

# The use of video recordings of microteaching in Czech language didactics lessons

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AULA, 2017, Vol. 25, No. 1-2: 32-47

**Abstract:** Didactics of Czech as a mother tongue is a hands-on discipline with a direct relationship to actual practice as it explores real-life issues of language teaching and provides trainee teachers with inspiration and input relating to not only organization and planning of teaching sessions but also to methods, organizational forms and other aspects of the teaching process. Although it incorporates trainee teachers' classroom observation and teaching practice at partnership schools, the range of opportunities for practising teaching remains limited – from the viewpoints of both trainee teachers and didactics specialists. Video recordings of microteaching sessions in seminars on didactics of Czech as a mother tongue thus play an important role in the self-reflection of trainee teachers. This paper presents a qualitative analysis of the students' reflections with the use of such recordings in seminars, aimed at identifying its strong and weak points. The study, based on a review of questionnaires completed by the trainee teachers at the end of their semester, highlights the importance of an appropriate choice of the teaching situation, and proper preparation of trainee teachers for their microteaching sessions. The microeducation analysis reveals the merits and drawbacks of trainee teachers' microteaching sessions from the perspective of pedagogical content knowledge, and directs their attention to their strengths and weaknesses in both verbal and non-verbal communication. By examining the video recordings, trainee teachers can identify – more readily than in didactics textbooks – any instances where the didactic principle of linguistic approach has been breached. The author believes that involvement of trainee teachers is very important, both in assessing the quality of the microteaching sessions of their colleagues and in proposing and substantiating alterations to the teaching situation.

## Introduction

Didactics of Czech as a mother tongue is a hands-on discipline with a direct relationship to actual practice as it explores real-life issues of didactic transformation of linguistic knowledge and provides trainee teachers with inspiration and input relating to not only organization and planning of teaching sessions but also methods, organizational forms and other aspects of the teaching process. On the curriculum offered by the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň, it is not an isolated item because it is closely linked to other courses: Modern Methods of Czech Language Teaching, and Information and Communication Technologies in the Czech Language Subject. In all these courses, trainee teachers are guided to use reflection and self-reflection, focusing mainly on the effectiveness of particular teaching methods when applied to specific language features that the class is expected to master.

Our aim is to train the future teachers of Czech language to develop particular knowledge and skills which are unavailable to those untrained in teaching and those outside the teaching profession. In our understanding, this particular knowledge comprises the pedagogical content knowledge. *It is a category which represents the greatest difference between a teacher and a specialist, in terms of their view of the content of their disciplines* (Janík, 2009).

Pedagogical content knowledge stems from four sources: a) observation of instruction as a student or teacher, b) training in professional disciplines, c) training in specific disciplines during teacher training and d) own teaching experience (Grossman, 1990).

In seminars on didactics of Czech language, we aim to develop trainee teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and teach them how to transform their content knowledge to match the students' level of understanding.

These seminars are closely linked to the trainees' final teaching practice – but trainee teachers still see the number of opportunities for self-reflection on their own teaching practice as inadequate. For these reasons, we have introduced microteaching into these seminars. Analyses of microlessons enable trainee teachers to cultivate their ability to review their own performance and demonstrate their approach. Microteaching also facilitates their collaboration. We see this as a significant element, as the “collective” aspect of the teaching profession has been gaining importance, with its emphasis on effective communication.

Microteaching in didactics of Czech language strengthens the constructivist character of this discipline. Trainee teachers approach the topics from **multiple perspectives**: using primary sources, electronic materials from the on-line course, video recordings of lessons delivered by experienced teachers, examples of teaching materials and materials for analysis, their own activities in the seminars, discussions with the supervisor, consultations, microlessons of their colleagues and their own, and their experience from the final teaching practice.

In the present paper, we analysed end-semester questionnaires completed by trainee teachers in the course of didactics of Czech as a mother tongue who were training to become secondary school teachers. Since the number of questionnaires returned was 26, the quantitative findings are not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the trainee teachers' responses to open questions help shed light on the strengths and weaknesses, and on the risks and opportunities for improvement. The questionnaire was designed to explore the effectiveness of constructivist features in didactics when microteaching and analysis of video recordings of microlessons are used. This paper highlights specific aspects of the constructivist instruction (Murphy, 1997) in bold print.

