A Qualitative Case Study on the Post-Observation Feedback in the Practicum

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Abstract

The present qualitative case study explores the post-observation feedback in the practicum provided by a single mentor at a junior high school in Japan. With the aim of determining the teaching skills for which the mentor provided feedback, 20 post-observation sessions were audio-recorded and analysed. The results show that the feedback focused on teaching skills, such as instruction, interaction, feedback and teacher talk. This suggests the mentor's underlying belief in good teaching and in creating a communicative classroom by ensuring meaningful interactions in English by utilising teacher talk appropriately. It was also found that the trainees are expected to serve some roles beyond the subject matter, such as maintaining discipline and helping build rapport among students.

Keywords：post-observation feedback, teaching practicum, mentor

1. Introduction

The teaching practicum provides would-be teachers with the invaluable experience of serving as a teacher for the first time. During this short-term training, they learn various skills due to a wide range of situations at school from teaching English to coping with the personal matters of individual students. Despite the possible impact that the practicum has on future teachers, knowledge regarding what occurs and which limitations exist are confined to anecdotal evidence shared amongst insiders. To date, few systematic investigations have been conducted to examine this topic.

Teaching practices (TPs) and post-observation feedback, during which the mentor provides comments with the aim of improving teaching after classroom observations, comprise a central component of the practicum (Copland, 2010). Post-observation feedback has been the target of qualitative investigations in different contexts overseas. The present study contributes to the understanding of this under-researched yet significant area of English language teaching in Japan by focusing on the feedback provided in the post-observation sessions. A total of 20 post-observation sessions were audio-recorded, and the results revealed that the feedback is centred on teaching skills, such as instructions, feedback, interactions and teacher talk, which reflects the tacit view of good teaching held by the mentor.

2. Background
2.1 Pre-Service Teacher Training and the Practicum

In an age of the mass employment of new teachers, pre-service teacher training is of utmost importance to assure the quality of education; however, it seems that pre-service teacher training involves various issues as pointed out by several researchers and teacher educators. For instance, Takahashi (2011) has asserted that there is a lack of clear standards for teaching qualification or initial teacher education and

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that there is an urgent need to stipulate the technical knowledge and expertise necessary for both the pre-service and in-service levels. Honda et al. (2017) also emphasised the importance of establishing standards for pre-service training for foreign language teachers, and they claimed that a complete list of descriptors of foreign language teachers should be compiled. Ishida et al. (2011) reviewed the status quo of pre-service teacher training and concluded that there is no well-established system that helps trainees acquire practical teaching expertise.

In pre-service teacher training courses, the practicum is an integral component (Delaney, 2015) and plays a central role because it provides trainees with their first hands-on experience teaching students. According to Gebhard (2009), the practicum is 'the kind of school-based experiences within a teacher education curriculum that can help teacher-learners to make a transition from their academic program to the realities of teaching in a school⋯.' (p. 250), and it usually includes 'supervised teaching, experience with systematic observation, and gain[ing] familiarity with a particular teaching context.' (ibid.).

In Japan, the practicum has long been a component of the pre-service teacher training curriculum; however, discussions, either theoretical or empirical, regarding the practicum are limited. Shimizu and Furuya (2008) stated that there is a tacit understanding that the practicum is left to the discretion of experienced teachers who accept trainees and that there is little cooperation amongst the board of education, universities and the schools where the practicum takes place. Asaoka (2014, p. 130) asserted that given the limited amount of practical training provided during pre-service training, it would be difficult for student teachers to acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills.

Regarding empirical evidence, few studies have investigated the perceptions of experienced teachers. For example, Jinbo (2006) administered a large quantitative survey on teachers' perceptions of the practicum, which revealed that teachers are too busy to accept and to mentor student teachers, especially when the students are not passionate about teaching as a career choice.

