

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER'S ODYSSEY AND SELF-REFLECTION ON TEACHING WRITING IN ONLINE CLASS

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Abstract: *The present paper endeavors self-contemplation on the implementation of teaching strategies in writing class as a pre-service teacher. The discussion imbricates the online classroom operation and the introspection undertaking the practice of teaching narrative text for the first semester students. In the act of self-retrospection, the paper starts with the rationale for writing the present paper. The session portrays the classroom activities by outlining the teaching agenda and personal reflection of the teaching routine. The paper aims to provide the teaching implications through teaching strategy especially in the online teaching context.*

Keywords: *pre-service teacher, teaching writing, online class, self-reflection, self-awareness*

INTRODUCTION

The self-reflective thinking of the teaching implementation contributes to the development of pre-service teacher professional competence. The significance of reflective thinking facilitates observing an event, experience, or action in the past. It is an essential facet to analyze past events to obtain insights about future behavior (Shavit and Moshe, 2018). In line with this, Dewey (1933) asserted that some conclusions and solutions of some state of doubt or difficulty are issued from reflective thinking. The evaluation covers planning and implementing the classroom practices to stabilize the strong points and strengthen the weak points.

Self-reflective thinking makes up the pre-service teacher's professional competence as well as professional vision. Employing self-reflective thinking, professional competencies such as values, motivation, self-regulation skills, beliefs, and particular knowledge can be instilled (Baumeret & Kunter, 2006). Certainly, those elements are enacted when the pre-service teacher obtains the opportunity to reflect on her/his cognitive, motivational, and affective disposition as part of the requirements to be a professional teacher. Moreover, through self-reflection, the pre-service teacher learns mediating situation-specific skills or well known as professional vision, such as interpretation, perception or decision making to use the knowledge of teaching accordingly. Certainly, those skills are deeply rooted in the pre-service teacher as they evaluate her/him with the help of self-reflective thinking.

As a pre-service teacher, the establishment of professional expertise is on the way of the construction. As they are on the way to balancing the theoretical and practical knowledge, connecting the information to achieve effectively complex and challenging tasks in teaching is considered a novice or starter. The implementation of the teaching class tends to involve more intuition rather than critical thinking process. Pre-service teacher is occupied with pedagogical competence and expected to apply it in the classroom setting, nevertheless, reflecting my point of view, scant experience on the real teaching practice, and adverse affective factors like nervousness and over thinking head to the 'imperfect' teaching implementation. Thus, the sharing between 'older' and 'newer' teacher is necessarily reinforced to set up personal professional development. Since I have limited opportunity to have teaching practice in a classroom, I have considered this as a luxury to reflect on my teaching experience.

Despite the fact that there is a tendency of researchers to involve subjects other than the researchers themselves (Basthomi, 2006), through the medium of narrative inquiry, I am able to be a potential research subject to create my own narrative covering my experience and self-reflective result on my teaching completely. Also, I am able to deplete my 'agency' if I compare to the result of other researchers' studies while asking the same questions for me since I concurrently involve as the subject and researcher at the same time.

Another personal account undergirding the present paper was the shift of offline class to online

that rushes teachers to adapt their teaching practice. Previous studies have been conducted to investigate teaching problems during the online class (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guardia & Koole, 2020; Baldwin, Ching, Hsu, 2018) and seminars and workshop on teaching and instructional media to help teachers tackle the challenges. This fact shows that the shift of the online class creates other challenges in teaching. This issue becomes more problematic for me as a pre-service teacher. I have to link chunks of information on the way to teach the students, the way to use media effectively, and the way to control students in the distance under the context of the writing process (since I was in charge in writing class). On my humble thought, other pre-service teachers or candidates might find or have found the same problem, so they need another perspective and experience from the pre-service teachers who had done their teaching practice so they can learn from it and do a better teaching practice.

These aforementioned rationales put me into the facet to share experience of mine in teaching writing for the first semester in online class. The reflection on my teaching also aims to bestow insights to the next pre-service and or teachers to meet the intended goals and improve teaching skills. Similarly, Aldahmash, Al-Shamrani, Almufti (2017) claimed that the systematic self-reflection on the knowledge and action helps transferring the knowledge on the program of teacher education to the real class practice. As the results, there will be increasing awareness of what and how to study and to be emerged.

The similar retrospection on the teaching experience discussion has been conducted by Rohmah (2017). Using narrative inquiry, she scrutinized EFL three university teachers' experience in teaching and two students' experience in learning through collaborative learning. While she put others as the research subject, I positioned myself as the subject of the research. Therefore, the present paper is the same on the methodology but different in terms of the subject option.

