

THREE ATTITUDES OF A REFLECTIVE TEACHER

Sitti Nurfaidah
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kendari

ABSTRACT

Reflective teaching practice in second/foreign language teaching education has been the focus of empirical studies attention since early 1990s. Despite the importance of the implementation of reflective teaching practice in the classrooms, there is still limited research on English language teaching in Indonesian context relative to the attitude of reflective teachers as revealed in their reflection. This study examined three attitudes of reflective teachers as proposed by Dewey, i.e. open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. They are considered as part of the keys in identifying the reflectivity state of the teacher. Data from two EFL preservice teachers' reflection through reflective teaching journals and interview were analyzed using thematic analysis technique to identify emerging themes and to extract narratives of experience. The findings reveal that both of the preservice teachers reflected the three attitudes in their reflection indicating their development in preparing themselves into more professional teacher. This study's implication on language teacher education program is also discussed.

Keywords: *reflection, reflective teacher, open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, responsibility*

Sari

Kegiatan refleksi mengajar bahasa asing sudah menjadi kajian pada penelitian-penelitian terdahulu sejak awal 90-an. Meskipun demikian, penelitian dalam konteks pengajaran bahasa Inggris di Indonesia yang mengkaji sikap guru reflektif dalam kegiatan refleksi mereka masih sangat terbatas. Penelitian ini menelaah tiga sikap yang dimiliki guru reflektif sebagaimana digagas oleh Dewey, seperti keterbukaan, kerendahan hati, dan tanggung jawab. Ketiga sifat ini dinilai penting sebagai bagian dari kunci utama untuk mengidentifikasi kualitas refleksi seorang guru. Data dari jurnal refleksi mengajar dan interview dari dua mahasiswa calon guru yang sedang praktik mengajar dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua calon guru merefleksifkan tiga sikap tersebut yang mengindikasikan perkembangan mereka dalam persiapan menjadi guru yang lebih profesional. Implikasi penelitian ini terhadap program Pendidikan Guru Bahasa juga disajikan.

Keywords: *refleksi, guru reflektif, keterbukaan, kerendahan hati, tanggung jawab*

Received 4 April 2018

last revision 13 April 2018

published 18 April 2018

INTRODUCTION

Reflective teaching practice, a closely related term to pedagogical context, has been of significance in fostering preservice teachers' development of teaching learning. The past thirty years have seen growing interest in reflective teaching practice in second/foreign language teaching education; making it the focus of scholars' attention since early 1990s (Richards, 1991). Along with this growth, however, research on English language teaching context relative to the attitude of reflective teachers as revealed in their reflection is still less explored (Farrell, 2012b). Meanwhile, it is argued that understanding the virtue of being a reflective teacher could help us commit to our own professional development (Marzuki, 2013). This study therefore seeks to examine the preservice teachers' reflective attitudes as exposed in their teaching reflection. Further suggestion on the study's implication on language teacher education program will also be discussed.

Reflective attitudes portray the teacher's state of being an open-minded, wholehearted, and responsible human being (Dewey, 1933; Rodgers, 2002; Farrell, 2012b). It was Dewey (1933), an American philosopher and educationist, who proposed three reflective attitudes that should embed in a quality teacher. He argues that for being considered as a reflective teacher, the first virtue a teacher should possess is open-mindedness. This attitude indicates some qualities that should be preoccupied by a quality teacher. A reflective teacher is said to be able to consider problems in new and different ways. He/she is also open to new ideas and thoughts that come from others. Therefore, he/she should be ready to listen to and welcome more opinions than one. Additionally, as an active listener, the reflective teacher should be prepared and able to hear contrary view, and also be able to admit that his/her previously held belief may in fact be wrong.

Furthermore, Dewey (1933) formulates the second virtue as wholeheartedness. It requires the reflective teacher to be totally involved in a subject or cause. Furthermore, he/she should display enthusiasm in a flood of ideas and thoughts. Also, he/she should be able to keep interest and desire for knowing is enacted. Wilbur (2016) maintains that as part of reflective framework, wholeheartedness "considers the complexity of

situations while maintaining a steadfast focus” (p. 3).

The last reflective attitude is responsibility (Dewey, 1933). This state of reflectivity is marked by the need to consider the consequences of the teacher’s actions. The reflective teacher needs to know why something is worth believing. In this way, he/she would grow curiosity in the meaning in what is being learnt. Ultimately, he/she is endowed with a moral trait which is important as an intellectual resource. Farrell (2012a) highlights that novice teachers can cultivate their responsibility by engaging in reflective practice during their first years of teaching real students “so that they can better assess and manage whatever issues and problems they face in their particular context.” (p. 438).

