Reflective practice: The experiences of pre-service EFL teachers in teaching English

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Abstract
Reflective practice is “a compass of sorts to guide teachers when they may be seeking direction as to what they are doing in the classrooms” (Farrell, 2012: 15). In other words, it is the teacher’s opportunity to contemplate what he/she has done in their teaching in order to find the solution toward the problems appear. This study aimed at presenting the experiences of pre-service EFL teachers in utilizing reflective practice in their teaching program. Thus, two pre-service EFL teachers were involved to give the information of their experience in utilizing reflective practice during their teaching practice program. The participants were the university students of English Education Program at one of the universities in Indonesia. The participants’ stories were collected through open-ended questionnaire, interview, and document analysis in this narrative study. Since it was a qualitative reasearch, the Interactive Model was used to analyze the data. It was found that the English teachers need to be more experienced in order to be able to utilize reflective practice properly and professionally.

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1. Introduction

This study aims at exploring pre-service teachers’ experiences in reflecting their teaching during the teaching practice program. Reflective practice is considered as one of the strategis to develop teacher professionalism. The process of becoming the professional teacher is not merely started when teachers have an opportunity to teach in the classroom, but it also begins before the teachers enroll the education program in a university. It means that the memories and experiences of the teachers when becoming a student since primary school are considered as the foundation to gain their professional development. It happens because what they feel and see from their teachers in the past can be something they will fix and improve in their teaching practice. In other words, previous studies have indicated that former teachers influence pre-service teachers’ perceptions about teaching profession and other conditions of class activity in which these will be a strarting point to understand and comprehend the perception of

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teaching and becoming an ideal teacher (Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014; Hudson, Usak, Fancovicová, Edorgan, & Porkop, 2010). In addition, this circumstance is called as reflection that is usually utilized by the teachers for the teaching purpose. By reflecting on their experiences, pre-service teachers are moving constantly in applying the theoretical concepts to their practice (Turunen & Touvila, 2012).

1.1. Literature review

The pioneering of reflection, John Dewey, sees reflection as “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that supports it and the conclusion to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933 as cited in Farrell, 2012: 9). Further, it is stated that reflective practice as a systematic inquiry which must be concerned by a teacher to achieve the professional growth. This is called as the reflection-on-action. Schön (1983, 1987, as cited in Farrell, 2012) developed Dewey’s concept and proposed the term reflection-in-action which means as a teacher’s opportunity to use their intuitive knowledge while he or she is in ongoing teaching. Further, Mannen (1991) and Killon & Todnew (1991) have the same view of the anticipatory action which later called as reflection-for-action. Accordingly, reflective practice is examined and subdivided into three categories: (1) Reflection in-action; (2) Reflection on-action; and (3) Reflection for-action (Farrell, 2012; Farrell, 2018). Reflection in-action called as interactive reflection means the process of teachers’ thinking towards teaching and learning activities while on the job. In reflection on-action, the practitioners think his/her previous teaching whether there is any problem or not and also to find out the alternative way to deal with. The last, reflection for-action or anticipatory reflection means teachers consider the problem or situation will happen in future teaching. Dewey (1933) adds that teachers must have some attitudes considered important to using reflection. It means that the thinking teacher requires three attributes to be reflective. The attitudes are open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility. Open-mindedness, means that teachers must have a desire on listening and looking at several aspects of problems and pay attention to many alternative ideas and views to reach several solutions and the alternatives; responsibility which is a careful consideration of the results to which an action will lead to; and wholeheartedness which implies that teachers can overcome uncertainties and fears so as to critically evaluate their practice in a meaningful way (Dewey, 1993; Farrell, 2015).

