

## A Case Study on Assessing Reflectivity Levels of Pre-Service Language Teachers through Journals

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**Abstract:** Reflectivity is regarded as an indispensable component of teacher education. Through a reflective teaching/learning model, pre-service teachers may have the opportunity to become a reflective practitioner and train their students in a more reflective fashion. With this in mind, 12 pre-service teachers were assigned to keep reflective journals for a ten-week practicum period. Each week, they were assigned a new task related to the practicum components involving classroom management, lesson planning, micro-teaching, and teachers' roles. The data obtained from the reflective journals and face-to-face interviews were analysed in accordance with grounded theory including initial and focused coding. The findings suggest that the level of reflectivity of participants mostly remained on the very first level of reflectivity (Recall Level). Upper levels of reflectivity (Rationalization and Reflective Level) were observed to be rather lower than the Recall Level, implying that such reflectivity practices require longer stretches of time to gain the habit of reflective thinking. Also, most of the participants highlighted the contribution of journals to the enhancement of critical reflection.

### Anahtar sözcükler

Hizmet öncesi  
yabancı dil  
öğretmeni  
yetiştirme, yansıtıcı  
öğrenim/öğretim,  
yansıtma düzeyi,  
yansıtıcı günlükler,  
durum\_çalışması.

### Yansıtıcı Günlükler Aracılığıyla Hizmet Öncesi İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Yansıtma Düzeylerinin Belirlenmesi

**Öz:** Yansıtma becerisi, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak kabul edilmektedir. Yansıtmacı bir eğitim öğretim modeliyle öğretmen adayları yansıtıcı düşünce becerilerine sahip olabilirler ve kendi öğrencilerini de bu şekilde yetiştirebilirler. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada 12 hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmen adaylarından on haftalık süreyi kapsayan bir araştırma takvimi içerisinde yansıtıcı günlükler tutması beklenmiştir. Her bir hafta içerisinde, öğretmen adayları kendilerine tayin edilen özgün ödevler doğrultusunda yansıtıcı günlüklerini ortaya çıkarmışlardır. Veriler, yansıtıcı günlükler ve yüzyüze yarı yapılandırılmış olarak gerçekleştirilen görüşmelerle toplanmış ve Temellendirilmiş Kuramın ön kodlama ve detaylandırılmış kodlama aşamalarına göre analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının günlüklerindeki yansıtıcı düşünce basamaklarından ilk basamak olan hatırlayarak yazmayı (Hatırlama Basamağı) ön plana çıkaran bulgulara sahiptir. Mantığa Bürüme ve Yansıtıcı Düşünce gibi daha üst basamaklara nispeten daha az rastlanmıştır. Bulgular yansıtıcı düşüncenin üst basamaklarına ulaşmanın daha uzun zaman diliminde ve daha eleştirel bazda düşünülerek oluşturabileceği sonuçlarına varmaktadır. Aynı zamanda bulgular bu tarz günlüklerin öğretmen adaylarının eleştirel düşünce sistemlerine olumlu katkı yaptığını ortaya çıkarmıştır.

## 1. Introduction

One of the most crucial needs in teacher education is to encourage reflective thinking of the teacher candidates. This concept can be attributed to Dewey (1933) who stated the objective of the reflective practice is to present how teachers act and decide, and how those actions and decisions affect the outcomes. To this day, reflectivity as a concept has transformed itself a lot by maintaining its importance for practitioners. Schön's (1983) work, *the Reflective Practitioner*, can be accepted as the milestone within the field in which he describes two aspects of reflectivity: reflection in action and reflection on action. Schön claims that reflection does not only involve a singular retrospective act, but rather it includes an ongoing process in which the experience and understanding are tested for future actions. Schön (1987) also underlines the fact that different perspectives should be taken into consideration while reframing the practice. Unless reflection turns into taking actions, it cannot be regarded as reflective (Reynolds, 2011).

