

## REFLECTING TO LEARN: THE ASPECTS OF REFLECTION AS REFLECTED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THEIR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

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### ABSTRACT

*Reflective practice has become central issue in teacher professional development. Through reflective practice, it is expected teachers can improve their teaching quality and develop their professionalism as well. As a tool of professional development, reflective practice offers opportunities to teachers to reflect on their teaching. There are some aspects that can be included in teachers' reflection. This qualitative case study was aimed at investigating some aspects of English teachers reflected in their reflective practice. 4 in-service English teachers were involved as respondents of the study. Data were collected through interview and documentation. Then, they were analyzed by using interactive model analysis for qualitative study. The results of data analysis were elaborated by using narration. There were four major findings emerged as the aspects of teachers' reflection in their reflective practice; classroom management, teaching strategy, teaching and learning material, and students difficulties in learning*

**Keywords:** *reflective practice; teacher professional development; aspects of reflection*

### INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice has been recognized as an effective tool to help teachers develop their professionalism. Reflection or reflective practice, which is a relatively old concept in teacher education, was first defined by its founder, John Dewey. According to Dewey (1933) as cited in *How We Think*, Dewey (2007, p. 9) "Reflection is an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge, of the grounds that support that knowledge, and the further conclusions to which that knowledge leads". As teacher self-evaluation tool, in conducting reflective practice there are several aspects related to classroom matters that can be reflected by teachers. Some problems such as students' motivation and teaching strategy can be included as features of teachers' reflection.

Pacheco (2005) opines teachers often encounter problem dealing with classroom phenomena and it is very important to make reflection on them. The problems that can be included in reflective practice are (but not limited to) classroom management, teaching strategy, teaching and learning material, assesment technique, and students' learning difficulty. Cirocki & Farelly (2016)



consider there are so many activities or aspects to include in reflective practice, “ranging from lesson planning through lesson and materials evaluation to pedagogical research” (p. 35).

Based on Indonesia regulation, teachers’ responsibility is not only to teach. Instead, they also have to guide the development of their students. Thus, making evaluation on classroom related problems, such as classroom management, teaching strategy, teaching and learning material, and students’ difficulty, is urgently needed.

Burhan-Horasanli & Ortactepe (2016) opine that classroom management which includes time management is an issue commonly reflected by teachers in doing teaching evaluation. Further, they state students’ learning difficulty and motivation are other important aspect to reflect. Hidayat (2017) says in order to be able to guide their students’ teachers should know their students well. They should know their strengths and weaknesses in learning. Instead of those two points, reflection on teaching strategy is also required. It helps teachers find appropriate way in teaching. As stated by Liou (2001), evaluating one’s teaching method is necessary to make sure their selection of certain teaching method can encourage learners to learn. On the other side, Hidayat (2017) also emphasizes the importance of the evaluation of teaching and learning material. He argues, it is important to do since learning process can be investigated from learning materials which are provided for students.

Basically, Teachers may conduct reflective practice by reflecting any aspects they want to reflect. As the guideline, Kavoshian (2013) proposes a framework for teachers’ reflective practice. He adds 8 aspects or contents of reflection which spread out into several sub categories.

**Table 1.** Kavoshian’s Reflective Framework

No	Content of Reflection	Sub-categories
1	Communication pattern in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eye contact</li> <li>• Body language</li> <li>• Rapport</li> <li>• Students relationship</li> <li>• Students’ difficulties</li> </ul>



2	The affective climate of the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self confidence</li> <li>• friendly atmosphere and have fun</li> <li>• Rate of praise</li> </ul>
3	Classroom management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' attendance problems</li> <li>• Students' distraction</li> <li>• Disruptive behaviour</li> </ul>
4	Error correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' indirect correction</li> <li>• Peer correction</li> </ul>
5	Teacher's physical appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wearing formal clothes</li> <li>• Being worried about appearance</li> </ul>
6	Teachers' technics and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language use</li> <li>• Manipulating equipment</li> <li>• Teaching and learning materials</li> <li>• Use of teachers aids</li> <li>• Teaching process</li> </ul>
7	Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing personal goals</li> <li>• Setting future goals</li> </ul>
8	Teachers' command of English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English pronunciation</li> </ul>

This current study elaborated the aspects of reflection included by English teacher in their reflective practice. Thus, research question is formulated in the following question: What aspects are included by English teachers in their reflective practice?