## Functions of microteaching

The first mentions of microteaching in Czech publications date back to the 1970 s (Mareš, 1976), and then re-emerge in the second half of the 1990 s (Spilková, 1995; Svatoš, 1997). The authors of microteaching have defined it as controlled practice which enables focusing on

specific elements of teaching and practising those under controlled conditions (Allen & Eve, 1968). Microteaching comprises the planning, delivery of and reflection on a reduced-scale instruction session for a group of fellow trainee teachers. The length of such a microlesson and the number of students in the microclass may vary. The microlesson often takes between 10 and 20 minutes, involving 10 to 30 students (Bakir, 2014). In our seminar, the trainee teachers were invited to prepare microlessons of 15–20 minutes. In reality, the shortest one took 15 minutes and 51 seconds, whereas the longest one was 28 minutes and 20 seconds. In one instance, the trainee teachers failed to adhere to the agreed scope, delivering a microlesson which comprised the entire lesson: 43 minutes and 43 seconds. This proved highly undesirable with respect to the intended objectives.

The key elements of microteaching include translation of theory into practice in the form of the trainee teachers' own teaching activity, giving and receiving feedback, and self-reflection. The supervisor's role is to provide a safe and supporting environment to help the trainee teachers learn from one another (Fernández & Robinson, 2006).

*“Self-reflection involves subjective generalization of knowledge about oneself, upon considering one's own activity and personality in relation to conducting the teaching process”* (Kolář, 2012). The trainee teacher gets an opportunity for self-evaluation in relation to his or her performance in a teaching situation, and can make decisions on what to change. In addition, the trainee teacher receives feedback from his or her colleagues and the supervisor. The key part of self-reflection is deriving conclusions and making decisions on teaching strategies.

Self-reflection upon microlessons fulfils cognitive, feedback, development, preventive and relaxation roles. The cognitive role means that the trainee teacher becomes aware of problems and their potential solutions, his or her own response to particular teaching situations, and feelings towards him or herself, as well as towards the students. The microlessons fulfil the feedback role in that the trainee teacher becomes aware of his or her teaching interventions and the students' reactions. Development of the trainee teacher's teaching skills is another outcome of microteaching. The aspect of prevention is entailed in the trainee teachers' learning from their own experience. Relaxation results from positive feedback given to the trainee teacher who thus gains satisfaction and enjoys the experience.

## Organization of microlessons

In the introductory seminar, the functions of microteaching, the organization and evaluation criteria were presented to the trainee teachers. One of the important aspects of constructivist teaching is **collaborative and cooperative learning** which exposes trainee teachers to different opinions and perspectives (**alternative viewpoints**). In view of this, we opted for trainee teachers working in pairs because the recent teaching practice also involves teaching in tandem.

Knowledge construction is based on the trainee teacher's individual experience and takes place during discussions in pairs (**knowledge collaboration**). Trainee teachers' answers to the question whether they were comfortable with conducting microlessons in pairs were 84.6 % 'yes' and 15.4 % 'generally yes'. In their explanations, the trainee teachers confirmed that this reduced their anxiety and uneasiness which could arise from the fact of being videotaped, as well as from the anticipated evaluation. *"During the microlesson, I was less nervous than if I were on my own."* As the number of trainee teachers in the class was odd, one of the groups comprised three trainee teachers. In their view, this was not an optimal arrangement. *"Our group had three members and our collaboration went well but I would certainly prefer working in a group no larger than two."* The reason they gave was that reaching consensus on a topic and a certain didactic solution was more difficult and lengthy in a group of three. *"Each of us defended her own proposal."*

The trainee teachers gave the same answers to the question whether their collaboration in pairs (groups) while preparing the microlesson had been effective (84.6 % 'yes', 15.4 % 'generally yes'). *"Each of us contributed with their own ideas; the microlesson was therefore prepared sooner and, more importantly, it was of better quality than if I had done it on my own."* *"We were able to consult things, recommend publications etc.; as they say: two heads are better than one."*

This also proved the effectiveness of letting trainee teachers choose their partners. Experience of earlier collaboration was a great advantage. *"Having Jakub as my partner made the assignment an absolute dream. We had been classmates in drama education where we had learned to cooperate; and now we benefited greatly from that. Specifically, it helped us come up with the activities for our microlesson. I mean all activities."*

The seminars comprise thematic units covering the language component of the Czech language subject. Each pair of trainee teachers chose one thematic unit and one topic from this unit for their microlesson (subjects relating to word meanings, word formation and structure, syntax, morphology, orthography, and general instruction on language).

