Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (*IJAL*)

Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2018, 1-27

Evaluating Recall and Reflection Journals Written by Pre-Service Teachers in EFL Practicum Courses

Katayoon Afzali*, *Sheikhbahaee University, Isfahan, Iran*

Abstract

In view of the fact that pre-service teachers' critical reflection through evaluating teaching activity of their peers is an important part of practicum activity, the current study aimed to analyze the recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers to identify and evaluate the discoursal features of their journals. To this end, a total of 272 recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers were analyzed on the basis of Hiebert, Morris, Berk, and Jansen's (2007) framework for analyzing their teaching practices. The findings indicated that the discourse of recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers is affective and descriptive rather than critical. Pre-service teachers predominantly ignore learners in writing their reflection journals. The findings of this study pointed to the need for explicit instruction of the discoursal features of reflection in teacher education classes. Therefore, teacher educators should help pre-service teachers to develop effective reflective discourse in practicum courses.

Keywords: Practicum course; Discoursal features; Recall and reflection journals; Teacher education

Article Information:
Received: 20 August 2017 Revised: 1 January 2018 Accepted:12 January 2018

Corresponding author: Department of English Language, Seikhbahaee University, Isfahan, Iran Email address: k.afzali@shbu.ac.ir

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

1. Introduction

The teaching practicum is considered as one of the most influential components of teacher education. As Richards (2008, p.166) states, "while the teaching practicum is often intended to establish links between theory and practice, it is sometimes an uncomfortable add-on to academic programs rather than seen as a core component." Most courses in colleges of education scarcely provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to evaluate practicum activity. Evaluation is an important part of practicum activity because it serves as a means by which "knowledge of teaching can be shared within a jointly constructed framework" (Mitchell, 1996, p. 47). This is due to the fact that they are "not asked to critically examine the underlying assumptions in educational conventions and practices" (Segall, 2001, p.234). Teaching practicum course is one of the courses in which pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices are shaped and developed during the teacher education process since it is a site which develops its own discourse (Singh & Richards, 2006; Yan & He, 2010). Discourse in the current research refers to the dominant discourse of TESOL (e.g. learner-centeredness, learner autonomy, authenticity and accountable ways of learning, acting and interacting) (Gee, 1996).

The rapid tempo of changes in understanding the nature of second language teacher education (SLTE) and its instructional practices call for moving toward a sociocultural view of teacher learning, implementation of collaborative approaches to SLTE, greater accountability, as well as critical perspectives on teacher education. In other words, becoming an English language teacher means becoming a member of the teaching community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourses and practices, but one with a self-critical view of their own practices or accountability (Richards, 2008; Ten Dam & Blom, 2006). In this respect, Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserts that a critical component of pre-service teacher education involves learning to acquire tools to analyze one's teaching. However, pre-service

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

teachers are not equipped with tools to study their own and their peers' practice (Chung & van Es, 2014). Valli (1997) observed that teacher educators use action research, supervision, recall and reflection journals and portfolios to promote reflection. Nevertheless, pre-service teachers are not familiar with the specific components of writing a critical recall and reflection journal (Luk, 2008). Leung (2009) points to two different dimensions of professionalism: 1) Institutionally prescribed professionalism in which a managerial approach to professionalism representing the views of the ministries of education, teaching organizations, school principals etc. prescribe what teachers are expected to know and what constitutes quality teaching practices; 2) Independent professionalism which refers to teachers' own views of teaching and the processes the teachers go through to reflect on their own values, beliefs and practices. This second facet of professionalization has attracted the attention of researchers. They study what pre-service teachers observe and how they make sense of and justify their teaching practices (Star & Strickland, 2008; Sturmer, Konings & Seidel; 2013).

While lecturers on language teaching education (LTE) courses spend much of their professional lives in course rooms like lecture theatres, classrooms and seminar rooms, they seek to provide a quality educational experience for their students through lectures, discussions, simulations, case studies, etc. University lecturers view themselves primarily as subject matter specialists and do not offer any formal course on pedagogy. Much of what is done in LTE courses is just limited to passing on information and ways of thinking to pre-service teachers. They are never invited to interrogate the assumptions about what teaching and learning mean. Teachers develop their own theory of learning and teaching by exploring classroom and language through cultural artifacts (e.g. handouts, worksheets, videos) and social practices in the course room (Singh & Richards, 2006). In this respect, Brumfit (1997) posits the idea of teachers as 'educational linguists' denoting that teachers are supposed to study and explore the beliefs and the roles of

