

## Teacher Professional Development through Reflective Teaching

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### Abstract

The aim of the current research is to investigate how in-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers reflect on their teaching activities and how their self-reflection impacts their professionalism. The population of the study is English teachers who study at postgraduate program. Yet, since this study employed a qualitative case study as its research design, the findings are not meant to generalize to the research population. The sample for this study is purposive sampling, and it involved six in-service EFL teachers at various levels of education, such as kindergarten, elementary, junior, and senior high schools, who were taking the postgraduate program in English Education at FKIP Universitas Tanjungpura as the research participants. The data for this study were obtained through questionnaires and interviews, as well as the written analysis of participants' teaching videos. After being analyzed qualitatively, the findings of this study indicate that most respondents reflect on their teaching activities at a very basic level. In relation to the impact of their reflective teaching on their professionalism, however, overall, respondents thought that their reflection activities helped them know their weaknesses and strengths in teaching, which encouraged them to become better teachers.

**Keywords:** *Reflective teaching, Teacher professionalism, English language teaching, inservice teachers, a case study*

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of reflection in enhancing teachers' professional development has been widely acknowledged and researched (Fakazli & KuruGönen, 2017; Lamb, 2017). Research suggests that through consciously and systematically reflecting on their own teaching experiences, both beginning and experienced teachers can improve their understanding of their teaching (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Levis & Farrell, 2007). This is because teachers are able to examine their teaching to identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as assessing their students that are useful for improving their teaching practices (Disu, 2017).

Within the teacher education field, reflection has also attracted the attention of researchers in this field. There has been much research related to teacher reflective practices (Disu, 2017). In the field of EFL (English as a foreign language), there has also

been a growing interest in the teachers' perception of the use of reflective tools (Moradkhani, 2019), factors influencing teachers' reflection (Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017; Nguyen, 2017) the impact of reflective practice for teacher professional development (Tosriadi et al., 2018; Uştuk & De Costa, 2021), elements of reflection (Lubis, 2017) and levels of reflection (Sunra et al., 2020).

While research on using various teaching media and strategies to improve the process of teaching and learning of English as a foreign language has been a lot in Indonesian contexts (e.g., Indah Sari et al., 2021; Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020; Prasetya, 2021; Rijal & Rohaniyah, 2020; Syakur, 2020), few studies related to how teachers reflect on their teaching have been conducted in EFL teaching contexts. This is specially the case in West Kalimantan. Furthermore, little is known how the reflective practice is used as a tool to improve EFL professional development teachers in this region. Even within Indonesian contexts, in-service teachers' reflective practices are still scarcely researched. Lubis (2018), for example, in his literature review, found that there are still scarce published articles that focus on the progress of the quality of teacher reflective practices. While there was one study focusing on reflection in the Indonesian context (Sunra et al., 2020), it was outside Kalimantan Island. Therefore, the current study attempts to address this gap by investigating how in-service EFL reflect on their teaching and how such activity impacts their professional development.

Within the Indonesian context, Reflective practice has been part of the component that the ministry of education emphasizes for teacher professional development at the national level. However, reflection for teachers is mostly done when the teachers are conducting classroom action research. Little is known how reflective practice is done in everyday teaching moments. As the information on how teachers reflect on their teaching moments is not documented well, it is important to conduct this research in order to address the research gap and to help better in-service EFL teachers to develop professionally. This investigation is helpful to know how in-service teachers reflect on their teaching. Furthermore, since reflective practice can be used as a tool for in-service English teachers to questions their beliefs related to teaching and further and make improvements on their teaching practice, they ideally should be used as a tool for improving their teaching practice. As the teachers are able to ponder and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching through reflection, they would be able to make some changes based on their teaching contexts. Aiming at exploring the research

participants' ways of doing reflection on their teaching and investigating how their reflective teaching is used as a tool for enhancing their professional development, this study specifically seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How do in-service EFL teachers reflect on their teaching activities? (2) How does reflective teaching impact in-service teacher professional development?

## **METHOD**

The design of this research is a qualitative case study in which the researcher is interested in gaining in-depth information related to how the research participants reflect on their teaching activities. As the research participants were familiar with reflective practice, at least in classroom action research that they have ever conducted, the researcher who is the instructor in TEFL Methodology class directly asked the teachers to reflect on one of their teaching moments in the participants' own classroom after introducing the topic related to reflective teaching in TEFL Methodology class.

The research participants involved were English teachers in different levels of education who were taking TEFL Methodology course at the postgraduate level majoring in English Language Education. In order to select participants, the researcher, who was the instructor of the class, assigned all students to practice doing the reflection after they discuss the topic about reflective teaching in the class. The number of students in the class was 24, yet only six students were selected as participants in this study. The selection of the participants was based on purposive sampling in which the selection is based on the following criteria. First, the written reflection submitted by the students reflect what students have done during their teaching activities. Another criterion was that the students have been teaching for more than one years, and the other criterion was that the students had willingness to participate in the study. Among the 24 students, only six students did their reflection based on their teaching activities at their schools. The rest were not chosen because of several reasons. First, the students did not submit their written reflection. Secondly, the students did not include reflections on their submitted written reflection. The other reason was that some of them were not teachers yet or just temporary teachers. The participants' profiles is seen in figure 1.

