

Examining Indonesian EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Quality of Reflective Practice through Their Reflective Journals

M. Yoga Oktama¹, Endang Fauziati², Dewi Rochsantiningsih³

¹ Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia; otm@student.uns.ac.id

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia; endang.fauziati@ums.ac.id

³ Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia; dewi_roch@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Reflective practice is essential for teachers' professional development. It leads teacher to shape and reshape their knowledge, and so forth a wide range of benefits can be achieved. However, to gain such benefits, teachers must have good quality of reflective practice. This qualitative case study aimed at investigating quality of reflective practice of four female EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia. Framed with qualitative case study, this study employed online reflective journals as the main instrument to collect the data. The data were analyzed deductively using content analysis. The results revealed that participants' quality of reflection was still at low level. They tended to remain in the level of D1 and D2 which meant that they had tendency to merely retell and describe their teaching practice with limited evaluation. Only few of them were captured to reflect on the level of R1 and R2. Three aspects were considered responsible to contribute to the result of this research namely, teachers' less experience of teaching, lack exposure of reflective practice, and unguided reflective journal. In addition, recommendation related to reflective practice was also provided in this research.

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Corresponding Author:

Endang Fauziati

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia; endang.fauziati@ums.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout their careers, teachers are strongly pushed to continually shape and reshape their knowledge of teaching and learning (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019). For language teachers, this reshaping is best undertaken under the umbrella of reflective practice (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019). Dewey (1933) explained reflective practice as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). It requires teachers to critically examine their experiences (Richards & Farrell, 2005) by looking at what, why, and how they do inside or outside the classroom (Farrell, 2015) in order to improve their skills of subsequent decision making as well as task performance (Smolarek & Hora, 2016).

Reflective practice provides a number of positives ranging from recognizing teachers' strengths and weaknesses of teaching to increasing their awareness about challenges and weaknesses in their classroom (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2017). In so doing, teachers will have ability to leave their routine ideas and become more critical (Jiang, 2017). For pre-service teachers, in addition, performing reflective practice during their practicum of teaching helps them develop their repertoire of teaching, survive in their beginning years of teaching (Ong, Swanto, & Alsaqqaf, 2020), and develop a persistent reflective practitioner who will continuously seek to develop themselves professionally (Farrell, 2016).

However, these benefits cannot be simply obtained by teachers. To gain such benefits, teachers must have good quality of reflective practice (Luttenberg & Bergen, 2008). It is considered so because the quality interprets teachers' ability of practicing reflection (Lee, 2005).

To measure reflective practice quality, Lane, McMaster, Adnum, and Cavanagh (2014) designed a framework. This framework includes purely descriptive (D1), descriptive and evaluative (D2), low-level reflection (R1), and high-level reflection (R2). In purely descriptive (D1), teachers only describe actions they underwent in the classroom without explaining any impact or effect of those actions. Descriptive and evaluative (D2) requires practitioners not only to describe their previous actions, but also to add the description with their simple evaluation of those actions. In low-level reflection (R1), teachers are required to add qualitative reflection when evaluating their actions. Typically, this stage is identified by phrases begun with 'as ...' or 'because ...'. Finally, in high-level reflection (R2), teachers are required to describe the actions, evaluate them with reference to principle of quality teaching, and include suggestions for adjusting future instruction.

In Indonesian educational context, reflective practice has been set by the Ministry of National Education of Republic of Indonesia as one among competence standards of teachers (2007). This regulation was purposed to develop teachers' professionalism. However, the beneficial contribution of reflective practice on teachers' professional development is not growing within the context of English as a foreign Language teaching in Indonesia (Saputra, Surendi, & Rodliyah, 2020). Nurkamto and Sarosa (2020) argued that many English teachers in Indonesia had no ability to reflect their teaching. It was proven by the fact of their study that only two out of thirty EFL teachers at Islamic Senior High Schools around Surakarta were familiar with the term of reflective practice. The study conducted by Azizah, Nurkamto, and Drajadi (2018) also revealed similar finding. They found that the seventh semester EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia still have difficulties in applying reflective practice. Although they have finished their teaching practice, it was found that the pre-service teachers applied reflective practice in limited ways. Yanuarti and Treagust (2016) added that teachers in Indonesia were still very lay about the concept of reflective practice. Because of it, many teachers neglect the reflection (Sabgini & Khoiriyah, 2020).