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

language in society. For instance, lecturers can model and demonstrate how to make students aware of the discourse features of newspaper articles and how to develop sensitivity to issues of power, gender, and linguistic imperialism (Hedgcock, 2002; Philipson, 1992). To this end, instructors are supposed to provide pre-service teachers with modeling good instructional practice, dialogically organizing instruction, encouraging participation in multiple discourses and setting up collaborative learning. Furthermore, written assignments are no more valued as the products of learning. Instead, the right kind of talks that initiate reflective review of the unquestioned habits and ideas about language and learning are considered as the tool for evaluation (Singh & Richards, 2006).In recognition of the fact that teaching practicum is critical to the development of pre-service teachers' reflective ability, the current study, using Hiebert et al.'s (2007) framework for analyzing teaching, aims to analyze the recall and reflection journals produced by pre-service teachers to examine the extent to which they employ the skills mentioned in this framework to reflect on their peers teaching practices.

2. Review of the Literature

The discourse of reflection in teaching practicum classes and its contribution to the learning of pre-service teachers has attracted the attention of researchers, teacher educators and teachers. The importance of reflection in the practicum courses has been emphasized by many scholars (e.g. Chung & van. Es, 2014; Luk, 2008; Zhu, 2011). For instance, Yan and He (2010) view the teaching practicum as an opportunity to observe real students, teachers and curriculum settings. This is due to the fact that the practicum is considered as not only a bridge between theory and practice in teachers' learning, but as the context in which pre-service teachers develop a personal teaching competence (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). It is believed that pre-service teachers can improve their learning through reflection (Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001). In this respect, Yan and He (2010) used reflective

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

paper-writing to investigate the views of 210 student teachers on an EFL teacher education program. Their findings highlight the existing problem of teaching practicum classes. In another study, Luk (2008) explores the discourse features of the high and low-grade reflective journals produced by pre-service teachers. Results of the analysis revealed the distinguishing features in the schematic structure and the use of linguistic and rhetorical resources. From this perspective, he found out that high-quality reflections are supposed to be dialogic and critical rather than merely descriptive. Zhu (2011) also describes student teachers' reflective practices during practicum in a teacher education program. His finding suggests that, in writing recall and reflection journals, pre-service teachers usually recall what occurs first and then discuss the rationale for practical action, and finally provide some suggestions for improving the instruction. It also reveals that pre-service teachers focus predominantly on "technical rationality and practical action", and they rarely deal with critical reflection or reflection on reflection (p.772).

Hiebert et al. (2007) proposed a framework for analyzing teaching which consists of four facets to guide the analysis of teaching: 1) specifying learning goals for an instructional episode, 2) conducting empirical observations of learning, 3) constructing hypotheses about the impact of teaching on students' learning, and 4) using analysis to propose improvements in teaching. Since this framework was used to analyze the collected data in the current study, the detailed description of this framework accompanied by some clarifying examples is cited in Table1 below. One category of teaching practicum studies addresses the pre-service teachers' perception about the practicum. Smith and Snoek (1996) found that pre-service teachers viewed practicum as the most valuable part of their teacher education program. Hodge, Davis, Woodward and Sherrill's (2002)

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

study indicates that the practicum had a positive influence on the pre-service teachers' attitude towards their work.

Another category of studies aimed to identify the problems of the practicum. In this respect, Bullough and Gitlin (1994) claim that the major problems of the practicum include lack of the integration of courses and field work and inadequate student advising form. In the same vein, Liu and Xu (2007) identified time limitation, lack of a coherent curriculum, lack of consistent and credible supervision, and lack of communication between institutions as the predominant problems of the practicum. Similarly, Wang and Xu (2008) believe that teaching practicum suffers from lack of clearly defined objectives and opportunity for teaching practice.

Another category of studies related to teaching practicum is concerned with the identity of pre-service teachers. In this respect, Trent (2013) conducted a qualitative study investigating the experiences of a group of pre-service English language teachers in Hong Kong. Interview with student teachers was conducted to understand the students' experiences of becoming teachers. The results suggest that a critical perspective of identity understanding is needed to reveal the threatening factors of the identity of trainee teachers.

Among various factors involved in teacher education classrooms, Bezzina and Michalak (2009) focused on two main areas of learning issues and teaching methods. The main topics in these relations are as follows: learning issues (The role of teacher, creating the learning environment, participation-involvement, independent learning) and teaching methods (practical work, small group work, large group/whole class work, support and mentoring, problem-based learning, assessment).

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

In sum, as the review of the literature indicates studies related to teaching practicum courses target various issues about teaching practicum such as establishing the teachers' perspectives (views), attitudes, and experiences identifying the problems of the practicum and addressing the ability to analyze and reflect on teaching demonstrations of peers. According to Luk (2008), one of the essential abilities for teacher educators is to reflect on and engage in exploration and experimentation. One of the tools used to evaluate this ability is written recall and reflection journals. Despite the importance of the discourse of recall and reflection journals, studying their discoursal features has remained under researched. In view of this fact, the current study aims to analyze the discoursal features of recall and reflection journals written by preservice teachers.