Furthermore, reflective practice consists of five elements usually realized by the teacher in teaching practice. The elements must be involved in reflection process even though not in the set order. The elements is same as the phase in thinking toward what the teacher reflected. The elements are suggestion, intellectualization, guiding idea, reasoning, and hypothesis testing (Farrell, 2012). Suggestion means the teacher’s actions in responding the problems occur at the teaching time. In other words, the possible solutions will be in teacher’s mind when he/she faces the problems. The second element is intellectualization. Intellectualization is the terrible situation in the teaching activity. The teacher at first looks the situation as the difficulty. Then, after analyzed it, it becomes the problem to be solved. It means that intellectualization is the problem. Guiding idea arises when the teacher has the suggestion toward the intellectualization in their reflection. In this stage, guiding idea is using a suggestion that is measurable to solve the problem. The fourth element is reasoning. In the reflection process, reasoning appears when the teacher analyzes the problems and factors of the problematic situation. It is usually linked to the teacher’s experience or observation in teaching. And the last element is hypothesis testing in which the teacher implements the guiding idea from his/her reflection. Hypothesis testing could be overt or imaginative action. It depends on the situation surrounding the teacher.

Pre-service teachers’ practical theories are developed through their practicum related to reflection. Through reflection, pre-service teachers implement some process such as observe and evaluate their experiences and thoughts in which this conceptualize them in order to increase skills and awareness of their feelings, beliefs and assumptions of their experiences into their teaching practice. As Mann &
Walsh (2013) state that when reflective practice is a positive activity that is needed and considered as a key to teacher development, so that reflective practice is needed to be kept in educational field. In addition, McCabe, Walsh, Widerman, & Winter (2011) & Walsh (2011) argue that “if reflective practice is to assist teacher development, it needs to be taught on pre-service teacher programs, a position adopted elsewhere (Mann & Walsh, 2017: 28). This is because pre-service teachers are the candidate of teachers who need to develop their professionalism. Further, they are still lack of skill to be competent. This is supported by Nurfaidah (2016) who finds that pre-service teachers have limited experiences in teaching so that they are not completely involved in reflective practice substance. For example, related to the levels of reflection, pre-service teachers achieve only at second level from four levels.

Reflective practice has also been utilized via tools such as diaries, narrative reflections, and mentoring meetings. Other tools are peer observation, student’s feedback, audio recording, peer coaching, peer observation, action research, and video recording (Lee, 2007; Fatemipour, 2013; Soisangwarn & Wongwanich, 2014; & Susoy, 2015). Those tools have the benefits of improving teacher’s skill. For example, peer observation provides some constructive feedbacks, teachers can make improvement in their classroom and also allows teachers to exchange the ideas about teaching methods, strategies, and materials (Tosriadi, Asib, Marmanto, & Azizah, 2018). And moreover, the feedback based on the issues found in teacher’s reflection can be used as a foundation to solve the problem appearing in teaching practice and lead the teacher to improve teaching skills and practices (Azizah & Tosriadi, 2018). Therefore, in the reflection process is included the solution revealed from the problems the teacher encounters in the teaching. The solution or even the discussion with other colleagues somehow gives pre-services teachers some ideas to solve the problems of teaching.

1.2. Research questions

According to the purpose of this study in reflective practice context, the formulated question is:

How do the pre-service EFL teachers reflect on their teaching practice?

2. Method

This study was conducted under the qualitative method in which narrative inquiry was chosen as the design. This was because the information of the participants’ experiences were the main data. Clandinin & Connelly (as cited in Richards, 2011, p. 782) state “Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively”. In order to get the information of the participants’ experiences in reflective practice, several techniques were used in this study such as questionnaire, interview, and document analysis.

2.1. Sample / Participants

The participants in this research were two pre-service EFL teachers (male and female) who had finished their teaching practice program. They practiced teaching in a Senior High School in Indonesia. The setting of this research was in the university since the time to conduct this research was when they had finished following the teaching practice. The participants were purposively selected through the preliminary study. The preliminary study was conducted in order to find out the pre-service teachers who understood of reflective practice, utilized reflective practiced in the teaching practice program, and also agreed to be my participants in this research. It was conducted through delivering questionnaire to the some undergraduate students and followed by interview. Then, it was revealed that two participants had high GPA, some experience in teaching, and further, the most important things were understood and
did reflective practice in their teaching practice program. The following is the information details of the participants.

