TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT AS A LIFELONG LEARNING MANIFESTATION

by Teguh Sulistyo

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the benefits of teacher self-development as a lifelong learning manifestation. Teacher self-development, basically, is intended to upgrade a teacher's competencies in teaching. Meanwhile, lifelong learning stresses that learning and education are two inseparable things to life, and the idea that learning throughout life is activities which start from cradle (even before an individual is born) to grave. The study was conducted at Kanjuruhan University of Malang in which 25 students who were joining Writing 2 class participated as the respondents of the study. They answered questions related to the implementation of teaching-learning process. A colleague observed the lecturer's teaching performance and provided feedback. Data were also collected from videos, follow-up interview, and the students' paragraphs. The results of the study revealed that teacher self-development through self-reflection is very important for the teacher to understand better what is happening in the classroom and the position of the teacher in order to make teaching-learning process run better.

Keywords: Teacher self-development, self-reflection, and lifelong learning manifestation

INTRODUCTION

Teacher self-development, basically, is an endless process intended to upgrade a teacher's competencies in teaching. Somehow, Gebhard (2000:14) avows that teacher self-development takes time. It implies that having sense of self-development is a matter of being aware of getting better teaching performance through an endless process. As a result, teachers should spend their time making an ongoing commitment for their self-development as a lifelong learning manifestation through self-reflection. Based on the findings of a study conducted by Lee (2005), self-reflection is determined by one's personal background, field experience context, and mode of communication. In addition, teacher self-development according to Bell and Gilbert (1994) can be viewed as teachers learning, rather than as others getting teachers to change. Thus the way one cultivates his/her self-reflection will influence the quality of teacher self-development.

On the other hand, the concept of lifelong learning (LLL) has been very popular in this modern era. Knapper (2006) states that the term lifelong learning was first used more than 30 years ago by Edgar Faure in his seminal work, Learning to be, and adopted by UNESCO as a blueprint for universal education. It basically stresses that learning and education are two inseparable things to life, and the idea that learning throughout life is the activities which start from cradle (even before an individual is born) to grave. This learning should not be linked to formal education levels only since it also happens in the society. In addition, due to the demands to be professional teachers, LLL should be the core concept in teachers' life.

Somehow, there is still a gap to reveal that is how teacher self-development can be carried out through feedback giving. Lee (2005) employed self-evaluation and classmates feedbacks to perform self-reflective thinking of preservice teachers, but the recent study employs three different modes of feedbacks namely students' feedbacks, a colleague feedbacks, and self-evaluation. The recent study basically aims at investigating how teacher development can be implemented through self-reflection after obtaining feedbacks as a lifelong learning manifestation. Thus this paper is the product of an effort to better understand whether teacher self-development can be cultivated through feedback giving and to what extents teacher development help the lecturer improve his teaching performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of 'what makes EFL teachers good teachers' is probably a matter of viewing ideal teachers from different perspectives. Brown (2007) mentions four criteria of good teachers: technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. These are similar to the criteria of qualified teachers as mandated by Indonesian government (Law Number 14, 2005): pedagogic, professional, personal, and social competencies (see Figure 1). All the criteria, both stated by Brown and Indonesian government, are requirements to be fulfilled by teachers.

The first criterion is pedagogic competency in which teachers are able to manage, plan, implement, and evaluate teaching-learning process in order to maximize students' potential. The second criterion is professional competency (or Brown calls it technical skill). It refers to teachers' mastery on the materials presented in the classroom. Brown (2007) states that professional EFL teachers should master the language skills and components and the connection between language and culture. The next criterion is personal competence (Brown

calls it intrapersonal competence) in which teachers should have good characteristics such as wise and stable. Also, they need to have self-reflective thinking and willingness and ability to have teacher self-development as a lifelong learning manifestation. The last criterion is social competence (or interpersonal skill) where teachers should have good relationship and communication with students, colleagues, and society. Brown (2007) adds that interpersonal competence deals with awareness of cross-cultural differences and students' cultural tradition. In short, teachers are not only aware of his ability to conduct teaching-learning process but also understand how to behave accordingly.

Figure1. Teacher Competencies (Law Number 14, 2005)

In addition, according to Hadfield in Fennell (2013), being a good teacher, basically, is a balance between what one feels is right, and feels comfortable with the needs and wants of his/her students. Indeed, it sounds very easy to comprehend the idea of how to be a good teacher, yet it is somewhat difficult to apply. One such requirement to possess is the sense of self-reflection – the willingness and ability to judge one's own performance in teaching activities. Lee (2005) believes that the central goal of reflective teacher education is to develop teacher's reasoning about why they employ certain instructional strategies and how they can improve their teaching to have positive effects on students.

