

4-2011

## Reflection at the Interface of Theory and Practice: an Analysis of Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Written Reflections

Amanda Yesilbursa

*Abant Izzet Baysal University, Turkey*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Yesilbursa, A. (2011). Reflection at the Interface of Theory and Practice: an Analysis of Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Written Reflections. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n3.5>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol36/iss3/5>

## Reflection at the Interface of Theory and Practice: an Analysis of Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Written Reflections

Amanda Yesilbursa  
Abant Izzet Baysal University  
Turkey

*Abstract: This study was conducted to identify the characteristics of a group of Turkish pre-service English Language teachers' reflective writing. A mixed method approach was taken in the analysis of their written reflections on a video-recorded microteaching experience at the end of a campus-based methodology course. First, qualitative analysis of the written reflections revealed the modes and themes of reflection. Second, the crosstabulations of the emerging reflective and thematic categories were calculated to investigate how each category interacted. The analyses revealed that while most of the reflection was descriptive and focused on the self, some of the participants engaged in reflection that showed a search for reasons behind and alternatives to their practice. Some also referred to past and hypothetical future experiences. This study contributes to the knowledge base on the reflective writing of non-native pre-service English Language teachers and emphasises the importance of tapping into reflections early on in pre-service teacher education.*

### Introduction

Reflective practice (RP) has been the dominant paradigm in English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher education for the past two decades since the emergence of the postmethod era (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001). This new age in the field was characterised by a move away from the search for a perfect foreign language teaching method to the recognition of the complexity of the foreign language/teaching process. In the spirit of this change, RP seemed to be the ideal approach to teacher education. Unlike traditional teacher education models, it places the teachers at the centre of their own development as they analyse and evaluate their own practice, initiate change, and monitor the effects of this change (Freeman, 2002; Richards, 2008; Wallace, 1991).

While traditional models rely on the one-way transmission of knowledge and the imitation of idealised practice, RP in both mainstream and ELT teacher education utilises a variety of techniques, including reflective writing (see e.g., Brookfield, 1995; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Consequently, it is now common for pre-service teachers (PSTs) in ELT world-wide to be required to write reflections on examples of teaching they have observed or enacted as part of their practicum courses. Recent research in both mainstream and ELT teacher education has shown that reflecting through writing, when approached in an informed way, can help both in-service and pre-service teachers to think more productively on their practice (see e.g., Davis, 2006; Freese, 2006; Ho & Richards, 1993; Lee, 2007; Luk, 2009; Tsang, 2003; Watts & Lawson, 2009).

In countries such as Turkey, although RP is not standard practice in the campus-based courses of teacher preparation programmes, PSTs are expected to write weekly reflections as

part of their school-based practicum courses. As a result, they do not always enter these courses with a full realisation of what reflection entails and how it can help their learning (Russell, 2005). Hence, before the PSTs go out to schools, it would seem logical to help promote reflection in addition to field-related pedagogical knowledge during the campus-based methodology courses (see, e.g. Freeman, 2002), the 'interface' of the current title. This is the stance I took in the context of the current study, which reports how a group of Turkish ELT PSTs reflected on their practice following a microteaching experience at the end of such a methodology course.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Reflection**

While reflection has been the buzz word in mainstream and ELT teacher education recently, there is no consensus on the definition of the term, and furthermore on its teachability. The most frequently cited definitions are those of Dewey (1991/1933) and Schön (1991/1983), which as Fendler (2003) pointed out, are contradictory. While Dewey emphasised the scientific rationality of reflective thought, Schön saw it as an artistic and intuitive process. However, drawing on the definitions of a number of researchers, essential elements of reflection have been reported as engaging cognitively and affectively with practical experiences in such a way as to make sense of the often messy events beyond a common sense level with the view to learning and professional development (Boud, 2001; Brookfield, 1995; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Many studies carried out in both mainstream and ELT teacher education have distinguished between descriptive reflection, which provides an account of events; analytic reflection, which searches for reasons, provides alternatives and evaluates the result of teaching; and critical reflection, in which the larger socio-political context is taken into account (see, e.g. Collier, 1999; Davis, 2006; Hall, 1997; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Stanley, 1998; Ward & McCotter, 2004).

