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# An Analysis of EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Reflective Journals: A Qualitative Research at English Education Study Program of UNP

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### **Abstract**

The development of reflective practitioner teachers is essential for enhancing the quality of education. As a recent popular topic among teachers, reflective practice fosters continuous learning and adaption in teachers' teaching methodologies. EFL preservice teachers from the English Education Study Program of UNP are also encouraged to do reflective practice by writing reflective journals during the *Teaching Practicum* at school. This study intends to analyze the reflective journals written by EFL preservice teachers' in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model during their Teaching Practicum. This study focuses on exploring the content of EFL pre-service teachers' reflective journals to identify the themes and trends found in these reflective journals. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach by utilizing content analysis as the instrument to analyze the data. 24 entries of reflective journals written by 8 EFL pre-service teachers of UNP were analyzed through an inductive approach. The findings revealed the content of the reflective journals written by EFL preservice teachers particularly focused on pre-service teachers' experiences during the lesson in the classroom. The reflective journals focus on pre-service teachers' experiences particularly related to the challenges in managing the classroom environment, maintaining students' engagement and participation, facing students' behaviour, and dealing with teachers' internal problems. In conclusion, this study highlights the focus of reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers during the Teaching Practicum. This research offers pedagogical insights for improving reflective writing skills, especially in relation to the practice of self-reflection in English Language Teaching.

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### INTRODUCTION

Producing more reflective practitioner teachers has been widely acknowledged as a fundamental goal of education. According to Schön (1983), the most effective teachers are "reflective practitioners", professionals who engage in ongoing reflection on their practice, continuously learning and adapting their approaches. Furthermore,



reflective teachers can also be defined as those who are deeply aware of the decisions they make, the reasons behind those decisions, and the consequences that result (Smith et al., 2017). Therefore, teachers are expected to become reflective practitioners who continually make changes and improvements to respond the students' needs as well as for teachers' self-improvement purposes.

Becoming a reflective practitioner teacher is more than just having the ability to reflect on experience, it also requires sustainable further personal and professional development. One strategy to reach teachers' development and professionality is by engaging in reflective practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The act of reflection enables teachers to become more aware of their strengths, weaknesses, biases, and areas for growth (Loughran, 2002) which will increase teachers' critical thinking (Korthagen, 2004), promote teachers' self-regulation (Boud, 2000), and ease teachers in decision-making.

As a part of teachers' teaching activities, reflection plays a big role in enhancing teachers' understanding of the teaching and learning process (Rozimela et al., 2024). In the engaging process of reflection, teachers assess their teaching practices, beliefs, and assumptions based on insights from their experiences. This self-review will drive them to discover new meanings, insights, and perspectives, forming the basis for critical reflection to develop more effective strategies for their future teaching (Farrell, 2007). Furthermore, reflection also helps teachers to provide a more effective teaching process by enabling them to better understand how they teach (Valdez et al., 2018: Farrell, 2008). Hence, the existence of teachers' reflection stands as an essential part of teacher successful teaching.

There are multiple ways to engage in reflective practice (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017), and reflective journaling is particularly effective for fostering self-awareness (Nguyen et al., 2019). Compared to other methods like group discussions or portfolio activities, reflective journals serve as an effective approach for teachers to engage in deep and meaningful reflection because reflective journals provide a more personalized continuous reflection on teaching experiences (Nguyen, 2017: Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018). Moreover, reflective journals act as documented evidence of teachers' development, which can be reviewed by mentors to track progress and identify growth areas (Nguyen, 2017).

Reflective practice has received wider attention in pursuit of high-quality teachers (Nguyen, 2017; Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018). Not only in-service teachers but also pre-service teachers are required to master reflection (Cirocki et al., 2014; Farrell, 2007) because it stimulates them to continually learn from their weaknesses, develop their understanding to their teaching practices, and foster a sense of professional identity (Farrell, 2008: Rozimela, 2014: Rozimela & Tiarina, 2015: Yayli, 2009). As a result, Indonesian universities encourage reflective practice in *Micro-teaching* and *Teaching Practicum* modules (Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018).

At the English Education Program of Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP), reflection is highlighted as a standard characteristic and competency of high-quality educators proven by the incorporation of reflective practice into UNP EFL pre-service teachers' activity during *Teaching Practicum* at school. Therefore, starting in 2024, for the first time, *Unit Program Pengalaman Lapangan* (UPPL), a unit within Universitas Negeri Padang responsible for implementing the Teaching Practicum Program, requires pre-

service teachers to formally document their reflections during the *Teaching Practicum* at school as part of monthly report and are necessary for passing the *Teaching Practicum* module.