Self-reflection itself is the major basis of teacher self-development which, in turn, will provide the opportunities for a teacher to have a better teaching performance. Schon (1983) suggests that reflection is the thought process that occurs relative to a perplexing problem or

past experience. In addition, Rodgers in Lee (2005) characterizes four criteria for self-reflection as follows:

1. Refection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas.
2. Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry.
3. Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others.
4. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others.

With regard to teacher self-development, self-reflection should be viewed from two different angles: process and progress. The process of self-reflection deals with how one is able to conduct a self-reflective thinking based on what has been going on in his/her classroom. In contrast, the progress of self-reflection is the real improvement in teaching performance. It reveals that one of the most revitalizing things about teaching is that a teacher never stops learning (Brown, 2001:426), and, indeed, it is the soul of lifelong learning. In addition, Knapper (2006) adds that the dimensions of lifelong learning deal with three components:

1) People plan and monitor their own learning.

It concerns the awareness of the importance to keep learning because one believes that learning is a must for a teacher, so he/she should be able to plan and monitor his/her own learning performance.

2) Learners engage in self-evaluation and reflection.

The willingness and abilities to evaluate his/her own teaching performance is important in order that he/she can make reflection on his/her professional teaching performance.

3) Assessment focuses on feedback for change and improvement.

A peer evaluation can be a tool to obtain inputs about his/her performance, and last but not least, the evaluation given by students may provide significant feedbacks. The feedbacks play a positive role to make a teacher understand what has been going on in his/her own classroom and make improvement to increase the quality of his/her teaching performance. Somehow, Brown (2001:429) utters that one of the most neglected areas of professional growth among teachers is the mutual exchange of classroom observation.

Meanwhile, with regard to LLL, classroom observation should be conducted in order to get comprehensive inputs concerning what has been going on in the classroom and possible strategies to conduct in order to get better teaching performance. In this respect, feedback giving is a very meaningful way to do. Feedback may be defined as inputs about progress making a learner guiding him/her to areas of improvement (Lewis in Yusuf, 2013). Feedback also plays a critical role in helping learners close the gap between current and desired understandings, by clarifying misconceptions and identifying flaws in learning strategies and skills (Sadler in Yang and Carless, 2013). In addition, Gebhard (2000:16) avows that self-development of teaching beliefs and practices requires the cooperation of others, probably- students or other teachers, who are willing to observe, listen to, and discuss teaching performance of a teacher. Without their cooperation, teacher self-development is very difficult to come true, as there is neither any source for feedback nor any stimulus for ideas. To be effective, teacher self-development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators' learning needs (Mizell, 2010:10).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of the recent study is a descriptive qualitative in nature. It describes the phenomena occurring before, during, and after the teaching performance of a composition lecturer. The study took place at Kanjuruhan University of Malang by involving 25 students who were joining Writing 2 Class (third semester) and a female colleague to participate actively in the research by providing two different kinds of feedback: oral and written forms. The students provided feedback based on the questionnaire given related to the teaching performance of the composition lecturer. In addition, the colleague observed the teaching performance by making some notes. Then she interviewed the lecturer dealing with the teaching performance and presented feedback. The lecturer himself made self-evaluation based on two recorded videos of the lecturer's teaching performance. So, he observed his own teaching performance through the videos to find out his own weaknesses, strengths, and possible essential improvement.

The follow-up interview was also conducted with the students based on the questionnaire. Their free comments in the questionnaire were also discussed with the students. However, the focus was on their opinion about the teaching-learning process, as well as what they felt and hoped in the classroom. Last but not least, the students' products, in the form of descriptive paragraphs, were also investigated to find out the strengths and

weaknesses of the students' writing abilities, including whether the materials, method, and activities facilitated by the lecturer met the students' need or not.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed at investigating and assessing the changes in an EFL composition lecturer's self-development after obtaining feedback from three different sources: students, a colleague, and self-evaluation/reflection.

Based on the questionnaire and follow-up interview, students were basically satisfied with the teaching performance of the lecturer, especially dealing with his ability to present the materials with different kinds of activities. Also, it was revealed that they were motivated to write after making a diagram based on a topic "Someone I Adore". Somehow, some of them complained that the lecturer used so much English that they got difficulties to understand all materials. It can be seen from points 2 of Table 1 that students were not too happy when the lecturer used English too much. Instead, they wanted him to apply code switching or translate some difficult terms or explanation. Also, they hoped that the teacher spoke more slowly and provided simpler and understandable vocabulary items (see Table 1). As a result, the lecturer understood his position and provided translation for specific explanation in the following meetings. In addition, he needed to speak more slowly and chose simpler word choices when explaining the materials. Thus there was a negotiation between the lecturer and the students related to what the students felt and needed and the way the lecturer carried out the materials.