The lack of understanding of reflective practice was probably caused by limited empirical evidence focusing on the quality of reflective level measurement. Reflective scholars less concern on this issue. Because of lack of references of the issue, there is no attempt of related parties to improve EFL teachers' reflective quality.

Only few studies were found related to this topic. The newest study regarding the concern was conducted in 2017 by Nurfaidah. She analysed Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' reflective journal guided with Richard and Lockhart guideline. She found that the level of reflectivity of EFL pre-service teachers undergoing teaching practicum remained mostly at the range of dialogic reflection level 3 and dialogic reflection level 4. It means that they were found to just describe, analyse and evaluate their instructional practices. No one of them was found reflecting critically on the highest level of the framework. In other words, it can be stated that their skills to reflect remained at the low level.

Responding to the above phenomena, this study comes to fill the gap. The current study will explore un-experienced Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers participating in a part-time teaching in their campus. The word 'un-experienced' referred to the fact that when they joined part-time teaching, they were in their third semester, had no teaching practicum, and got limited theory of teaching. Moreover, they used un-guided reflective journal as their tool to reflect their teaching. Those facts make the study pivotal to

discuss. In line with it, this study is guided by single research question, *'to what extent female EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia perform reflective practice?'*

Additionally, since the current research required in-depth exploration of the contemporary and unusual case of EFL pre-service teachers' practice of reflection, case study design was employed. The case study was chosen to frame this research for it focuses on the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context (Yin, 2018).

After conducting the study, richer empirical evidence related to the issue would be available. The empirical evidence could be utilized by related parties to evaluate and improve their system of developing teachers' professionalism in their institutions. Thus, competence standards that were designed by the Ministry of Education of Indonesia could be reached.

2. METHODS

This case study was conducted at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. Four female EFL pre-service teachers from third semester of department of English education were enrolled as part-time teachers at English learning club of this university. Because of their early years of study, they had not undergone teaching practice beforehand and had little exposure related to teaching theories. For this condition, they were considered as 'un-experienced' EFL pre-service teachers.

They were voluntarily involved in this research and their involvement was based on their activities dealing with reflective practice in the form of writing reflection. Their names were pseudonyms and referred as Vanesa, Sheila, Luna, and Dean.

Given once pedagogical scaffolding by their teacher educator right before their teaching practice, they wrote reflection weekly right after completing their teaching during odd semester 2021. Unlike reflective journals of other researches (Barber, 2020; Farrell & Kennedy, 2020; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2017), there were no special conditions in writing reflection in this reflective journal. In other words, they could freely write everything they considered necessary in their reflective journal. This policy prevented the student teachers from "writing for" the instructor (Bahsan & Holsblat, 2017). To avoid language problem, in addition, they were required to write in Bahasa Indonesia. On behalf of this research, their reflective journal is the main instrument to collect the data.

In line with data analysis, the collected data were analyzed deductively using thematic analysis. After splitting row data into sentences, three steps of data analysis proposed by Arslan (2019) were adapted and used to analyze the data. The steps consisted of familiarization, coding, and reviewing themes. The familiarization step was used to gain familiarity of the content. It was done through reading and rereading the data. The familiar data were then coded using the framework of Lane et al. (2014). Afterwards, the coded data were reviewed. To make sure the accuracy of data interpretation, the results of data analysis were compared to those of two other researchers of this research. The agreement among the researchers was 95%.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study revealed that there were variations of the total amount of journal entries submitted by participants. Interestingly, the differences did not influence their total word counts. Although only submitting 9 entries of reflective journal, for instance, Vanesa's total amount of words remained at the second position (Table 1). Conversely, with 14 entries, Dean's words stayed at the third position right below Vanesa's. The differences occurred because of different length of reflection written by participants.

