

EFL COLLEGE TEACHERS' AWARENESS ON CAR: A case study at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember

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Abstract

Nobody can claim that all instructions are free from problems. Realizing that all instruction are potential to have problems, college teachers should do reflective practices. One of the do reflective practices which can be done integratively and sytematically with their instructions is classroom action research (CAR). The present study tried to investigate the lecturers' perception on CAR. The study focused on the indentification of the lecturers' awareness on CAR and digging up the the factors affected the lecturers perception on CAR. The study employed survey method which posited qualitative approach. The study revealed that the leacturers' awareness on CAR was relatively low. It also indicated that there were some factors which affected the lecturers' awareness on CAR i.e., 1) the lecturer's prior education or pre-service education; 2) their involvement in scientific forums; 3) self-regulated learning by reading books on CAR.

Keywords: EFL college teachers, perception, awareness, CAR

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Introduction

Every instruction is potential to be problematic which appears in various forms such as the students' failure in achieving learning outcomes, low learning motivation, lack enthusiasm for learning and so forth. Such condition must also occur in ESL/EFL teaching context. Naturally, there exists instructional problem/s in every EFL/ESL classroom which varies in terms of quality and quantity as the impact of the variability of learning itself such as learners, learning facilities, technique or strategy and even learning materials (McNiff, 2006; Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 2000). Instructional problem/s cannot be avoided and occured along with the teaching and learning process which is being held in the classroom. One of the main impacts of the instrsuction which becomes problematic is the learners' failure in attaining their learning performace or internalizing knowledge and skills they learn. In certain extent, the learners potentially fail in reaching their best achievement.

Actually, that instructional problem can be solved or at least it should be minimized immediately it occurs in the instructional process. A good teacher or lecturer in higher education context, should not postpone to overcome the problems s/he gets in her or his own instruction. S/he should have a good awareness that postponing to settle down an instructional problem will be potential to make the problem becomes complicated. S/he cannot claim that a problem is tollerable and hopes it will ease over time naturally. Certainly this opinion is misleading and harmful because there is no warrant that the problem will disappear by itself without any effort to solve it. A lecture should not let a problem gets worse. S/he has to look for an effective method or a strategy to the problem.

On the other hand, a lecturer should do reflective practice as a part of his/her profesional teaching activity Borko, 2007; Schmack, 2013). EFL college teachers who always keep on their reflective practice incline to solve the problem

of instruction and improve its quality. It is believed that reflective practice is an effective tool in the practice-based learning setting (Impedovo & Impedovo, 2016) in which a lecturer can learn from her/his own professional experiences rather than formal-based learning or knowledge transfer.

Among the efforts they can do to solve the problem and improve the instructional quality is by implementing classroom action research (CAR). It can be said that one of the reflective practice the college teachers may set up to solve their instructional problem is the use of CAR (Hong & Lawrence, 2011). Ideally, college teachers, or it is called lecturers in tertiary education context, should have adequate awareness about CAR. A college teachers who is robust to promote the quality of his/her instruction will always conduct CAR because it is a part of lecturer's academic and professional reflection.

CAR is supposed to be one of the most appropriate ways to solve the instructional problem. The characteristics CAR is fully identical to the effort to instructional problem solving because it is in line with the aim of such kind of research which tries to improve the quality of instruction. When a lecturer doing CAR in an instructional process in proper way, it can be claimed that s/he solves the instructional problem and promotes the quality of the instructional process.

Therefore, CAR should become academic rite for the college teachers because every instruction has potential to have problem/s (Korthagen, 2010). In case that, an instruction is relatively supposed to run well, without any significant problem, but action research is still suggested to be done because basically CAR is used to improve the quality of classroom instruction and a part of teachers' professional

development (Denny, 2005; Mamlok-naaman, 2018; Schmack, 2013).

In the context of higher education, a professional college teacher ideally will always do a reflection in every instruction. S/he will always keep in mind a high awareness that her/his instruction should be improve continuously. By doing reflection, s/he will always try to improve her/his instruction. A systematic way to do the reflection is manifested by conducting CAR. However, not all college teachers carry out CAR as their reflective practice. There is a number of potential factors which may cause the teachers do not conduct CAR.

Therefore, it is important to cover up the fact whether or not English college teachers used to conduct action research in their classroom. So far, the study about the English college teachers' awareness on CAR is scarcely done

The present study aimed to investigate the awareness or the understanding of college teacher of English in Jember on CAR. It also tried to find out the potential factors cause the EFL college teachers in Jember had the experiences to conduct CAR.