Based on the preliminary research and semi-interviews with students from the English Education department at UNP who took the *Teaching Practicum* subject, the researcher found that reflective practice on teaching is already integrated into the *Micro-Teaching* activities. However, the practice is primarily confined to Micro-Teaching which only provides limited exposure. Moreover, it was discovered that only a small number of EFL students had experienced reflective practice during *Micro-Teaching*, primarily due to the varying lecturers responsible for the course, while at the same time, the majority lacked any prior experience with this practice. In addition, although these EFL students engage in reflective practice, they do so without detailed guidelines on how to properly write reflective journals.

As this is the first year UNP's pre-service teachers are required to regularly write reflective journals with limited experience, they may encounter challenges in understanding how to build reflections that are both meaningful and impactful. Based on this finding, the researcher identified a research gap in understanding what EFL pre-service teachers write in their reflective journals during their *Teaching Practicum* at school. This presents an opportunity to explore and address the focus of EFL pre-service teachers in writing their self-reflection in reflective journals.

Several previous studies have examined reflection among pre-service teachers. A study by Armutcu and Yaman (2010) qualitatively measured the level of reflection among pre-service teachers at the beginning and the end of their teaching practicum. Nurfaidah et al., (2017) investigated reflective levels in Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' journals during field teaching. Another similar study by Yee et al., (2022) aimed to identify the common stages of reflective practice engaged by EFL pre-service teachers in Malaysia when writing reflective journals.

The previous and recent studies analyze the reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers. However, previous studies typically focused on identifying reflection levels by considering factors such as sex and type of instruction or grouping reflective stages using a theoretical framework. These studies often categorized reflective writing reflective writing based on predefined levels derived from theories. In contrast, this research shifts the focus to the content of the reflective journals themselves, analyzing the themes and trends found among EFL pre-service teachers. To keep the data equal, Gibbs' Reflection Model will be utilized to provide a clear guideline for EFL pre-service teachers in writing their reflective journals.

In conclusion, there is a limited number of studies that have examined the reflective journals by EFL pre-service teachers. Furthermore, there is still relatively little research on this topic that has been conducted at the UNP. The gap found among UNP's pre-service teachers who have no experience in writing reflective journals will also serve as a driving factor for this study. Therefore, this study aims to analyze reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers during their *Teaching Practicum* to address the focus of reflective journals written in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model.

### **METHOD**

### Research Design

Research design functions as a structured plan that organizes the steps to achieve the objectives of a study (Maxwell, 2013). Aligned with the purpose of this research, which is to analyze reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers during their *Teaching Practicum* to address the focus of reflective journals written in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model, a descriptive qualitative research design is employed in this research. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2013), is a process of exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups attach to social and human issues. Furthermore, descriptive research is intended to comprehensively present human or social phenomena through detailed written descriptions (Walidin, Saifullah, & Tabrani, 2015). Therefore, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach as its methodology, as it aligns with the goals of analyzing the content of EFL pre-service teachers' reflective journals, addressing the focus reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model.

## Source of Data

Data generally refers to the information that is collected and analyzed to validate a study. According to Ajayi (2017), primary data is first-hand information that is directly collected by the researchers through methods such as surveys, observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The primary data for this research is reflective journals written in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model during the Teaching Practicum by EFL pre-service teachers from the English Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Padang. While there is no strict rule regarding the minimum number of documents required for content analysis, the research objectives and the complexity of the topic guide the determination of an appropriate sample size (O'Leary, 2014). However, Creswell (2013), suggests that a sample of 20-30 documents is generally sufficient to provide meaningful insights and a variety of perspectives, which contribute to the validity of the data. Because of that, the researcher decided to collect 24 reflective journals from 8 EFL pre-service teachers of Universitas Negeri Padang. A pre-service teacher is required to write 3 entries, therefore, there are 8 EFL pre-service teachers as the respondents of the study due to the limited number of EFL pre-service teachers who are doing Teaching Practicum this semester

# Instrument

The researcher employed a journal as the primary data collection instrument for this study. The researcher developed a scheme of framework for EFL pre-service teachers by providing guideline questions based on Gibbs' Reflection Model stages to help the pre-service teachers build their reflective journals. The researcher first conducted pre-journal writing sessions to brief the EFL pre-service teachers on the introduction to Gibbs' Reflection Model and the mechanism of writing reflective journals. Then, the pre-service teachers were asked to write their reflective journals for three teaching sessions in 2 weeks. In writing the reflective journals, the EFL pre-service teachers had the flexibility to write in English or Indonesian, considering their comfort in reflecting on their experiences. Through this instrument, the researcher

collected 24 reflective journals written by 8 EFL pre-service teachers from the English Education Study Program of UNP during the Teaching Practicum.