METHOD

The present paper used narrative inquiry as the interpretative device to narrate my teaching experience and discover teaching principles of my self-reflective thinking. As Creswell (2012) mentioned that the design focuses on studying single person and gathering data through stories, in this paper, I presented the teaching experience of each meeting in the form of narration of the teaching practice in the classroom. The total meeting of my practicum is six meetings. Two meetings before the teaching practicum started were allocated to do sit-in activity in all classes of the supervisor-teacher's class (meeting 4) and in the assigned class (meeting 5). A week after the sit-in activity, in meeting 6, I started the teaching practicum.

I taught Intensive Course Writing for the first semester students in Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang. The course has compulsory course status with 2 credit or 100 minutes twice a week. The course attempts to provide students with various ability to write some types of paragraphs, comprising narrative, descriptive, logical division of ideas paragraph, process, comparison-contrast, and cause-effect paragraphs. The concerns of the paragraph writing are on the topic sentence identification, paragraph structure, unity and coherence, and types of supports. As I started in meeting 6, the material covered is narrative text, and the topic would be finished in meeting 11. As I assigned in those meetings, the meetings are only focused on the following Program Learning Outcome (PLO) and Course Learning outcome (CLO). The PLO was specified into occupying students *to apply the theories of writing paragraph to produce an 8 – 10 sentences of coherent narrative paragraph*. Also, the CLO was specified into foundational knowledge and skills that is communicate ideas effectively and appropriately in written forms both in academic and non-academic contexts and Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills that demonstrate creative-critical thinking and innovation in social and academic lives.

In order to recall the whole teaching implementation starting form 16 October 2020 to 6 November 2020 comprehensively, I consulted to WhatsApp group chats as the class was mostly conducted via WhatsApp. I also referred to the lesson plans used during the teaching practicum.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since the paper focused on narrating my teaching implementation in 6 meetings in Intensive

Course Writing class, the organization of this part started from narrating teaching agenda for each meeting then continued with the self-reflection of the implementation.

Meeting Agenda

As the narrative text is taught within the six meetings, I was in charge of those by doing some teaching activities. The details of each meeting will be specified in the following sub-discussion.

1. Meeting one (16 October 2020)

Since the fifth meeting was the first meeting of my teaching practicum, the activities in the classroom were started by the self-introduction in zoom for 20 minutes, and then they were continued by pre-teaching. In the pre-teaching, I asked students' experience relating to the narrative text. In this icebreaking, some questions were asked, such as their activities during the pandemic that led to hobbies like reading books, comics, or novels.

The activities were continued by whilst activities on identifying the stories that students have read and the characteristics of the narrative text such as the generic structure, time order signals. The activity was continued by identifying and discussing time order signals in the story I had given. After the identification, I checked my student's understanding by asking them made a sentence using the time order signals and discussed the incorrect sentences made. After this activity, the students finished some practices given, checked the answers, and discussed incorrect answers until the end of the meeting. This phase was conducted in the WhatsApp group. In the post-teaching, I asked the students to summarize what they have learned on that day.

2. Meeting two (20 October 2020)

Meeting two was started by asking the students two activities they have done that morning. This question triggered them to make two sentences using the past tense and connector.

The activity was continued by showing two sentences as examples of simple and compound sentences. After comparing the two sentences, I explained more the difference between the two types of sentences and the function of the conjunctions in those sentences. After the explanation session, I asked the students to do some practices and discuss the answers. The last topic in that meeting is three comma rules. After the discussion of the topic, the students did the practices and discussed the answers.

The post-teaching was conducted by posting some memes I found on the internet and asked the students what they have learned that day and the kind of story for the next meeting. All the activities were conducted in the WhatsApp group.

3. Meeting three (23 October 2020)

Meeting three was focused on the initial writing process by free writing and drafting. Before the main activity started, I posted a story to get the idea the way how authors attract readers' attention, especially in inserting the moral of the story in a narrative text. After discussing it, I asked the students a memorable experience. After that, I asked the students to do free writing, outlining, and brainstorming the ideas they would write. The activities were moved to Padlet. After the students finished writing, I started giving them feedback. The discussion on their writing continued in the Padlet by giving and doing some revision.

4. Meeting four (27 October 2020)

Meeting four was dedicated to developing the outline into the first draft. Like the previous meeting, I posted two stories to be compared to find other characteristics of a good story, especially in the way how to tell the story.

Before they started writing, I provided some checklists and rubrics to keep students on the right track and achieved the expectation of readers. Then, the students started writing until the end of the meeting. At the end of the meeting, the students submitted Draft 1 through Google form, and I turned it on the next meeting after the peer feedback.