Rodgers (2002) claims the most important components of reflectivity are systematic thinking and scientific inquiry. Through such reflection, any learner can have a deep understanding of their experiences and thus connect that to other experiences or ideas easily. Reflecting upon any kind of situations leads to a better understanding of that situation, a better handling of the possible problems within the situation, and thus a better view of a solution that would go unnoticed. Reflection can be eased or triggered by means of various tools whose effects were studied in detail in the literature: (a) Reflective journals (Foss, 2010; Kaminski, 2003; Pavlovich, 2007); (b) Double Entry Journals (Whitton, Barker, Nosworthy, Humphries & Sinclair, 2016); (c) Interactive journals (Maloney & Campbell-Evans, 2002); (d) Group discussion/reflection (Clarke, 2004; Kabilan, 2007; Priest & Sturgess, 2005); (e) Blog Journals (Williams & Jacobs, 2004), and (f) Jargon books (Özkan, 2018). Regardless of the type or perspective, a written form of reflection has been subjected to many studies resulting in numerous advantages (Abednia, Hovassapian, Teimournezhad, & Ghanbari, 2013; Farrell, 1998; I. Lee, 2008; Maarof, 2007; Majid, 2016; Shin, 2003). By using such a written form of reflection, I. Lee (2008) conducted a study based upon response journals of 13 English major undergraduates and analyzed the content within the framework of H. J. Lee (2005) and Hatton and Smith (1995). This study proved that pre-service teachers displayed all levels of reflection varying on the basis of the emerging themes.

Within the Turkish context, Önel (1998) conducted a case study on investigating the effect of action research with the collaboration of teachers' involvement in a reflective teacher training program. Another study by Oruç (2000) focused on the effects of a reflective teacher training program on the high school teachers at a state high school. According to the findings of these studies, such reflective teacher training programs proved to increase the level of creativity and critical thinking in their teaching context. Zeyrek (2001) conducted a study investigating the effect of diaries with fourth-year ELT students doing their practicum at one of the state universities in Turkey. The aim was to receive feedback on the pre-service ELT courses and understanding students' feelings and attitudes towards various aspects of teaching. Another aim was to provide students with an opportunity for self-exploration and reflection on professional growth and its relationship to teamwork as well as the use of technology in teaching English. With the analysis of the student diaries, she found that the students became aware of their personal views with respect to professional development.

With the aim of evaluating the reflective writings of Turkish pre-service teachers of English, Yeşilbursa (2011b) asked the students to reflect upon their own microteaching sessions in a campus-based course. Video-recorded sessions were transcribed by the students themselves, and student reflective writings were evaluated as to the subject matter and the way of

reflection. Results showed that pre-service teachers mostly focused on "self" and "negative reflection" in a descriptive fashion.

Supported by the aforementioned studies, the use of a reflective journal has been proven to be a powerful tool in raising awareness and enhancing the practice of both experienced and novice teachers. It can also have a positive impact on the professional growth of teacher candidates. Such reflective journals can be utilized in both pre-service and in-service teaching contexts (Numrich, 1996; Kaur & Kaur, 2010). Reflective journaling and the quality of critical reflection can be fostered, improved, or even developed by providing trigger questions, supervised scaffolding, opportunities to share experiences and opportunities to connect theory to practice (Hatton & Smith, 1995; I. Lee, 2008; Pultorak, 1996; Zeki, 2010).

As Wallace (1998) puts forward, reflective journals, apart from being personal documents, do not necessarily involve particular rules, which makes the writers feel free to write their feelings. Therefore, they can serve as a platform embracing affective factors. In a similar way, Richards and Lockhart (1996) state that diary keeping involves the process of understanding the affective variables which have an effect on teaching styles while paving a way for reflection. It is also beneficial in generating hypotheses and questions as well as being an easy way to record data.