2.1.1. Pre-service Teacher A (PST A)

Pre-service teacher A is a female student, 21 years old. She is on 7th semester of English Education Department in one of the universities in Indonesia. Her GPA is 3.65. Related to English teaching knowledge, she attended a seminar discussing about the learning activity in classroom. Her experiences in teaching English are private English course for junior high school student grade 1, 2, & 3. She also has experience in teaching English in one of the famous Senior High Schools for her teaching practicum program for 2 months. Currently, she is still teaching for 3rd grade student of Junior High School in her English private course.

2.1.2. Pre-service Teacher J (PST J)

Pre-service teacher J is a male student. He is 20 years old. He is the 7th semester student of English Education Department from one of the universities in Indonesia. His GPA is 3.69. He has currently no teaching activity; however, he has credible experience in teaching English such as becoming English tutor in Islamic boarding school for junior and senior students, English instructor for English camp at a Senior High School and an English teacher in teaching practice program in one of the famous Senior High Schools. To support his experience and knowledge in English Teaching and other areas, he many times attended seminar with various topic in a university, such as International Seminar Indonesian National Skill Competition, Self-Management Training, ESQ Character Building, Achievement Motivation Training, and Broadcasting Seminar and Workshop.

2.2. Instrument(s)

The instruments used in this research were open-ended questionnaire, interview, and document analysis. The questionnaire consisted of nine questions in which it was about pre-service teachers’ experiences in utilizing reflection while teaching, after teaching, and before future teaching. So that, to make the instrument, the researchers developed questions by considering the Farrell’s (2012) concept of the types of reflection (reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action) which resumed from Dewey’s (1933) and Schon’s (1983) theory.

Then, the interview was used to elaborate the participants’ answers in the questionnaire and also to explore more detail the information related to their experiences in doing reflective practice. This accounted for the similarities of the questions between in the interview and the questionnaire.

And the last was document analysis in which it was in the form of teacher diary. The participants after participated in questionnaire and interview were asked to write everything about their experience in doing reflective practice during their teaching practice program. The format of teacher diary was adopted from the related research that is unpublished doctoral dissertation from Nurfaidah (2016) that also investigated pre-service English teachers’ experience in doing reflective practice through a diary.

2.3. Data collection procedures

In this study, the researchers give an open-ended questionnaire to the participants. The total number of the questions to gain the information of their experience were nine questions in which for the reflection-in-action was number 1, 2, & 3. The sample of the these three questions were 1) Did you analyze the students’ condition while teaching? How did you do that? 2) Did you analyze the class condition while teaching? How did you do that? 3) Reflection-in-action is an activity to find out and solve the problem done while teaching is taking place. How do you respond to this statement? Therefore, reflection-on-action was questioned in number 4, 5, & 6, and then the rest question was for reflection-
for-action. After the participants finished answering the questionnaire was the time for in-depth interview. In this part, the researchers confirmed the participants’ answers and explore more information. The last step, the participants were asked to write teacher diary to retell their story in conducting reflective practice during their teaching practice program.

2.4. Data analysis

Since this study was qualitative research, so the validity and reliability of the data was needed to be fulfilled. Thus, the researchers used four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). Credibility showed confidence in qualitative research data. To meet this criterion, method triangulation and member checks were used. The second characteristic was transferability. It was used to discover to what extent the research result can be applicable or transferred to other contexts and participants. Doing purposive sampling was the way to meet the transferability. For dependability, it aimed at ensuring that the findings must be consistent when the research is repeated under the same context, participants, and method. Accordingly method triangulation was used in this research. The last criterion was confirmability that used to against the researchers’ bias. For this last criterion, method triangulation was also used to meet confirmability of data.

After the data collected, then all data were transcribed to facilitate the researchers in analyzing the data. Thus, this research used the Interactive Model proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, (2014) to analyze the data. The activities in this model were: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) drawing conclusion or verification. In the condensation process, the researchers read many times the transcriptions of participants’ stories. Farrell’s (2018) theoretical framework was used to create category. In data display process, the researchers displayed the organized information of pre-service teachers’ experiences in the form of text. Then, researchers presented the arguments and related theories of the findings in the verification stage.