Table 1. Questionnaire on How Much the Lecturer Talked

NO	ASPECTS	A LOT	SOMETIMES	LITTLE
1	How much do you think your teacher talked in the lesson?	20	5	0
2 (a)	How much English did your teacher use in the lesson?	25	0	0
2 (b)	Are you happy with this situation?	8	6	11
2 (c)	Why or why not?	The answers varied		
3	How much Indonesian did your teacher use in the lesson?	0	0	25
4	How much do you think you teacher gave positive statements (praise or encouragement) to the students?	22	3	0

Meanwhile, regarding the perception of the students on the lecturer's English proficiency, it was concluded that the lecturer could use English fairly well. Somehow, it was found that the students thought that there was a little problem with the lecturer's vocabulary use. Probably, they found difficulties to catch the explanation given by the lecturer because he spoke too much English.

Table 2. Questionnaire on Lecturer's English Proficiency

NO	ASPECTS	A LOT	SOMETIMES	LITTLE
1	Did your teacher speak English fluently?	23	2	0
2	Did your teacher use grammar accurately?	22	3	0
3	Did you think that your teacher's pronunciation is easily understood?	23	2	0
4	Did your teacher use easy vocabulary?	18	5	2

Meanwhile, based on the students' compositions in the form of paragraphs, the students made good progress in their products, specifically dealing with content and organization of the paragraphs. Somehow, they still got difficulties to apply English accurately since they still produced grammatical errors. It implies that semantic mapping had a positive impact on students' ability to cultivate ideas and organize the ideas into a paragraph even though it did not facilitate students to use English accurately. Accordingly, the lecturer needed to help the students to minimize their grammatical errors by providing written and oral feedbacks. Also, he applied problem-based approach when discussing the errors.

In addition, based on the notes taken by the colleague and discussion after watching again the videos of the teaching-learning process as well as the responds given by the students through the questionnaire, it was found that the lecturer did not provide enough time for the students to think of the answers to the questions he gave or a chance to express the students' opinion. According to her, the lecturer should have been more patient to listen to the students' ideas. Another thing to be considered was that the lecturer made a consistent error when pronouncing the word 'focus'. Also, the lecturer needed to speak in different varieties in terms of speed and intonation since they way he spoke was still a little bit monotonous. Then he had to use simple vocabulary items when speaking English. For instance, the word "obtain" should have been changed into "get" because the latter was more

familiar to the students compare to the former. Last but not least, the lecturer still dominated the class, so the class was managed in the form of teacher-centered learning. It should have been student-centered learning by allowing the students to take bigger participation during the class.

Actually the last comment was similar to the lecturer's own reflection which showed that he was not happy since he still explained too much. In addition, he still had many things to consider not only improving the students' writing ability but also a variety of teaching-learning process to create better classroom management and atmosphere. Thus he felt that his teaching quality was not satisfactory yet, so it was necessary for him to learn more in order to be a qualified teacher who fulfilled the criteria of a good teacher as suggested by Brown and mandated by the government: professional, pedagogic, personal, and social competencies.

The recent study shows that teacher self-reflection is helpful to cultivate teacher self-development. The feedback giving enables the lecturer understands his position in the classroom, what students feel and want, and what areas of teaching performance should be improved since feedback on performance is a feature of much professional training (Copland, 2012). In addition, Bell and Gilbert (1994), based on the findings of their research on some teachers' development in New Zealand, revealed that the teacher development was worthy to be conducted as it could improve the teachers' proficiencies especially dealing with professional, personal, and social development. In addition, in line with Gebhard (2000), teacher self-development of teaching beliefs and practices requires the cooperation of others. Also, Day (2002:49) believes that at any given stage in their lives and careers; teachers will be at a particular phase in their personal and professional development. It shows that lifelong learning should attach to the lives of teachers.

Through teacher self-development in the form of self-reflection, the lecturer understands his position and has tried to change his orientation that teaching deals with how to facilitate students to learn better by understanding what they need and want. It is in line with Lee (2005) who found that student teacher became more reflective and changed their perspectives from self-oriented to student-oriented issues once they started their teaching practice. Thus teacher self-development really requires an ongoing commitment (Gebhard, 200:15), so lifelong learning takes a crucial part in developing professional teachers.

CONCLUSION

The findings imply that teacher self-development through self-reflection is important to develop teachers' teaching competencies. Also, lifelong learning should be an integral part

of the lives of teachers since learning is situated not only in formal education but also in societies. The findings also indicate that the cooperation with others helps teachers to have self-reflective thinking and ability and willingness to conduct self-development as the lifelong learning manifestation. Besides, different modes of feedback are necessary for teachers to realize their position in the classroom, what changes they need to improve the quality of teaching performance, and their students' need and want. Also, the feedback enables teachers to have a negotiation with students related to how to manage the class since they realize what students need and want during the class. The findings may be an indication of a good perspective for teachers to investigate more how important it is to keep developing in order to be professional teachers so that they can improve their teaching performance to have positive effects on students.

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