METHODOLOGY

Data in this qualitative case study were gathered from two EFL preservice teachers who were assigned to partake in a field teaching program at a private senior high school in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Anne and Ellie (pseudonym) were willing to take part in this study because they believe that engaging in reflective practice would be beneficial for them. As for reflective writing exposure, both of them had been engaged in writing their teaching reflection during Microteaching course in the previous semester.

Using reflective teaching journals as the main instrument, the participants were given guidelines in writing their reflective accounts prior to the journal writing activities (Richard and Lockhart, 1996) because the guidelines address some aspects of reflection in the language classroom. Unlike the structured journals (Borg, 2006), however, the participants only needed to address some issues of their concerns listed in the guidelines. Data was collected using participants’ teaching journal due to its use in the study of teacher cognition in preservice teacher education. Teaching journal is commonly assigned as a reflective tool during practicum (Borg, 2006) as well as a tool to develop competence and self-efficacy (Nye, Clark, Bidwell, Deschamps, Frickman, & Green, 2016).

Upon teaching the class, the participants were asked to reflect on their teaching and recorded their reflection in form of teaching journals. Despite their ability to teach English, they were asked to write their reflection in Indonesian because reflective journal writing demands linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural comprehension (Borg, 2006). The journals then were emailed to the researcher.

In general, the coding method in this study follows Liamputtong's (2009) and Malik and Abdul-Hamied's (2014) suggestion by locating the relevant texts containing the repeating ideas, followed by categorising the recurring themes which then were reviewed based on the theoretical framework underpinning this study's research concerns. In addition, in order to ensure a particular unit of reflection is coded accordingly, Hatton and Smith (1994) and Nurfaidah, et al. (2017) required the text being constructed before furthering into recognising reflective forms. In order to secure the participants' identity, their names will be pseudonyms as Anne and Ellie.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that regarding Dewey's (1933) framework of reflective attitude, the participants' reflective practice indicate their reflective virtues of being open-minded, wholehearted, and responsible teachers. The followings are illustrations from the Anne's and Ellie's journal entries depicting their reflective attitudes.

Open-mindedness

The first attitude to be revealed in the participants' reflective practice is open-mindedness. It is the virtue of cognitive excellence as well as civic excellence (Riggs, 2010). In other words, having the virtue of open-mindedness will lead the person into tolerance and living with others in harmony. This is what we need to cultivate to preservice teachers as they are hoped to pass on this good virtue to the next generation. The following extract exemplifies Anne's open-mindedness for being open to new ideas and thoughts.

“I came to the classroom alone, without my partner. I don't know where she is for she never showed up while our mentor teacher had suggested that we work in team.

Well, actually I was a bit irritated because she never came as the controller. Basically, today's teaching and learning process was fun. Some of the students were noisy but they wanted to go with the lesson. They were calmer when Miss R came to do videotaping which made me think that it is important to work in team so that one can be the teacher and the other could play the role of controlling the students. In that way, the students could be prevented from being noisy, wandering around, going in and out of the classroom, chattering, etc. At the end of the class I reflected that being a teacher is tiring and a hard work." (*Anne, journal entry #3*)

Anne's reflection on her second teaching illustrates the virtue of being an open-minded teacher. She realized that what her mentor teacher told them about working in team justifies teacher's ability to manage the classroom. Anne shows indication of being an open-minded teacher as she is willing to listen to what other says to her and then came with realization of the benefit of the suggestion after putting her judgement into hold for a while. It is in line with Baehr's (2011) argument that such standpoint requires the state of being open to new ideas or thoughts offered from others.

As for Ellie's case, the following excerpt demonstrates her openness towards the problems in the classroom she posed during her time of teaching. She open-mindedly considered the problems in new and different ways. She reflected:

"After the third meeting, I started to feel a bit annoyed since it seems that the students don't know or perhaps they don't want to appreciate what I have done for their class so far; from preparing and making teaching media, preparing teaching materials and explaining in front of the class until my mouth went dry. But now, as I'm reflecting it, I start to think about many things like: (a) the ways to make them understand the material I'm delivering to them because as far as I'm concerned, they still don't get whatever I deliver to them, (b) the ways to make them want to do the tasks that I assign them to do, or (c) maybe they're bored with the way I teach since I always use teaching media which I put on the whiteboard and *pair work* technique." (*Ellie, journal entry #3*)

Ellie's revelation on her third teaching epitomizes a novice teacher open-mindedness (Farrell, 2012a). As her exposure towards teaching experience and students' progress on the delivered lesson went on, she realized that she need to sit back and review on what she had done in the classroom. Her reflection brought her some ideas when she tried to see problems from different angle.