In the light of all the studies mentioned above, this study tries to shed light on the effects of reflective journals in the pre-service language teacher education program on teacher candidates' reflectivity levels and their attitudes related to journal keeping experience. Among numerous reflective types or levels proposed by the scholars such as Van Manen (1977), Schön (1983), Griffiths and Tann (1991), Larrivee (2004), this study utilized H. J. Lee's (2005) framework of reflectivity as the basis in the analysis process.

The depth of reflection levels was examined in accordance with the framework of H. J. Lee (2005) in which the levels are described as Recall Level (R1), Rationalization Level (R2) and Reflectivity Level (R3). Recall- level reflection involves participants' describing the situation without questioning or interpreting the situation by recalling the experience and imitating the way they observe. The Rationalization Level, on the other hand, covers reflections that discuss a relationship between bits and pieces of the experience, the individual interprets the situation with rationale, searches for reasons behind the situation and generalizes the experience or comes up with guiding principles. The last level –the Reflectivity Level- calls for a change in the analyses of their experience and an evaluation of their experiences from various perspectives involving why-type of questions rather than what-question.

Identification of such levels of reflection and scaffolding in the pre-service teachers to enhance their reflectivity bear great significance since the quality of education can be facilitated through such practices (See also Ulusoy, 2016; Yeşilbursa, 2011a). By doing such analyses, this current study tries to contribute to the already existing literature and to extend it by providing data from a Turkish pre-service teacher educational context. Since H. J. Lee's reflectivity levels (2005) were scarcely investigated in the Turkish tertiary level of education, this study plays an important role in experimenting and uncovering the reflectivity levels.

With this aim in mind, the study tries to seek answers to the following questions:

1. How do pre-service teachers reflect upon ELT-related issues in accordance with H. J. Lee's reflectivity levels?

2. What are the views of pre-service teachers with respect to reflective journal keeping process?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Type and Research Context**

The study, a descriptive multiple case study by nature, includes two data collection tools: reflective journals and interviews. In this descriptive study, the phenomenon of the reflectivity levels of the participants' was discussed through the reflective journals kept regularly each week during the 2017-2018 Academic Year. According to Merriam (2002), a case study is defined as particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. Based on this premise, the researchers tried to focus on the reflectivity levels of pre-service teachers in a specific context, which implies the particularistic side of the study. The study is also descriptive as it tries to describe the whole situation regarding pre-service teachers' reflective journal keeping process during the practicum. It is heuristic as well since the content of journals demonstrates how reflective the pre-service teachers are.

The teacher education program in Turkey requires student teachers to complete a four-year compulsory higher education in order to enter the national standardized field test to be nominated as an English language teacher in Turkey. This standardized testing is comprised of all of the student teachers' four-year course content, including field and language knowledge. Based on the scores of this standardized tests, student teachers are assigned to any state school. On the condition that they are not assigned to state schools, they have got an opportunity to work as an English teacher at private schools or institutions. Approached from this perspective, being nominated to a state school is regarded as more prestigious in public opinion.

### **2.2. Participants**

Homogeneous sampling, a type of a purposive sampling technique, was used in this study. Twelve pre-service English language teachers (7 females and 5 males) with the mean age of 22, enrolled in a state university in Turkey attended the study. They were all senior students who completed the requisite and elective courses within the department in the field of methodology, linguistics, and literature. They all completed the first term of practicum by observing their mentors and completing the required tasks to accomplish the practicum session at a state secondary school of the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. During the study, the participants all enrolled in the Practicum Course in the fourth year of the teacher education program, and none of them had a reflective journal experience before in the teacher education programme.

### **2.3. Data Collection Procedure**

The data of the study were gathered through reflective journals and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The completion of data collection lasted for 12 weeks. Participants at the very beginning of the semester were informed about how to keep a journal under the Practicum Course conducted by the researchers. They were given a sample of a reflective journal and its potential content. As a following step, they are asked to write and reflect freely about their weekly experience in the practicum. After an analysis of the first two weekly journals, the researchers noticed that pre-service teachers focused only on what they did on that specific day and did not go beyond describing the events. Thus, the researchers decided to give some prompts that would lead them to trigger their reflectivity and creativity in writing journals. Table below demonstrates weekly prompts for reflective journals.