These studies were based on the assumption that reflection can and should be taught. However, there is a considerable amount of debate on whether or not reflection is an innate or a learned process. In an early study on the reflective abilities of PSTs, Richards, Gipe, Levitov and Speaker (1989) suggested that disposition to reflection depends on a number of psychological and personality traits, and hence some are more likely to engage in reflection than others. Recently, in a theoretical discussion of the nature of reflective thought, Gelter (2003) argued that people are not genetically predisposed to reflect spontaneously and that reflective thought must be taught. Not all would take a similar stance, however. More recently, Edwards and Thomas (2010) contended that all teachers reflect and that there are no 'reflective toolkits' (p. 5) that can be taught directly. To rationalise reflection, in their opinion, is to diminish intelligence.

However, Yost, Sentner and Forlenza-Bailey (2000) remarked that that many PSTs held narrow views of knowledge as discrete pieces of information, a mindset which 'is diametrically opposed to the type of thinking required of a reflective practitioner' (p. 46). In a similar vein, Russell (2005) commented that many of his PSTs did not take reflection seriously in comparison to other undergraduate coursework. He remarked that PSTs actually want to be told how to reflect, rather than be told about reflection. That is, RP should be taught 'explicitly, directly, thoughtfully and patiently' (p. 203).

While the Yost et al (2000) and Russell (2005) studies refer to the North American context, this situation is also particularly true of Turkey, where candidate teachers are admitted to undergraduate level teacher preparation programmes, and are then appointed to posts in schools after graduation by means of centrally-administered examinations consisting entirely of multiple choice items, which by their nature emphasise discrete knowledge and

correct answers. Moreover, Rakicioglu (2005) found that Turkish ELT PSTs believed knowledge came from an authority and was learned quickly without questioning, rather than being personally, socially and critically constructed. The line taken in the present study is that explicit guidance in reflection would be beneficial in the current cultural context.

### **Reflective Practice in Pre-Service Contexts**

One important change in ELT teacher education that RP has brought about is in the view of teacher-learning. Teacher-learning is now realised to be a socially negotiated process that takes place within a context; and, rather than the translation of knowledge and theories into practice (Richards, 2008). Unlike more traditional teacher education models, RP takes into consideration the past experiences (e.g. Romano, 2006) and personal practical knowledge (e.g. Tsang, 2004) of teachers and allows them to apply this accumulation to their own practical contexts. The ability of PSTs to project themselves mentally into the future (see, e.g. Eren, 2009) to anticipate potential teaching-related problems (see, e.g. Boud, 2001; Freese, 2006) is also a particularly valuable activity, and encourages more creativity than retrospective reflection alone (Akbari, 2007).

Freeman (2002) states the lack of importance given to the concept of context in most ELT teacher education programmes as a reason behind the gap between theory and practice. The knowledge base of campus-based courses cannot always equip teachers to deal with every aspect of their own particular teaching context. In countries such as Turkey, the educational culture is very different to that of the countries from which the predominant theoretical knowledge base of the field has emerged, and there are even internal differences between urban and rural areas in terms of culture, economy and expectations (Cakiroglu & Cakiroglu, 2003). ELT teacher educators in Turkey will be familiar with the resistance of PSTs to certain approaches and techniques because they do not see any relevance to their own professional context (see, e.g. Cubukcu, 2010). They often find it difficult to apply what they have learned during their campus-based courses to their school-based practical courses. This suggests that the campus-based methodology courses themselves should be conducted reflectively in order to provide an internal transition between the campus-based and school-based components of teacher education.

Having RP as the central pillar (Wallace, 1991; Freeman, 2002) of ELT teacher education programmes should help PSTs develop skills of reflection so they can investigate and optimise their language teaching beliefs (e.g. Richards & Lockhart, 1996) and personal practical knowledge (Tsang, 2004), in addition to providing them with the vocabulary and discourse enabling them to assign meaning to their experiences (Akbari, 2007; Freeman, 2002). Reflective writing is one way for ELT teachers to investigate their own practice (see, e.g. Richards & Farrell, 2005).

### **Reflective Writing**

Writing is a technique used in teacher education to encourage PSTs to make connections between what they learn on campus-based courses and their practical experiences, thus enhancing their reflective abilities (Yost et al, 2000). Many other researchers in general education have reported the benefits of using different forms of reflective writing in teacher education (e.g. Collier, 1999; Freese, 2006). There have been a number of studies carried out with the reflective writing of PSTs in the field of ELT. Numrich (1996) reported that novice teachers were preoccupied with their own teaching behaviour, they transferred or rejected teaching skills used in their own language learning experience and

they reported unexpected discoveries about their teaching. Tsang (2003) found that PSTs largely reflected on an evaluation of teaching during free reflection, but that they took into consideration theories of teaching in assigned reflections. Recently, Lee (2007) discussed the potential of dialogue and response journals to encourage reflection in PSTs to help them investigate their own values, experiences and beliefs. More recently, Luk (2008) analysed the discourse features of the high and low grade practicum reports of a group of PSTs. She discovered differences in the way the high and low scorers approached their tasks, and as to what the assessors valued as effective reflective discourse.