3. Findings

3.1. The experiences of pre-service EFL teachers in doing reflection

Reflection in this research means the pre-service EFL teachers’ actions in finding out and solving the problems appeared at the teaching time and also doing a contemplation to predict the possible solution of problems may appear in the next teaching. In the teaching practice experience, the pre-service teachers used some strategies in doing reflection. The findings of pre-service teachers’ experiences were taken from the questionnaire, interview, and teacher diary. The following is the pre-service EFL teachers’ experience.

3.1.1. Questioning

In the teaching process, pre-service teachers used to ask the students to find out their problems by giving the simple questions such as “Any difficulty? Any problem? Do you understand?” For some reason, it was like the teacher’s routine to confirm the students’ understanding. On the other sides, this was revealed from particular condition. Further, in reflective practice context, giving a simple question was considered as one of the strategies for teacher to reflect what they observed. In other words, before giving the question, the teacher had analyzed the state of the class.

“....I analyzed the state of students while in class. [] it could be terms of material means whether they understand the material given. It could also look at the state of the student whether they pay attention to the lesson, for example. I used to do it like [] I’ve said before [] I mean as I said in the questionnaire that is asking students whether there is such difficulty. Any difficulty or any
problem. So I gave the task to the students, then saw them doing the task and [ ] sometimes I saw the student did the task while looking around like that. Sometimes they seemed to be working with their friends as they [ ] like asking each other and turning their heads to the left-right. Well [ ] then from this case, I asked if there was any difficulty or not.” (PST-A, 3 March 2018)

Through the question, the students used to ask back to PST-A related to the problem they encountered. The following is the PST-A’s statement of the students’ difficulty related to vocabulary in the material taken from the interview.

“Generally, mostly students asked me the vocabulary because [ ] there were many strange vocabularies in the text they did not know and then they asked me. Sometimes they asked to their friends first, but when I looked around them [ ] maybe their friends couldn’t answered the question so they finally asked me. [ ], to deal with that case is I used to directly answer the meaning of the vocabulary....” (PST-A, 4 March 2018)

In this reflection when PST-A looked the students’ condition, she firstly wanted to know the students’ problem since she saw that the students’ behavior while doing the task indicated that the learning seemed like not going well. She then used a simple question to find out the students’ difficulty while walked around the classroom from one group to other groups. The students then asked back to PST-A of the vocabulary they did not understand. In responding this state, PST-A directly answered the students’ question at that teaching time. Since this case happened during teaching activity so that this reflection is called as reflection-in-action. It means that the teacher reflects the teaching on the feet or directly reflects the teaching at the teaching time.

3.1.2. Analyzing the class’ condition directly

Doing reflection during teaching was not only by giving a simple question to find out the students’ problem, but also by looking at the class activity critically. This played an important role for pre-service teachers in considering what they should do when teaching-learning activity was not going well. In this case PST-J told that he ever analyzed the class condition in his teaching practice. At that time, he found the students were less motivated to study. He realized it from the face expression of students that indicated the tiredness and boredom. Also, PST-J had tried thinking critically that this condition happened because the English class was allocated before break-time and the students had studied from morning. The PST-J’s story can be seen as follows,

“... For example, when I teach before the break time, at that time the students were tired and bored because it had been long hours learning from the morning. When their faces and their reactions worsened, I stopped giving the material for a moment. At that time I initiated to encourage the students to be motivated in studying by giving simple icebreaking or sing and a game. Finally I decided to give them a game that can refresh their minds so they feel spirit again to learn.” (PST-J, 3 March 2018)

From the experience of PST-J, the types of reflection realized is reflection-in-action in which it is conducted during his teaching activity. In this reflection, PST-J found the students’ motivation was the problem that must be solved. From the story, it is clearly explained that PST-J did two actions in responding the problem, those are stopping delivering material and giving a game to return the students’ motivation in studying.