In the literature on microteaching, we tend to encounter an approach where the trainee teachers in introductory seminars draw lots for the method and the lesson stage (motivation, exposure and fixation) to be used in their microlessons (Bajtoš, Orosová, 2011). It is beneficial in the breadth of methods which the trainee teachers encounter during the seminar. In our opinion, it is suitable for seminars on pedagogy or general didactics. Because our seminar on didactics of Czech as a mother tongue focuses on didactic transformation of linguistic knowledge, trainee teachers do not draw lots when choosing methods. After the trainee teachers selected their thematic units, there would be a risk that the method chosen by lots be forcefully applied to a topic for which it is unsuitable or ineffective. We believe that the method must be chosen with respect to its function. Where identical methods were chosen over and over in the microlessons, we pointed out alternatives during the follow-up analysis.

76.9 % of trainee teachers answered 'yes' and 23.1 % of trainee teachers answered 'generally yes' to the following question: "Were you satisfied with having the choice of the teaching situation for your microlesson within the assigned thematic unit?"

*"Everyone was able to choose the topic they found suitable. As for myself, I work best on what I enjoy." "We practised exactly what we wanted to."*

*"We had the option of choosing a teaching method first, and then identifying a language feature within the thematic unit for which it was suitable."*

The answers were an indication of **student-directed goals**. The trainee teachers decided what to focus on and what they wanted to learn or practise during their microlesson.

They were informed about the date of their microlesson and about the classroom equipment. Available to them was the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and the SMART Notebook application which they had learned to use in the ICT discipline for the Czech language subject in the previous semester.

The position of the camera which captured the microlessons was given by the available space. The classroom where the seminars on didactics of Czech as a mother tongue took place had the advantage of desks being arranged parallel to the longer wall. The camera was positioned between the wall with the whiteboard and the side wall. If we had a wider lens and the trainee teachers' chairs had been arranged appropriately, no operator would have been required and a static camera could have been used. The optimal configuration might seem to involve two cameras for capturing the microlessons: the classroom camera pointed at the trainee teachers in the role of students and the teacher camera recording the trainee teachers in the role of teachers (Janík, Miková, 2006). It would, however, place demands on equipment, subsequent processing of the recording, and the staff. Even more importantly, it could put stress on the microteachers. Recording the microlessons without lapel microphones for trainee teachers and without surround microphones or a directional microphone proved useful. The reason was that one of the aspects of our microlesson analysis involves the use of voice. The recordings revealed differences in speech intelligibility, and provided feedback for further development of vocal skills.

The video recordings were done in a single take. Therefore, they also captured those parts of microlessons in which the trainee teachers in the role of students worked on their own and the microteachers walked among them and corrected or helped them with their activities.

Links to the recordings were available to the trainee teachers within three days via the Moodle LMS. They could access them in the course on didactics of Czech as a mother tongue which they could also use for preparing their microlessons.

It offered seven chapters which identified critical issues in individual thematic units of the Czech language subject, explaining why these were difficult for students, and presenting examples, demonstrations, analogies and flash animations which were most effective for clarification. The

course also provided links to video recordings of Czech language lessons made under the Virtual Classroom Observation project. By combining the materials in on-line courses, field observations and final teaching practice, didactic theory and practice can be brought together.

Trainee teachers' answers in the questionnaires showed that they were aware of the importance of video recording to their self-reflection and feedback but they also indicated it as the single most stressing factor.

The responses to the question whether making video recordings of the microlessons was meaningful involved 57.7 % of 'yes' answers, 34.6 % of 'generally yes' answers, 3.9 % of 'not really' answers and 7.7 % of 'no' answers.