Despite the recent research on ELT PSTs' reflective writing in practicum contexts, there appears to be a gap in the research on reflective writing of these PSTs in campus-based courses, particularly in the Turkish context. This study aims to determine how and on what a group of Turkish ELT PSTs reflect in their writing after a microteaching experience during a campus-based methodology course. The following research question was formulated to this aim: 'How and on what do a group of Turkish ELT PSTs reflect in their reflective reports following a campus-based microteaching experience?'

### **The Current Study**

The English Language Teaching (ELT) programme offered by the departments of Foreign Language Education (FLE) in Turkish universities is a 4-year long undergraduate programme leading to a BA degree. Admission to the programme requires completion of Turkish secondary education, or a foreign equivalent, and attainment of the required score on the national university entrance examination (see Cakiroglu & Cakiroglu, 2003). Graduates from the programme are employed in Ministry of National Education primary and secondary schools, universities or in the private sector.

As with all teacher education programmes in Turkey, the ELT programme is determined by the Turkish Council of Higher Education (*YÖK* in Turkish). The programme currently in operation was introduced in the autumn semester of the 2006-2007 academic year (see *YÖK* 2007). It aims to provide a solid foundation in the major theoretical and methodological issues of ELT. The first three years consist entirely of campus-based courses with the emphasis moving gradually from theoretical to applied knowledge. The final year includes, but is not limited to, two school-based practicum courses run in cooperation with local Ministry of National Education schools.

The course involved in the current study was the Teaching Language Skills II (TLS II) course, the second part of a two-semester long ELT methodology course in the third year of study aimed at teaching the techniques and stages of teaching grammar, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. While *YÖK* provides a general description for each course, material and teaching approach are left to the instructors. In the current study, I adopted a reflective approach to the course and supported theoretical readings and discussions with weekly guided observations (Wajnryb, 1992) of video-recorded language skills lessons given by the instructors in the department, including myself. During the observations, I drew the participants' attention to both effective and ineffective teacher behaviour, the outcomes of this behaviour and possible alternative actions. Thus, in addition to presenting the required course content, I aimed to acquaint the PSTs with the reflective skills required of them in the practical courses of the final year.

The final assessment in the TLS II course included a microteaching activity of planning and executing a 40 minute language skills lesson in groups of three using materials of the participants' own choice. The lessons were recorded by the PSTs themselves using their own digital cameras, thus the responsibility for recording was passed into their own

hands rather than being imposed by the instructor. The final portfolios included the microteaching documents: a lesson plan, the video-recording on a CD, a transcription of their own part of the lesson aimed at raising the awareness of their classroom language and positioning in the classroom (Wallace, 1991), and a computer-printed written reflection on their own performance.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study was conducted using a mixed method approach, a pragmatic approach to research design in which elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined in a single study for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding (see, e.g. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The reason for adopting this approach was driven by the scope of the study, which aimed to describe the reflective characteristics of the writing of this particular group of PSTs at both a group and an individual level.

### **Participants**

This study was carried out in the spring term of the 2009-2010 academic year in the ELT programme of the Department of Foreign Language Education of a large university in the Western Black Sea region of Turkey. The participants were 28 regular-section students (22 female, 6 male) aged between 21 and 24 years ( $M = 21.5$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) in their third year of study. The mean Grade Point Average (GPA) for the group was 2.99 ( $SD = .43$ ) on a scale of 4. Since higher education in Turkey is relatively expensive (Cakiroglu & Cakiroglu, 2003), the social economic status of the participants was assumed to be at least medium. All the participants were Turkish citizens and non-native speakers of English. Since they had been admitted to the programme on the basis of their scores on the foreign language component of the university entrance examination, their English language proficiency was assumed to be similar. None of them had had any formal teaching experience; although at the time of the data collection, they were all giving one-to-one English lessons to primary school pupils of underprivileged families as part of their Community Service course, and one had been teaching primary school pupils voluntarily for a charitable organisation for three years. The PSTs were all willing to participate in this study and they chose pseudonyms, real Turkish names reflecting their gender, to protect their identity. All extracts provided are original in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

### **Data Sources and Collection**

The data that formed the core of the current study, the written reflections of each PST on their microteaching experiences, were qualitative in nature. While the data were cross-sectional in nature and cannot be considered as journal entries on their own, they show the 'starting point' of the students' reflective writing before they took the school-based practicum courses in the following year, the assessment of which includes written reflections on weekly observations and teaching tasks. The data were collected in the participants' portfolios submitted as part of the final assessment at the end of term.