Table 1. Gibbs' Reflection Model

No.	Six-Stage of Reflective	Description
	Practice	-
1.	Description	Description or report of events on the
		learning and teaching experience.
2.	Feelings	One's feelings, emotions, thoughts, interest,
		or attitude of the learning and teaching
		experiences.
3.	Evaluation	Explanation about positive and negative
		aspects of the experiences during teaching
		practicum.
4.	Analysis	Critical analysis of the reasons, causes, and
		consequences of the learning and teaching
		experiences.
5.	Conclusion	Summary about what has been learned and
		considering actions as the best idea from
		alternative views, others' perspectives,
		research, and so on.
6.	Action Plan	Develop a plan for future actions based on
		the insights gained from the reflection.

Table 2. The Instrument

No.	Six-Stage of Reflective Practice		
110.	The Instruction		
	Please write your reflection by following these stages of Gibbs'		
	Reflection Model! For each stage, write a single paragraph by		
	addressing the questions provided!		
1.	Description		
	- What happened?		
	- Where did it happen?		
	- When did it happen?		
	- What did you do/read/see/hear?		
	- What were the circumstances?		
	- What were you responsible for?		
2.	Feelings		
	- How did you react at the time?		
	- What were your feelings at that time?		
	- What were your thoughts at that time?		
	- How did these feelings affect you?		
3.	Evaluation		
	- What was positive about that experience?		
	- What was negative about that experience?		
	- What went well, and what didn't?		

4.	Analysis	
	- Why did this experience occur?	
	- What choice did you make, and what impact did they have?	
	- What similarities or differences are there between this	
	experience and your previous experience?	
	- What might helped improve the situation?	
5.	Conclusion	
	- What have you learned for the future?	
	- What else could you have done?	
	- What now you can improve in the future?	
	- What skills do you need to develop?	
6.	Action Plan	
	- What improvements will you make in the future?	
	- How will you adapt your plan or improve your skills?	
	- If a similar situation occurs again, how would you handle it?	

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding (tentative)

Finding 1

The research findings answer the research questions,

# 1. What experiences do EFL pre-service teachers describe in their reflective journals?

At the beginning of the reflective journals, EFL pre-service teachers described their experiences, giving details about what happened in those experiences. It was found there are some specific experiences described by these pre-service teachers, some of those experiences are,

# a. Challenges in Managing the Classroom

Classroom management challenges have emerged as a popular theme among preservice teachers' reflective journals. Many pre-service teachers described difficulties in managing the classroom environment. One of the most frequently cited experiences is the difficulty in managing classroom noises. However, some pre-service teachers also described their good experience where the class was still manageable even though the class was quite noisy.

### From entry 1 by AFR

"I have not yet been able to create a conducive environment in the class, so the class is very unproductive." (author's translation)

# From entry 1 by DE

"The students at the back are noisy and not focused on the lesson." (author's translation)

## From entry 1 by SRR

"When I continued to the materials, there were boys (students) entering the class and making the class noisy, disturbing other students' focus, and making the class less conducive."

Most of the pre-service teachers face challenge in managing classroom due to noises made by the students in the classroom. The noises lead the classroom environment become not conducive and hard to handle by the pre-service teachers.

# b. Students' Engagement and Participation

Many entries also described the pre-service teachers' experiences with students' engagement and participation during teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The most commonly found were students often show a lack of interest and participation in the lesson. However, a few entries reported instances where students showed strong enthusiasm and actively engaged with the lesson. Therefore, those varied experiences can be categorized into two, experiences with students' high engagement and experiences with students' low engagement.

From entry 2 by DE

"there are some students who are less interested in reading and discussing with their peers." (author's translation)

From entry 1 by ZAS

"many students are sleeping while I am explaining." (author's translation)
From entry 2 by ITC

"I was surprised that all students were trying to participated by raising their hands."

There is a range of students' engagement issue faced by the pre-service teachers. The most reasons were because students' less interest to the lesson and being distracted by factors around them such as talking with peers or playing their phone. However, these pre-service teachers also experience good students' engagement when the pre-service teachers can gain students' attention by providing interesting teaching activity.

### c. Students' Behaviours

Few reflective journal entries recounted pre-service teachers' experiences dealing with various students' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom.

From entry 1 by AFR

"At that moment, bullying occurred when one student threw a handful of powder at her classmate's face." (author's translation)

From entry 2 by RA

"Students are starting to ask each other about the answer of the quiz." From entry 3 by AFR

"After I took the attendance, one student, known for causing trouble in class, made the classroom chaotic. He encouraged his group to chat each other, and after I reprimanded them, I was mocked and ridiculed by them." (author's translation) A variety of students' behavior were found by pre-service teachers during the lesson in the classroom. Some specific student behaviors were reported by the EFL pre-service teachers in their reflective journals, such as students mocking the teacher, bullying incidents between students, disrespecting the teacher during the test, and pretending to be 'special' causing a disruption.

## d. Teaching Strategies Implementation

A few entries also described pre-service teachers' experiences in implementing various teaching strategies to engage the students. Implementing these teaching strategies has resulted in a variety of responses from the students. Some teaching

strategies implementation experiences described by pre-service teachers are Quick & Run games in teaching procedure text, "Rujak Party" as a project-based learning task, and games for teaching descriptive text.

