volume is devoted to *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (ICC) and its role in the EFL classroom and EFL teacher education.

Silje Normand and **Milica Savić** focus on the use of process drama in teacher education, aimed at increasing prospective teachers' intercultural competence. The authors present a case study of implementing an 8-hour process drama project, focusing on two components of intercultural competence—developing empathy and multiperspectivity. The authors emphasise that the participants found the dramatic embodiment valuable for both their affective response and for a deeper reflection on the feelings of others.

With regard to fostering intercultural competence, **Sofija Christensen** discusses cultural resources incorporated in a textbook for Norwegian as a second language, and the role of these resources as mediators in the process of developing students' intercultural competence. The author does not focus only on the elements of the Norwegian society, lifestyles and values that are selected and presented in the textbook, but rather on the

ways in which the textbook uses the materials for the purpose of developing learners' intercultural competence.

Part four of the volume, titled *ESP*, is devoted to issues of teaching foreign languages for professional use.

This section opens with **María Kopylovskaya's** proposal of a new ESP methodology course in higher education, stressing the new demands placed on this field by the introduction of the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. She shows that ESP teachers need to use digital tools not only in the process of teaching but in the design of their teaching and assessment of its efficiency.

Error analysis as a teaching tool in ESP is discussed by **Jelica Tošić**, who presents the findings of her study of students' errors in a selection of ESP language tests, and highlights the ways in which this analysis could be used to improve the teaching process.

Explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction in developing ESP students' lexical competence is dealt with by **Maja Stanojević Gocić**. Her study compares the results of two groups of students, one employing implicit and the other explicit vocabulary instruction techniques. The findings show that implicit vocabulary instruction has proved much more effective for the students' long-term vocabulary retention.

Finally, **Milevica Bojović** explores ESP students' views on classroom reading activities. The results of her quantitative study show some gender differences in students' evaluations of their previous experience in reading and reading-comprehension activities, while the frequency of testing reading skills has proved to have a positive effect on the students' self-confidence in reading.

In **Part Five** of the volume, titled *Different languages, different contexts*, four authors discuss issues related to language research, teaching and learning from the perspectives of different foreign languages and various mother tongues.

Investigating the influence of a Slavic mother tongue on the process of learning a Finno-Ugric foreign language, **Edít Bogár** analyses potential problems for students at all the levels of linguistic structure, pointing out that teachers' practices must take into account these systemic differences. The author concludes that student motivation is crucial in the language learning process.

The possibilities offered by the Argumentation Theory in the context of teaching Spanish as a foreign language are discussed by **Liliana Karina Alanís Flores**. She describes the potential for using some aspects of the theory in the classroom, particularly some important concepts such

as topoi, modifiers and connectors through which students can understand and use the new language for effective communication.

Christian Voss discusses the study of Slavic Philology at the Humboldt University in Berlin, focusing on Border Studies and the Balkans. Setting off from the description of the current situation in the Slavic studies and their relevant socio-political, historical and cultural context, the author emphasises the importance of the constructivist notion of the *border*, concluding that the relation between symbolic and territorial, topographic and topologic processes of border drawing requires interdisciplinary, comparative and intersectional research approaches.

The last contribution explores the process of language learning in the context of high school student international mobility. **Dunja Živanović** explores the timeframe within which a student can master the language of the host country, and stresses the importance of the complex factors and circumstances in which the process takes place.

* * *

Teaching Languages and Cultures in the Post-Method Era: Developing Competencies, Re-thinking Practices hopes to communicate to a wide audience of scholars and researchers as well as classroom practitioners. The questions raised and research findings offered by the contributors are undoubtedly of interest to a wide array of professionals in the fields of linguistics, applied linguistics, intercultural competence, and foreign language teaching, as well as to prospective language and culture teachers, MA and PhD students. We therefore thank the authors for their insights and efforts to add to the exploration of the important questions in language and culture teaching.

In the belief that the academic network needs to be as dynamic as the pace of the modern, changing world, *TLC* conferences and publications like this one aim to provide a forum for authentic and novel discussions, to encourage researchers to conduct studies with the teaching component in mind, and to invite researchers and practitioners to jointly consider how to implement the research findings in daily classroom practices, thus contributing to bridging the ever-present gap between theory and practice.