3. The study

A total of 180 pre-service teachers taking the practicum course participated in this study. They were senior EFL students taking practicum as one of their required components of the EFL curriculum. Primarily, pre-service teachers enrolled in teaching practicum courses at both BA and MA levels offered by Sheikhbahaee University and Azad universities in Najafabad, Shahreza and Khorasgan were provided with a recall and reflection journal where they were supposed to evaluate the teaching practice of their peers. Journal writing in the field of teacher education is considered by many academics to be a powerful tool to enhance pre-service teachers' reflective ability (Luk, 2008). Therefore, at the onset of each session, the pre-service teachers were provided with a reflection journal (Appendix) which required them to not only recall the teaching activities conducted in the classroom but also evaluate and provide their reasoning and critical comments. In other words, prompts were used to elicit pre-service teachers' comments and reflections about their peers. There are various forms to promote effective

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

reflections such as the use of prompts, guiding questions, interactive feedback and online forum. Prompts were used in this study. The reason for using prompts was that they specify the aspects of language teaching practice on which pre-service teachers are supposed to reflect. Therefore, they can be helpful for providing clues to pre-service teachers who are not familiar with important aspects of language teaching. A total of 433 recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers were collected. However, 272 of the cases were selected to be analyzed since 161 of the journals did not meet the requirements of the selected framework for analysis, i.e. they did not contain any components of the framework used in this study.

To analyze the pre-service teachers' recall and reflection journals, the principles of content analysis proposed by Hieberts et al. (2007) were applied. This framework was drawn for two reasons: First, it addresses the challenges teacher educators face analyzing teaching demonstrations of their peers by focusing on certain aspects, such as learning goals, and the significance of the relationship between teaching moves and student learning in classroom interactions. Second, this framework offers criteria for gauging pre-service teacher learning. To analyze the data, the frequency and percentage of each of the components of the selected framework were computed.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Analyzing pre-service teachers' recall and reflection journals

To analyze the recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers, Hiebert, et al.'s framework for analyzing teaching practices was used. The rubrics of this framework were used to code the pre-service teachers' responses to confirming and disconfirming evidence with respect to each

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

facet. Table 1 below demonstrates the facets of Hiebert et al.'s framework with some examples drawn from the recall and reflection journals produced by pre-service teachers participating in the current study.

Table 1

Facets of Hiebert et al.'s Framework

Skills	Criteria for accomplished enactment	Examples
1. Specifying the learning goals for the instructional episode (What are students supposed to learn?)	Specific content -related learning goals using language of the discipline	She asked some guided discussion questions to make students to guess the topic of the text.
2. Conducting empirical observation of learning (What did students learn?)	Using specific evidence revealing whether learning goals were achieved. Providing a wide range of student thinking/ responses and interpreting these responses.	The teacher, by asking some critical questions, fostered student- student interaction.
3. Constructing hypotheses about the effects of teaching on students' learning (How did teaching help (or not) students learn?)	Providing strong hypotheses about teaching about student learning using specific and detailed evidence. Appealing to well-supported principles and providing appropriately nuanced and complex rationale.	She showed some pictures to the class. Her goal was to make students realize that many of their classmates had different perspectives on the same situation.
4. Using analysis to propose improvements in teaching (How could teaching help students learn?).	Revising prior analysis of learning goals, student thinking, and the impact of teaching supported by principles of teaching and learning. Employing high-quality rationale for changes and suggesting specific opportunities to study student thinking.	Before moving to the next step, she should have made sure if students learnt the new vocabularies.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Table 2 indicates the frequency and percentage of each of the Hiebert et al.'s framework observed in the recall and reflection journals produced by pre-service teachers.

Table 2
The Results of the Analysis of the Recall and Reflection Journals

Skills	Frequency	Percentage
Skill1:Setting the learning goals without using the language of discipline	42	15.44%
Skill 2: Using specific evidence revealing whether learning goals were achieved? (What did students learn?)	17	6.25%
Skill 3: Constructing hypotheses about the effects of teaching on students' learning (How did teaching help (or not) students learn?	178	65.45%
Skill4:Using analysis to propose improvements in teaching (How could teaching help students learn?)	35	12.86%

As Table 2.indicates, the pre-service teachers' problems are concerned with Skills 2 and 4 more than skills 1 and 3.