From entry 2 by DE

"The Quick and Run game was conducted in the English language learning for Procedure Text material in class IX.2 outside the classroom." (author's translation)

From entry 3 by DE

"The "Rujak Party activity was conducted as a project-based learning media for Procedure Text material in class IX.3."

From the entries, it was found that pre-service teachers put an effort to provide new classroom environment adapting the students' needs to give the students better experience in learning English.

## e. Teachers' Internal Problems

In addition to describing their interactions with students, these EFL pre-service teachers also reflect on personal challenges encountered during teaching experiences. Those personal problems include balancing their emotions in reacting to their students, losing focus and experiencing exhaustion, feeling bored by repetitive activities, being nervous due to unexpected changes in lesson plans, and struggling to understand teaching materials.

From entry 1 by SDR

"Personally, I feel so bored of my schedule because I am type of person who easily get bored with repetitive things."

From entry 1 by SPS

"I feel confused about what material I should teach my students. I also feel that I don't fully understand the material that needs to be taught." (author's translation)

Almost all of pre-service teachers expressed their internal problem in their reflective journals. Those internal problems were varied and mostly related to teachers' personal challenges such as feeling bored due to repetitive schedule, and feeling confused on how to teach the material to the students.

# 2. What emotional responses do EFL pre-service teachers express in their reflective journals?

The second step of reflective journals focuses on EFL pre-service teachers' feelings toward the experience. In this phase, pre-service teachers expressed their emotional responses to the experiences they previously described. The findings revealed a range of emotional reactions by pre-service teachers, which will be outlined below,

### a. Frustration and Stress

Multiple entries expressed frustration and stress, particularly in responding to students' behavior, students' low engagement, or classroom management challenges.

From entry 3 by AFR

"At that moment, I felt frustrated with the situation and wanted to leave the classroom..." (author's translation)

# From entry 2 by RA

"I felt the frustration coming into my mind, this kind of situation is not appropriate and won't be able to measure their understanding about the material."

Many pre-service teachers were experiencing feeling frustrated and stressed, however, there are some differences background reasons of that feeling among pre-service teachers. The feeling of frustration often happened when pre-service teachers did not reach their expectations in their efforts to make the students engaged. For instance, when students ignore their instructions or disrupt the class, this often leads to feelings of helplessness and desperation especially when the teacher has already prepared the lesson.

# b. Happiness and Gratitude

Several entries expressed happiness, particularly when students showed enthusiasm or when the class went well. Happiness is usually stimulated by positive interactions between students or students and teachers as well as by successful class activities.

From entry 2 by ITC

"I felt so happy! Their enthusiasm just boosted me."

From entry 2 by ITC

"I felt very happy seeing their enthusiasm, my mood for teaching improved even more."

Most reasons of pre-service teachers' emotional response of happiness and gratitude were because of the teachers' plan goes well during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Specially, when the students show good response both in gaining the knowledge and also responding to the lesson enthusiastically. Several entries also included the feeling of gratitude that is expressed when students show support and interest or when things go well despite challenges that help alleviate stress.

### c. Sadness

The sadness appeared in contexts of unexpected events, such as class cancellations or disappointment in students' behavior. This emotion is linked to the teachers feeling a sense of loss and disappointment.

From entry 2 by E

"I felt sad because I had to hold back and remain patient instead of scolding the students." (author's translation)

From entry 2 by DE

"However, seeing the children who lacked enthusiasm also made me sad and curious about why they were not motivated." (author's translation)

From entry 1 by ITC

"I felt shocked and sad about the news. I had mentally prepared for the teaching, but it cancelled."

Sadness can be happened because of many reasons, the pre-service teachers can be sad when they have to deal with exhaustion of facing students' behaviour, sadness can be triggered by students' responses in the classroom when they do not engaged with the lesson and show less interest, moreover, pre-service teachers can

be sad when the plan do not go well because of unexpected cancellation to the lesson that day.

### d. Anger

Anger is often noted in response to students' behavior and the less support from teacher mentors. Feelings of disrespect or frustration when the teacher manages the classroom or when students disregard the teacher's authority often stimulate anger.

From entry 1 by AFR

"At that time, I felt very upset and angry at the student involved, to the point of using harsh language..."

# From entry 2 by AFR

"I felt very angry because I felt unappreciated as a teacher..."

From the entries, it was showed that students' behaviour can cause pre-service teachers to feel the feelings of anger. The pre-service teachers were often feeling disrespected by the students and it leads them to the emotional responses of anger.

# e. **Disappointment**

Disappointment was expressed when students did not meet expectations, From entry 3 by DE

"I felt disappointed because the group that did not bring materials for the Rujak Party was actually the group of diligent students." (author's translation)

This emotion reflects the gap when the teacher's hope meets the reality of students' disengagement. The pre-service teachers feel disappointed due to the students do not bring necessary materials or failing to engage in lessons.