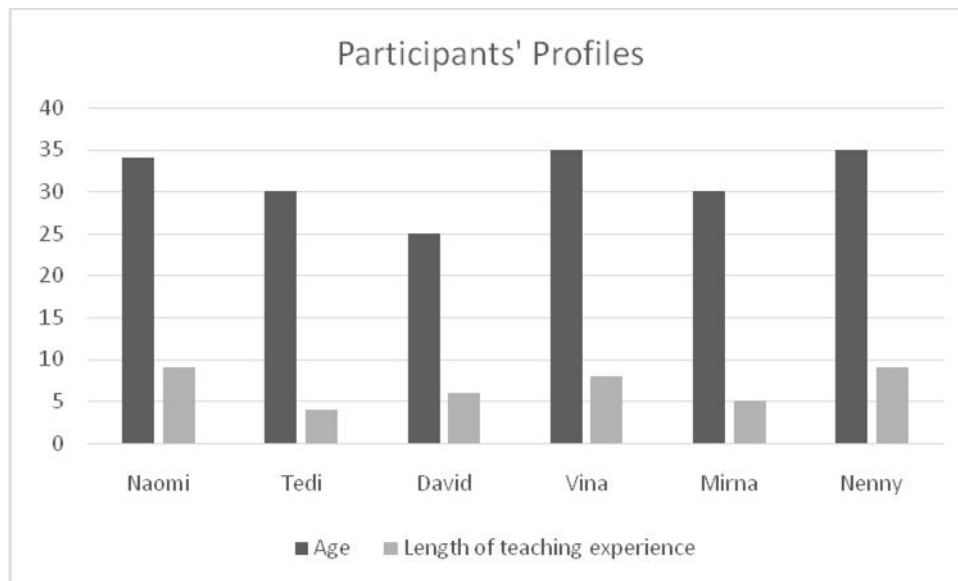


Figure 1. Participants' profiles

The data for this study were obtained through indirect observation and interviews. The indirect observation was done by looking closely at the participants' teaching performance that has been video-taped and through an open-ended questionnaire. While the main data was collected through participants' written reflections on their teaching activities and the questionnaire, interviews were also done as a follow-up to better understand how reflective practice impacts teachers' professional development and to be used for data triangulation.

One of the main tools of data collection is written reflection by the participants. In applying this tool to collect the data, the researcher assigned each in-service teacher to write a reflection on one of their teaching activities with the duration of at least 30 minutes. In order to obtain this type of data, the researcher instructed each teacher to decide one of their teaching moments in their own classroom for reflection. To help the participants reflect on their teaching, the researcher asked the participants to video record their teaching moment with the help of another teacher or one of the co-researchers. The in-service teachers then analyzed each of their teaching performances by thinking of the reasons they decided to do particular activities in their teaching, things that worked well in their teaching, and things that needed improvement. This video analysis was intended to gain insights into how in-service teachers reflect on their teaching performance and their ideas on how to improve their practice for the next teaching activities. The open-ended questionnaire was then distributed soon after the teachers do the reflection to find out the impact of reflective teaching on the

participants' professional development. The interview, which was done after the video analysis was submitted, is to gain further information related to the impacts of reflective teaching on the participants' professional development.

The obtained data were analyzed qualitatively. The data from written reflection and video analysis were first to be read carefully. The next stage was coding the data by putting labels then grouped into categories and themes as the emerging themes are identified. Similarly, the questionnaire and the interview data were also read and codified to find the emerging themes. However, the interviews were first transcribed before they were analyzed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **How in-service teachers do reflection on their teaching activities**

Findings related to how in-service teachers do reflections on their teaching activities can be grouped into the time of doing reflections, and the level of their reflections. From the data analysis, it is found that in-service teachers did reflection in various different stages of their teaching (before, during, and after teaching). While most of the participants claim to reflect on what they have done in the classrooms (after teaching reflection), the data show that that the participants reflect on different times of their teaching. For example, Tommy, one of the participants who is a teacher of English at the Kindergarten level, did reflection mostly before the teaching activities or anticipatory reflection in Manen's (1995) term. During this period, in-service teachers primarily reflect on anticipating what might happen in their upcoming teaching. In this study, Tommy mainly pondered about his plan to teach, and his main concerns were that he kept thinking were whether his lesson plan was as expected. This was because he had to deal with young learners with short-term memory span.