Those who answered 'yes' gave the following reasons: *"It is the most effective feedback one can get. It even shows things that one can easily overlook during the lesson."* *"Although I do not like watching video recordings of myself, I consider them very effective – for the simple reason that they enable us see ourselves through the eyes of others, the learners, and show us the mistakes we do not notice while teaching."* *"Mainly for self-reflection. When speaking, one is not aware of so many things – and the video can provide a perfect feedback."* Those who answered 'generally yes', gave the following reasons: *"One can notice mistakes that one was not aware of. It just seems to me that the camera made some people nervous and their teaching performance was different from the performance that they would have delivered without being video-recorded."*

The trainee teacher who answered 'not really' argued that the stress was excessive. *"Trainee teachers with a panic fear from speaking in front of a camera might collapse."* Even she, however, admitted the benefits of video recording in her response to an open question: *"On the other hand, without the video, we would hardly become aware of our weak points."*

The only trainee teacher who gave the answer 'no' had the following explanation: *"In my opinion, the video recordings as a tool for self-reflection would be more effective and, in particular, more objective if made during actual teaching practice. Microlessons could do with a follow-up feedback without the use of video."* However, this suggestion is very difficult to implement because obtaining a consent to recording the instruction in primary and secondary schools on video is virtually impossible.

Although these teaching situations are not real-life situations, they still provide trainee teachers with opportunities for **exploration**, which is the most effective way to acquire knowledge independently.

## Microteaching analysis

Microteaching analysis did not take place immediately after the microlesson. If it did, it would be somewhat intuitive and superficial, without reflecting the teaching situation in depth. By contrast, we placed stress on **problem solving**, higher-order thinking and profound understanding of the subject.

Trainee teachers and the didactics supervisor had the time until the next seminar to assess the microlesson from various angles, conduct an in-depth analysis and suggest improvement with respect to the topic, if needed. An analysis of the video-recorded microlesson provides facts instead of mere impressions, opinions or reflections of attitudes. It enables the trainee teachers to contrast their view of themselves with their actual teaching performance. Trainee teachers take into account their pre-existing knowledge, conceptions and views (**previous knowledge constructions**).

This leads to a thorough **reflection on the learning process** and the **trainee teachers' self-regulation (metacognition)**.

Trainee teachers thus become **the main agents of the appropriate delivery of didactics of Czech as a mother tongue (learner control)**.

The **supervisor** acts as a **guide, coach, tutor and facilitator (teacher as a coach)**. Trainee teachers are guided to **active knowledge construction**, instead of mere reproduction. The supervisor continuously provides support and motivation to the trainee teachers to push the boundaries of their existing knowledge and skills (**scaffolding**).

The assessment of learning performance is not separate from the learning process. Trainee teachers are evaluated on a continuous basis (**authentic assessment**).

We make trainee teachers work out answers to the following questions: *“What have I been doing, how and why, with what intentions and expectations, what were my results, where were critical spots and why, and what were alternative ways of doing it?”* (Mazáčová, 2008)

Mistakes are seen as opportunities for getting an insight into pre-existing knowledge of the trainee teacher. Mistakes become a material to be worked on (**consideration of errors**). One of the trainee teachers made a good point in her questionnaire: *“Many colleagues are worried before such lesson and are afraid of making a mistake. However, there is nothing wrong about making a mistake during one's microlesson. Where else can one afford mistakes than on such an occasion?”*

We used the following criteria for microteaching analysis:

- › specialist knowledge correctness criterion,
- › psychodidactic criterion,
- › communication criterion,
- › control/organizational criterion.

In our seminar, we tried various forms of feedback on microteaching based on the criteria.

The questionnaire included the following question:

Which form of self-reflection and feedback on a microlesson do you find most effective?

- a) verbal self-reflection and feedback from colleagues and the supervisor, discussion
- b) verbal self-reflection and feedback from the supervisor, written anonymous feedback from colleagues submitted on sheets of paper (and read by the supervisor),

- c) written discussion in the Moodle LMS – microteachers’ self-reflection, feedback from colleagues; the supervisor moderating the written discussion,  
 d) other...

46.15 % of teacher trainees chose option a), i.e. an open discussion during the seminar. One of the trainee teachers explained her choice. *“It is important to provide an environment in which participants are frank and are not afraid to give their opinion, particularly when it comes to expressing criticism of colleagues.”* This answer, too, shows how important it is for the trainee teachers to be aware during the microteaching analysis that the point is not in criticizing colleagues but in seeking and finding solutions for “critical issues” with the help from the supervisor and all members of the trainee teacher group.