Both Anne's and Ellie's quality of being open to their new teaching context indicates their willingness to be reflective teachers. This case suggests that by cultivating the virtue of being an open-minded teacher early on during their teacher education program, the preservice teachers are expected to develop solid foundation for quality teachers.

Wholeheartedness

The second reflective attitude to be explored in this study is wholeheartedness. This reflective virtue requires both Anne and Ellie to be totally involved in their field teaching practice. They are expected to be enthusiastic in teaching ideas and thoughts, and be able to keep interest and desire throughout their teaching practice. The following reflection illustrates Anne's wholeheartedness during the day's lesson.

“I thought today's lesson was quite effective because the lesson plan was complete and the classroom was more manageable because we worked in team. ... I realized that the teaching and learning process was still dominated by me. I decided to do so because when I asked the students to discuss in small group, they still relied on me on what to discuss and what to do with text. They still have lack awareness of the benefit of discussing with their friends. They still believe that the right things are all on me. In other words, they are not confident enough to speak their minds. However, I helped them by guiding them on how to deal with the text and what to discuss by mingling around to check each group and told them to ask me anything they didn't understand.” (*Anne, journal entry #4*)

Anne's total engagement with the teaching is shown from her effort to make the lesson effective and to make sure that the students could comprehend the lesson well by helping them out. Although the students were struggling with the task, she managed to make them work on their discussion by providing proper guidance. Meanwhile, in Ellie's case, her reflection reveals her ability to stay focus and enthusiastic when facing the students. She revealed:

“Thank God... After I explained to them about [learning and the importance of] English, they started to be open about their problem in learning English. Most of them are having troubles in grammar and limited vocabularies so that they are facing difficulties in speaking, writing, listening, even reading that they cannot comprehend the passages. So, it is difficult. Besides, they said that their English teacher at the school did not care whether they understand or not what the teacher was delivering and she kept going. Also, they acknowledged that I spoke too fast in

front of the classroom while all this time whenever I asked them whether I spoke too fast or not, they just said that it was fine.” (*Ellie, journal entry #6*)

The abovementioned reflection exposes both Anne’s and Ellie’s attempt to take risks and therefore put themselves as ‘responsible risk takers’ (le Cornu & Peters, 2005: 55). As exposed to real classroom complex problems, Anne and Ellie realized that they should face whatever problems they encountered. Such exposures to problems have developed their ability to overcome their own anxiety, fears, and uncertainties (Richards & Lockhart, 1991) within their particular classroom context. In other words, they were able to cultivate wholeheartedness, the reflective attitude, and grow into more contemplative and quality teacher (Bach & Alexander, 2015).

Responsibility

Responsibility is the third reflective attitude worth depicting in the participants’ reflection. Featured by “careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads” (Farrell, 2008), responsibility bears the significance of critical thinking that the teacher should develop. Anne’s responsibility in handling her classroom is portrayed as follows:

“I think in this lesson I didn’t provide proper media for simple present, rather I only provided the one for analytical exposition text. I should have made specific teaching resource dealing with sentences, probably in form of flash cards so that the lesson could have been more interesting. Besides that, I will teach them how to write analytical exposition text by mind mapping concept. However, since I didn’t prepare any mind map and explaining what mind map was, they became confused and didn’t know what to do. For the following meeting, I have to provide mind map and explain about it in detail so that they will get clear idea.” (*Anne, journal entry #5*)

Regarding preservice teachers’ virtue of responsibility, both Anne’s and Ellie’s reflection exert their sense of responsibility as language teachers. They both reflected on how they dealt with their lesson plan and their ways in solving the problems they encountered. Ellie’s sense of responsibility is reflected as follows:

“But the lesson plan that I have planned didn’t go smoothly as whenever I asked them to do something like understanding passages, writing, or speaking, they just kept silence. While in fact, before asking them to write or speak, I have provided them with explanation and sufficient examples with the help of teaching resources.