### f. Anxiety

This emotion is noted in situations when teachers feel unprepared and uncertain about the students' response or concerned about their effectiveness as educators which results in classroom management issues.

From entry 1 by DE

"I also felt anxious that the students might get even louder and start fighting." (author's translation)

From entry 1 by SRR

"At that time, I felt that they don't like my class; I thought maybe my class is boring or I don't match their learning style? I don't know what's wrong with them. Is it my fault? I don't know."

The feelings of anxious oftenly triggered by pre-service teachers worrying if they do not perform perfectly in the classroom during the lesson, there is anxiety of being less maximum teacher and make the situation worse.

### g. Confusion

Confusion was mentioned when the teachers were unsure about how to connect effectively with their students or when they felt their lesson plans were not well-received.

From entry 2 by SRR

"I just blank at the time..."

Following that, the teachers expressed overwhelm when the teachers realized that their teaching methods or material were not suitable for their students.

# 3. What do the EFL pre-service teachers evaluate from their experiences in their reflective journals?

In the reflective journals, EFL pre-service teachers were also required to evaluate their experience by identifying both positive and negative aspects of their experiences. The findings indicated that many entries explicitly mentioned both the positive and negative sides of their experiences. However, there were also found some entries that tended to focus on just positive aspects or even not include any of both -positive and negative aspects. Instead, those entries continued to describe the experiences in detail, elaborate on the emotions, or discuss lessons learned, rather than providing a balanced evaluation.

# a. Recognition of Positive and Negative Aspects of Experience

This is the most common evaluation done by EFL pre-service teachers in their reflective journals. Many entries highlighted both the positive and negative side of the experiences.

From entry 3 by ZAS

"The positive side is that they are enthusiastic about participating in the learning process. on the negative side, they become less serious in engaging with the lessons" (author's translation)

From entry 3 by SPS

"The positive aspect of teaching in class IX.5 is that the students are very 'welcoming' and willing to communicate freely. On the negative side, there are a few mischievous students who often make jokes about height, which makes me feel insecure." (author's translation)

From entry 2 by RA

"Positive thing I can get is I can learn from my mistake, so I won't do that again in the future. The other thing the class was very enjoyable, but because of that one thing I felt guilty. However, negative thing from this experience is I become worried for her mental stability because she's still a young girl in the Ten grade of high school. Her feeling still fragile, she might cry over a small thing that she has occurred."

It was found that the pre-service teachers mostly follow the framework adapted from Gibbs' Reflection Model by reflecting on the both positive and negative side of the experience and write in on their reflective journals.

## b. Recognition of Positive Aspects of Experience

Evaluations in a few entries only talk about the positive side of the experiences, for example,

From entry 2 by DE

"The positive aspect of the 'Rujak Party' experience is that it can help develop students' confidence and speaking skills during group presentations." (author's translation)

From entry 2 by ITC

"Everything goes well. This is the best respond so far, I experience being crowded in good way. They were easily expressed their ideas during discussion. Actually, I did not plan to have quiz, but since they were happy in my class the idea popped up. It was suddenly but everyone got good score."

Few pre-service teachers showed only the positive side of their experience in their reflective journals. However, they explain it deeper and give more detail on what happened.

# c. Continuation of further description

Instead of evaluating their experiences, some entries were continued describing the details of their experience.

From entry 1 by AFR

"At that moment, I felt that the situation was very bad for me. I shared this with my fellows in the library while crying because I was in shock. My friends advised me to be patient and to try to approach that student in the future, as such behavior can stem from a desire to seek attention in the wrong way. I realized that I would have asked questions kindly to avoid wrongly accusing someone and hurting a student's feelings. After speaking with the student affairs representatives, they shared the background of the student, which made me very concerned and sympathetic. I understood that the mistakes they made were a result of a lack of affection from their family, leading them to seek more attention from a teacher. With this understanding, I learned how to approach that student and their background better. However, I must admit that I felt a bit traumatized when entering that classroom again, and I had a sense of fear within myself" (author's translation)

The pre-service teacher tended to continue explain more about the experience, describing further about what happened in detail after expressing their emotional response.

# d. Elaborations of emotion

It was found few entries from the pre-service teachers elaborate on their emotional response in the evaluation part.

From entry 1 by RA

"I worried for her mental stability because she is still a young girl in the Ten grade of high school. Her feeling still fragile, she might cry over a small thing that she has occurred."

Some pre-service teachers give further elaboration, explaining their emotional responses and the reasons behind that in this evaluation part.

## e. Discussion on lessons learned

Lastly, a few entries also discuss the lessons learned from the experiences in the evaluation part of reflective journals.