### Data Analysis

The data were prepared for analysis by scanning the computer-printed reflections and converting them into electronic documents. In accordance with the mixed method approach adopted in the study, the data analysis procedure occurred in a number of steps. These are detailed in the following sections.

### Qualitative Analysis

The initial step was to reduce the qualitative data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) by content analysis, a technique in which the many words of a text are classified into fewer categories with similar meanings which are defined according to the focus of the research. The emerging categories are assigned codes which can then be subjected to further analyses, including statistical data analysis techniques (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the analysis, I took Ward and McCotter's (2004) liberal definition of reflection as 'any text focusing on a specific teaching action' (p. 248), since any event written about had been deliberately chosen by the participants as material for reflection. I read and re-read the data to divide them into chunks of meaning with identifiable topics, keeping in mind the focus of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994), namely the manner and theme of reflection. I used the 'Add comment' facility of the computer software to assign each chunk with two codes. One was given according to the mode of reflection (referred to hereon as reflective codes), and the second according to the content of reflection (thematic codes). The reflective codes were assigned by a top-down process using a reflective rubric I had previously developed (Yeşilbursa, 2008) in a study with in-service university ELT teacher educators. The decision to use this rubric was made after the initial reading through the data. Table 1 shows the modes of reflection that emerged from the initial qualitative analysis in the current study with examples from the data.

Code	Explanation
R	general reflection
<i>Example</i>	'In this lesson ,we talked about hospitals and made my friends do an activity called "At the Doctor' s Office"' (Ayça)
R+	positive reflection
<i>Example</i>	'I prepared a paper on which instructions are written. This was very helpful to me at the beginning of lesson.' (Efe)
R-	negative reflection
<i>Example</i>	'I couldn't show my exact performance in the lesson.' (Özge)
RR	reflection on reasons
<i>Example</i>	'because in this way, we saw our mistakes and criticized ourselves' (Sibel)
RS	reflection on solutions
<i>Example</i>	'I should try to increase my speed of speech and speak more fluently and rhythmically' (ElifK)
RN	reflection on new discoveries
<i>Example</i>	'I realised that I used "ok" many times' (Büşra)

**Table 1: Modes of reflection**

I preferred to use a self-developed reflective rubric rather than one already developed and published (e.g. Ward & McCotter, 2004) because I wanted to reveal details which were not accounted for in these frameworks. For example, whether reflection occurred specifically on solutions or reasons; whether the participants had learned anything new about themselves as a result of the microteaching experience; and whether reflection was positive or negative, thus revealing any tendencies of a 'self-congratulatory' (Luk, 2008, p. 634) nature, of blaming

others (Watts & Lawson, 2009; Freese, 2006) or of ‘self-laceration’ (Brookfield, 1995), all of which are considered to be unproductive characteristics of reflection.

The thematic codes were assigned by bottom-up analysis of the data, involving several readings of the data by the researcher and an independent coder, a research assistant from the same department as the researcher who was familiar with qualitative data analysis. After several conferences with the second independent coder, the coding system was modified to resolve any discrepancies. A final independent coding of 10% of the data revealed acceptable levels (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of 90% agreement for the set of reflective codes, and 95% for the set of thematic codes.

The emerging themes of reflection were found to be the actions of the teachers themselves (slf); others, including their peers they were teaching and their teaching partners (oth); the microteaching task and the video-recording (tsk); and past and future hypothetical experiences (exp). Table 2 gives these findings with examples from the data.

Code	Explanation
Self	Actions of student-teacher
<i>Example</i>	"I have realized that I was a bit nervous and standing behind the table" (Aysegül)
Others	Actions of students and teaching partners
<i>Example</i>	"My classmates behaved as if there had been a real teacher" (ZehraS)
Task	The microteaching activity and the videorecording
<i>Example</i>	"I could not guess that watching my video while giving lesson could be so effective" (ElifM)
Exp	Previous experience as learner, hypothetical future experience
<i>Example</i>	"I thought that I could experience the same thing in my future teaching life" (Huseyin)

**Table 2: Themes of reflection**

### *Quantitative Analysis*

In order to answer the research question, the researcher transformed the qualitative data gleaned from the data reduction into quantitative data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This was done by assigning a numerical code to each reflective and thematic category, which were subsequently entered into SPSS 13.0 for statistical analysis. In order to display the joint distribution of the two types of categories across the reflections, their crosstabulations (see, e.g. Muijs, 2004) were calculated.