Many trainee teachers have difficulties to publicly express their opinion on negative aspects of a microlesson. This is why 53.8 % of the trainee teachers preferred written anonymous feedback on a sheet of paper read by the supervisor.

Besides these two forms of feedback, we use written feedback on the discussion forum in the Moodle LMS. It is an opportunity to express their opinion for those trainee teachers whose curriculum has been adapted because they already worked as teachers. We consider their views very important because they can share their real-life experience with their colleagues in the seminar. In terms of negative emotions which the written feedback may trigger in microteachers, this form of feedback poses the highest risk.

### Specialist knowledge correctness criterion

Our basic premise was that the best way to embed specialist knowledge involves passing it on. Therefore, the questionnaire for the trainee teachers included the following question: Did your preparation of the microlesson help you better understand the language feature you taught? 23.1 % of the trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 15.4% ‘generally yes’, 30.8 % ‘not really’, 15.4 % ‘no’ and 7.7 % ‘don’t know’. Our hypothesis of a majority of positive or mostly positive answers was thus disproved. One possible reason is that the trainee teachers have chosen topics with which they were thoroughly familiar. *“We picked a language feature which we knew relatively well. Still, afterwards I understood better some details of the subject.”*

The three-member group had more difficulties achieving consensus about the topic of their microlesson. Despite that, one of the members stated a positive effect of their cooperation: *“I have always had difficulties with complement clauses but our preparation helped me understand them better because my colleagues were able to explain them.”* Other students used expressions similar to “understand better”, such as “refresh”, “embed” and “clarify”. *“Thanks to the microlesson, I was able to refresh and clarify my knowledge, such as the word formation and derivation.”* *“I strove to present the feature exactly the same as way I would to actual students in the class. I studied the subject diligently which helped me*

*improve my knowledge.” “I would not say that the microlessons directly contributed to better understanding of the subject but they helped me get a clearer picture and think through the options of the didactic approach.”*

A greater number of positive answers were given to the question: “Did any of the microlessons or their follow-up analysis help you better understand the language feature in question?” These answers were: 30.8 % ‘yes’, 38.4 % ‘generally yes’, 23.1 % ‘not really’ and 7.7 % ‘no’. One of the responses to the related open question which asked for examples to illustrate a positive answer was as follows: *“I would not pick a concrete example. All the microlessons helped me refresh the topics and offered new options for presenting them to students.”* Some trainee teachers were perhaps reluctant to admit their lack of knowledge. Those who were able to do so, listed some complex syntactic features as more difficult topics. This was related to the microlesson on complement clauses. *“I probably should not admit this publicly but I was not thoroughly familiar with this subject, which is why I was excited about my colleagues’ microlesson.”*

One of the students reported that he had gained more understanding of a feature from the follow-up analysis and the explanation given by the supervisor than from the microlesson.

The microteaching analysis focuses on how the microteacher follows the didactic principle of linguistic approach. This principle requires accurate presentation and giving linguistically correct explanations of language features.

The principle can be breached by

- › inaccurate explanation of language features,
- › incomplete or inaccurate presentation of language features,
- › incorrect use of terminology,
- › using expressions or terms unfamiliar to the students.

All these inaccuracies were found in trainee teachers’ microlessons.

## Psychodidactic criterion

We examined how effective choices the trainee teacher makes in terms of methods and organizational forms and the ability he or she demonstrates in planning the motivation and activation of students. We asked the trainee teachers the following question: “Have your colleagues’ microlessons and the feedback to them helped you evaluate any psychodidactic aspects? (E.g. the choice of methods, organizational forms, students’ motivation and activation and others.)” 53.8 % of the trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 30.8 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, and 15.4 % responded ‘don’t know’.

Microlessons reveal how important it is for trainee teachers to consider motivation in their teaching situations. It is typical of students aged 15–19 that they enjoy new things and are unwilling to revisit those they had learned about earlier. This tends to be behind the secondary students’ lack of interest in language lessons. Reviewing a subject at the same level as before is

seen by students – justifiably – as something trivial and not very useful, because they had heard about such topics in their final years at the primary school. We used microteaching analysis to jointly seek better solutions for teaching situations which lacked motivational elements.