From entry 2 by SDR

"Everything just crosses on my mind like 'ooh I made this ppt for them, not for me'. That's my fault, I can't construct module based on my thought, and I have to put myself in my student's shoes. I become know that class A is different with class B; I have a lot of students so that I can't generalize them, I can't focus on the plan that I have already made, but I have focus to my students' development"

The pre-service teachers found reflecting a sense of learning and personal growth from what they have gained from experiences, explaining the key learning they got after experiencing those experiences.

# 4. What do the EFL pre-service teachers analyze regarding their experience in their reflective journals?

In this section, the EFL pre-service teachers are expected to analyze their experiences by identifying the causes and effects of their experiences, making connections to prior experiences, and examining factors that might have contributed to the outcomes of those experiences. The findings revealed that almost all entries included analyses by pre-service teachers concerning the cause of their experiences. However, only a few entries connected these experiences to prior situations or examined the factors that may have contributed to the outcomes. The result of the EFL pre-service teachers' analysis regarding the cause of the experiences will be outlined below,

#### a. Teachers' Reactions

Many entries reflected on the pre-service teacher's reactions to the classroom situations as the main cause of their experience.

From entry 2 by AFR

"When I get angry, I might make them feel bored and could actually increase the chaos in the classroom. I should avoid hitting the chalkboard when reprimanding the students." (author's translation)

The pre-service teachers identified their reactions as the reasons of their experience happened, particularly regarding anger and panic. These pre-service teachers recognized that their reactions negatively affected their authority and classroom management.

### b. Classroom Dynamics

Pre-service teachers frequently analyze the dynamics of the classroom environment that impacted their experiences.

From entry 1 by DE

"This incident (students being noisy and unfocused) occurred due to a lack of preparation in creating teaching materials and worksheets overnight" (author's translation)

From entry 2 by SPS

"It is highly likely that this is caused by the school implementing a full-day system, which makes the students feel tired and sleepy during the last period of the lesson" (author's translation)

From entry 3 by ZAS

"The students are enthusiastic about participating in the lessons because the game media I use in teaching is also quite engaging for them" (author's translation)

The pre-service teachers reflected on why these dynamics happened and affected the learning process.

### c. Lesson Effectiveness and Student Needs

Teachers assessed the effectiveness of their lesson based on student needs and then recognized it as one of the factors causing the events to happen.

From entry 2 by DE

"In my opinion, the activity went smoothly due to several factors. Firstly, the use of game media for outdoor learning suits the learning styles of the students in class IX.2, which are kinesthetic and visual..." (author's translation)

The pre-service teachers analyzed their lesson whether it is already effective or needs improvement as well as the factors behind it.

# d. Mentorship and Guidance

Pre-service teachers often incorporate advice from mentors into their reflections, analyzing how this guidance influences their teaching.

From entry 1 by SRR

"When I entering the class again, I do the same thing like my tutor said, then magically they do their own, and I finally I know how to face them..."

The pre-service teacher analyzed their mentor's guideline as the cause of their experience ruin smoothly as well as their improvement in facing challenges.

### e. Teachers' Action and Responsibility

In some entries, pre-service teachers showed their critique of their responsibility and actions as teachers.

From entry 2 by RA

"Because I let them to do the things they want, I chose to let them do it, and they started to scatter around because I didn't scold them. Maybe I should've scolded them to scatter around and not sit on their seat."

The pre-service teachers criticized their actions and analyzed what might helped them to face the situation at that time.

# 5. What conclusions do EFL pre-service teachers draw about their experience in their reflective journals?

After analyzing the experiences, EFL pre-service teachers were asked to break down what they learned from their experiences and identify areas for future improvement. However, it was noted that some entries already included plans for the future within the conclusion section. The findings revealed that EFL preservice teachers recognized several key lessons including,

## a. The Importance of Classroom Management

Most of the entries concluded that pre-service teachers recognize that effective classroom management is crucial for creating a productive learning environment. They learned that the ability to manage classroom is an essential skill of a teacher. From entry 3 by RA

"I've learned how to handle that kind of student in the class. But it's not enough, I need to learn more from this kind of situation and this kind of student. Maybe if I want to judge someone, I need to find the background of their bad behaviour first."

The pre-service teachers concluded that their lack of classroom management skills had resulted in the challenges they experienced and realized that they should improve their skills to manage the classroom environment.

## b. The Significance of Implementing Engaging Teaching Strategies

The pre-service teachers realized that engaging students through interactive and varied teaching methods is essential to gaining effective and meaningful teaching and learning experiences.

From entry by AFR

"After that incident, I learned that providing engaging and varied learning activities is important. I thought that perhaps my teaching media was boring or

my way of explaining the material was uninteresting, which failed to pique their curiosity about what I was teaching that day" (author's translation)

From entry 3 by ZAS

"So, in the future, I will develop my skills in understanding students' interests in learning and my ability to continuously seek diverse teaching media so that students do not get bored" (author's translation)

From entry 2 by ITC

"This class reinforced my belief in student-centered teaching. I also realized the importance of interactive material and media to support my teaching process." This realization among pre-service teachers regarding to the urgency of implementing engaging teaching strategies leads them to explore more dynamic teaching resources and activities to captivate students' needs and interests.