Editors
September, 2017

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PART I –
TEACHER EDUCATION

USING LESSON STUDY AS A DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION WITH ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENT TEACHERS

DEBORAH L. S. LARSEN AND ION DREW

Outline

This paper reports on how Lesson Study (LS) has been used and researched as a supporting tool in EFL teacher education at the University of Stavanger. LS has been a compulsory part of EFL teacher education courses at the University of Stavanger since 2012. All EFL student teachers are required to carry out a LS project during their group teaching practice and to write a follow-up report that includes reflective notes and a presentation to their peers. Data collected over the last four years has included recordings of supervision sessions, video-recorded lessons, focus group interviews, LS reports and student reflection notes. These were analysed using two types of content analysis: the first was where the categories emerged from the text (Krippendorf 2013), while the second used a predesigned rubric adapted from Cochran-Smith et al. (2009). The experiences and research on LS in EFL teacher education at the University of Stavanger show that, while it is challenging and demanding, the student teachers nevertheless acknowledge that it makes a positive contribution to their professional teacher development. The implications are that there are clear benefits of using LS as a supporting tool in EFL teacher education.

Key words: Lesson Study (LS), English as a foreign language (EFL), EFL teacher education, teaching practice.

Introduction

This article discusses the use of Lesson Study (LS) as a developmental tool in English as a foreign language (EFL) initial teacher education at the University of Stavanger (UiS). Tsui and Law (2007, 1294) define LS as

the “systematic investigation of classroom pedagogy conducted collectively by a group of teachers/students, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning.” Firstly, the article describes the origin and nature of LS, followed by a brief overview of LS research. Secondly, it explains how LS has been implemented as a compulsory component during EFL student teachers’ teaching practice at UiS. Thirdly, it provides an overview of research carried out at UiS on the implementation of LS in initial EFL teacher education. Finally, it discusses the implications of practising LS as a compulsory part of this education.

An historical overview of Lesson Study

The precursor to research lessons in LS was known as “object lessons”, namely lessons in focus (Makinae 2010). The idea of object lessons first came about during the Meiji era in Japan (1868–1912) as a tool to support the introduction of western arithmetic with Arabic numbers and calculations based on decimals. During this period of transition, pre-service teachers were trained to use the new arithmetical systems and methods before being sent out to elementary practice schools with pre-planned object lessons that they performed together with the local staff (Makinae 2010). Fellow student teachers were encouraged to review the lesson plans, observe the teaching and subsequently to critically assess the lesson against four main points: content, method, teacher and children.

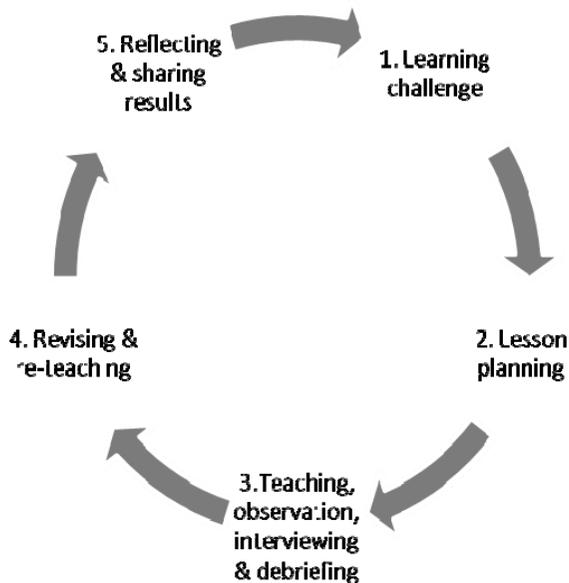
The success of this early model for student teachers led to its wide-scale adoption by many local boards of education in Japan in the 1900s and an expansion of its role from pre-service to in-service professional development (Makinae 2010). Its gradual change into what is now recognized as Lesson Study is firmly established as one of the most common components of continuing professional development currently practised in Japan (Stigler & Hiebert 1999).