Table 1  
*Weekly prompts for reflective journals*

Weeks	Prompts
1	Practicum reflection (Participants were free to reflect on anything related to their practicum experience)
2	Practicum reflection (Participants were free to reflect on anything related to their practicum experience)
3	The concept of reflective teaching
4	Reflective teacher
5	The success of an English language class
6	Self and Kolb's experiential learning stages
7	Practicum experience within the theoretical framework of reflectivity
8	Teacher's role in a language class
9	Language teacher as a researcher
10	Microteaching

The researchers' intervention took place only to give prompts after the second week. In order not to affect the participants' reflective journal keeping process, the researchers did not intervene again in data collection procedure other than checking whether they were writing on a weekly basis.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Journal Data

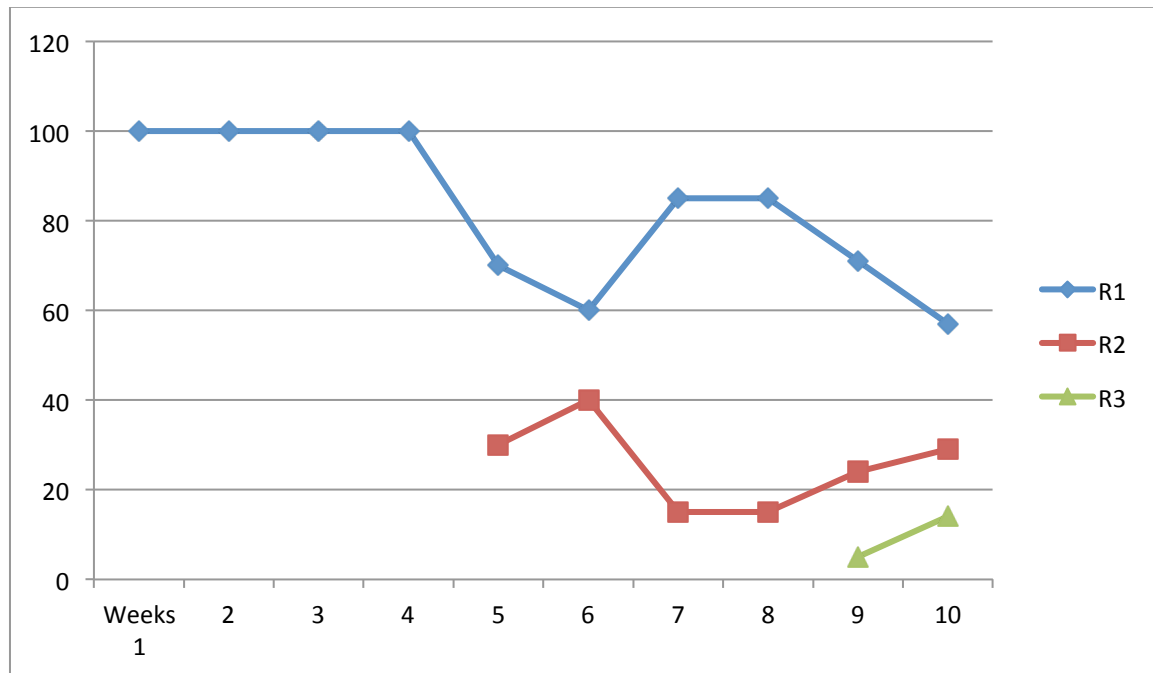
As the first research question seeks an answer to figure out the levels of reflectivity, the researchers, as a first step, counted the numbers of meaningful units –sentences- in the participants' weekly journals. Throughout the counting process of 120 journal entries, the researchers regarded simple and complex sentences as having one meaningful unit (one sentence) while a compound sentence was counted as two meaningful units (two sentences). As a second step, the researchers analysed the content of the meaningful units within a constant comparison method to eliminate potential researcher bias or misunderstandings and matched the journal depth with three levels of reflectivity (H. J. Lee, 2005). The reflection entries of pre-service teachers were analysed in terms of depth by giving descriptive statistics related to each week. The inter-rater reliability was calculated as .93 through inter-rater reliability formula by Cohen et al. (2007), which may imply the strong unanimity in labelling the reflective level of the participants.