2.2 Studies on the Post-Observation Feedback in the Practicum

What exactly do trainees experience in the practicum? The key components include observation of experienced teachers, TPs and feedback on TPs from peer trainees and/or tutors (Copland, 2010). The feedback in the practicum is defined as 'information supplied to trainees concerning some aspects of their performance on a task, by a peer or tutor, with a view to enhancing practice' (Brandt, 2008, p. 39). In providing feedback, tutors are meant to 'offer support to the trainee as they learn to teach, provide suggestions and advice with regard to improving practice, and assess trainee's teaching against a set of criteria issued by the institution or an awarding body.' (Copland, 2010, p. 466) The feedback is usually provided during post-observation sessions, which occur shortly after the TPs (Mann & Walsh, 2017).

Post-observation feedback has been the target of empirical investigations abroad. For example, Brandt (2008) conducted an ethnographic study and found that feedback alone was problematic and insufficient to promote reflection. Copland (2010) also conducted a linguistic ethnographic study and shared the same view as Brandt that feedback caused tensions between the mentor and the trainees. She further demonstrated that tension may have been rooted in different expectations the trainers and the trainees had regarding the purpose of feedback. Hyland and Lo (2006) conducted a qualitative case study in which they revealed interrelated factors, including a cultural factor that influenced the dialogue between university tutors and trainees. Kurtoglu-Hooton (2016) also reported a case

study of four student teachers and demonstrated that confirmatory feedback, or positive feedback in the form of praise, helped student teachers develop their confidence.

In Japan, although there is some evidence of teachers' perceptions of the practicum, as mentioned in the previous section, there has been no investigation into post-observation feedback. The present study is the first attempt to fill this gap, and the aim was to characterise what teaching skills the mentor expects to observe from the trainees during the practicum.

2.3 The Present Study

In the present study, following Copland (2012, p. 1), the term 'trainees' is used to refer to university students, either juniors or seniors, who participated in the practicum as student teachers. The mentor is an experienced teacher in the school who is responsible for observing TPs, providing feedback and assessing their performance at the end of the practicum. The tutor is a researcher from the university, the second author of this study, who teaches a Teaching Methodology course and send trainees to the school.

The aim of the present study was to explore the post-observation feedback in the practicum by addressing the following open research question:

(1) What feedback does the mentor provide during the post-observation sessions?

3. Method
3.1 The Context of the Present Study

Methodologically, the present study was interpretive and qualitative in nature, which is usually associated with a case study (Duff, 2008, p. 35). The data were collected in September 2016, when the three-week teaching practicum took place at a junior high school affiliated with the University of X. There were three experienced English teachers (mentors), and each teacher was responsible for mentoring four or five trainees.

In many public junior high school, trainees generally spend the first week of the practicum observing lessons taught by experienced teachers, and then they conduct TPs themselves later; however, at the school examined, three weeks were spent on TPs because the mentors needed to observe as many as twelve TPs for each trainee.

The trainees had observed lessons taught by experienced teachers in May and June in advance, and they had input-sessions in August. Each group of trainees attended the session about five times, and each lasted about three hours. During these sessions, each mentor covered the basics of teaching English that trainees were expected to be familiar with before the practicum officially began.

Due to the economy of time, the focus was one group comprised of one male mentor with thirteen years of experience and four trainees, two males and two females, who were responsible for teaching the second-year students. Two of the trainees were in their junior year at the university, and it was their first time participating in the practicum. The other two were seniors, and it was their second time. One trainee was a leader student, and all the trainees were expected to work together as a team in planning and reflection. The main coursebook was *NEW HORIZON English course 2*. Twenty post-observation feedback sessions were held, and the length of each session varied from about 20 minutes to 80 minutes depending on the number of lessons covered. Table 1 outlines the timetable for each TP and the feedback sessions during the practicum. Trainee A is shown as A, and the number indicates the number of times TPs were observed. For example, A-1 refers to the first TP by trainee A.