*“Several enjoyable methods that were used by my colleagues certainly inspired me, for instance the ‘game with compound words’. I also learned from some of their mistakes (lack of motivation and activation in the students).”*

*“Students must be continuously involved or activated! Some microlessons started with a short theoretical introduction in the form of a dialogue with students and continued with exercises – which was great. On the other hand, there were microlessons which included long theoretical presentations (either in the opening or at the end) without engaging the students – and that is bad! Students should be active agents of the instruction.”*

*“I realized how well the class can work when students enjoy the activity.”*

*“The video recording from 17<sup>th</sup> March made me aware of the pitfalls of group work and student motivation in various contexts.”*

It emerged that trainee teachers can critically evaluate methods on the basis of their effective use, rather than classifying them as modern or traditional ones:

*“I often hear that the lecture is an anachronism but I categorically reject such opinions. Obviously, the instruction should not consist of a teacher monologue but an explanation by the teacher is essential for students to understand new subjects and I believe that my colleagues succeeded in keeping their ‘students’ interested at this stage.”*

We also pay attention to the appropriate use of instruction methods for the goal set by the trainee teacher for the students. For instance, if the trainee teacher uses deduction as the fundamental logical reasoning process (a sequence of steps starting from a definition of a general concept), our microteaching analysis will involve comparison with inductive reasoning (starting from concrete language materials and deriving a general principle or definition) and help trainee teachers identify the advantages of the inductive process.

We asked the trainee teachers the following question: “Has follow-up feedback or self-reflection on your own microlesson helped you identify critical points and consider why and how ‘it could have been done in a different way?’” 30.8 % of the trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 23.1 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, and 46.1 % responded ‘don’t know’. We attribute this to some trainee teachers’ reluctance to point out their ‘weak spots’ in their answer. Nevertheless, we also encountered excessive self-criticism. A student from the three-strong group wrote: *“It seems to me that our whole microlesson was critical – inaccurate theoretical knowledge, poor illustration of features, sometimes even wrong examples.”* We find the opinion of another trainee teacher from this group very positive: *“Above all, I have realized I should not worry too much about everything. Everyone can make a mistake and we are only humans.”*

## Communication criterion

We analyse the verbal component of communication, the vocal component (the voice tone and modulation), as well as the non-verbal component. We direct trainee teachers' attention to the most frequent mistakes in the wording of questions, their accuracy, intelligibility, linguistic correctness, and their sequence in the dialogue, following the logic of the language feature taught. As former primary and secondary school students, the trainee teachers had often encountered an authoritative and non-interactive approach (lectures with prevailing monologue) or an authoritative interactive approach (with the teacher asking mostly closed questions and with short answers from the students). In their microlessons, they should learn to ask open questions which stimulate students' thinking and invite them to express their own opinions. They should also adopt appropriate responses to the students' answers. The answers should not be evaluated exclusively on the basis of correctness. They should become the source for formulating follow-up questions. We should move from the dialogue (teacher – student) toward the polylogue where multiple speakers respond to one another. In their microlessons, the trainee teachers also practise the use of proper Czech as the natural code for teaching the Czech language. They also identify filler words in their speech.

We asked the following question: “Has the video recording of your microlesson helped you evaluate your verbal communication?” 46.1 % of trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 23.1 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, and 30.8 % responded ‘don’t know’.

In their use of voice, some trainee teachers relied on their experience from the courses of the Drama Education curriculum. This was an example of interrelationship between subjects (**conceptual interrelatedness**). *“I have completed the course Speech Education. The aim was to learn to master one’s breath which is a prerequisite for correct phrasing. Thanks to this course, a film is projected on the background in my head with every speech (where I picture exactly what I am saying). This process taught me not to “lose the thread” and also to speak more slowly (I need to first project, then realize and then say what I want to express).”*

Trainee teachers should also learn that non-verbal communication can be used to improve students' relationship to the teacher as well as to the subject and even make students keen to learn more about the topic. Microteaching analysis shows that the desired open atmosphere can be facilitated by voice dynamics and diversity, the pace of speech, smiling, leaning toward the student, maintaining eye contact, using gestures and relaxed posture and appropriate proxemic behaviour and movements.