The depth of reflection levels was examined in accordance with the framework of H. J. Lee (2005), in which the levels are described as follows (with further explanations by I. Lee, 2008):

- 1) Recall Level (R1): At this level, one
  - describes the situation without questioning,
  - interprets the situation by recalling the experience,
  - imitates the way s/he observes or s/he was taught and
  - does not look for alternative explanations.
- 2) Rationalization Level (R2): At this level, one
  - tries to find a relationship between bits and pieces of the experience,
  - interprets the situation with rationale,
  - searches for reasons behind the situation (questioning "why it is/was") and
  - generalizes the experience or comes up with guiding principles.
- 3) Reflectivity Level (R3): At this level, one
  - analyses the experience with the aim of a change or improvement in the future,

- can see the effect of cooperating teachers on students' behaviour, achievement, and values,
- evaluates the experience from various perspectives and
- asks not only the "why" but also the "so what" question.

As the figure depicts, at the start of the study, pre-service teachers tended to reflect on the practicum-related issues at the very first level: Recall Level (R1). Following the fourth task, pre-service teachers elaborated on their practicum reflections by stepping into Rationalization Level (R2). The ultimate level of reflectivity (Reflective Level- R3) was only observed in the last two tasks.



*Figure.* Reflectivity levels of pre-service teachers depicted through weekly journals

In the first and second week of the study, the participants were not given any prompt to write their reflections into journals. Analysis of those journals proved that they did not go beyond the first level (Recall Level-R1) of the reflective process. All of the journal content was related to describing their practicum experience that week without any interpretation of the current situation. For these reasons, the researchers decided to give prompts to enrich the content in the journal keeping process. The researchers did not provide any prompts for the first two weeks in order to see the current status of the participants: how they would reflect and what issues they would cover in their writings. Nevertheless, the participants did not go further than describing what they did at the practicum school. Thus, the researchers decided to give some prompts, and those prompts were chosen from the topics related to the ELT curriculum which the participants were already familiar with, specifically focusing on the issue of reflectivity. Thus, it was thought that those prompts would present the practitioners with a certain route to connect their experiences more easily. For this very aim, the researchers used only eight prompts allocated to the following weeks. Such prompts were perceived to be beneficial as it was observed from the participants' improvements in their reflective levels. However, these prompts led some of the participants to write only about the targeted prompt and not to consider combining the prompt with the practicum experience.

Some even went further by defining the prompt and writing what they already know as if they were responding to an exam question.

The third and fourth week in the study used *reflective teaching* and *reflective teacher* as targeted prompts consecutively. Nevertheless, the level of reflectivity did not change: level remained at Recall Level which indicates a sole description in the student journals.

*The Success of a language class* was the prompt for the fifth week which was a starting point for stepping into the second reflectivity level for some of the participants: Rationalization Level. In this week, 70% percent of the participants' journal data belonged to R1, while a small percentage (30%) of the journal data was included in R2 level.

Excerpt for Recall Level (R1) (Prompt: success): "*Success depends on the school's atmosphere because some schools don't focus on the importance of English, and this also makes students feel distant from English*" (P7).

*Self and Kolb's experiential learning* was the following week's prompt in which student teachers were expected to relate to their potential at the practicum experience to the theoretical framework put forward by Kolb. The participants' R2 level of reflectivity level raised to 40%. Still, most of the journal content (60%) belonged to the first level of reflectivity, R1.

Excerpt for Rationalization Level (R2) (Prompt: Self and Kolb): "*Being in front of the class is a real experience because we have a chance to teach by reflecting ourselves. While teaching, we can learn how to teach, and we can learn something new in performance*" (P5).