The post-observation session was initiated by a self-reflection by a trainee(s) who had conducted a lesson(s), and then the feedback was provided by peer trainees followed by feedback from the mentor. Feedback was given on the strengths of the lesson first and then on the areas of

Table 1　*The Timetable for TPs and Post-Observation Sessions in the Practicum*

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	
31st. Aug	A-1	B-1	Session-1	B-2		A-2	Session-2
1st Sep	C-1	D-1	C-2	Session-3		D-2	Session-4
2nd Sep	B-3	Session-5		A-3	Session-6	A-4	Session-7
5th Sep	B-4		C-3	Session-8	D-3		Session-9
6th Sep			C-4		D-4		Session-10
7th Sep	C-5	D-5	Session-11	D-6		C-6	
8th Sep	A-5	B-5	A-6	Session-12	C-7	B-6	Session-13
9the Sep	D-7	Session-14		C-8		A-7	
12th Sep	D-8		A-8		B-7		Session-15
13th Sep			C-9		B-8		Session-16
14th Sep	D-9	D-10	C-10	B-9	Session-17	A-9	
15th Sep	C-11	A-10	B-10	D-11			Session-18
20th Sep	D-12		A-11		B-11		Session-19
21st Sep	B-12			A-12	C-12		Session-20

development. Each TP was not formally assessed, and there was no official written assessment criteria for TPs. The final mark for the practicum was given later based on teaching English as well as on overall achievements during the practicum, including the multiple roles fulfilled by the trainees.

3.2　Data Collection and Analysis

With informed consent, all the sessions were audio-recorded, and only feedback from the mentor was transcribed for the analysis because the present study focused on the mentor's feedback. The first author was sometimes present during the post-observation feedback sessions with an IC recorder on the table without any intervention in the process. The second author visited the school and observed TPs as the tutor but did not intervene any of the post-observation feedback sessions.

A qualitative content analysis was employed to address RQ1 because it allows themes and interpretations to emerge inductively from the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 573). The aim was to shed light on the post-observation feedback, and therefore inductive coding, that is, data-driven coding rather than theory-driven coding, was suitable without any predetermined categories (Sato, 2008).

The analysis included three stages: (ⅰ) the transcripts were coded according to the functions of feedback, and (ⅱ) feedback that was coded in (ⅰ) as comments for future development was also assigned codes according to the area of teaching skills that each remark mentioned. The comments for future development are worth examining because it was assumed that it should reflect what the mentor considers 'good teaching', or unwritten guidelines, against which TPs were assessed. In other words, the latent guidelines or criteria on which the feedback was based emerged by examining this particular area of feedback. (ⅲ) Then, the qualitative data obtained in the first two stages were quantified to observe how much feedback was provided for each teaching area.

In the first step, the meaningful segments of the feedback were identified that functioned as: positive comments, comments for future development, clarification, questions and suggestions. As mentioned, the mentor always began with positive comments on TPs followed by comments for future development during which he also asked questions either to clarify what the trainees had intended to do during the TPs (clarification) or to elicit trainees' knowledge regarding language or teaching (questions). When necessary, the mentor offered alternative approaches to teaching for their future lessons. It should be noted that some feedback had more than two functions. For example, the feedback

Table 2　*Feedback Functions in the Post-Observation Feedback*

Feedback functions	Definition	Sample excerpt
Positive comments	Expressing approval for teaching (praising)	今日特によかったのが、いろいろ生徒に当てたり、気づかせたりしてたんですけど、すぐ答えを言うんじゃなくて、ヒントをあげたりうまく引き出していたのがよかったと思います。(7)
Comments for future development	Identifying teaching skills/behaviours that need to be improved in the future	最初に「教科書56ページ開きましょう〜」じゃなくて、これは英語で言えそうかなって。(11)
Clarification	Asking trainees why they did a particular teaching	聞いてからポイント与えたのは予定どおり？(9)
Questions	Asking about trainees' knowledge and alternative ways of teaching	Who is going to go to Kiyomizu Temple? Raise your hands!と聞いてたくさん挙げるじゃんね。そのあとどう言うんですか？(15)
Suggestions	Suggesting teaching alternatives	まあ、挙げた子に当てるのがひとつの手だし、挙げてない子に「あなたは？」って言うのもひとつの手だし、まあ先生がまとめて、Oh, many of you are going to go to Kiyomizu Temple! It's very popular in this class.と言ったら言ったですけど。(15)