5. Meeting five (03 November 2020)

The meeting was allocated to do self-assessment, peer-assessment, teacher-assessment, and revision based on those feedbacks. I distributed Google form to students to give a score to their friends' works and submitted their final draft. After the draft has been submitted, I calculated the mean of the scores and submitted the students' writing scores to the lecturer.

6. Meeting 6 (06 November 2020)

The last meeting was used to do a short quiz. The short quiz covered the material taught, especially for editing and developing narrative text. I distributed the quiz in the WhatsApp group since the students also had a seminar from the faculty; I let them turn in at 3 p.m. through Google form.

Reflection and Teaching Implication

After doing this teaching practicum I got some ideas that might be beneficial for the improvement and future teaching ability.

a. Teacher's talk

From the first meeting, I learned that knowing students is important as the basis of the next activities. For example, in the first meeting, I used the term "generic structure" to ask the way how an author narrates the story, but the students reluctantly answered my question. It seemed that they still did not understand the terms (or they might forget although the term is commonly used in senior high school). After the class, the lecturer who observed my teaching suggested that I should use another way to ask the previous question, like "What happens at the beginning of the story, in the middle, and the end?" or "What is the conflict?" By doing so, the students will easily understand the teachers' question. Therefore, the teacher's talk is important to elicit students' comprehension.

Teale (2003) stated that appropriate questions take a big role in learning. Teale suggested that the questions impact on the outcomes to the type and amount of discussion in the classroom. It determines the level of engagement with classroom activities. For that reason, the questions should be in students' 'zone of proximal development' in order to stand of the students' current level and upgrade their level of cognitive challenge concurrently (Danis, Beenard, & Leproux 2000).

In addition to the acceptable questions, the teacher should scrutinize the simplicity of the direction while giving tasks in order to avoid misunderstanding (Sowell, 2017). The simplicity and clarity of the direction help the students to do what supposed to do and achieve expected goals. The teacher can use definition, synonym or restatement of the words in the direction, or even using first language. Ur (1996) and Cook (2016) claimed that some use of first language is necessary to be the bridge of the direction and students' understanding, so then the students are able to grasp the whole direction inasmuch as instruction and the delivery determine whether a lesson is success or failed (Scrivener, 2011). Therefore, the skill of explaining briefly and concisely should be possessed by the teacher as it is one criterion of good teacher (Ur, 1996).

Considering the importance of those two skills, asking question and giving direction, I suggest to the pre-service teachers to practice doing teachers' talk more because in order to learn English, students need to understand and respond to the medium of instruction well.

b. Contextualized and authentic material

The aspects I learned from the second meeting were contextualizing material and making it as close as possible to students' life is important. Therefore, I asked what they had done before the class to invite students using the past tense. By doing this, I got many more responses from the students to write and apply the theory they got, and I effectively teach them and get closer to them as the bonus (to build rapport). I also used memes relating to the topic as they are now close to the stuff. This idea also implies that using simple yet authentic media is beneficial for teachers. No need for complicated tools or applications, but simplicity and authenticity are required in teaching. Therefore, I consider that the second meeting was better than the first one.

Contextualized and authentic materials help students utilize the language in and out of the classroom (Kessler, 2018). The types of the materials offer meaningful and practice for the students that lead to the engaging experience for students. When the students are engaged in language learning, they are not reluctant to use the language extensively. Thus, the substance of language learning is not limited to the learning the language, but also use the language as a means of communication. In short, the contextualized and authentic materials are used to optimize the language learning. As I observed in my class when I contextualized the materials, I got more response from the students. It implies that the characteristics are able to boost students' motivation and engagement. Similarly, Dornyei (2001) argued that authentic context impacts on students' motivation as the key of success.

Another form to boost students' motivation in learning is the use of meme as I did in my teaching practicum. Current previous studies found that memes can be beneficial for students' learning. Han (2019) found that the meme encourages the students to build semiotic modes that are integrated with social intercultural modality to establish meaning. Han also mentioned that memes become a recreational social activity and portrayal of high linguistic and pragmatic proficiency. The same result also shows by Purnama, Desiarti, Aflahah, Ekaningrum (2017)

In the era of online class, the opportunity to gain variety of learning context is bigger. Countless websites, social media platforms, gaming platforms, collaborative- telecollaborative-based projects, and authentic language practice being recorded across the internet to obtain luxury to explore genre, register, and culturally specific and appropriate interaction (Kessler, 2018). However, before using those tools, I suggest to consider the practicality and the emerge of the tools. When the teachers can delivery materials clearly using a simple tool, sophisticated tools is not needed because when they and their students are not familiar with the tool, another chaos will occur. In other words, the main concern of teaching is students' learning not teachers' teaching.

c. Discovery learning and text modeling

The valuable aspect that I learned in the third meeting is exposure important for the students. Thus, I provided them with texts to model the text and to identify good characteristics of narrative text. Besides I also invite them to discover the characteristics on their own using triggering questions instead of providing them the list of the characteristics directly. By doing so, I encouraged my students to think-high order thinking on what they have and applied the theory to their writing.