The excerpt above shows that the participant tries to find a relationship between the teaching experience and the benefits gained as a result of that, which shows the reflection at Rationalization Level (R2).

The seventh week's prompt was related to participants' reflection on their own practicum experience within the theoretical framework of *reflectivity*. They were all asked to write on their experiences during the practicum process within the scope of reflectivity. Still, 85% of the participants' journal data involved R1 level of reflectivity, and only 15% of the data belonged to R2 (rationalization) level.

*The teachers' role* in a language class was the following week's prompt where the participants were expected to consider language teachers' role in the language teaching context. The percentage of the reflectivity levels did not change from the previous week's content as 85% of the data included the R1 level, while 15% of the journal content belonged to the R2 level.

The ninth week's prompt was to discuss and reflect on the role of a teacher as a researcher. The participants' reflective journals concentrated mostly on the R1 level with 71%. This is the first time that student teachers raised their reflectivity level to the ultimate point even with a slight percentage in the R3 reflectivity level. Here the participants' journal content also involved the second level (R2) with 24%.

Excerpt for Reflectivity Level (R3) (Prompt: teacher as a researcher): "*According to their ages and levels, I try to find new methods every time. Because I know there is no "best" way to teach English. That's why I support the idea that every time searching for new methods and new materials*

would be more beneficial to achieve our goals. I mean different ones for each subject, level, age and also time” (P2).

The above excerpt shows the traces of R3 since the participant aims at an improvement in the future by focusing on the idea that "there is no best way to teach English." The participant not only concentrates on the rationale but also the "so what" constituent of R3.

The participants were all asked to reflect upon microteaching in the last week, and the results appear to be similar to the previous journal content. Most of the journal content (57%) belonged to the R1 level, while 29% corresponded to the R2 level and 14% were associated with the R3 level of reflectivity.

### 3.2. Interview Data

In order to answer the second research question, the interview data tried to elicit the views of pre-service teachers with respect to reflective journal keeping process. Each of the participants of the study was given an interview protocol (see Appendix) to enable them to feel prepared and ready for the interview. They were given five minutes to go through the protocol before starting the interview. By participants' reading the interview flow, the researchers aimed to raise their awareness of the interview content.

The interviews focused on each participant's reflective journal keeping process, and they tried to scrutinize the pre-service teachers' assumptions formed prior to the journal keeping process as well as new conceptualization because of the journal keeping process. Interview data was first transcribed by the researchers, and then member checking was applied to ensure validity and verify the transcription. After data verification, the researchers continued with analysing interview data under grounded theory coding. The rationale was that it is not just based on counting words or phrases in the data set, but it requires the involvement and interpretation of the researchers in the study. They started with initial coding individually without seeing each other's work. In this process, the researchers took notes about which in vivo codes would be inserted into the analysis of this study. As a second step, the researchers continued with the focused coding stage by discussing emerging themes in the initial coding stage and categorizing such themes to correspond with the related literature.

Based on the interviews with 12 participants, five main themes emerged which is ordered below from the most to the least frequently mentioned:

- a) the supervisor's role as a scaffolder in the reflective journey,
- b) beneficial and informative,
- c) realistic activity with a real purpose,
- d) effective prompts and
- e) the need for further experience.

*The supervisor's role as a scaffolder* was the most frequently mentioned theme among the participants which highlights the collaborative nature of the reflective thinking process. In the interviews, most of the participants stated that they needed the support of their supervisors to become more reflective and critical in educational issues. The following excerpts indicate the importance of the *scaffolding* of supervisors in leading to reflectivity:

*"I want to point out that your work as a supervisor is so valuable that I can't define. It was a pleasure to be trained on these issues" (P7).*



*“Your role as a supervisor during our practicum process inspired me a lot, and I will take you as a model in helping student teachers how to teach a subject and how to behave students” (P10).*