statement 'When you show a model of reading aloud, where in the classroom should you stand? Yes, you should stand in the centre of the podium. You were walking around today' (from session 10) was coded both as a question and a comment for future development. Definitions and sample excerpts for each function are provided in Table 2. The numbers of post-observation sessions are provided in brackets.

During the second stage of the analysis, the focus was narrowed to 'comments for future development' because this form of feedback plays a central role in improving trainees' teaching skills in the practicum. The coding was not always straightforward because one comment could be interpreted in several ways. The authors discussed and re-coded the transcripts a few times to determine which teaching skills each comment referenced. To clarify the codes, Spratt et al. (2011) was followed because they explained the essential terms and concepts for English language teaching. As discussed in the next section, 26 codes corresponded to 26 teaching skills.

4. Findings and Discussion

As explained in the previous section, the feedback was coded into five different functions. Table 3 shows the frequency of feedback functions. More than half (54.1%) of the feedback focused on comments for future development.

The remainder of this article focuses on comments related to future development. For this form of feedback, 26 teaching skills were mentioned in the remarks. Table 4 outlines each teaching skill and provides their definitions with sample excerpts. Twenty-six teaching areas were grouped into four larger categories: classroom management, managing learning, language and planning.

Table 3　*The Frequency of Feedback Functions*

Feedback functions	Total	Percentage
Positive comments	107	22.2
Clarifications	20	4.2
Questions	31	6.4
Suggestions	63	13.1
Comments for future development	260	54.1
Total	481	100.0

Table 4 *The Frequency of Teaching Skills Mentioned in the Comments for Future Development*

Category	Teaching skills	Total	Percentage	
Classroom management	Classroom environment	11	4.2	
	Time management	8	3.1	9.6
	Maintaining discipline	4	1.5	
	Self-confidence	2	0.8	
Managing learning	Presenting language	2	0.8	
	Explanation	3	1.2	
	Reading comprehension	3	1.2	
	Board work	8	3.1	
	Nominating	7	2.7	
	Instruction	23	8.8	
	Feedback	18	6.9	44.6
	Interaction	7	2.7	
	Inreraction patterns	6	2.3	
	Procedure	4	1.5	
	Monitoring	5	1.9	
	Lesson aims	3	1.2	
	Techniques	17	6.5	
	Dealing with problems	10	3.8	
Language	Teacher talk	34	13.1	
	Codeswitching	18	6.9	
	English usage	32	12.3	38.8
	Pronunciation	15	5.8	
	Japanese usage	2	0.8	
Planning	Materials	4	1.5	
	Content	7	2.7	6.9
	Preparation	7	2.7	
		260	100.0	100.0

As can be observed, more attention was paid to certain teaching skills than others, which could indicate that these teaching skills were considered more important by the mentor and/or that some are more challenging for trainees to acquire, which prompted the mentor to discuss them repeatedly during the post-observation sessions. Of the 26 skills, the majority were categorised into 'managing learning', which involves approaches to managing student learning in the classroom. Table 5 describes each teaching skill with sample excerpts.