## **Results and Discussion**

The research question aimed to reveal how and on what the PSTs reflected in their writing at a group level. Table 3 presents the results of the crosstabulation of the modes and themes of reflection. Cramer’s V for this set of data was 0.19 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating a small but highly statistically significant association between the variables.

### *Modes and Themes of Reflection*

In answer to the question ‘how’, the top-down analysis using the reflective rubric described in the previous section yielded the following results. The totals for the reflective categories given in Table 3 show that the most frequently occurring reflective categories were evaluative (Ho & Richards, 1993), with R- accounting for 28.64% of the total reflections.



This was followed by R+ with 27.81%. Neutral descriptive (Jay & Johnson, 2002) reflection (R) accounted for 19.87% of the total. RR (13.15%) and RS (6.58%), which can be considered aspects of dialogic (Hatton & Smith, 1995), or comparative (Jay & Johnson, 2002) reflection, together constituted 19.73% of the total. Finally, RN accounted for 9.55% of the total reflections.

		Reflective categories						Total
		R	R+	R-	RR	RS	RN	Total
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Thematic categories	Slf	88 (13.77)	99 (15.45)	111 (17.37)	47 (7.36)	37 (5.79)	49 (7.67)	431 (67.45)
	Oth	13 (2.03)	37 (5.79)	27 (4.23)	25 (3.91)	4 (.63)	7 (1.1)	113 (17.68)
	Tsk	11 (1.72)	33 (5.16)	5 (.78)	11 (1.72)	0	3 (.47)	63 (9.86)
	Exp	15 (2.3)	9 (1.41)	4 (6.26)	1 (.16)	1 (.16)	2 (.31)	32 (5.01)
Total		127 (19.87)	178 (27.81)	147 (28.64)	84 (13.15)	42 (6.58)	61 (9.55)	639 (100)

Note. R=neutral reflection, R+=positive reflection, R-=negative reflection, RR=reflection on reasons, RS=reflection on solutions, RN=reflection on new discoveries; slf=reflection on self, oth=reflection on others, tsk=reflection on task, exp=reflection on past or future experiences.

**Table 3: Crosstabulations of reflective and thematic codes**

In answer to the question ‘on what’, the bottom-up analysis revealed that the participants appeared to reflect on four major themes in their writing. The totals for the thematic categories given in Table 3 show that the PSTs reflected on themselves as teachers (67.45% of the total reflections); the actions of the students and their teaching partners (17.68%); the task they were involved in (9.86%); and both past and future experiences (5.01%).

Some members of the current group of PSTs reflected on previous and possible future experiences (5.01%). Akbari (2007) emphasises the importance of being able to reflect on potential future problems, what Freese (2006) refers to as ‘anticipatory reflection’ (p. 103), arguing that the predominant focus on retrospective reflection in teacher development can lead to an emphasis on memory over imagination or creativity. Caner, for example, in the extract given below went beyond the immediate context of the microteaching task and reflected on experiences he had had teaching a student on a one-to-one basis, then extended this to a hypothetical situation after his graduation. In other words, the microteaching activity had constituted a ‘bumpy moment’ (Romano, 2006) for Caner, who then engaged in anticipatory reflection on his future career.

‘Suppose that ... they were 20 or 22 students who studied at elementary school... To tell the truth, it would have been worse and I would have felt less relaxed ... I have a student who is 15 year-old, when I teach him something I face with difficulties, sometimes I am confused about how to teach him ... but when we graduate, we will teach not just one but 25 or 30 students’.

Interestingly, unlike the Tsang (2003) study, none of the PSTs in the current study made any references to theories of language teaching in their reflections. Tsang (2003) remarks that theories of language teaching play different roles for teachers at different stages of development, adding that teachers with little or no experience tend to use them as a guide when planning and delivering lessons. The lack of mention of theories by the participants of the current study may be related to a number of reasons. First, I approached the TLS II course with an emphasis on experiential knowledge over received knowledge. Hence, the participants may not have viewed theoretical knowledge as part of the course. Alternatively, the fact that it was the first time that these PSTs had video-recorded and observed themselves teaching could have focused most of their attention on their own actions. Another reason

could be that Turkish PSTs find theory irrelevant to their practice (Cakiroglu & Cakiroglu, 2003; Cubukcu, 2010).