Table 1. Participants' Words Count

Journal Entries	Word Entry per Week			
	Vanesa	Sheila	Luna	Dean
Entry 1	73	16	11	195
Entry 2	228	89	117	206
Entry 3	135	68	191	136
Entry 4	183	89	71	56
Entry 5	46	124	55	45
Entry 6	64	145	60	49
Entry 7	-	47	26	27
Entry 8	159	121	-	67
Entry 9	145	106	-	29
Entry 10	90	117	-	8
Entry 11	-	115	24	9
Entry 12	-	134	29	20
Entry 13	-	-	6	41
Entry 14	-	79	5	10
Total Words	1123	1250	595	898
Total Entries	9	13	11	14

In addition, Vanesa's reflection was extremely dominated by purely descriptive (D1) with 53 occurrences (Table 2). Descriptive evaluative (D2) topped in the second position with 20 times. Meanwhile low-level reflection (R1) doubled than that of high-level (R2) which only appeared 3 times.

The following expressions illustrate Vanesa's reflections categorized as D1 and D2. In D1, Vanesa only restated her previous teaching activity. She stated that she faced obstacles in the third meeting though it was not as many as in the previous weeks.

"At the 3rd meeting, the obstacles were not as many as the previous weeks." (D1 – Vanesa's Entry 3)

In line with her R1, Vanesa reflected that it was necessary for her to serve various examples related to the materials for her students. Thus, she thought that the participants could develop. Meanwhile, her R2 contained evaluation of her teaching and suggestion to listen to more advise for her future action.

"I thought that I need to provide more varied examples to ETP participants so that they can develop." (R1 – Vanesa's Entry 6)

"In the future, [I] will listen more and more to suggestions and input together so that this activity becomes better." (R2 – Vanesa's Entry 1)

Table 2. Vanesa's Quality of Reflection

Categories	Frequency per Week														Total
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	
D1	6	11	9	9	1	2	-	2	5	8	-	-	-	-	53
D2	-	1	3	2	2	1	-	5	6	-	-	-	-	-	20
R1	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
R2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3

Appeared 52 times (Table 3), it could be inferred that Sheila's reflection was highly dominated by purely descriptive (D1). Descriptive and evaluative (D2) and low-level reflection (R1) followed in the second and third position respectively with 9 time of occurrences per category. Meanwhile, high-level reflection (R2) only appeared once in the second week of teaching.

Related to R1, Sheila reflected that the material was little bit hard for her. This evaluation was written without giving any specific remedy for her future action. Conversely, after evaluating her teaching practice, she suggested herself that she should deliver the material more relaxedly, slowly, and in detail.

"The meeting to explain this interview [material] I thought was a bit difficult because I realized when I explained or presented the material there were many words that I thought were too complicated and a waste of words." (R1 – Sheila's Entry 11)

"For the future, I hope I can convey the material more relaxed, slowly and in detail." (R2 – Sheila's Entry 2)

Table 3. Sheila's Quality of Reflection

Categories	Frequency per Week														Total
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	
D1	-	3	6	3	2	7	3	5	6	4	3	6	-	4	52
D2	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	9
R1	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	9
R2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Luna's reflection was also dominated by purely descriptive (D1) with 19 times of occurrences in total (Table 4). It meant that Luna, in her reflection, wrote more about her previous teaching practice without any evaluation. Reflection that was expressed descriptively and evaluatively only appeared 12 times. Furthermore, Luna wrote reflection that was considered as low-level reflection (R1) 3 times, and nothing could be referred as high-level reflection (R2).

The example of D1 below indicated that Luna only retold her previous teaching practice without any justification. Luna only stated that she greeted her students and required them to open their camera. Meanwhile, in the next example, Luna gave simple evaluation on what she reflected. She argued that what made her students motivated was that they had their own goal which was to get higher score. Thus, it was considered as descriptive evaluative (D2).