Non-verbal communication was addressed in the following question: “Has the video recording of your microlesson helped you evaluate your non-verbal communication?” 19.2 % of the trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 11.5 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, 7.7 % responded by ‘no’, and 61.5 % gave the answer ‘don’t know’. Answers to the question about what trainee teachers noted in

the analysis of their non-verbal behaviour rarely involved negative self-reflection: *“I would say that my gestures were appropriate, although I sometimes come across forced and stilted.”* Despite the high percentage of ‘don’t know’ answers to this question, the responses to the last question on the questionnaire which explored whether the trainee teachers used any of their findings from self-reflection in their final teaching practice, many respondents mentioned examples of non-verbal behaviour. *“I tend to put hands in my pockets and lean on the teacher’s desk while teaching. I am aware of these deficiencies and strive to minimize them.”*

## Control/organizational criterion

We monitor how well the trainee teacher handles the organization of student activities during the lesson. Although the microteaching situations are somewhat artificial and not authentic, trainee teachers in the role of students sometimes create unusual teaching situations to which the microteacher must respond. We analyse them and the trainee teachers assess the microteacher’s handling of such situations. We take note of how the trainee teacher responds to these situations and how well he or she creates positive atmosphere, guides student group activities, how he or she works in tandem etc.

We asked the trainee teachers whether self-reflection on their microlesson helped them become aware of any issues relating to lesson organization. (Organizing the group work, working in pairs, contests, language games, creative drama, writing on the board, and others.)

30.8 % of the trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 26.9 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, 7.7 % responded by ‘no’, and 34.6 % gave the answer ‘don’t know’.

They listed the following examples: *“It is better to first assign a task and only after that hand out the materials. This way one avoids the noise and loss of concentration among students.”*

*“Results of contests must not be announced before the task has been completed by all students.”*

*“During my microlesson but also in my final teaching practice I began to find that writing information on the board (when presenting a new subject) is in fact a waste of time. I believe that nowadays a PowerPoint presentation is a better choice for presenting the subject to students. The teacher can show bullet points one by one, while activating the students.”*

Related to the above question is the following one: Have your colleagues’ microlessons and the feedback to them helped you become aware of any problems related to the lesson organization? 34.6 % of trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 26.9 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, 11.5 % responded by ‘not really’, and 26.9 % gave the answer ‘don’t know’. They mentioned the following examples: *“When students are working in small groups, it helps to walk among them to make sure they understand all that is required.”* *“Pair work appears more effective to me than small-group work. The more people are assigned to a task, the fewer actually work on it – or, conversely, everyone gets involved, supporting a solution and opinion of their own.”* *“In one microlesson, the colleagues awarded points for correct answers – but not in*

*every question. As a result, there were students who answered many times but received no points; and when a question with some point value came up, they gave a wrong answer and ended up without a point again. The problem was that it was not clear beforehand which question has a point value and which has none. Obviously, this motivates students to respond to all questions but in the end, this evaluation scheme is unfair.”*

## Evaluation of microlessons in didactics of Czech as a mother tongue

Responses to the question whether the use of microteaching in didactics of Czech as a mother tongue is meaningful included 73.1 % ‘yes’, 23.1 % ‘generally yes’ and 3.8 % ‘not really’ answers.

The only student who gave the answer ‘not really’ objected mainly to the video which she found very stressful. At the same time, however, she answered ‘yes’ to the question whether the video recording helped her evaluate her verbal communication; and she identified microlessons as beneficial in five other aspects.

In their questionnaires, the trainee teachers identified the strongest point of the microlessons as the perfect feedback they received from their colleagues and the supervisor after the video recordings analysis, as well as their own self-reflection. They valued the fact that they could test the didactic effectiveness of the approach they had chosen. They also praised the opportunity to try and experience the teacher role before people they knew well. They reported that this helped them get over their stage fright and gain confidence, referring to the microteaching experience as a small test before their final teaching practice.