Research Method

This study was a case one which was equipped with mixed-method. The method was employed because the data elicited were both quantitative and qualitative ones. The quantitative and qualitative data elicitation were done respectively at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember in the span of time May up to July 2019. The quantitative data were gathered by using an objective test to measure the awareness or understanding on CAR of 12 (twelve) English college teachers' who served as the subject of the study. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were obtained by interviewing those English

college teachers to elicit the factors which were potential to affect their awareness on CAR.

Result and Discussion

Data of the study, both quantitative and qualitative, were elicited within 3 (three) months i.e., May up to July 2019. The quantitative data were collected to answer the first objective of the study and the qualitative data were elicited due to the second objective of the study. The data were obtained from 9 (nine) college teacher of English in Jember. To elicit the data, a

competency test of CAR was given to the college teachers of English or the reserach subjects as the primary data resources. Following the test, the research subjects were in terviewed to get the data about their experiences which potentially became the factors of their understanding on CAR. In the first data elicitation, every research subject was requested to do an objective test comprising 20 multiple choice items. Based the test, the data obtained were figured out on Table 1.

Table 1. CAR Competency Test Scores

Highest score	Lowest Score	Average
90	50	60

The data obtained from the competency test on CAR revealed that there was only 1 (one) subject or a college teacher of English who achieved excellent score 90 or had a good understanding on CAR. Most of the EFL college teachers did have adequate competency on CAR. It can be seen from the scores they attained which ranged between 50 - 60. Based on the data, the average scores of CAR competecy test obtained by the EFL college teachers was 60 and it was categorized as low.

Meanwhile, the data obtained by using interview indicated that there existed a lot factors contributed to the EFL college teachers understanding on CAR. Those factors were described as follows, (1) formal education prior to their profession as college teachers; (2) formal education whilst being EFL college teachers; (3) trainings, workshops, seminars and other academic forums.

The data indicated that the EFL college teachers who got scores above

the average, often joined trainings related to CAR. Besides, the EFL college teachers were supposed to be senior teachers who had a lot of experiences on CAR. In contrast, the EFL college teachers who were clasified as junior ones did not have any adequate experiences in implementing CAR in their instructions. Most of them just graduated from masterate program. Besides, they have not involved in academic forums actively yet that they still needed some guidances from their seniors. The important thing contributed to lack of awareness the EFL college teachers on CAR was that they did not put CAR as their theses both on bachelor and masterate programs.

Based on the data, it was discovered that there existed a big gap between the EFL college teachers who had good unerstanding (awareness) on CAR and those who did not. There was a college teacher of English who had very good awareness on CAR which was indicated by the score she got (90). However, There was also a college teacher of English who had inadequate

understanding on CR which was marked by the score she got (50).

By comparing the result of test and interview, it was obtained that the the EFL college teachers who actively joined trainings and similar activities tended to understand CAR well. The trainings gave significant impacts on understanding or awareness of the EFL college teachers about the concept and principle of CAR (Atay, 2006). By the use of trainings and the similar activities, the EFL college teachers who got good score tended to have chance to update their CAR knowledge and skills.

The data revealed that the college teachers of English competency on CAR was categorized as more than poor (fair). However, ideally the college teacher of English competency on CAR should be in good category or at least above fair category. Such competency has become one of the indicators of teachers' professionalism. It means that carrying out action research affected the professional development of graduate teaching assistants (TAs) who were teaching in foreign and second language departments (McDonough, 2006).

Therefore, there are some implications which should be done in promoting the college teachers' awareness and experiences. One of them is the institution effort to arrange a program which is intended to develop the college teachers' awareness and experiences in conducting CAR as a part of professional development (Schmack, 2013; Zuber-Skerritt, 2012). The other one is facilitating the college teachers to enhance their professionalism by giving the widest opportunity to join off-campus academic or scientific forums (Denny, 2005; Buaraphan, 2016).

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that awareness or understanding of EFL

teachers college in Jember on CAR was categorized as fair. The condition was affected by several factors which contributed a lot to awareness and ability of EFL teachers college on CAR i.e., formal education in the form of both pre-service and in-service ones. The factor, then, was broken down 1) formal education prior to their profession as teachers; 2) formal education whilst being teachers; 3) trainings, workshops, and seminars on CAR.

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