The nature of Lesson Study

Lesson Study is normally practised by groups of in-service teachers or, as is increasingly common, by student teachers in initial teacher education. LS is investigative, cyclical in nature and grounded in what takes place in the classroom (Munthe, Helgevold & Bjuland 2015). Starting from a classroom challenge or innovation, and in connection with a learning aim, a research focus is identified and expressed through a research question (Dudley 2015). A number of “research pupils” are chosen from the class in question based on consideration of their suitability to yield data from

lesson observations and post-lesson interviews that may help to answer the research question. The group then plans a research lesson and, in addition, predicts what learning behaviours and outcomes may be expected from the chosen research pupils. During the teaching of the lesson, these pupils are closely observed and interviewed afterwards. This data, together with the experiences of the teacher and the group's predictions are then discussed and improvements are made to the research lesson as a conclusion of these discussions. This refined lesson is then re-taught to a similar but different class. A final debrief follows, as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: A Lesson Study cycle



Research on LS

In an overview of LS articles, Xu and Pedder (2015) identified 67 articles connected to LS, published between 2002 and 2013. They noted that the first recognizable article on LS was written by Fernandez (2002). LS publications had previously tended to be introductory in nature, often discussing its potential. Between 2002 and 2007, 17 articles were published reporting empirical research on LS, with the number increasing

to 50 by 2013. The increase in the number of articles in this period reflected the global growth of LS.

Hu and Pedder (2015) pointed out that the earlier articles tended to be written in North America and Asia, although more articles had recently been published in Europe and Africa. These reviewed articles showed that LS was practised in all formal educational settings from pre-school to university, with the majority of the research focusing on primary/secondary schools and within initial teacher education. In relation to subject focus, the majority of the articles tended to concern LS in Mathematics and Science. However, some recent articles had focused on other subjects, such as EFL, literacy, economics, and business studies.

Hu and Pedder (2015) also identified four main categories of research foci in the LS articles. Firstly, there was a focus on the benefits and constraints that influenced LS in the various research contexts. Secondly, there was a focus on the way that LS was used by teachers and teacher educators to investigate specific aspects of teaching and learning. Thirdly, there was a more in-depth focus on understanding the deeper processes of professional learning and classroom practice. Finally, there was a focus on the contextual factors that influenced the success or failure of LS, with indications of how the method could best be implemented and sustained within a programme of study. The first three categories are especially relevant to the LS research on EFL reviewed later in this article.

An intercultural perspective on school reform, teacher education and professional development

Unlike western nations, who view teachers as fully qualified when they finish university or college, teachers in Japan accept that they may never be fully qualified and, as a part of their job description, they are expected to undertake continuous professional development whilst at work (Stigler & Hiebert 1999). Although teachers in Norway are also allocated time for such professional development, it is the individual teacher who decides how this time should be spent rather than it being the responsibility of school heads to organise.

This difference in the way professional development is viewed in countries such as Norway and Japan impacts the opportunities there are for school innovation and reform. In Japan, educational improvement tends to be school-based and led by responsible professional practitioner teachers who have the knowledge and tools available to them to conduct classroom-based research (Stigler & Hiebert 1999). In Norway, in contrast, school reforms have tended to come from top-down initiatives

from the Department of Education, which teachers may find as burdensome and thus only partially implement (Møller & Skredmo 2013). However, studies such as those undertaken by Stigler and Hiebert (1999), which clearly show cultural differences in approaches to education and classroom teaching between countries, have meant that there is an increasing global interest in methods of teaching reform and improvement from countries such as Japan. LS is one such method and is increasingly considered as one of the tools that may facilitate improved teaching and subsequent learning as it “allows teachers to transform the way they teach the children they are teaching now in the lessons that they are teaching now” (Dudley 2015, 4). As Stigler and Hiebert (1999, 111) note:

The premise behind LS is simple: If you want to improve teaching, the most effective place to do so is in the context of a classroom lesson. The challenge now becomes that of identifying the kinds of changes that will improve pupil learning in the classroom and, once the changes are identified, of sharing this knowledge with other teachers who face similar problems, or share learning goals, in the classroom.