4.2. Qualitative analysis of the recall and reflection journals

In this section, the way pre-service teachers dealt with each section of the reflection journals (Appendix) will be put into the spot light separately.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

4.2.1. Warm up

The analysis of this section indicated that pre-service teachers just described the range of activities conducted by their classmates to address their warm ups. These activities included playing videos related to the topic, asking interesting questions, starting with energy and involving the students, motivating everyone to participate, using songs, asking questions related to the lesson, encouraging students to talk about their own experience related to the topic, giving an overview of the lesson by showing some pictures to the class, dividing students into small groups and giving them some questions to answer, asking students to guess the topic of the lesson, using a game, and using proverbs as a point of departure. What seems to be striking in this section is that the language of discipline (i.e. technical terms related to language teaching) was not used for writing this section. However, 24of the pre-service teachers set the learning goal (part 1 of skill 1) as preparing the students for learning. Furthermore, they did not consider students in their reflections, and also the way that teaching facilitated students' learning (skills 2 and 3). Moreover, they did not propose any suggestions for improving their classmates' teaching (skill 4).

4.2.2. Pre-speaking activities

In this section, the majority of pre-service teachers merely sufficed to describe the range of activities conducted by their peers as pre-speaking tasks. They enumerated the following activities: Asking challenging questions, role playing, teaching vocabulary using pantomime, using pictures to introduce the topic, playing videos, writing the key words related to the topic on the board and asking some questions related to that topic, using jumbled sentences and asking students to reshuffle them, assigning

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

fill-in-the-blank tasks and using power point slides to introduce the topic. For writing this section, similar to the above one, no one used the language of discipline, and 7 of them mentioned preparing the students for the lesson as the learning goal of the teaching. They also ignored the students and what they learnt from pre-speaking activities (skill 2). However, 50 of them constructed hypotheses about the effects of teaching on students learning. For instance, one of them wrote, "the use of fill-in-the blanks could have exposed the students to the new vocabulary of the text." and "teaching vocabulary with the aid of pantomime could help the students remember the meaning of the new words easily." In this section, 12 of the pre-service teachers used skill 4(i.e. proposing suggestions for improving their classmates' teaching). For instance, one of them wrote: "when asking students to reshuffle the order of the words, it was better that he would have called the name of the students one by one rather than addressing the whole class".

4.2.3 Asking critical questions

For this section, the pre-service teachers were asked if they had believed that the teacher asked critical questions, they should have written down what they meant by critical questions. They included the following reasons for considering a question as critical: questions that involve inference, questions whose answer is not yes or no, and problem-solving questions (for instance, the teacher described a situation and asked the students what they will do in that situation. In one case, the teacher showed the picture of a weird man, standing amid the road asking for help. She asked students if they would have helped him if they were driving in that road.), questions having information gap, questions asking students to evaluate a social belief, questions asking the students to predict the end result of something (for instance, in one case one of the pre-service teachers played a horror

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

video in which two children were left alone by their parents, suddenly a monster knocks at the door, the pre-service teacher paused the movie and asked her classmates to predict if the children will open the door or not.). For writing this part, as the previous ones, pre-service teachers did not use the language of discipline, but 11 of them wrote that the goal of asking critical questions was to engage the students and motivate them to participate in classroom activities. In 13 cases, they wrote about the students (skill 2).One of them wrote: He asked critical questions, the students learnt vocabulary through answering these critical questions (skill2), these critical questions sparked student-student interactions (skill3).It is noteworthy that 50 of the pre-service teachers used skill 3 in their writings. As for skill 4, 13 of the pre-service teachers suggested ways to make critical questions. For instance, one of them wrote, if I were in my classmates' shoes, I would have removed the names of the participants in the dialogue and would have asked students to guess which one was male and which one was female, and would have asked them to account for their answers.

4.2. 4. Teaching new vocabulary

For reflecting on this part, the pre-service teachers avoided using the language of discipline. Only 2 of them focused on what students learnt (skill2). One of them wrote: She taught the vocabulary through playing a video; therefore, students were able to use the learnt vocabularies in context. 48 of them included skill 3(constructing hypotheses about the effects of teaching on students' learning) in their recall and reflection journals. One of them pointed out that "using games increased motivation in classroom". Only 5 of them used skill 4 (suggestions for improving teaching). One of them wrote "she should have evaluated if students learnt vocabularies or not."

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

4.2.5. Feedback

In this section again, recall and reflection journals lacked the language of discipline. They had simply written that "she provided feedback." Only in one case, one of the pre-service teachers commented that "since she provided feedback using gestures, the student self-corrected his mistake."(skill2). And 22 of them included skill 3 in their reflections. For example, "providing feedback through gestures reduced the students' anxiety." For this section, no one incorporated skill4 in his/her reflection journal.