### *Mode-Theme Combinations*

The individual cells of Table 3 show the mode-theme combinations. The most frequently occurring were those of evaluative reflection and the self: 'R- slf' (17.37%) followed by 'R+ slf' (15.45%); and then neutral description, 'R slf' (13.77%). 'RN slf' then follows with 7.67%. This is in turn followed by reflection on reasons relating to the self: 'RR slf' with 7.36%. This was followed by 'R- exp' with 6.26%, then 'RS slf' and 'R+ oth' with 5.79% each. 'R+ tsk' accounted for 5.16% of the reflections 'R- oth' for 4.23%, and 'RR oth' for 3.91%. The remaining group of combinations occurs at a frequency of less than 3.0%.

Examples of negative evaluations of self include (original errors) Başak's comment: 'At the end of the lesson, I wasn't able to finish the lesson very effective. I was unprepared for this part. I was confused and I tried to say something'; and positive evaluations of actions, for example 'When I heard that I felt happy and I thought that I was doing something right' (Çiçek). Neutral descriptive reflections on the self include accounts of the PSTs actions, such as 'I was walking around them and monitoring. I was checking whether they had understood. I spent almost equally time for all group members' (Ayşegül);

Numrich (1996) and Watts and Lawson (2009) also reported a preoccupation of novice teachers and PSTs to engage in a descriptive reflection with a focus on the self. However, such reflection should not be considered as entirely unproductive. It is necessary for these teachers, whose primary concerns are gaining competency in teaching (Fendler, 2003). The issue is whether or not they will later engage in reflection that aims at self-improvement and take into consideration the ideas of others (Ward & McCotter, 2004), which usually requires an amount of classroom experience to occur (Watts & Lawson, 2009). Given that it is expected for inexperienced PSTs to reflect largely in a routine manner, the occurrence of reflection on reasons, solutions to problems and new discoveries in the reflections of the current study (totalling 27.32% of all modes of reflection) is promising, since it shows that some members of this particular group engaged in reflection that has the potential to bring about change even at this early stage in professional development. This is a significant result for teacher educators, many of who, according to Yost et al (2000) strongly believe that PSTs are unable to reach higher levels of thought.

The next most frequently occurring combination was on new discoveries about the self. The following extract from Sibel's entry shows how a new discovery led to an analysis of the events in terms of reasons solutions, showing the dialogic nature of the reflection: 'While I am watching the video recording I realized that; I used the words of "now" and "OK" very frequently. In fact I did it to show my agreement with them and my attention, to show that I am listening to you. But I should limit them.' Many others also mentioned how watching the video-recording had helped them to pick up on aspects of their teaching that they would otherwise have missed. A number of these new discoveries were related to voice-quality, word choice, classroom management, and readjustments of self-image. For this group of PSTs, the video-recording experience had helped them to see themselves as teachers and had been beneficial, as in the Freese (2006) study. As Sibel commented, 'we observed your lessons and criticize you and wrote reports about them. Then we presented our lessons and criticize ourselves. To sum up, it was a very useful lesson'.

The current group of PSTs showed that they also reflected on others, including their teaching partners and the other students in the class. Positive reflection on others largely

included praises or expressions of gratitude for their peers' cooperation as students in the microteaching class. Negative reflection, on the other hand, included comments on the negative attitudes of their peers and comments on their teaching partners. Others were able to comment on the effects of their actions on the students, such as Murtaza: 'When I watched the video, I saw myself very relax, perhaps because of there was not so many people. But being relax doesn't mean you do a great teaching. I'm not saying I was totally bad, but I saw that I had stood like a robot, an emotionless robot. Speaking like a dead person, but in a really fast way. I can't help speaking very fast. I really speak fast and sometimes my friend looking at me like "What was that, we couldn't catch it." Perhaps I should try not to memorize everything.'

This comment is particularly interesting since it shows that the microteaching task had helped Murtaza to observe the effects of his actions as a teacher on his peers. He recognised that the rate of his speech made it difficult for his peers to follow him. Furthermore, this experience caused him to search for a reason behind his fast speech, which he gave as his memorising the classroom language he would use. This reflection in turn provided interesting insight for myself as a teacher educator into how non-native PSTs deal with situations they have to face (Davis, 2006; Freese, 2006).