Table 5　*Teaching Skills Covered in the Comments for the Future Development*

Category	Teaching areas	Definition	Sample excerpt
Classroom management	Classroom environment	Creating a comfortable learning environment in the classroom both physically and psychologically	指名後、生徒が発表しますよね。立ち位置は工夫しましたか？一番教卓の前の子を当てましたけど、その生徒との距離感は数十センチです。(2)
	Time management	Setting appropriate time for each stage	パタプラが長い。パターンプラクティスになっていない。(2)
	Maintaining discipline	Establishing a clear system of rules and codes of behaviour	活動が続いてくと、生徒ってけっこう姿勢が崩れるんです。「姿勢を正してください」とか。(2)
	Self-confidence	Teaching with self-confidence	生徒とのやりとりでちょっと焦るよね。どっしりとスマイルで聞いてあげたり、ちょっとヒント出してあげたりさ。(8)
Managing learning	Presenting language	Conveying the meaning of a new language	take care ofの意味をどうやったらみんな気づけたかなっていう。(3)
	Explanation	Explaining a new language	文法説明が繰り返しが多いかなって。(6)
	Reading comprehension	To help students understand the text	本文理解の方法、質問していくのもいいし、TorFとか。(13)
	Board work	Keeping a clear record of learning on the board	sが大きかった。ちゃんと小文字に見えるように。
	Nominating	Choosing one learner to speak or do a particular task	かなり上位の子をポンポンって当てたんね。で、すんなり文法説明が成立したんですけど、低位の子分かったかなあっていう。なるべく上位の子だけで授業作らない。(2)
	Instruction	Telling students clearly what to do	I'll ask you questions, so please answer.って言うけど、Please answer my questions.でもいい。
	Feedback	Giving response (either positive or negative) to students' utterances	How are you?って言って、生徒がI'm so-so.って言ったのに対してGood!って、何がgoodながかなあっていうところ。(12)
	Interaction	Asking further questions and/or giving comments to maintain communication with students	パタプラで、あのまま生徒に質問するとか。Will you play soccer tomorrow?とか。(5)
	Interaction patterns	Choosing appropriate interaction patterns (e.g. whole class, group, pair or individual)	Talk in pairs.が長いしちょっと多用しすぎかな。内容考えて。(10)
	Procedure	Putting activities/practices in a logical sequence	オーラルで夏休みのことを話していたのに、その次へのつながりがなかった。(1)
	Monitoring	Observing students' performance in tasks/activities	もうちょっと机間指導できたらいい。(6)
	Lesson aims	Setting a clear aim of the lesson	この授業は、何をゴールにしたいかだよね？(13)
	Techniques	Using teaching techniques effectively	オーラルはもうちょっと間をなくしてテンポよくいけたらいいな。(8)
	Dealing with problems	Anticipating or/and deal with problems	「基礎英語」で発表した子がtext toが言いにくそうだった。そのあと授業者はどうする？(16)
Language	Teacher talk	Adjusting the way of talking to students	What kind of dog do you like?が分かってなかったよね。(6)
	Codeswitching	Choosing Japanese or English appropriately	「野球部の人〜？」って聞いてましたが、これ英語にできないかなあって。(2)
	English usage	Using correct English	We are going to chat time.って正しい文ですか？(2)
	Pronunciation	Pronouncing words/phrases accurately	windyとcloudyのwとlがちょっと甘いかなあ。(10)
	Japanese usage	Using correct Japanese	「薄い音」。これよく分かりません。(2)
Planning	Materials	Utilising materials effectively	タブレットの写真は2回目だけど、見にくいかな。大きさ的に。(16)
	Content	Understanding the content accurately	give a presentはホームシック解消方法のひとつ？ちょっと直結しないかなあって思いました。(15)
	Preparation	Preparing and planning a lesson	教科書のCD、あれを50回とか100回とか練習した？(3)

4.1　Comments on Instruction

As Table 4 shows, nearly half (44.4%) of the comments for development referred to managing learning. In this category, 'instruction' (8.8%) was the most frequent skill that the mentor discussed. This may imply that the mentor regarded instructions as a crucial component of lessons because he understands that a lack of clear instructions can cause confusion amongst students, which may disrupt the classroom environment. It was also challenging for the trainees to clearly convey the instructions during lessons. The trainees often used ambiguous or redundant expressions when giving instructions, which is evident from the following excerpts. The numbers of post-observation sessions and codes are shown in brackets.