"First, I greeted the students. Then, I required them to turn the camera on." (D1 – Luna's Entry 2)

"And I felt that they were motivated because they had a goal, her goal was to be active and get higher score." (D2 – Luna's Entry 3)

Table 4. Luna's Quality of Reflection

Categories	Frequency per Week														Total
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	
D1	-	6	3	2	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	1	1	1	19
D2	1	1	5	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
R1	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
R2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

Based on Table 5, Dean's depth quality of reflection was mostly purely descriptive (D1) and descriptive and evaluative (D2). Out of 14 entries, D1 emerged 30 times followed by D2 with 16

occurrences. The Table 4 indicates that Dean's reflection was also in the level of low (R1) and high (R2) reflection. Interestingly, the number of occurrences of R2 approximately doubled than that of R1.

"This time I could explain the material slowly and in detail, I gave important material and about structure." (D1 – Dean's Entry 2)

The example of D1 conveyed that Dean purely retold what she had experienced in her teaching. She expressed that she had been able to explain the material slowly and in detail.

Table 5. Dean's Quality of Reflection

Categories	Frequency per Week														Total
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	
D1	3	7	6	2	2	3	-	2	1	1	1	-	1	1	30
D2	2	4	3	1	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	16
R1	1	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
R2	4	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	14

In line with R1 and R2 level, the following two examples illustrate each of them accordingly. In the example of R1, Dean qualitatively reflected her teaching by stating that her teaching was boring and convoluted. In the next sentence she convinced that she would use different method in the next meeting to make the learning more interactive. Thus, it was considered to belong to R2 level.

"The meeting went well, but the method I used was boring and the explanation was convoluted." (R1 – Dean's Entry 7)

"The next meeting [I] will use different method which is more interactive." (R2 – Dean's Entry 7)

The results concerning reflective practice quality of Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers reveal that Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' quality to reflect mostly remained at the low level. They were frequently found to reflect on the level of D1 and D2. It means that they tended to merely retell and describe their teaching practice with limited evaluation. The result of the current study is in line with that of the study conducted by Nurfaidah (2017) in which she stated that pre-service teachers tended to reflect in the form of describing, analyzing, and evaluating their previous activities. Also, this finding supports the statement of Nurkamto and Sarosa (2020) in which they stated that many English teachers in Indonesia are still unable to reflect on their teaching.

Responding to the above mentioned, this study resumed three factors contributing the participants' quality of reflection in this current study. The first is teachers' experience of teaching. Hotton and Smith (1994) argued that teachers' premature engagement to teaching practice plays significant roles in this trend. It makes them merely focus on concrete and simple aspects of teaching such as environment, students' motivation, and teaching method, without further critical investigation why such aspects exist in their teaching (Astuti & Draji, 2022). Even though, the essence of reflective practice is not only restating what happened in the classroom, but also evaluating teaching activities (Sabgini & Khoiriyah, 2020), investigating strengths and weaknesses of teaching, and even finding out one's own teaching philosophy (Nuraeni & Heryatun, 2021).

Another reason considerably contributes to the weak level of reflective quality is pre-service teachers' lack of exposure to reflective practice. It is in line with what found by Nurkamto and Sarosa (2020). They stated that EFL teachers encountered a plethora of challenges in practicing reflection due to their lack of understanding of reflective teaching. In the matter of fact, reflective practice theory is commonly given to pre-service teachers when they are in their late semesters, right before conducting teaching practicum (Nuraeni & Heryatun, 2021; Nurfaidah, 2017). Its purpose is to help them engage on the proper reflection. So that, they can link between theories they gain from campus and their practice of teaching in teaching practicum program (Barber, 2020; Nuraeni & Heryatun, 2021).

In this research, however, the participants were third semester EFL pre-service teachers which were initially on the process of digging up theories of teaching (Astuti & Drahati, 2022). Moreover, the exposure of reflective practice materials given by teacher educator was less enough. The teacher educator of this research only gave them short explanation of reflective practice by only giving them examples of good and bad reflection and did not train them how to perform reflection properly before practicing their real reflection. Even, it was done only once before they practice their teaching. This condition, of course, significantly affected students' performance and quality of doing reflection. Sabgini and Khoiriyah (2020) explained that since pre-service teachers are still on the initial step to teach and going to be future teacher, they really need to be more exposed to do reflection.