Students as researchers in teacher education in Norway

As noted earlier, the Ministry of Education in Norway is often the driving force behind many of the educational changes undertaken in the country. One such change can be seen in the Guidelines for Teacher Education (2010), which state that:

All teacher education programmes in Norway must be organised so that they promote the integration of theory and practice training, academic progression, consistent professional orientation and a research basis... The teacher education programmes must be research-based. All school subjects and subjects relevant for work in schools must be anchored in an active research environment if the objective of being totally research-based is to be achieved.

These guidelines are clearly intended to support the development of research knowledge amongst student teachers and to provide them with the tools to continue researching within their own contexts and classroom settings once they are fully qualified. By continuously reviewing their practice, it is hoped that future teachers will become more innovative and responsive to their pupils' needs.

The facilitation of such guidelines has led to LS pilot studies at UiS, both as a professional development tool for practising teachers in the nearby municipality of Bomlø (Munthe, Baugstø & Haldorsen 2013), and as a teacher education tool in subjects such as Mathematics, Natural

Sciences, English as a Foreign Language, and Sports Science (Helgevold, Njæsheim-Bjørkvik & Østrem 2016). As a result of these pilot studies, which showed an increase in the focus on pupil learning and supported the development of improved teaching methods amongst both professional and student teachers, the EFL, Mathematics and Sport Science departments have implemented LS as an integral part of their BA and MA programmes at UiS. For the EFL department, LS takes place in the student teachers' fifth semester of their Bachelor of Education and is a compulsory component.

The Lesson Study cycle at UiS

Dudley (2015, 5) notes that LS is a deceptively simple sequence of collaborative reflective practices that can be undertaken by any small group of teachers. It requires no technology or prior experience and can be adapted to many different contexts. In fact, the very adaptability of LS may be a problem if it loses key elements, such as rigorous clinical reflection, in an attempt to make it easier and less time-consuming to undertake.

Bearing this in mind, the LS cycle developed at UiS builds on a traditional LS model as described by Dudley (2015) and Stigler and Hiebert (1999), and starts with an introduction of the theme "Research in the English language classroom". Here students discuss their previous experiences of conducting research and the LS model is presented to them and consequently discussed. A LS guide has evolved over the last six years of practising the method within the department. This guide emerged as a consequence of employing many of the core questions used in Science subjects (Loughran, Berry & Mulhall 2006), together with supportive materials published online by Dudley (2014). However, in time it has been strongly influenced by comments made by the student teachers and their supervising teachers following the completion of the LS projects. This guide acts as a scaffolding for first-time LS participants, guiding them through the project step-by-step, asking critical questions, and offering rubrics that they can use at each stage of the process.

This is followed by the student teachers (usually in groups of three to four) visiting their teaching practice school approximately six weeks before practice commences in order to carry out a form of "needs analysis" of their upcoming classes. First, they meet their practice classes and discover the characteristics of their pupils and what technical support the classroom may have (e.g. smartboards, computer access). Their supervising teacher then presents the syllabus, highlighting the learning aims they will teach and providing any course-books they may need to prepare lessons. Finally,

the student teachers attempt to discover, with the help of their supervising teacher, what pre-knowledge the pupils may possess that can help them, or challenges that may prevent the pupils from learning and developing these learning aims and skills.

On returning to the university, the student teachers spend approximately 12 hours of the course and many more hours outside course time, meeting in their groups over the next three weeks. They discuss both on their own and together with their lecturers, deciding what learning challenge they wish to focus on and what is to be their research question. They subsequently design a research lesson, the aim of which is twofold: firstly, it must address both the learning aim for the lesson and, secondly, it must also yield data about the pupils' learning behaviours that may help the student teachers to answer their research question. An example of this from an EFL context could be the challenge of reluctant speakers and may result in a research question in connection with, for example, Readers Theatre, an activity in which groups read aloud a text (Black and Stave 2007). A possible research question could be: Will Readers Theatre, as an activity type, encourage reluctant speakers to participate orally more in the EFL classroom? The learning aim in this case can easily be contained within the Readers Theatre text and the student teachers are essentially testing out a new activity type that they have discovered at the university to see how it may influence pupil participation and subsequent learning. The student teachers receive feedback on this draft plan by the supervising teacher at a meeting organised at the university before the start of teaching practice (normally ten days beforehand) and in supervision sessions once practice has started.