## METHODS

This study is a qualitative case study. It involved 4 female in-service EFL teachers teaching at vocational high school in Indonesia. The participating teachers had varied teaching experience ranging from 8-27 years. The samples were selected through purposive sampling. In this case, we set up some criteria before selecting the sample. Those were; they should pose at least 1 year teaching experience and the second they had experience of conducting reflective practice. We also did interview with the participating teachers to know if they understood about reflective practice and its implementation on teacher development program. Instruments used in this study were documentation and interview.



The data in this study were gathered through document analysis and interview. After filling out the questionnaire, we discussed interview schedule with participants. We let them decide the day, time, and location of the interview. We also let the participants choose the language of interview, and finally they decided to have interview in Indonesian to avoid misunderstanding. The interviews were carried out at school (school library and office).

The data collected through documentation and interview were analyzed by using Interactive Models by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014). It involved data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion. Since interviews were conducted in Indonesian, we firstly transcribed the recording of the interview into English. We also coded the data to make it easier in identifying the themes appeared. Some of the codes appeared in the result of the study are as follow: T1#DS refers to participant 1, T2#AZ, refers to participant 2, and so on. And then, INT, refers to interview, to indicate data were extracted from interview.

## RESULTS

In doing reflective practice at any kinds (in-action, on-action, or for-action) there are some aspects reflected by teachers as the main concern of their reflection. Those things are: students difficulties in learning, teaching strategy, teaching and learning material, and classroom management.

### Students' Difficulties

One of the most common themes of reflection found in this study is students' difficulty. All participants of this study expressed that they did evaluation regarded students' difficulties and interest in learning.

Participating teacher T3#JT, said to reflect students' difficulties in learning she usually gave questions to students.

*“During teaching and learning process, I ask my students questions to know their understanding level” (T3#JT, INT, May 12, 2018)*

From the above interview, it is clear that the participating teacher T3#JT reflected students' difficulty while on the job. In other word, she did reflection in



action. Another participant, T2#AZ also reflect on students' motivation, and she also mapped students strength and weakness to ease her in directing students potential. She asserted,

*"I also reflect on students' motivation. I usually map students' capacity to ease me creating guiding program(T2#AZ, INT, May 9, 2018).*

T4#ES, also reflected students' difficulty in her teaching. She also investigated the achievement of learning goals by checking students' understanding.

*"For example students' difficulties in learning. I do it by looking at students' liveliness during lesson. I also evaluate the achievement of teaching goals. I also review the lessons before dismiss the class, I check if students have already understood my explanation. If they do not understand, I give them reinforcement, then I give homework" (INT, May 9, 2018)*

### **Teaching strategy**

The selection of teaching strategy is very important. To teach effectively, teachers need to select an appropriate teaching strategy to deliver certain topic. Thus, making reflection of teaching strategy is a must in educational context. Teachers need to evaluate their pedagogical competence to create a better teaching. By selecting appropriate teaching strategy, instructional goals can be achieved. The participants of this study revealed that they evaluated their teaching strategy to find a better way in teaching.

*"I also reflect on teaching technique. I evaluate the compatibility of teaching technique with teaching topic, students' characteristics. If there is a mismatch, I will find a more appropriate teaching technique" (T2#AZ, INT, May 9, 2018)*

*"After doing evaluation, if I find my teaching technique is ineffective, I will mchange the way I teach" (T4#ES, INT, May 9, 2018).*

The above statments were extracted from interview with T2#AZ and T4#ES on May 9, 2018. Both participants said they evaluated their teaching strategy for the betterment of their teaching. When they found something did not run well, they made changes on the way they taught the lesson. In this case, doing reflection is beneficial for teachers since it helps them find the best teaching strategy.



### Teaching and learning material

Reflective teachers involved in this study also did reflection on the selection of teaching and learning material. They investigated the appropriateness of the available material with the students' level, context, and targeted skill. Related to the evaluation of teaching and learning material, T1#DS, elaborated that she evaluated the materials by comparing several sources,

*“I evaluate teaching material by crosschecking several sources. I also analyze its compatibility with students' context. For example, when I read handbook provided by government, I found the level of difficulty was high and it did not fit with students' level of English. To solve this, I try to find other sources which use a simpler language, but the essence of the topic was similar. I found it when I taught about descriptive text, the fantasy was too high. The texts were about countries in Europe and America. While in fact, the students never went out of their town. So, I looked for material which was familiar to them, so they were not day dreaming in learning. (T1#DS, INT, May 12, 2018).*