ElifK made a similar observation about herself as a result of watching her video: 'It is said that I seem to people very serious, not friendly, upset and bored. In fact, I am not any that kind of person. However, after watching my video, I thought that those people were right. I seemed serious and nervous most of the time in my presentation. I should have been a more friendly and pleasant teacher.' In this extract, the task helped ElifK to see herself through the eyes of others. These observations led her to contemplate possible solutions.

Although Watts and Lawson (2009) state that early reflections of inexperienced teachers can be characterized by 'a tendency to blame others for inadequacies' (p. 162; on the whole, the current group of PSTs did not use their reflections as an opportunity to justify their actions by directing the blame onto others with only three of the 28 texts including evidence of negative reflection on others.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

There are a number of implications for teacher education that can be gleaned from this study. First, it appears that even through a single written reflection on one microteaching event a good deal of insight can be gained into the way PSTs see themselves as teachers and how they reflect on their own practice. The current study has shown that even at an early stage of professional development, some PSTs reflected in a way that the literature suggests would facilitate their professional development. It would be beneficial for teacher educators in contexts similar to that of the current study to be aware of the benefits of implementing RP into the campus-based methodology courses of their programmes. They also need to appreciate that given the opportunity PSTs have the potential to reflect productively on their practice. They can include written reflections on teaching experiences as part of the campus-based methodology courses to provide the PSTs with practice for the Practicum courses, during which they are expected to make weekly reflections. In this way, they can encourage their PSTs to adopt an approach which will help them to develop as professionals throughout their careers. An emphasis on the Practicum given during the methodology courses may help PSTs to make connections between theoretical and practical work. In the context of ELT teacher education in Turkey, RP could be introduced even as early as the first year basic language skills courses by requiring the PSTs to keep journals of their language learning experiences to serve as a basis for the pedagogical courses later in their studies.

Some of the PSTs in the current study showed evidence on drawing on their past experiences to account for problematic situations and then project themselves to possible future experiences. Such ability has been shown to be important in professional development in the literature discussed in this paper and is one that should be optimised by teacher educators. This can be encouraged in campus-based courses by asking PSTs to reflect back on their experiences as language learners and predict the potential problems of applying the knowledge base of the field to their own contexts with an aim on finding solutions to these problems. Finally, the rubric used in this study can be used by PSTs in meta-analyses of their own writing (see Watts & Lawson, 2009) to help them investigate their own reflective processes.

## Conclusion

This article has presented the findings of a mixed-method study which set out to determine the reflective characteristics of the reflections written by a group of ELT PSTs following a video-recorded microteaching experience using a rubric developed by the researcher. Initial qualitative analyses revealed the different reflective modes and themes of reflection in the writing. Subsequent quantitative analyses showed how the reflective and thematic codes co-occurred with each other. Characteristic of inexperienced PSTs, the current group reflected in a largely descriptive way on themselves as teachers; however, there was evidence of them being able to reflect in ways the literature suggests are more conducive to professional growth, which was a promising sign considering the early stage of their professional development. The results present significant findings for teacher educators of the reflective processes of PSTs at a critical time of their professional development as they stand at the interface of theory and practice.

There are a number of limitations to the current study. First, its aim was to reveal the reflections of PSTs at a particular stage of their development, and is therefore cross-sectional in nature. Thus, it does not claim to trace any changes in behaviour over a period of time. Longitudinal research could be conducted to give such detail. Second, the results of this study have provided a profile for the group of 28 PSTs as a whole. However, such quantitative results do not tell the entire story. The reflective profiles of each PST could be investigated using person-based data analysis techniques such as cluster analysis. These profiles could be used to investigate the emerging relations between reflection and other variables, such as academic performance and personality. Finally, it was not possible in the current study to conduct interviews with all of the participants to cross-validate the data. Further studies could use more systematic interviews with the participants to gain more insider perspective on their reflections and how they view their practice.

## References

- Akbari, R. (2007). Reflection on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in L2 teacher education. *System*, (35), 192-207.
- Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, (90), 9-17.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Collier, S.T. (1999). Characteristics of reflective thought during the student teaching experience. *Journal of Teacher Education*, (50), 173-181.