4.2.6. Using collaborative tasks

Since the majority of the pre-service teachers had not used collaborative tasks in their teaching practices, pre-service teachers did not write any comment for this section in their journals. Only one of the pre-service teachers used collaborative tasks. She gave a pack of chewing gum to one group of students and a toothpaste to another group. She asked them to make two advertisements for each of them. For evaluating this section, only 1 person used skill 2: "By using the collaborative task, students were motivated to participate in classroom activities." Five participants used skill 3. One of them wrote: She asked a group of students to make an ad for a pack of chewing gum and another group to make an advertisement for a toothpaste. In this manner, she aimed to familiarize the students with the language of advertisements" (skill 3). None of the participants provided any suggestions for improving this part (skill 4).

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

4.2.7. Using fine arts, body language, teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction and creativity in teaching and teacher's proficiency

None of the skills in Hieberts et al.'s framework was observed in these sections of the participants' recall and reflection journals. Participants simply wrote that "she used body language" or "she was creative".

5. Discussion

Helping pre-service teachers to develop effective reflective discourse is one of the objectives of the practicum course. Recent studies (e.g. Chung & van Es, 2014; Luk, 2008) pointed to the need for developing a systematic method for writing reflection journals and exposing pre-service teachers to "the norms and dominant frames of mind of their discourse community" (Akbari, 2007, p. 204). One of the tools used to help pre-service teachers to develop reflective ability is to ask them to submit reflective journals to evaluate their peers' teaching practices in the practicum course (Boud, 2001; Tsui, 2003). Scholars advocating the need for assessing reflections believe that providing assessment criteria enhances pre-service teachers' awareness of what makes effective reflective practices (Luk, 2008). Recall and reflection journals are useful in a sense that they make clear the goal of the teaching activity and provide a basis for comparison and critique (Mitchel, 1996).

In view of these facts, the current study aimed to assess the quality of recall and reflection journals produced by pre-service teachers in EFL practicum courses. While Luk (2008) believes that "high-quality reflections are expected to be dialogic and critical rather than simply descriptive" (p.626), most of the recall and reflection journals produced by the participants in this study were descriptive and affective rather than analytic. To shed some light on this issue, some of the sentences written by

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

participants demonstrating descriptive and affective style of writing are as follows: "Her warm up was so good", "I liked her pre-speaking activities". "The questions she asked were good and enough" "The feedback was good." In these cases, the evaluation is based on what the evaluators think and know with respect to their conception of good practice. The findings of this study consistent with the findings of Yan and He (2010) and Luk (2008) point to the lack of critical analysis skill among the pre-service teachers. As Hyland (2000) asserts, drawing pre-service teachers' attention to the discoursal features of reflective genres may enable them to write critical reflective journals.

The analysis of pre-service teachers' recall and reflection journals indicate that, regarding the first skill of Hiebert et al.'s framework, students use specific, content-related learning goals, but they are not competent enough to use the language of the discipline. Only 15.44% of pre-service teachers set the learning goals in their recall and reflection journals; however, none of them used the current terminology of language teaching discipline and their relevant theories. To Segall (2001), in teacher education classes, practice should be integrated with theory. He goes on to say that since pre-service teachers are not asked to critically examine the underlying theories in educational practices, they fail to pay attention to the ways these theories impact their own education as students, and also the way they will structure their own classrooms in the future. For instance, one of the pre-service teachers evaluating one of her classmates teaching demonstrations wrote: "She showed some photos to the class and asked the students to name them". According to Hiebert et al.'s framework, the pre-service teacher did not use the language of the discipline in the description of her peers' teaching practice. To do so, for instance, she could have written "she stimulated the students' prior knowledge by showing them some photos related to the dialogue as her pre-speaking activity." One of the most critical

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

problems in teacher education classes is the gap between theory and practice. Incorporating educational theories into practice is considered as a dialectical process in which various agents and social factors play important roles. In other words, "strong social support is needed for teachers to fully incorporate theory into the context of their work in schools" (Stenberg, Rajala, & Hilppo, 2016, p.1) Despite the fact that pre-service teachers described the range of activities that their classmates employed in order to do their warm ups, they did not explain why they did so and even did not develop any hypotheses about the effects of warm ups on students. Furthermore, they did not provide any suggestion for improving their classmates' teachings. Some examples related to the warm up section of recall and reflection journals of students are as follows: "He played a video for his warm up.", "He asked some interesting questions for his warm up" "She used a song for her warm up." , and "He asked challenging questions for his warm up." According to Velandia (2008), the function of warm ups is to get students' attention and help them think in English. However, none of the recall and reflection journals contained this type of information and the way that each warm up won the attention of students. According to Hiebert et al. (2007), in order to acquire analytic expertise, pre-service teachers need to acquire the subject-matter knowledge of teaching which is needed to help pre-service teachers discover content learning goals for students and express ideas in a way which is acceptable in the discipline of language teaching. Schuman (1986) calls this kind of competence "pedagogical content knowledge" (p.48-49). The results of the current study show that pre-service teachers are incompetent in using pedagogical content knowledge for writing their recall and reflection journals.