3.1.3. Memorizing the problems arose

In this research, pre-service teachers did not apply particular tools such as audio-video recording or write a problem in bottom of lesson plan. They tended to remember in mind about the problems arise in the teaching-learning activity as the discussion topic in their reflection after teaching. The story can be found in the following statement,
“I honestly rarely wrote the result of review/reflection in the notes, because I tended to remember and then discussed it with friends and teachers. But I wrote it down once and made a list of things I needed to correct/solve. The lists could not only contain my own evaluation, but also contained an input from friends and teachers that were then discussed together to be overcome or at least anticipated in further learning activities.” (PST-A, 2 March 2018)

From PST-A’s story, she told that she rarely wrote the result of reflection in the note, but she tended to remember it and then the problems to be solved will be discussed with the teacher and peer. Discussion is one of strategies in reflection-on-action since reflection-on-action happened after the teaching time finished and it is used to solve the problem appear at the teaching time.

3.1.4. Discussing with the teacher and peer

Pre-service teachers used to discuss with the teacher and peer and also supervising lecturer in order to discuss the teaching activity they have done and also to prepare the lesson for the next teaching. The points discussed in the discussion were many things related to the teaching-learning such as lesson plan, time management, and students’ motivation. The following is the stories of PST-A and PST-J related to discussion they conducted.

“[], the first is managing the time. I in my first teaching practice was taking so much time in apperception/brainstorming, so that there was no enough time to finish the material. Then, in the discussion time with teacher and peer they suggested me to do apperception for 5 or 10 minutes, actually 10 minutes have been long enough. Their correction was in that part. Another point is about the exercise. The students complained that they were bored in doing task of reading comprehension. Well, this case was brought to FGD session with lecturer, teacher, and friend. Then, I got the suggestion to deal with students’ boredom by giving the varied exercises. In my teaching I used fifteen exercises of reading comprehension with the same kinds of exercises. Lecturer said it is better to make varied exercises, such as the students were not only given the direct question, but it could be matching, yes or no questions, or true or false. So, I do not only use one type of questions....” (PST-A, 3 March 2018)

From PST-A’s story, there were two points discussed with teacher, friend and also the lecturer. The first was about managing the time. PST-A told that it was difficult to manage the time since she took much time in the apperception. However, she got advice from the teacher to use about five to ten minutes to do apperception. The second point is about the students’ motivation. The students were bored in doing the task of reading comprehension, and then, PST-A brought this problem in the discussion with the lecturer, teacher, and peer in the FGD. PST-A was suggested to make a variant of the exercise which not only use one type of question. But the variant questions like matching, true or false would be a considerable idea to deal with students’ boredom in reading.

“I think, when [] I forget the name [] when arranging [] the lesson plan and I’ve implemented once. And then [] I, my peer, and my teacher suggested to change little bit [] the process of learning in order to be well-ordered and more effective. And after that I applied in the next teaching and it was proved that the students could follow better the learning process.” (PST-J, 4 March 2018)

PST-J told about the learning activities arranged in the lesson plan. The discussion with teacher and peer revealed that PST-J needed to change the activities to be well-ordered. Accordingly, PST-J implemented the idea in the next teaching and he stated that the advice he got from discussion was effective to make better learning.

3.1.5. Predicting and preparing the next teaching

Pre-service teachers did reflection for the next teaching through predicting what problem should come up in the classroom. In this case, PST-J shared his experience in preparing the future teaching by
preparing the material and questions. Preparing the next teaching is classified into reflection-for-action because it is essentially the teacher’s time to reflect what will happen later. The statement of PST-J can be seen as follows,

“The first, on English language skills, I am confident in my abilities because before teaching I had read, and prepared the material and questions that might come up in the classroom so I could anticipate it....” (PST-J, 6 March 2018)

From the above story, PST-J had analyzed his own skill in teaching English. He was confident since he had prepared himself before teaching. When preparing the next teaching, he tended to prepare the material and predict the questions that might be questioned by the students.

In another chance, PST-A said that she used to discuss with the teacher and friend to prepare the future teaching. What they discuss are lesson plan, learning activities, and the materials. Below is her statement,

“I, friend, and teachers always communicate and discuss about the lessons we will do. It could be the preparation before the meeting, such as lesson plan, and the activities and materials we will bring to the class.” (PST-A, 2 March 2018)

From the above story, PST-A used discussion with teacher and peer as a way to reflect or analyze the next teaching. It should be to prepare the teaching activity that would be done. Therefore, lesson plan, learning activities and materials were the issues of teaching-learning she analyzed in the discussion.