During practice, the student teachers undertake two rounds of their research lessons with two separate but comparable classes. These rounds are highly choreographed in an attempt to signal to the student teachers and their supervising teacher that these are essentially research lessons and different in nature from the normal lessons they may have to teach. Once the supervising teacher has decided that the research lesson is appropriate for the first class, three "research pupils" are chosen to represent the variety of learner types in the classroom. Predictions are then made of the possible learning behaviours and outcomes these research pupils may display during the research lesson. In addition, they design interview questions to ask the research pupils after completion of the lesson that may add extra data to their analysis of the lesson. Finally, the student teachers' roles are determined randomly; one student teacher is chosen to teach the lesson while the others act as close observers. During the lesson, observations of the selected individual pupils take place; the observing student teachers

take notes as to how and in what way the pupils react to the lesson in relation to the predictions made in advance. The role of the supervising teacher is to adopt an *eagle-eyed* view of the classroom as a whole, spotting any behaviour or incidents that may add to the data.

Having taught the lesson and conducted the interviews, the student teachers regroup within 24 hours of the research lesson and debrief. Having reviewed their data, they first reflect over what they have found out about pupil learning and the different learning behaviours they have observed. They then decide what changes need to be made to their research lesson in order to offer more opportunities for learning before teaching it to a second class. The procedure of student teacher roles (i.e. one teacher and others as observers) is the same as before, and research pupils are once again selected and predictions made. After the second lesson has been taught, the group once again reviews their data from both classes and sums up their reflections of the whole LS project, with a particular focus on how their knowledge and understanding of pupil learning has developed. On returning to the university, the student teachers are given guidance on how they should write up their results into a LS report of approximately 8,500 words. They also write an individual reflection note of approximately 1,500 words on their own learning development and the whole group orally presents their project to their peers (25-30 minutes). As this is the final assessment for the course, clear criteria are available so that the student teachers know how they will be evaluated.

Research on the implementation of LS at UiS

This section refers to three research studies in the context of LS in initial EFL teacher education at the institution in question. In order to compare the effects of LS with a normal teaching practice situation for EFL teacher students, the first study focused on student reflections on teaching English during a normal teaching practice period (Larssen & Drew 2014). Focus group interviews lasting between one and one-and-a-half hours were conducted with two groups of student teachers (one group of four and one group of three) to elicit their reflections on EFL teaching both before and after a three-week teaching practice period. The aim was to find out which aspects of their teaching practice the student teachers reflected upon and which factors influenced their reflections during this process.

In the pre-practice interviews, the student teachers' focus was on General Pedagogical Knowledge (GPK) and Pedagogic Content Knowledge

(PCK) (Roberts 1998). Aspects of GPK reflected upon were classroom management, choice of resources and activities, and motivation and assessment. These included premises for dividing the pupils into groups, parent involvement, and determining the pupils' learning styles. Reflections on PCK, i.e. their specific understanding and knowledge of teaching English, included discussions about the use of the target language in the lessons. Little attention was given to the content knowledge of English teaching (Roberts 1998), e.g. the specific topic being taught or the linguistic aim of the lesson.

In the post-practice interviews, reflections on GPK and PCK were still predominant, with little attention devoted to content knowledge of English teaching. In general, the student teachers "...seemed to be more focused on their own roles as teachers and less on their pupils' learning, especially on the development of the pupils' target language." (Larssen & Drew 2014, 168). For example, neither group showed an understanding of why and how the topics they were teaching would enhance the pupils' development of language and communicative skills. It also became apparent that the supervising teacher's focus largely determined the focus of the student teachers' reflections. In the one group, the supervisor had focused on the student teachers' ability to control and motivate the pupils and had paid little attention to the subject of English itself. In the other group, the supervisor's focus was on how to build a good lesson (Larssen & Drew 2014, 166). In this latter group, the student teachers experienced far more correspondence than in the first group between what they had learned at the university and what they had experienced in practice.