Regarding pre-speaking activities, pre-service teachers simply described the activities their classmates used. For instance, "She asked questions as her pre-speaking task", "she used pictures to ask questions.", "She played a

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

video as her pre-speaking activity.", "He wrote the key words of the text on the board and asked students to explain them." Again these examples just describe the activities the pre-service teachers conducted which do not contain skills 2, 3 and 4. According to Luk (2008), specific moves in a reflective journal include "an analysis of the issue, an implementation of the actions to respond to the issue and a review of the effects of the actions followed by suggestions for alternatives." (p. 637). An example containing all these skills is the following one: "She played a video as her pre-speaking activity, this video which was related to the topic of the conversation stimulated the schema of the students about piercing (the title of the conversation) and helped them learn some new words in this relation. I think she could have asked some questions by pausing the video at some particular points to involve the students and let them process the information. "According to Luk (2008), "… quality reflections need to be well-supported with warrant (why?) and data (what?)" (p.637).

Regarding the sections related to using fine arts, body language, teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, creativity and teacher's proficiency, the pre-service teachers were not equipped with sufficient knowledge to write analytical reflections. In the case of creativity, many simply wrote that she was a creative teacher without explaining why and without using the terminology of the language teaching discipline. However, one case in which the writer accounted for his reflection is the following one: "She was creative because she asked the students to predict the ending of the story. Prediction is one of the features of communicative language teaching." The pre-service teachers were not familiar with different types of feedback in language teaching; therefore, no one mentioned the type of the feedback (explicit, implicit, recast…) their classmates used in their teaching demonstrations. It is noteworthy that all of these concepts (fine arts, collaboration, feedback,…) are recent emerging concepts in the remit of

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

teacher education, and as Kumaravadivelu (2012) states" … the post method perspective seeks to equip student teachers with the knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice."(p.10) However, pre-service teachers participating in this study rarely used these aspects of language teaching in their demonstrations and in case some of them did, others did not have any critical lens to write reflections on their performance professionally. The modular model of teacher education proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2012) includes "knowing, analyzing, recognizing, doing and seeing (KARDS)" (p. 17).

Another kind of competence required by pre-service teachers is "a collection of dispositions, knowledge and reasoning skills that enable developing and testing hypotheses about cause-effect relationships between teaching and learning."(Hiebert, et al., 2007, p. 49). This facet of Hiebert et al.'s framework was observed in only 6.25% of the recall and reflection journals produced by the pre-service teachers. In writing this facet, pre-service teachers are supposed to first specify the goal of teaching and then conduct empirical observations to collect evidence regarding students' learning. To acquire this skill, they should know what counts as evidence. This means that they should be able to decide not only what kind of student work to collect but also which aspect of this work reveals students' achievement of the learning goal. The following examples written by pre-service teachers in their recall and reflection journals can be representations of skill 2: "The students guessed the topic of conversation and got familiar with the topic of the text by the game that the teacher used at the beginning of the class ", or "The students learnt how to haggle in English through role plays". The analysis indicates that pre-service teachers should be taught that for writing recall and reflection journals, they need to assess the effectiveness of teaching by providing evidence. Studies in this relation (e.g.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Spillane & Jennings, 1997) indicate that teachers often analyze teaching demonstrations in terms of describing activities rather than anticipating change in students' thinking. In the examples cited above, the pre-service teachers described the change in students' behavior by stating the effects of using games, role-plays and making conversations. Prospective teachers are supposed to focus on students as learners rather than on themselves as teachers. Beginning teachers are expected to be conscious of their own performance. Attending to students' learning is motivated by paying attention to the effect of one's own teaching. Prospective teachers are expected to know that evidence on students' learning provides crucial information for improving their teaching (Hiebert et al., 2007).