- Cakiroglu, E. & Cakiroglu, J. (2003). Reflections on teacher education in Turkey. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 26 (2), 253-264.
- Cubukcu, F. (2010). Congruence and dissonance between micro-teaching and macro-teaching. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, (2), 326-329.
- Davis, E.A. (2006). Characterising productive reflection among preservice elementary teachers: Seeing what matters. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (22), 281-301.
- Edwards, G. & Thomas, G. (2010). Can reflective practice be taught? *Educational Studies*, (1), 1-12.
- Eren, A. (2009). Self-efficacy beliefs and mental time travel ability: Uncovering a hidden relationship in educational settings. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 19, (4), 513-517.
- Fendler, L. (2003). Teacher reflections in a hall of mirrors: Historical influences and political reverberations. *Educational Researcher*, 32, (3), pp. 16-25.
- Freeman, D. (2002) The hidden side of the work: Teacher knowledge and learning to teach. *Language Teaching*, 35 (1), 1-13.
- Freese, A.R. (2006) Reframing one's teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 100-119.
- Gelter, H. (2003). Why is reflective thinking uncommon? *Reflective Practice*, 4 (3), 337-344).
- Hall, S. (1997) Forms of reflective teaching practice in higher education. In Pospisil, R. & Willcoxson, L. (eds). *Learning through teaching. Proceedings of the 6th Annual Teaching Learning Forum*, Murdoch University, February 1997. Perth: Murdoch University. [Online document]. Available <http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/asu/pubs/tlf/tlf97/> Retrieved 30 May 2005
- Hatton, N. & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11, (1), 33-49.
- Ho, B. & Richards, J.C. (1993). Reflective thinking through teacher journal writing: Myths and realities. *Perspectives*, 5, (2), 25-40
- Jay, J. K. & Johnson, K.L. (2002). Capturing complexity: a typology of reflective practice for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 73-85.
- Johnson, R.B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33, (7), 14-26.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 27-48.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35 (4), 537-560.
- Lee, I. (2007). Preparing pre-service English teachers for reflective practice. *ELT Journal* 61 (4), 321-329.
- Luk, J. (2008). Assessing teaching practicum reflections: Distinguishing discourse features of the "high" and "low" grade reports. *System*, 36, 624-641.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, M.A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Muijs, D. (2004). *Doing quantitative research in education with SPSS*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Numrich, C. (1996). On becoming a language teacher: Insights from diary studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, (1), 131-153.
- Osterman, K.F. & Kottkamp, R.B. (2004). *Reflective practice for educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Rakicioglu, A.S. (2005). *The relationships between epistemological beliefs and teacher-efficacy beliefs of English language teaching trainees*. Unpublished MA thesis, Abant Izzet Baysal University Institute of Social Sciences, Bolu.
- Richards, J.C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC Journal*, 39 (2), 158-177.
- Richards, J.C. & Farrell, T.S.C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: strategies for teacher learning*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Richards, J.C., Gipe, J.P. Levitov, J. & Speaker, R. (1989). Psychological and personal dimensions of prospective teachers' reflective abilities'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, March 22-31.
- Richards, J.C. & Lockhart, C. (1996) *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Romano, M. (2006). "Bumpy moments" in teaching: Reflections from practicing teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 973-985.
- Russell, T. (2005). Can reflective practice be taught? *Reflective Practice*, 6, (2), 199-204.
- Schön, D.A. (1991/1983). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate
- Stanley, C. (1998) A framework for teacher reflectivity. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32 (3), 584-587.
- Tsang, W.K. (2003). Journaling from internship to practice teaching. *Reflective Practice*, 4 (2), 221-240.
- Tsang, W.K. (2004). Teachers' personal practical knowledge and interactive decisions. *Language Teaching Research* 8 (2), 163-198.
- Wajnryb, R. (1992) *Classroom observation tasks: A resource book for language teachers and trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace, M. (1991). *Training foreign language teachers: a reflective approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ward, J.R. & McCotter, S. (2004) Reflection as a visible outcome for preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20 (3), 243-257.
- Watts, M. & Lawson, M. (2009) Using a meta-analysis activity to make critical reflection explicit in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 609-616.
- Yeşilbursa, A. (2008). *Reflective foreign language teacher development: A case study*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Gazi University Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara.
- YÖK, (2007). *Öğretmen yetiştirme ve eğitim fakülteleri (1982-2007)*. [Teacher education and faculties of education (1982-2007)] Ankara: Yükseköğretim Kurulu.
- Yost, D.S., Sentner, S.M. & Forlenza-Bailey, A. (2000). An examination of the construct of critical reflection: implications for teacher education programming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51 (1), 39-49.