As a comparison to the above study, focus group interviews with two groups of EFL student teachers were again used as a forum for eliciting reflections on teaching practice, both before and after practice, but this time in connection with the use of LS in specific English lessons (Larssen & Drew 2016). One group, consisting of four student teachers, taught a seventh grade class in which the focus of the lesson was on the pupils writing a diary with supporting modelling. The other group, consisting of three pupils, taught a second grade class in which the lesson focused on using a children's picture book.

The post-practice focus group interviews showed that the student teachers reflected on the experience of using LS in their EFL practice in three main ways (Larssen & Drew 2016, 225-226). Firstly, they reflected on the contribution LS had made to the planning and execution of the lesson. They noted the necessity to plan the lesson in depth and, through the observational data and post-lesson interviews with the three selected pupils, they were able to focus on what these pupils had learned. This

input enabled them to modify the lesson so that when taught a second time, they could provide pupils with increased learning opportunities.

Secondly, the student teachers reflected on how LS had contributed to their own development. Their collective responsibility for the lesson had been considered as a strength in the process of their development. During the LS process, they had been able to “reflect on, discuss and be critical of both general classroom issues and subject-specific issues...in the lesson and the choice of appropriate learning activities” (Larssen & Drew 2016, 225). This had increased their self-confidence and made them better teachers.

Finally, the student teachers had reflected on the importance of linking theory to practice. They had been given a good deal of theoretical support at their institution before embarking on their teaching practice. For example, the group reading a children’s picture book had been required to read up on the literature about using children’s books with young EFL learners and had been advised on what to read. The student teachers had emphasized how important this pre-practice support had been for successfully carrying out their LS project, for which they had needed to be thoroughly prepared. In fact, the pre-practice support provided at the institution appeared to be more important than that provided by the supervising teachers during the teaching practice period itself, partly because the supervising teachers were less familiar with LS than the student teachers themselves.

The third and final study addresses how a LS cycle specifically influenced the second grade children’s picture book lesson referred to in the previous study (Larssen & Drew 2015). In this lesson, the student teachers used the picture book *Henry’s Holiday* to teach the theme of “the weather” to the second graders. Authentic children’s picture books had not previously been used with the class in question and the two supervising teachers were initially skeptical about the suitability of using such a book with their class. Data was gathered through video- and audio- recordings of the pre-lesson supervision session, the lesson taught to the first class, the modified lesson taught to another class, and the follow-up supervision session (Larssen & Drew 2015, 96).

In the first lesson, the student teachers appeared to have been influenced by the two supervising teachers’ concerns and, as a consequence, over-scaffolded the lesson by asking too many questions and often recasting questions in the L1. This resulted in a fragmented and relatively long reading experience for the pupils. As a result of the data gathered from researching the three selected pupils in the first lesson, the student teachers asked fewer questions in the second lesson and resorted less to the use of

the L1. The reading of the picture book happened in a more natural and fluent way. In general, the second lesson was more successful than the first. It was interesting to note that the differing starting points of the student teachers and the supervising teachers seemed to converge in the session between the two lessons:

The mentors took on board the students' ideology of using authentic picture books in English, which they would now use themselves with their pupils in future. The students for their part understood the necessity of adopting a more instrumental approach to their teaching. In this way, LS became a developmental tool for both the mentors and the students. (Larssen & Drew 2015, 103)

This LS experience is an example of how reviewing a lesson and teaching the same lesson again in an improved manner is central to the cyclical nature of LS. The focus is on pupil learning, while per se enhancing the quality of teaching.

Implications

This section addresses the implications of the research conducted on the implementation of LS in initial EFL teacher education at UiS, considering its benefits, prerequisites and challenges.