T1#DS told after checking the reliability of the material, then she analyzed its appropriateness with students' background. For example, when teaching about descriptive text she found the context of the text was not really close to students' everyday life, thus, she looked for other text which was familiar to students. T4#ES, another respondent, shared her experience when conducting reflection of teaching material while on the job. She said that she evaluated teaching material by rereading basic competence and then crosschecking teaching material

*“In evaluating teaching material I usually read basic competence on the syllabus, then I check teaching material to know if they are in line. I also had experience when teaching writing. I used handbook provided by government. I found the assignment provided on the book did not measure the skill I taught. It was more about reading. So, I had to create question and instruction which in line with writing skill. It occurred when I was teaching” (T4#ES, INT, May 9, 2018)*

### Classroom management

Another aspect included in teachers' reflection is classroom management. A good classroom management can lead to effective teaching. T2#AZ, stated she did reflection on her classroom quite often. One of the ways she chose to manage her classroom was by considering seating arrangement.



*“One of the ways to control my classroom is by arranging students’ seats. It looks insignificant, but it is very useful. By doing seating arrangement, we can reduce the case students crowd during teaching and learning process” (T2#AZ, INT, May 9, 2018).*

Other respondent, T1#DS said:

*“There are many things I include in my reflection, for example classroom management. I also reflect on misbehaved students who talk during the lesson and classroom management” (T1#DS,INT, May 12, 2018).*

Respondent T1#DS reflected on classroom management. There are some points she included as her concerns in evaluating classroom management. Some of them are how to handle misbehaving children who talked too much during teaching and learning process and time management. Those aspects became her reflection since it affected the whole process of students’ learning.

## **DISCUSSION**

Teaching and evaluation are two interconnected things. Without evaluation, the improvement of teaching quality is almost impossible. In reflecting their teaching, there are some points that might be reflected by teachers. Cirocki & Farely (2016) consider there are so many activities or aspects to include in reflective practice, “ranging from lesson planning through lesson and materials evaluation to pedagogical research” (p. 35). From in-service EFL teachers’ experiences, they reflected on classroom management, teaching strategy, teaching and learning material, and students difficulties in learning.

Students’ difficulty should be teachers’ main concern in teaching and learning process because through students’ understanding the accomplishment of learning goal can be achieved. The participants of this study had revealed that they took students’ difficultis as their concern in doing reflection. The participating teachers applied some strategies in adressing this issue. For example, they asked questions to their student or in other occasion, they also mapped their students’ competencies to ease them in preparing handling strategy for their students. Getting to know of students difficulties is very important in educational context. Related to this, Hidayat (2017) says in order to be able to guide their students’, teachers should



know their students well. They should know their strengths and weaknesses in learning.

Participants of this study also reflected on teaching strategy they used in classroom. It is important since appropriate teaching method can lead to the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. As stated by Liou (2001), evaluating one's teaching method is necessary to make sure their selection of certain teaching method can encourage learners to learn. So, it is obvious that the evaluation of teaching strategy should be addressed to students' learning. By doing so, teachers will know if their teaching method is applicable or not with students' needs and learning style.

Another emerging content of reflection found in this study is teaching and learning material. Teaching and learning material are basically derived from curriculum. Teaching and learning materials should consider students' context. Although government has provided and distributed books to schools, it does not mean that teachers do not need to evaluate their contents. Hidayat (2017) emphasizes the importance of the evaluation of teaching and learning material. He argues, it is important to do since learning process can be investigated from learning materials which are provided for students. Thus, teachers should evaluate the contents of the books. As arose in this study, participating teachers crosschecked the materials by studying them deeper and comparing several sources and they adjusted with students' level and context.

The last point, classroom management is another content of reflection reflected by participating teachers in their reflective practice. Good classroom management enables teacher to control their own teaching. This, can lead to the achievement of learning goals. Burhan-Horasanli & Ortactepe (2016) opine that classroom management which includes time management is an issue commonly reflected by teachers when conducting reflective practice. As found in this study, participating teachers utilized various strategies in managing their classroom. For example seating arranging to avoid noise and giving questions or giving verbal reminder to students who did not pay attention to the lesson.





## CONCLUSION

Reflective practice as an important feature of teacher professional development activity is expected to lead teachers to their professionalism. Maintaining critical thinking through reflective practice is a must in educational context. The finding of the study has revealed that conducting reflective practice facilitates teachers with opportunity to expand and evaluate the quality of their teaching. This activity is expected to foster teachers' professionalism, which later on is expected to improve learning outcomes. Thus, it is very important for schools to support teachers to conduct reflective practice.

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