# c. The Values of Building Positive Relationships with Students

The pre-service teachers recognized establishing positive relationships with students and building trust is a must.

From entry 3 by AFR

"After that incident, I though that my approach at the beginning of the class was perhaps uninteresting, and I did not recognize the characters of the students in class 8.2. Moving forward, I will strive to connect with each of these students' personalities so that I can understand their individual characteristics. Because not all students can respond well to a raised voice when angry, it might backfire on us." (author's translation)

These pre-service teachers realized that positive relationships can lead to students feel valued and motivated.

### d. The Essential Role of Patience and Communication Skills.

Pre-service teachers also learned that patience is an important skill in responding to challenging classroom behaviors.

From entry 3 by SPS

"In the future, I will pay more attention to how communication between teachers and students can be improved so that students do not feel scared and remain silent when asked, or feel less motivated to learn" (author's translation)

From entry 2 by DE

"In the future, I will create engaging learning activities, one of which will involve games and icebreakers. I will motivate the students who are still passive in class and practice patience." (author's translation)

In addition, they concluded that they will improve their communication skill to build connections with their students better.

### e. The Necessity of Balancing Discipline with Student Engagement

Teachers concluded that managing behavior is important, but creating a comfortable environment for students to express themselves without disrespecting others is more important.

From entry 1 by SRR

"I think I have to take my boundaries because I can tell I am such an extrovert person and I can easily engage with my students but sometimes they look like they

don't know their limit, when I'm in my serious mode, they still make a joke and I have to take boundaries because I'm the teacher who takes control of the class." From entry 2 by RA

"It would be better if I had been more assertive with them because students nowadays are always doing the things that they want, and they won't listen to the teacher's advice to them. I will learn how to speak in the authoritative ways, and I will try to get their respect to me."

# 6. What action plans do EFL pre-service teachers formulate for their future improvements?

At the end of the reflective journals, pre-service teachers developed their action plans for future improvement based on what they have learned from the experiences. The findings showed that the pre-service teachers have formulated some key action plans for future improvements as outlined below,

# a. Enhancing Emotional Control and Classroom Management

EFL pre-service teachers plan to enhance their emotional control in challenging situations in the classroom environment.

From entry 1 by AR

"I will try to be wiser in the future because I'm already an adult person not a teenager anymore."

From entry 1 by AFR

"In the future, I will try to improve my emotional management, and if this happens again, I will attempt to have one-on-one conversations with the student to understand whether the issue lies with them or with me. This experience has made me more patient with my students and better able to organize the classroom for a more conducive learning environment" (author's translation)

The pre-service teachers intend to address issues with understanding and patience, aiming for better classroom management.

## b. Improving Creative Teaching Methods

Pre-service teachers aim to improve their teaching methods and approaches by incorporating creativity into their lesson plans.

From entry 1 by SPS

"Here, I will aim to improve my teaching methods, and if necessary, I will incorporate icebreakers during the lessons to make the learning experience less boring. Additionally, to enhance my students' reaching skills, I will encourage them to read texts and discuss the experiences to help them understand how to read and comprehend the meaning." (author's translation)

From entry 1 by ZAS

"I will strive to involve students more in the learning process so that they do not get easily bored by creating engaging lessons through games and quizzes."

# (author's translation)

From entry 3 by ZAS

"For the next, I will seek out more engaging teaching media sources to ensure that students remain consistently enthusiastic about participating in the lessons."

### (author's translation)

From entry 2 by AFR

"In the future, I will try to improve my teaching methods so that students do not get bored and feel excited with every meeting. I plan to enhance my creativity for each engaging teaching media. This experience has taught me how to manage the classroom and make it more interesting when the students appear unprepared for learning from the beginning of the class." (author's translation)

It was found that the pre-service teachers want to develop more engaging material as well as learning activities to excite students and encourage participation. Provide interactive activities, utilize games and quizzes, involve students more, and appreciation.

# c. Understanding Students' Personalities

It was found that there is a focus on understanding students' personalities better among pre-service teachers.

From entry 3 by AR

"I will learn the background of each student about why do they act differently. Because, I had faced several students before I did my Pre-Service Teaching Program, and I admit that the students' behaviour is related with their life's background."

From entry 3 by AFR

"In the future, I will try to improve my approach to the students and understand their individual characteristics. I will strive to be a more outgoing teacher by creating engaging media. Additionally, I will work on my way of reprimanding them, aiming to avoid raising my voice, as not everyone can respond well to that "(author's translation)

The pre-service teachers focus on increasing motivation, understanding student backgrounds, focusing on student development, and boosting student mood.