One very satisfying finding is that most trainee teachers have truly made use of their microteaching experience in their final teaching practice. We asked the trainee teachers the following question: Have you used in your final teaching practice any piece of knowledge gained by self-reflection or from feedback on your or someone else’s microlesson? 38.5 % of trainee teachers answered ‘yes’, 34.6 % gave the answer ‘generally yes’, 7.7 % responded by ‘no’, and 19.2 % gave the answer ‘don’t know’.

The examples they gave included psychodidactic, organizational as well as communication aspects.

*“The microteaching experience improved mainly the way I assign tasks to students.”*

*“In our reflection on one of the microlessons we realized that when the teacher leans toward the student (or an entire group) while explaining something, this makes a more comfortable and perhaps friendlier impression than the teacher remaining behind the teacher’s desk all the time. Standing alone behind the teacher’s desk during my final teaching practice did not make me feel good. Frankly, I was very nervous when I was behind the teacher’s desk. Once I began walking between desks and kept among the students, my anxiety disappeared. In the end, I made sure I stayed among the students and maintained friendly contact.”*

One of the trainee teachers had an opportunity to reuse the entire microlesson during his final teaching practice. His description was this: *“In my teaching practice, I made use of the experience acquired*

*from the microlesson and the feedback and self-reflection. My actual class was larger (about 25 students) than our microteaching group, which entailed more noise during group activities but it was not excessive. I expected students to take longer to complete their activities and I was right. Our microlesson in the seminar took about 20 minutes, whereas in the actual school I set more than 30 minutes for it, and we have not completed the whole thing anyway. I was glad to find that the activities we had tried during the microlesson motivated the students and made them cooperate.”*

The trainee teachers were grateful for having the freedom of choice of their teaching method while preparing their microlessons. *“As a result, we were able to explore any advanced method that caught our interest and find (even before our final teaching practice) whether it would work well with the students.”*

Trainee teachers viewed the didactic inspiration they gained from their colleagues’ microlessons as the strength of microteaching. Some of them stated that the feedback from their colleagues helped them deal with constructive criticism.

A weakness of microteaching was seen in that the situations were not authentic. Trainee teachers only experience those during their final teaching practice in schools. Another weakness was seen in the separation of the teaching situation from the rest of the lesson because microlessons are limited by the time frame of 15–20 minutes. However, the case with the 40-minute microlesson proved the ineffectiveness of this kind of practice in a didactics seminar.

The trainee teachers also mentioned the risk of mistakes in specialist knowledge and didactics becoming embedded, despite the thorough follow-up self-reflection, and feedback from colleagues and the supervisor. The reason given for this risk was the powerful experience of microteaching.

## Conclusion

When compared to the use of microteaching in general didactics or pedagogy (Bajtoš, Orosová, 2011), microteaching in didactics of Czech as a mother tongue benefited from abandoning the lots as a means of choosing the method and the lesson stage in which it is to be used by the trainee teacher; instead the trainee teachers were allowed to choose the method they preferred and a topic they preferred from a thematic unit.

A great majority of trainee teachers found video recordings as the source for microteaching analysis very useful because of the efficient feedback. At the same time, some of them pointed out the risk of the stress related to being videotaped.

Microteaching in tandem was very well accepted. It helped reduce trainee teachers’ anxiety associated with video recording and prepared them for future collaboration between teachers which we find very important.

The trainee teachers were also grateful for the fact that the cooperation provided them with deeper insight into the language feature they were explaining and with multiple perspectives on not only language features but also didactic aspects.

Most trainee teachers reported that they had used their experience from microteaching in their final teaching practice.

In contrast to earlier research studies on microteaching (Orosová, Nováková, Juščák, 2015) the students of didactics of Czech as a mother tongue did not list the method of providing feedback as a weakness of microteaching analysis. 46.2 % of trainee teachers believe that face-to-face discussion is the most effective method. At the same time, 53.8 % of trainee teachers prefer anonymous written feedback read by the supervisor. This eliminates the trainee teachers' worry about being critical to microlessons of others.

Appropriate use of microteaching in the seminars of didactics of Czech as a mother tongue meets the fundamental criteria of constructivist instruction: contributes to trainee teachers' motivation, keeps students active, promotes cooperation, conceptual interrelatedness, multiple perspectives and supports self-reflection and providing feedback on colleagues' teaching.

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