Through the application of discovery learning, the students can be actively involved in the learning. It helps the students ask questions, formulate tentative answers, and generate particular subject matter from practical examples or experiences. By doing so, the students can make their decision on what, how, and when something should be learned and lead to the longer retention in remembering the information compared to direct teaching (Balim, 2009). To this end, the students will engage in their learning and trigger them to think of the general topic's general principles. Thus, the ability to do high order thinking can be realized in classroom practice. Additionally, previous researchers have proven that discovery learning enhances students' skills and attitudes in their learning (Ananta, 2016; Irmayanti, 2015; Prawerti, 2014).

Regarding to the enhancing students' ability in writing narrative text, I also found the advantageous of text modeling. Through the medium of text modeling, I assist the students in tackling new and unfamiliar genre. Peloghitis & Ferreira (2018) stated that text model provides a concrete example of a genre covering the rhetorical structures, conventions, and organizational features, so then they can produce the expected standard text based on teachers' expectation.

Telling students what they have to achieve is essential. I did this by providing students with checklists and rubrics to make them aware of the quality of their writing. I consider giving before writing draft 1 because I need my students to reflect on "Is my title/story valuable/interesting" by doing this, I expect students to write interesting stories. Also, using the checklists and rubrics, the students can do their best to achieve the high quality to meet readers' expectations.

d. Learning objectives

Telling the students of the expected criteria of learning success lead them to devote more effort in learning. Everette (2017) mentioned that it helps the students to focus on the purpose and achieve the goals and led to the discussion on how to achieve the goals. Similarly, Mahajan & Singh (2017) asserted that telling students on the objectives and standard criteria helps them to navigate their effort in learning on what, when, and how to achieve the goal. Once the students know how the minimum standard of success, they can evaluate the progress of their works whether it is moving in the right direction or not. Thereupon the students' agency increases. Specifically, in writing, rubrics can be utilized as the way to tell students of the standard criteria of particular tasks.

e. The use of peer- and teacher-feedback

I learned some aspects of meeting five. First, the students commonly focus on how interesting the story and the clarity of the story. However, most of the students commented on the vocabulary, capitalization, and grammar. Regarding to the students' attitude and belief on the usefulness of peer-feedback is considerably different. In line with this, Hassan & Dzakaria (2019) found that although most of the students have relatively positive attitude on the peer-feedback, their belief of the correctness on their feedback is considerably moderate to low, thus they need teachers' feedback. They were not confident of their criticisms whether they were correct or not. This case relates to the issue of students' language proficiency and their belief on others.

In terms of the usefulness of the peer-feedback, students have different perspectives on it. The belief ranges from significantly helpful to less helpful. The different perspectives are based on some factors including the background knowledge on the topic being written, the more familiar the topic, the more critical and comprehensive the feedback will be; proficiency level; students' attitudes toward their belief on the usefulness of peer-assessment; time allotment; in doing peer-assessment; and interpersonal relationship among the students (Tyas & Safitri, 2019; Chong, 2018).

The first question asked how significant their peer helps to improve their draft. Generally saying, the students get help from their peer-feedback. However, the level of significance was different. Some of the students feel that it is significantly helpful since they can get and spotted their errors and find another perspective, namely reader perspective. Meanwhile, some students did not think that it was helpful when their peer only focuses on correcting their grammar and vocabulary.

The second question was about their concern while giving feedback. The students responded that they commonly give feedback on their grammar and little attention to punctuation and vocabulary, and rarely on the content. This idea brings me to the understanding that the teacher should give feedback more on the other issues, such as content, organization, and diction. In line with this, the students also suggest that the teacher should give them more models of the text to acquaintance them with the text genre and give feedback on their draft.

CONCLUSIONS

My overall reflection on my teaching are teacher's talk, knowing students on their language proficiency or learning strategy, contextualized authentic material with high order thinking, providing standard on what others expect, discovery learning and modeling of the text, and feedbacks are important in teaching writing. Additionally, I found that narrative text can be used as an alternative pathway to teaching students to reflect on what they have through to find the moral values of their experience. In other words, teachers teach prevalent values (affective aspect) that students experienced through narrative text.

If I could suggest the next pre-service teachers, I would like to recommend them to provide more stories for them to build their ideas and imagination and spark them with the use of narrative text in real life and how close it is with their daily life. Also, I would suggest them to ask students' report on how many stories they read within a week and share with the class, so they are exposed to writing narrative text and reading activity as well.

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