The next kind of competence required by pre-service teachers to write their recall and reflection journals involves constructing hypotheses about the effect of teaching on students' learning. This skill involves making guesses about how a particular instance of teaching (task, question, activity, etc.) facilitates or inhibits a particular type of learning (How did teaching help (or not) students learn?). While skill 2 focuses on students' responses, skill 3 shifts to the teaching activities that facilitated these responses. According to Hiebert et al. (2007), hypotheses refer to tentative guesses about how the instructional event influenced the intended learning. For instance, "By asking students to make conversations, she fostered student-student interaction" and, "By asking questions related to the task, she helped students learn more vocabulary". The findings of the current study indicated that the pre-service teachers focused predominantly on teaching activities rather than students' learning since 65.45% of the recall and reflection journals contained this skill of reflection.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Another kind of competence necessary for pre-service teachers is using analysis to propose improvements in teaching (How could teaching more effectively help students learn?). Only 12.86% of the reflection journals contained this discourse feature of reflection. Some of the examples are as follows: "She should have made sure if the students learnt the new vocabulary.", "She should have improved her pronunciation.", and "It could have been better if he talked louder and smiled." The purpose of applying the previous three skills is to provide the information necessary to make evidence-based decisions about how to improve an instructional episode. This facet of the framework should also be taught to teacher educators. This facet of reflection is very important since by incorporating suggestions for alternative actions, pre-service teachers will demonstrate a kind of "anticipatory reflection" which provides evidence of constructing future planning on past experiences rather than just demonstrating retrospective remembering. Ignoring skill 4 in writing recall and reflection journals will limit the teachers to only finding justifications for their practices rather than thinking of new possibilities of teaching (Akbari, 2007).

Since the role of teachers has changed at a rapid tempo, pre-service teachers are supposed to be familiar with the features of effective reflective discourse. The role of teachers is no longer confined to consumer, receiver and transmitter of other peoples' knowledge; "they now need to be knowers, thinkers, leaders and change agents." Therefore, teacher educators are supposed to prepare teachers to "recognize and cope with the complexity of teaching, so they can participate in the educational setting in an increasingly competent way." (Lawson, Çakmak, Gündüz, & Busher, 2015, p. 2). Students' experiences of teaching and learning are shaped by what Lortie (1975) describes as "apprenticeship of observation." To this end, pre-service teachers are supposed to be familiar with discoursal features of high-quality reflections. High-quality reflections are supposed to be "dialogic and critical

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

rather than simply descriptive" (Luk, 2008, p. 626). As Luk (2008, p.637) states, we can observe the "emergence of an embryonic form of disciplinary discourse of reflections". Therefore, since writing is an important tool for evaluating the reflective skills of pre-service teachers, it is necessary to equip them with resources to write effective recall and reflection journals.

6. Conclusion

In spite of the fact that evaluation is an important part of practicum activity, teacher educators do not consider, question, or comprehend the overall purpose of what is being done. In view of this fact, the current study aimed to study the reflective discourse in recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers. The findings indicate that the recall and reflection journals written by pre-service teachers are predominantly descriptive and affective. Therefore, pre-service teachers should be trained to write critical recall and reflection journals since a critical component of pre-service teacher education involves acquiring tools to observe, interpret, and analyze teaching activities (Chung & van Es., 2014). To this end, the first step is to develop their capacity to observe skillfully and to think critically about students and their learning to consider what this tells them about teaching (Rodgers, 2002). As the results of this study indicate, this aspect of observing critically which concerns students' learning is the major problem of pre-service teachers. To train teachers who can challenge the status quo, teacher educators are supposed to afford them opportunities to question their experiences in practicum classes, "to ask why things are as they are, how they got to be that way, and imagine alternatives" (Segall, 2001, p. 225).

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

7. References

Akbari, R. (2007). Reflections on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in L2 teacher education. *System, 35*(2), 192-207.

Bezzina, C., & Michalak, J. (2009). Preparing student teachers for teaching practicum. In A. Swennen, & M. van der Klink (Eds.), *Becoming a teacher educator* (pp. 163-171). Netherlands: Springer.

Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. In L. M. English, & M. A. Gillen (Eds.), *Promoting journal writing in adult education: New directions in adult and continuing education.* (pp. 9–18). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Bullough, R., & Gitlin A. (1994). *Becoming a student of teaching Methodologies for exploring self and school context.* New York, NY: Garland publications.

Brumfit, C. J. (1997). The teacher as educational linguist. In L. van Lier and D. Corson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education*. The Hague: Kluwer.

Chung, H. Q., & van Es, E. A. (2014). Pre-service teachers' use of tools to systematically analyze teaching and learning. *Teachers and Teaching, 20*(2), 113-135.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teacher's College Record,103,* 1013-1055.

Gee, J. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. London: Taylor &Francis.

Hedgcock, J. S. (2002). Towards a socioliterate approach to second language teacher. *The Modern Language Journal , 86,* 299-317.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Hiebert, J., & Stigler, J. W. (2000). A proposal for improving classroom teaching: Lessons from the TIMSS video study. *The Elementary School Journal*, *101*(1), 3-20.

Hiebert, J., Morris, A. K., Berk, D., & Jansen, A. (2007). Preparing teachers to learn from teaching. *Journal of teacher education*, *58*(1), 47-61.