### Discussion

The main research objective of this study is to analyze the reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model during *Teaching Practicum*. This research has achieved its objectives: (1) to find out what experiences EFL pre-service teachers describe in their reflective journals, (2) to find out what emotional responses EFL pre-service teachers express in the reflective journals, (3) to find out what do the EFL pre-service teachers evaluate from their experiences in their reflective journals, (4) to find out what the EFL pre-service teachers analyze regarding their experience in their reflective journals, (5) to find out what conclusions do EFL pre-service teachers draw about their experiences in their reflective journals, and (6) to find out what action plans EFL pre-service teacher formulate for their future improvements.

From the results of the document analysis, it can be concluded that EFL preservice teachers do the reflection in their reflective journals more effectively and in detail by following Gibbs' Reflection Model because it gives a clear structure to be followed by EFL pre-service teachers. Based on the findings, the reflective journals by EFL pre-service teachers in the form of Gibbs' Reflection Model revealed a structured and insightful review of their experiences during the lesson in *Teaching Practicum* at school.

In the beginning, these pre-service teachers described their experiences, particularly highlighting challenges related to classroom management, student engagement and participation, and various students' behaviors. They also recounted experiences in implementing teaching strategies and the internal struggles they face as educators. Similar to the study conducted by Kabilan & Kaur (2024), which also found that the reflective journals by pre-service teachers highlighted various challenges faced in the classroom, such as student behavior and classroom management.

Second, the EFL pre-service teachers expressed their emotional responses to the experiences. Many pre-service teachers expressed feelings of frustration and stress, yet there were also moments of happiness and gratitude. There were also other emotions found in the reflective journals such as sadness, anger, disappointment, anxiety, and confusion. This aligns with the research by Chen et al., (2024), which indicated that pre-service teachers expressed a range of emotions, including positive and negative experiences.

Following this emotional exploration, the pre-service teacher evaluated their experiences. Many entries have identified both positive and negative aspects of their experiences following Gibbs' Reflection Model. However, from the data, it was also found that some entries only mentioned the positive side of the experience, described the experience further, elaborated on the emotions, or discussed the lessons learned from the experience. This is similar to Poldner et al., (2014) study, which also found pre-service teachers often provide into their emotional responses in evaluation of reflective journals based on Gibbs' Reflection Model.

In the analysis phase, a majority of pre-service teachers indicated the causes of their experiences. They referenced factors such as teachers' reactions, the dynamics within the classroom, the effectiveness of their lesson, student needs, mentorship and guidance from mentors, and teachers' actions and responsibilities as the reasons for the events happening in the classroom. This is consistent with the study by Chen & Zhang (2023) which indicated that pre-service teachers analyze their experiences based on classroom dynamics and teaching strategies.

To conclude their reflections, the EFL pre-service teachers synthesized their experiences into some key learnings. They underscore the importance of some aspects such as effective classroom management, employing engaging teaching strategies, and building positive relationships with students. Furthermore, they also recognized the essential roles of patience and communication skills, as well as the need to balance discipline with student engagement.

Lastly, these reflective journals provide actionable plans that are formulated by EFL pre-service teachers for future improvements. The pre-service teachers outlined specific strategies as their commitment to ongoing professional development aimed at enhancing emotional control and classroom management, improving creative teaching methods, and understanding students' personalities. This aligns with the research by Li et al., (2024) which found that classroom management skills are important for EFL pre-service teachers to improve.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research purposively explores and analyses the reflective journals written by EFL pre-service teachers. Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded

that EFL pre-service teachers tend to reflect on their experiences **during the lesson** in the classroom in their reflective journals. The reflections captured in these reflective journals reveal the pre-service teachers' awareness of the various challenges encountered during the classroom's teaching and learning process, particularly in classroom management, student engagement, and student behavior. Initially, the preservice teachers documented a wide spectrum of feelings, from frustration and stress to happiness and gratitude. In the evaluation phase, the pre-service teachers engaged in identifying both positive and negative aspects of their teaching experiences. Besides, it was also indicated that there is a tendency to overlook the challenges by describing further the experience, elaborating on the feelings, or discussing the lesson learned from the experience.

The pre-service teachers demonstrated a growing awareness and self-transformation, indicating self-reflection journals are beneficial for pre-service teachers' improvement. Moreover, by highlighting key learnings from the experiences, the pre-service teachers get more benefits being naturally fostered to be developed continually in the future. This stimulates their understanding as the groundwork for effective teaching. Finally, the results of the study also show that reflective journals by EFL pre-service teachers are presented more effectively and efficiently as well as deeper due to guidelines based on Gibbs' Reflection Model. Reflective journals have efficiently helped pre-service teachers to better raise their awareness for continuous professional growth, contributing to the formation of competent and reflective educators.

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