While it is clearly shown that in-service teachers did reflection in different stages of their teaching, their reflection mainly was on the surface. Referring to what Yost et al.(2000), the in-service teachers' reflection is mostly still in the low level, in which the participants describe what they do. However, some of them tried to include more than just describing the teaching activities. For example, the elementary level English teacher, Merry, only mentioned what she did in each stage. From the video analysis data, it is also found that all the participants reflected on their teaching activities as shown in the following excerpt: Yet, some of them did not explicitly explain why they did the certain

activities. This finding is similar to what has been found out by Sunra et al.(2020) in which, the teachers' reflection is mainly at a descriptive level.

In terms of the focus of the reflection, the participants reflect on different foci. However, teaching techniques and classroom management were the things most of the in-service teachers reflect on. Table 2 shows the summary of the foci of reflection that the participants in the study did.

Table 2. Summary of the foci of the participants' reflection

<b>Name (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Level of students being taught</b>	<b>The focus of the reflection</b>
Naomi	Junior High School	Teaching techniques
Tedi	Senior High School	Teaching technique and classroom management
Tommy	Kindergarten	Teaching technique and classroom management
Vina	Junior High School	Classroom management
Mirna	Elementary School	Teaching materials
Nenny	Junior High School	Teaching techniques

In terms of documenting reflection, most of the teachers in the study did not document their reflection in written form. For them, reflection was still a matter of thinking of what went well and went wrong and spontaneous matters. From the six participants, only one participant, Naomi, who is the teacher of English in a junior high school, wrote down her reflection in a book and even planned to publish the book she wrote.

In relation to how in-service teachers do reflection, it can be concluded that the participants did a reflection on different stages of their teaching, such as before, during, and after teaching. However, five out of six participants focused their reflection after the teaching moments, especially when they felt there were things that did not work as expected in their teaching activities. Only one participant always pondered about their teaching preparation. This was especially the case for the in-service teacher who taught kindergarten students with short-term memory span. In terms of the level of the reflection, it is still considered as descriptive reflections in Jay and Johnson's (2000) term, or low level of reflection (Yost et al., 2000). In this case, the research participants

mostly only described what they did at each level without thinking more profound about why they did certain activities.

How reflective teaching impact the professional development of in-service teachers

In relation to how reflective teaching impact on in-service teachers' professional development, the findings show that this reflective practice contribute to their professional development. Overall, all the participants considered reflective teaching as an essential part to be done by the teachers. They see the activity of reflection as a tool to make them better teachers. One of the participants, for example, claims that:

In my opinion, reflective teaching can develop me as a professional teacher because by doing reflection, I can prepare my teaching process to be better than before. By having reflection, I try to solve the problems that I found in my own teaching. Without having a reflection, I usually think that my teaching process have already been well done (Nenny, Questionnaire)

As indicated in the excerpt, Nina views that reflective teaching is something important for her professional development.' Like Nenny, Naomi, another participant, also considers that reflection on her own teaching makes her a better teacher. She said, "it (reflective teaching) helps me grow better as a professional teacher".

In relation to how in-service teachers reflect on their teaching, the findings show that in-service teachers reflect mostly on past and future experience and rarely do in situations when they are teaching in the classroom. This finding is in line with what Manen(1995) argues that reflection during the event is perhaps the most challenging activity to be done. While the in-service teachers in the study did what is called contemporaneous reflection in Manen's (1995) term as indicated in the video recording, they mostly were apparently unaware of that. It is indicated in the reflection of their teaching moments. None of the participants in the study highlighted the reflection that occurs during their teaching activities, suggesting that they did not focus their reflection in the middle of their teaching. This can also be that they are not accustomed to reflection in their teaching moments. Alternatively, as Manen (1995) argues, teachers commonly make spontaneous decisions in their teaching, which contrasts to reflection, where teachers have to stop and think of what they are doing.

In relation to the impacts of the reflective practice, the findings of this study echo previous research (Ahmad et al., 2013; Disu, 2017) in which teachers perceive reflective practice positively as the activity helps them to prepare their lesson plan better, improve their teaching skills, and solve the problems in the classroom.

Additionally, the current study's findings also resonate with previous research on reflective practice conducted by Fakazli and KuruGönen, (2017), in which reflective practice contributes to professional empowerment.

## CONCLUSION

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that the findings of the current study indicated that in-service teachers do reflect on various stages of their teaching such as before, during, and after their teaching activities. However, in terms of their level of reflections, in-service teachers in the study still reflect at a descriptive level (**Jay & Johnson, 2002**), or low level (**Yost et al., 2000**). In relation to the impacts of reflective teaching on the in-service teacher professional development, all the participants considered doing reflection as an essential activity to make them better teachers professionally.

In line with the findings that in-service teachers' level of reflection is still low, it is suggested that lecturers who are involved in teaching TEFL methodology put emphasis more on reflective practice as part of assignments in the class. Additionally, as this research provides insights on how in-service teachers do reflection, it is also advisable that lectures in collaboration with schools hold workshops to train teachers to do the reflective practice. In addition to the lecturers, future researchers should consider the findings of the current study. As the current study is narrow in scope and only involved six participants, further research involving more participants and a larger study is important to be conducted in order to understand better how in-service teachers do a reflection on their teaching.

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