When you were introducing today's activity, I think it was not very clear. It wasn't clear what the students were going to do. You may use Japanese a little to make it clearer.

(16, instruction)

At some point, students didn't seem to know what to do. Why was that? They didn't know to whom the instruction was directed. You just said, 'Please answer.' But maybe students thought something like, 'Are we supposed to chat, think in pairs, or is he going to nominate somebody?' So, you need to make sure you clarify who you are giving instructions to.

(4, instruction)

4.2　Comments on Feedback

The mentor repeatedly pointed out that the way in which trainees provided feedback related to students' responses could be improved. He expressed that it is important for trainees to appropriately respond to students' utterances, regardless of how trivial they may sound not only to create a communicative classroom but also to establish rapport with students.

One student said, 'I have to do my homework', and you said, 'Good! Do your best (In Japanese)'. It appears to me that you didn't take her comment seriously. When you said 'good' to 'I have to do my homework', did you mean she was a good student? Or did you mean that her sentence was good? You should have made your point clearer there.　(19, feedback)

When you nominated student A, she just kept saying, 'No, I can't do it! I can't do it!' But, she tried her best in the end. What did you say to her? You were focusing on writing something on the board while listening to them. She did her best anyway. That was okay, but it might be even better if you could give her a small praise on the spot. Or a bit later, when you were walking around in the class, you could just say 'It was a nice job' to her. It does makes a difference. This may sound hard for you, but I think what's important is people's heart (kokoro).　(9, feedback)

It is also observable from the next excerpt that the mentor believed that more positive feedback should be given related to the message or the content conveyed by students than related to the forms of the language they used. This suggests that the mentor finds it important to use English as a means of communication in the classroom by maintaining a favourable atmosphere in which students are not afraid of making mistakes.

Well, I would like you to be interested in the content. I mean, we English teachers tend to pay more attention to grammar. We are tempted to say things like, 'It was good that you have used "be interested in"!' But, rather, I want you to show more interest in what your students have done and what they are trying to convey.　(2, feedback)

When students shared their ideas, you had one of them say something, and then you

said, 'It's good that you use "Why don't you …?".' You also said, 'Perfect human is good'. But, was that really GOOD? Let me make sure again, but that was a piece of advice for Carlo, wasn't it? Well, you could encourage them in the way you did, but what is more important? Its content. Its content. It would be much nicer if you praise them for what they said. I too sometimes do this, and we are in the habit of saying, 'It was nice grammar!' However, we would like to highlight what students say. I'm saying this to myself, too.   (14, feedback)

4.3 Comments on Interaction

In relation to the comments on feedback, the mentor emphasised 'interaction', though the percentage is small (2.7%). He wanted trainees to maintain and to develop interactions as much as possible with a student(s) by adding comments and asking further questions because he wanted meaningful interactions to occur in the classroom.

In pattern practice, you let them practice words like 'play', 'get on the bus', and 'weather'. Why didn't you ask students then? For example, you could say, 'Will you play soccer?' or 'Will you listen to Kiso Eigo today?' (5, interaction)

You mentioned 'School trip'. It was a good move, and you were almost there. You said, 'Do you like Kiyomizu temple?' and 'How about you?' And the conversation stopped when a student just said, 'Yes.' If you ask using 'Do you…?', answers are always yes or no, and conversation stops. You could have done more. For example, you could have said, 'Can you add one more sentence?' or you could have asked questions.   (15, interaction)

The fact that the mentor commented frequently on teaching areas such as 'feedback' and 'interaction' reflects his firm belief that teachers should be able to utilise these skills to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom in which students are trusted and respect each other. In addition, these skills are indispensable in maintaining communication in the classroom. It is worth noting that these feedback and interaction skills cannot be realised without a certain degree of command of oral English, as is discussed in the next section.