4. Discussion

From the findings, it is indicated that pre-service teachers in the EFL context need to engage in reflective practice more professionally by using particular tool and getting kind of training since reflective practice can help them to develop their professional as the candidate of teachers. In three context of reflection that are reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action, pre-service teachers are required to be guided and facilitated from related parties such as department program and supervising teacher at school. This seems possibly be successful to train pre-service teachers to focus in their role as a teacher.

In this research, it is found that pre-service teachers conduct reflection directly while teaching. This is in line with some studies that when teacher reviews his teaching directly in teaching process, it is called as reflection-in-action. According to Murphy (2013), “reflection-in-action can be regarded as teachers’ awareness on current conditions, thus takes place at the time of teaching”. Wilson (2008) adds that reflection-in-action refers to teachers’ deep thinking of present situations and conditions. Farrell (2012) explains that reflection in-action means the process of teachers’ thinking towards teaching and learning activities while on the job. In this study, the pre-service teachers give a simple question and analyze the class condition at the teaching time. These ways are pre-service teachers’ action in doing reflection while teaching. Soisangwarn & Wongwanich (2014) pinpoints that in reflection-in-action, teachers should using simple question to analyze the problems whether the students understand or not of the lesson. In addition, the teachers must also be aware of classroom environment constantly when teaching.

In reflection on-action, pre-service teachers tend to memorize the problem rather than write it on the notes. They also many times discussed with teacher or even the lecturer to discuss the previous teaching in order to find the solution of the problem appeared. In fact, Lakshmi (2009) states that doing reflection through reflective journal must be offered to the novice teacher because journal writing is potential to
give feedback for the teachers. Additionally, Soisangwarn & Wongwanich (2014) also argue that reflection-on-action is usually noticed from assessing the effectiveness of teaching-learning and writing the results of the lesson at the bottom of lesson plan. However, the finding of reflection-on-action in this study is contradicted with those arguments because the pre-service teachers did reflection-on-action by remembering what things appeared and discussed it with the teacher and peer instead of writing in the teacher journal or journal writing.

The finding reveals that pre-service teacher used discussion to predict and prepare the future teaching. Predicting and preparing anything may happen in the future is in line with Farrell’s (2012) statement that reflection-for-action means teachers consider the problem or situation will happen in future teaching. While, doing reflection-for-action through discussion is in line with Soisangwarn & Wongwanich (2014) who state that reflection-for-action functioned to seek out the opportunities to talk about teaching with others.

5. Conclusions

To be a professional English teacher, one needs to look at several aspects that can help them to improve their English teaching practice. Reflection, in particular, is a model that is considerably more significant to involve an English teacher in developing professionalism. Reflection means English teachers are required to look back what they have done in English classroom, how the activity is going, how students performance and achievement, why that could happen, and others. In this phase, English teachers must think critically and link to the English lesson. Accordingly, several tools can be used to utilize reflection such as video-recording, teacher journal, peer discussion, and more. To sum up, pre-service teachers need to have more experience in teaching so that they can apply many strategies to reflect their teaching. Because the quantity of teaching influences the pre-service teachers’ critical thinking in doing reflection.

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References


Appendix A. Interview protocol

1. Did you analyze the students’ conditions while teaching? How did you do that?
2. Did you analyze the class conditions while teaching? How did you do that?
3. Reflection-in-action is reflection activity conducted while teaching. What do you think about this statement?
4. Did you analyze the lesson that you had provide in the class? How did you do that?
5. Please tell several points that you found in analyzing previous lesson!
6. Reflection-on-action is reflection activity conducted after teaching. What do you think about this statement?
7. Did you analyze the future teaching? How did you do that?
8. Please tell several points that you found in analyzing the next lesson!
9. Reflection-for-action is reflection activity conducted before the next teaching. What do you think about this statement?

Yansıtıcı uygulama: Hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmenlerinin deneyimleri

Öz

Anahtar sözcükler: Yansıtıcı uygulama; EFL; öğretmen adayı

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