One implication from the research on EFL teaching practice in a normal situation was that the experiences of the different student teachers were extremely variable and seemed to depend to a large extent on the supervision focus during lesson discussions with their supervising teachers. In one case, the supervising teacher stressed factors such as classroom control and the importance of motivating pupils and had little focus on the teaching of English as a school subject. In another case, the supervising teacher was much more focused on the structure and the subsequent teaching of a *good* English lesson. However, neither of these student groups experienced in-depth discussions during their supervision sessions about how best to address the learning aim in relation to English language content knowledge, something that had been focused upon during their courses at the university. There was thus a discrepancy, in this respect, between the student teachers' teaching practice experiences and the underlining focus of their university courses. In addition, the student teachers seemed to be more preoccupied with their own performances as teachers rather than with the effects of their teaching on pupil learning. On the basis of this research, one may conclude that there was room for improvement in the quality of teaching practice experienced by the student

teachers in their EFL education, especially its link between theory and practice.

The two other studies, based on data collected during the LS intervention, revealed that the student teachers experienced teaching practice in a number of ways different from those in the normal practice teaching situation. The implication from both studies was that LS had enhanced the quality of the teaching practice experience for the student teachers involved. During the post-practice focus group interviews, the student teachers reported that a consequence of LS was that they placed greater focus on the pupils themselves and their learning during the research lesson. They felt that this had aided their development and self-confidence as teachers and they had gained more methodological insight into how best to teach EFL. One reason for this was that they were able to make stronger connections between theory and practice during the LS process because of the need to justify their choice of activities during the research lesson. This thus fulfilled the Department of Education's (2010) requirement that theory should be linked to practice and that the subject should be anchored in an active research environment.

In the case where LS had been used to teach a picture book in a second grade class, one was able to gain insight into a complete LS cycle in an EFL context, one that evolved according to the principles and models for such a cycle (Dudley 2015; Stigler & Hiebert 1999). The student teachers moved from a specific learning aim, to researching how best to teach it, to planning and undertaking a research lesson, and then to researching the lesson. On this basis, they were able to re-teach what was subsequently considered to be a more successful lesson. Interestingly, one unexpected benefit of LS in this context was how it was able to contribute to the professional development of the supervising teachers in addition to that of the student teachers.

Although the above-mentioned studies conducted on LS at UiS have been small-scale and involving a small sample of student teachers, the trends from these studies have been confirmed through discussions with and reports written by other student teachers during the same period.

Based on the experiences of implementing LS as a compulsory element in initial EFL teacher education at UiS, the implication is that LS carries with it a number of benefits for EFL student teachers' professional development. Firstly, LS shifts their focus away from their own classroom performance and onto the effects and learning opportunities of that performance on their pupils. This thus helps them to understand the essential nature of teaching, namely to facilitate learning. Secondly, the LS process necessitates student teachers making the link between theory and

practice. This theoretical/practical knowledge is not confined to the university, but is used by the student teachers as topics for discussion in their practice schools. Thirdly, because the group and not the individual is responsible for the planning, teaching and evaluation of the research lesson, this shared responsibility creates a professional space for deeper critical reflection about teaching. Moreover, the group dynamic is not limited to the group, but is likely to have a positive effect on the individual student teacher's development.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge that LS places a number of demands on teacher trainers, school supervisors and, not least, on student teachers. It requires a good deal of time and effort both during courses at the university and also during practice. In the initial planning phase, student teachers require considerable scaffolding from teacher trainers. In addition, for LS to succeed, supervising teachers need both to be trained to work with the student teachers, and also to have the time and motivation to support their efforts during practice. Although the university lecturers can support student teachers during the initial phases of the project, once the student teachers move into the schools, they need to be supported by their supervising teachers. Successful LS projects are usually a consequence of supervising teachers allocating sufficient time and /or being sufficiently motivated to become thoroughly involved in the research. Therefore, supervising teachers also need to have insight into LS in order for student teachers to gain optimal benefits from a practice period including LS.

Conclusion

In spite of the obvious demands that LS places on those taking part in it, our experiences of the benefits of LS as a compulsory component within initial EFL teacher education have been so positive that it will continue to be practised at our institution in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we strongly recommend that other institutions consider the potential for teacher development it has to offer in initial teacher education and beyond.

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