They are having great trouble with grammar. For example, out of the two sentences I asked them to make, none of them was correct. At last, I ended up explaining grammar rather than focusing on what I have planned before. So, my lesson plan didn't work at all." (*Ellie, journal entry #1*)

Based on the findings of the study, preservice teachers indicate their great potential to be reflective teachers as revealed from their reflective teaching practices. This study implies that teacher education program needs to establish sound curriculum in order to cultivate the student teachers' reflective attitude early on. The findings of this study echo Nurfaidah, et al.'s (2017) study that the preservice teachers should be engaged, realized and exposed to the reflective activities earlier in their student-teacher learning experience. Teacher educator should bear in their mind that preservice teachers are full of idealism and should be maintained their enthusiasm by helping them being reflective.

CONCLUSION

In summary, regarding Dewey's (1933) reflective attitudes, as the findings indicated, it is suggested that in order to gain the state of quality teacher, the teacher candidates need to be open-minded, wholehearted, and responsible. Cultivating the three attitudes as essential elements of being ready to be reflective teacher is clearly valuable in teacher education program. The attitudes predispose an individual to reflect become important features in teacher education, which under appropriate conditions, they can also be enhanced and developed further. Once the preservice teachers are equipped with reflective virtues, it will be no doubt that they would be able to facilitate their students' learning (Tyrrell, Lo, Sankey, & Sam, 2013). Thus, it implies that English language teacher education program should equip and encourage the preservice teachers with more exposure to teaching learning activities which may trigger them to engage in reflective attitudes.

REFERENCES

- Bach, D. J., & Alexander, J. (2015). Contemplative approaches to reading and writing: Cultivating choice, connectedness, and wholeheartedness in the critical humanities. *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, 2(1), 17-36.

- Baehr, J. (2011). The structure of open-mindedness. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 41, 191-213. doi: 10.1353/cjp.2011.0010
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.
- le Cornu, R., & Peters, J. (2005). Towards constructivist classrooms: The role of the reflective teacher. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 6(1), 50-64.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston, MA: DC Heath and Company.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2008). Reflective practice in the professional development of teachers of adult English language learners. *CAELA Network Brief, October*, 1-4.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2012a). Novice-service language teacher development: Bridging the gap between preservice and in-service education and development. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), 435-449.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2012b). Reflecting on reflective practice: (Re)visiting Dewey and Schon. *TESOL Journal*, 3(1), 7-16. doi: [10.1002/tesj.10](https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.10)
- Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1994). Facilitating reflection: issues and research. *ERIC ED375110*, 1-23.
- Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(1), 33-49.
- Ho, B. (2009). Training teachers of English to reflect critically. *The Journal of ASIA TEFL*, 6(4), 109-130.
- Liamputtong, P. (2009). *Qualitative research method, 3rd edition*. Victoria, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Malik, R. S., & Abdul-Hamied, F. (2014). *Research methods: A guide for first time researchers*. Bandung: UPI Press.
- Marzuki, A. A. (2013). *Reflecting the reflective journal training in South Sulawesi, Indonesia: The case of secondary teachers from Bugis ethnic groups*. Paper presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Adelaide.
- de Matos, M. E. E. (2014). CLIL as a catalyst for developing reflective practice in foreign language teacher education. Unpublished dissertation, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto. Porto: University of Porto.

- Nurfaidah, S., Lengkanawati, N. S., & Sukyadi, D. (2017). Levels of reflection in EFL pre-service teachers' teaching journal. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 80-92. doi: 10.17509/ijal.v7i1.6861
- Nye, A., Clark, J., Bidwell, P., Deschamps, B., Frickman, L., & Green, J. (2016). Writing the (researcher) self: Reflective practice and undergraduate research. *Reflective Practice*, 17(3), 257-269. 10.1080/14623943.2016.1146577
- Richards, J. C. (1991). Reflective teaching in TESOL teacher education. In E. Sadtono (Ed.), *Issues in language teacher education: Anthology series 30* (pp. 1-19). Singapore: SEAMEO RELC.
- Richards, J. C., & Lockhart, C. (1996). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Riggs, W. (2010). Open-mindedness. In Heather Battaly (Ed.), *Virtue and vice, moral and epistemic* (pp. 173-188). West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4), 842-866.
- Tyrrell, J., Lo, M-L., Sankey, D., & Sam, C. A. (2013). *Field experience handbook (preservice education programmes)*. Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Wilbur, G. (2016). The staying power of intercultural learning through reflective inquiry. *Reflective Practice*, 1-13. doi: 10.1080/14623943.2015.1123687

Biography

Sitti Nurfaidah is an English lecturer and researcher in Institute Agama Islam Negeri Kendari- Indonesia. She has already published several articles related to English instruction and teacher professionalism. Some of her articles have been successfully published in several refereed journals. She could be reached at snurfaidah@yahoo.com