The last factor that might influence the result of this study is the unguided reflective journal they used as a tool to reflect. Guideline, in writing reflective journal, is extremely important because it will make participants more focused on what aspects they reflect. The guideline can be in the form of angler questions such as what proposed by Richards and Lockhart (1996) which includes, 'what do I do as a teacher?', 'what principles and beliefs inform my teaching?', 'why do I teach the way I do?', 'what roles do learners play in my classes?', and 'should I teach differently?'. It also can be in the form of stressed points like what Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2017) stressed out at their participants. They asked their participants to write their experiences, weaknesses, and strengths of their teaching in their reflective journal.

Prior to this research, participants who applied guidelines in their reflective journal were found having positive perception toward the use of journal as a tool of reflection. Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2017) found that their participants were convinced and regarded reflective journal as tool to increase their teaching awareness. Farrell and Kennedy (2020) found that using guideline can help teachers to reflect on all aspects of their practice. Moreover, Barber (2020) found that using bullet-grid journal could help pre-service teachers tackle the problem of theory-practice gap during their teaching practicum.

In this study, however, participants were not provided with guidelines. The initial purpose was to let them think and write freely what they considered important in their teaching. Yet, the decision not to include guideline in writing reflection led pre-service teachers to perceive writing journal as a burden and weekly routine, which actually goes against the nature of reflective practice proposed by Dewey (1933). What Dean and Luna wrote in their late journal entries may give clearer illustration.

"The students were able to understand the materials given very well." (Dean's Entry 10)

"The students were able to understand the materials and practiced them very well." (Dean's Entry 11)

"The students understood the given materials, and understood the steps of constructing news." (Dean's Entry 14)

"Alhamdulillah [everything] was running well as usual." (Luna's Entry 13)

"Alhamdulillah [everything] was going smoothly as usual." (Luna's Entry 14)

In this case, Dean and Luna only wrote a sentence for each reflection entry. Moreover, what they wrote tends to be the same from one entry to the others. In the examples above, Dean tends to repeatedly write down the relationship between the material presented, student knowledge, and how it was practiced. Meanwhile, Luna was limited to regularly reporting that the learning activities were running smoothly. Though they wrote them at the late week, but this fact indicates that writing reflective journal like this is not considered as reflective activity anymore, instead it tends to be regular action.

By looking at the results of this study, related parties in general can have illustration of the current condition of EFL pre-service teachers. Hereinafter, like what suggested by Lee (2005), they can evaluate their current teachers' professional development programs and establish follow-up actions such as providing them with more exposure of reflective practice and giving them chance to practice reflection.

More specifically, teachers' educator might mind using guideline for their students to practice reflection. Future researcher or those who are interested in reflective practice in Indonesia also could use the result of this study as additional reference. From this point, it is expected that the quality of teachers' reflection in Indonesia will become much better in the future, and the benefits of reflective practice can be obtained by teachers more maximally. Thus, competence standards that were designed by the Ministry of Education of Indonesia could be reached.

The limitation of this study lies on the number of instruments and participants as well as their education background. This case study only used pre-service teachers' reflective journal as the only one instrument. Consequently, some important points such as participants' reason writing such way could not be confirmed. Additionally, with limited number of participants, this study could not effectively reveal general trend of Indonesian pre-service teachers' quality of reflection. Consequently, the results of the current research cannot be generalized. Participants' limited experience of teaching might also give significant influence on the finding. To gain more variative results, future research with similar topics is encouraged to involve more research instruments, add their participants, and consider their background of education. Finally, since participants of this study were female, it is suggested for future research in line with this topic to involve male pre-service teachers to examine whether the sex influence the results or not.

4. CONCLUSION

Reflective practice is believed to give its practitioners a wide number of benefits. To achieve them, teachers are encouraged to critically review their previous experience of teaching. Exploring Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' reflective journal, the results of this study revealed that female pre-service teachers' quality of reflection remained at the low level. Factors related to their less experience of teaching, exposure of reflective practice, and unguided reflective journal are considered responsible for the result.

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