Hodge, S.R., R. Davis, R. Woodward, & C. Sherrill (2002). Comparison of practicum types in changing preservice teachers' attitudes and perceived competence. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, 19,* 155-71.

Hyland, K. (2000). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. London: Longman.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012). *Language teacher education for a global Society: A modular model for knowing, analyzing, recognizing, doing, and seeing*. New York: Routledge.

Lawson, T., Çakmak, M., Gündüz, M., & Busher, H. (2015). Research on teaching practicum–a systematic review. *European journal of teacher education*, *38*(3), 392-407.

Leung, C. (2009). Second Language Teacher Professionalism- Whose agenda? In A. Burns, & J. C. Richards (Eds.). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 48–58.

Liu, X., & Xu, B. (2007). Urgent issues in teaching practice. *Education and Profession* 5: 164-165.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Luk, J. (2008). Assessing teaching practicum reflections: Distinguishing discourse features of the "high" and "low" grade reports. *System, 36*(4), 624-641.

Mitchell, J. M. (1996). Developing reflective teaching: Negotiation in the practicum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *24*(1), 47-61.

Munby, H., T. Russell, & Martin, A. K. (2001). Teachers' knowledge and how it develops. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook for Research on Teaching* (pp.877-904). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

Philipson, R. (1992). ELT: The native speaker's burden? *English Language Teaching Journal*. *46*(1), 12-18.

Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC, 39*(2), 158-177.

Rodgers, C. R. (2002). Seeing student learning: Teacher change and the role of reflection. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*, 230-253.

Schuman, L. (1986). *Plans and situated actions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University.

Segall, A. (2001). Re-thinking theory and practice in the preservice teacher education classroom: Teaching to learn from learning to teach. *Teaching Education*, *12*(2), 225-242.

Singh, G., & Richards, J. C. (2006). Teaching and learning in the language teacher education course room: A critical sociocultural perspective. *RELC*, *37*(2), 149-175.

Smith, K., & Lev-Ari, L. (2005). The place of practicum in pre-service teacher education: The voice of the students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *33*(3), 289-302.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Smith, K., & Snoek, M. (1996, September). *Dutch and Israel student teachers' views on their future role as teachers.* Paper presented to the Annual Association of Teacher Education in Europe, at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland.

Spillane, J. P., & Jennings, N. E. (1997). Aligned instructional policy and ambitious pedagogy: Exploring instructional reform from the classroom perspective. *Teachers College Record*, *98*(3), 449-481.

Star, J. R., & Strickland, S. K. (2008). Learning to observe: Using video to improve preservice mathematics teachers' ability to notice. *Journal of mathematics teacher education*, *11*(2), 107-125.

Stenberg, K. Rajala, A., & Hilppo, J. (2016). Fostering theory-practice reflection in teaching practicums. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 44*(5), 470-485.

Stürmer, K., Könings, K. D., & Seidel, T. (2013). Declarative knowledge and professional vision in teacher education: Effect of courses in teaching and learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *83*(3), 467-483.

Ten Dam, G. T., & Blom, S. (2006). Learning through participation. The potential of school-based teacher education for developing a professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*(6), 647-660.

Trent, J. (2013). From learner to teacher: Practice, language, and identity *in a teaching practicum. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 41* (4), 426-440.

Tsui, A. (2003). *Understanding expertise in teaching: Case studies of second language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]

Valli, L. (1997). Listening to other voices: A description of teacher reflection in the United States. *Peabody journal of Education, 72*(1), 67-8

Velandia, R. (2008). The Role of Warming Up Activities in Adolescent Students' Involvement during the English Class, *Profile,10* , 9-26

Wang, X., & Xu, Z. (2008). Reflections on the teaching practicum. *Journal of History of the Chinese Communist Party*, *11*(1), 8-15.

Yan, C., & He, C. (2010). Transforming the existing model of teaching practicum: a study of Chinese EFL student teachers' perceptions. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *36*(1), 57-73.

Zhu, X. (2011). Student teachers' reflection during practicum: Plenty on action, few in action. *Reflective Practice*, *12*(6), 763-775.

Appendix

Table3

Sample of reflection journal given to pre-service teachers

Warm up	Using collaborative tasks
Pre-speaking activities	Teacher-student interaction
Asking critical questions	Student-student interaction
Teaching new vocabulary	Creativity in teaching
Feedback	Teacher's proficiency
Post-speaking activities	

Note on Contributor:

Katayoon Afzali is assistant professor in applied linguistics. She is currently teaching English at B.A, M.A, and Ph.D. levels at Sheikhbahaee University. Her areas of research include discourse analysis and translation studies.

[Downloaded from ndea10.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-06]