The second most frequent theme concentrated on the *benefits* of the journal keeping process. The journal keeping process was viewed as not only *informative* but also quite insightful in terms of professional development. The following quotes display the participants’ views regarding these themes:

*“This process was very beneficial for me. As a prospective teacher, I learned a lot from this process of journal writing, and I will apply what I’ve learned to my own lessons in the future” (P9).*

*“I learned most of the things like knowing and teaching is not the same thing. As a teacher, we should improve our teaching skills; we should adapt our language and behaviours according to students. I feel that I know nothing and will learn when teaching” (P6).*

Participants also attributed the *realistic* nature of journal writing to two different dimensions: being a realistic activity embodying a *real purpose*. They reasoned that such practice involves the realities of their professions, presenting the transferable side of the reflective practice. Also with the very real purpose in mind, they voiced their enthusiasm through journal writing.

*“We usually wanted to be in front of the class and instruct the subject and tried to take an opportunity. Doing this gave me a chance to improve my classroom management and realized that real classroom and real students made me a real teacher during the class” (P11).*

*Effective prompting* was another theme present in the interview data, which clearly indicates the necessity of utilizing hints to trigger pre-service teachers’ reflective thinking and to reach the ultimate level of reflectivity. One of the participant’s verbatim proves the importance of effective prompting.

*“The questions at the tasks were really helpful. It’s always better to have guiding questions” (P3).*

With this excerpt, *effective prompts* can be understood as one of the main incentives in pre-service teachers’ reflective writing throughout practicum experience.

*The need for further experience* was the last theme emerged in the interview. The participants expressed the need for more time to keep and reflect through journals, which also pinpoints the need for such practices for a longer duration of time. The following quotes of the participants display their need related to further practice in the process of keeping reflective journals.

*“I have learned so many things that will be useful for me in my future career. Every day is a fresh start for both teacher and students, and each class has a different atmosphere that leads the lesson. We just need to experience more” (P1).*

*“Being a teacher is a multidirectional job, and this kind of jobs requires experiences. Since interacting with someone is a priceless moment, and if we could achieve this, I believe we are going to be very good teachers” (P10).*

The interview data was not only analysed in terms of content but also the depth of reflectivity. The levels of reflectivity in the transcribed data were not different from the current picture of the journal data. Most of the transcribed data comprised of statements/utterances reflecting the R1 level of reflectivity (80%), while only a small percentage (20%) belonged to the second

level of reflectivity. This may serve as a proof to validate journal data; student teachers' oral and written pieces did not differ from each other significantly.

Verbatim for Recall Level (R1): *“During my observation sessions, I observed students' reactions to learning a new language, some were very enthusiastic about it, and some were not interested in it at all. I tried to understand which techniques the teacher used, which were useful or not. This helped me a lot when I was planning my teaching process”* (P4).

The participants here without thinking the 'whys' just mirrored what she observed during practicum sessions which is one of the signs of a very basic level of reflectivity at Recall Level.

Verbatim for Rationalization Level (R2): *“In my micro-teaching day, I was given the class which I had not been before. It was the first time and very challenging. I guess that class was the most challenging class in the school by the way. I was in failure again that I did not manage to stop, silence and make them listen to my class. Maybe I could have stopped them if I had been there before, maybe I had tried different things to make them listen if I had known them before. Therefore, it may not be a failure, but it is definitely a bad luck for me”* (P12).

Here the participant tried to connect what they brought to practicum with what they observed at the time of their practicum experience. The participant's interpretation of the existing situation can indicate the level of rationalization.

### **3.3. Trustworthiness of the Study**

The researchers of the study made every effort to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. For *credibility* issues, member checking was conducted to interpret the interview data by asking the participants to verify the transcribed data. The *transferability* dimension concentrates on the applicability, and the present study can be applicable to the other teacher education contexts within the same framework. The *confirmability* issue was accomplished by researchers' coming together to identify the type of reflectivity levels to eliminate the potential researcher bias. Also, the researchers received support from another colleague who is an expert in a qualitative research in the level identification process. Finally, the researchers made every effort to explain each step of the study as clearly as possible to ensure the *dependability* of the research.