4.4 Comments on Teacher Talk

Another area the comments focused on was 'teacher talk'. Teacher talk refers to the way in which trainees adjust the use of either English or Japanese for the students. In the post-observation feedback, the mentor expressed that teacher talk should be concise and clear enough to avoid disruption amongst students as well as to minimise teacher talking time.

You didn't have to ask, 'Do you know…?' when everyone knew it. When they have done many shadowing activities, you said, 'Do you know shadowing?' It was a complete waste of time.
                    (10, teacher talk)

'Codeswitching' can be viewed as a subcomponent of teacher talk because it involves switching from English to Japanese, and vice versa, to ensure that students understand instructions and explanations as well as to increase the amount of listening to English.

You used Japanese even for simple instructions, such as 'Let's listen'. Try to use English when you can.   (14, codeswitching)

When you were explaining 'universal design', it was all Japanese. I was wondering what subject you were teaching. (19, codeswitching)

'Teacher talk' was viewed as a fundamental skill because without it, other important skills could not be realised, such as giving instructions, asking questions, maintaining interactions and

providing feedback to the students. The next excerpt illustrates the importance of elaborating on the point that trainees attempted to make.

When you asked, 'What kind of movie do you like?', a student answered, 'Kimi no nawa (Your name)', which was not a genre. If I were you, I would further ask, 'Oh, is it a love story?' because you were asking about a genre. Perhaps, students didn't understand it when you said, 'What KIND of movie or music do you like?' They didn't seem to understand that 'kind' here means genre. You could help by giving examples, such as, 'What kind of movie do you like? Ah… SF? Action? Love story? Horror?' That might help them say, 'I like …' I assume that was why students couldn't respond. (15, teacher talk)

The mentor acknowledged that the way teachers use English has a significant effect on students' understanding as well as on whether teachers successfully maximise communication in the classroom. In other words, as far as the mentor in the present study is concerned, being able to demonstrate effective 'teacher talk' is a vital teaching skill, which the mentor wanted trainees to acquire during the practicum.

4.5 Comments on English Usage and Pronunciation

Several comments were provided on 'English usage' and 'Pronunciation', as most of the trainees did not seem to have developed a sufficient oral proficiency of English. This is a prerequisite for using teacher talk effectively, which could function in various ways in the classroom, as mentioned. In addition, the mentor expressed that English proficiency is crucial because teachers are meant to serve as models of English usage both in written and spoken form.

When students are using prompt cards, don't say, 'Don't look it to your partner.' Say, 'Don't

show it…' (18, English usage)

Which was the stress? DOWNstairs? downSTAIRS? It should be downSTAIRS. What about 'upstairs'? It's upSTAIRS. You stressed 'up', didn't you? Small mistakes, but you should be careful. (10, pronunciation)

Overall, the mentor emphasised the importance of teacher talk, including its grammatical and phonological accuracy, because it enables communication to occur in the classroom. Teacher talk plays a key role in giving clear instructions, explaining materials, asking questions and making comments, all of which are determined by how well the trainees could adjust the way they spoke to students.

5. Conclusion

The present study conducted the first qualitative analysis of post-observation feedback, one of the core components in the teaching practicum yet a neglected topic in the literature of English language teaching. The content analysis of the audio-recorded data showed that some teaching skills were repeatedly mentioned, such as instruction, feedback, interaction and teacher talk, including English usage. It could be argued that these skills are essential to create a communicative classroom in which English is used as a means of exchanging messages rather than as an explicit target of learning, whilst emphasis is placed on developing a favourable classroom atmosphere as well as on maintaining discipline. Although there are no official assessment criteria for teaching, feedback was provided based on implicit teaching guidelines held by the mentor, which may have been shaped by years of teaching experience embedded in a larger context of English language education in Japan.

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