### **3.4. The Ethics of the Study**

All of the participants voluntarily participated in the study and filled out a study consent form. The researchers informed all of the participants of the confidentiality of the data; the participants were all given numbers, and the data was not shared with third parties.

Also, the researchers declare no conflict of interest with other people or parties.

## **4. Conclusion and Implications**

This study aimed at giving a clear picture of what levels of reflectivity pre-service teachers are on, and how pre-service teachers perceive this reflective journaling process. At the beginning of the study, the participants only wrote at the descriptive level, which could be a strong indicator of their inexperience in keeping reflective journals. Upon observing this reality, the researchers initiated giving prompts, which stimulated the higher levels of reflectivity. The related literature (Bean & Stevens, 2002; Davis, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) is also supportive of such implementations where scaffolding or teacher's attitude plays a crucial role in encouraging reflectivity among pre-service teachers.

Even after being exposed to such prompts, pre-service teachers reflected on the given prompts only or mostly at the basic level of reflectivity (Recall Level). Only a small percentage of the second level of reflectivity (Rationalization Level) was observed in both written and oral reflections of pre-service teachers. The third level of reflectivity (Reflectivity Level), which involves the most critical and reflective thinking process, started to appear at the very last two weeks, which may be a sign underlining the fact that the reflective thinking acquisition process necessitates a lot of time and effort (See also Nurfaidah, Lengkanawati, & Sukyadi, 2017; Ulusoy, 2016). Thus, teacher education programmes are recommended to integrate reflective tools into the curriculum from the very start of education in order to trigger student teachers' creative reflective journey. The earlier they begin this journey, the more critical and reflective they become both as a practitioner and an individual. Here in this study, only the effect of journals as a reflective tool was investigated; nevertheless, we, as teacher educators, should consider utilization of such tools to enhance reflective thinking of student teachers.

Through the 12-week study period, pre-service teachers in the study showed a tendency to reflect on higher levels as time passed. The overall picture displaying this difference between the very first week and the last ones was not an unexpected situation. The related literature also supports the idea that reflectivity requires time (Pennington, 2011; Yeşilbursa, 2011a) and experience for such reflective occasions. Such findings highlight the necessity and importance of exposure to the reflective thinking and writing process along with the practicum experiences in teacher education programs.

The study also has some significant implications for teacher education programs involving supervisors, mentors, and teacher trainees who would benefit from the utilization of reflective journals during practicum experience. Through journaling, pre-service teachers can gain insights into their own teaching and receive an impetus to facilitate the learning and teaching environment which complies with the related literature (Holly, 1984; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Also, the study suggests the integration and use of such reflective tools at prior levels at teacher education programs would be beneficial since familiarity and awareness of such tools would probably enhance their critical and reflective thinking skills, which is one of the major components of being an effective practitioner. This integration is also supported by some other researchers in the field (Allen & Casbergue, 1997; Freese, 1999; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Kabilan, 2007; Yeşilbursa, 2011a; Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

## **5. Limitations**

This study, having qualitative aspects of nature, has two limitations. The first limitation is about generalization. Due to the nature of a case study, the researchers in this specific study cannot easily generalize the results across other English Language Teacher Education contexts. The other limitation is about the restricted use of reflective tools. Here only a single tool, journals, was investigated; however, a variety of such reflective tools may increase the level of reflectivity of pre-service language teachers.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview Protocol**

Department: English Language Teaching Department
Interview Venue: Department Seminar Hall
Duration:
Interviewee(s) (Title and Name):
Interviewer: Researchers/Authors
Interview Sections Used by the Researchers:
A: Warm-Up Stage
B: On Your Own type of question
C: Closure
Post Interview Comments or Leads:
Researchers took notes in relation to each interview.