

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study examined the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers regarding reflective teaching journal writing during field teaching practice at an Islamic higher education institution in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. The background, scope, research question, and purpose of this study are discussed herein, as well as the significance of the study and the definitions of the key terms used.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reflective journal writing has been utilized in pedagogical practices for a long time in order to enhance students' academic awareness, learning attitudes and creativity. This hands-on demand for reflective journal writing is grounded on two major principles. Firstly, EFL university students are motivated to cultivate their writing skills which consists of their capacity to compose texts (McIntosh et al., 2017), the aptitude to portray linguistically or culturally enriched writing frameworks, and the capability to identify thematic topics. Secondly, reflective journal writing aids students in developing their self-awareness, comprehension of issues, and reasoning abilities (Abednia et al., 2013). This is based on the power of reflection, imagination, and interpretation (Lindsay, 2011). In this manner, reflective journal writing is gaining more popularity as a means of tackling both writing competence and its substantial impacts on cognitive domains such as powerful reflections, interpretation, and other self-inquiry matters.

In EFL contexts, reflective journal writing necessitates a pedagogical approach that embodies teaching attitudes, teaching awareness (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018), and other accepted norms of writing (McIntosh et al., 2017). Further, reflective journal writing has potential cross-cultural implications (Bailes et al., 2010), which lead to a fundamental advancement of learning by providing insight into higher education contexts (Power, 2017).

Reflective journal writing has been identified as a potential tool to facilitate reflections and allow students to incorporate background materials relevant to their individual learning experiences (Hashemi & Mirzaei, 2015). It is believed to have the capacity to bridge the divide between existing and new knowledge. As a learning technique, writing a reflective journal has been found to encourage critical thinking (Ebadi & Rahimi, 2018), cognitive task complexity (Johnson, 2017), metacognition, self-efficacy (Zhang, 2016; Zhenget et al., 2018) and self-awareness in the pursuit of knowledge. Additionally, the development of self-exploration and problem-solving skills can enable self-directed learning to meet the requirements of writing competence in the 21st century.

The background knowledge of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students may enable them to produce adequate self-reflection (Yang, 2010) and self-expression (Roesler, 2020) when writing reflective journals. However, a growing concern for these students lies in the requirement for multiple revisions based on the comments provided by lecturers. In order to effectively address this concern, EFL students must be supported in developing evidence-based data, language awareness, self-editing, and peer-correcting skills (Balderaset &

Cuamatzi, 2018; Hajimohammadi & Mukundan, 2011). Guidance is essential to ensure these skills are appropriately handled.

The importance of practical experience has been recognized as a critical facet of teacher education programs (Farrell, 2008). Teaching practice is seen as the main source of knowledge for pre-service teachers, allowing them to link the didactic content of the program with their teaching experiences (Salazar & McCluskey, 2017). Moreover, teaching practice provides a platform for reflective practice, wherein teachers are able to take stock of the effects of their classroom actions and evaluate student learning (Debreli, 2016). This reflection is distinct from reflection-in-action in that it is a retrospective process rather than an intervention occurring in the moment (Ghassoub Mustafa, 2020). Teacher reflection is deemed necessary for addressing the intricate issues associated with classroom instruction (Spalding & Wilson, 2002).

The teaching profession is crucial for upholding educational standards (Day, 2004, p. 14). In this era of globalization, teachers must not only be knowledge transfer agents but also problem solvers. Pre-service teacher training is a significant milestone for university students to gain involvement in current teaching practice (Frase-Seeto, 2013).

Classroom management skills are essential for EFL pre-service teachers to raise teacher quality and enhance teacher preparation programs (Freeman, 2014). Through teaching practice sessions, pre-service teachers are able to plan, teach and reflect on their teaching practice in order to develop subject matter, pedagogical

and personal competence. As teacher educators are aware, individuals may choose not to engage in reflection, consciously avoiding to ‘actively dedicate time and effort’ (Gelter, 2003, p. 337) to its assessment and understanding.

Reflection has become an essential requirement for pre-service teachers due to its potential to lead to professional growth and expertise in teaching (Farrell, 2010). It is a process through which teachers can review their past teaching practice, examine their real classroom practice, and suggest better practices for further development (Spalding & Wilson, 2002).

Reflection engages pre-service teachers' practical theory and values life experiences, personal beliefs, and emotional responses that shape and inform their understanding of teaching and learning (Francis, 1995; Mills & Satterthwait, 2000; van Halen Faber, 1997). This cyclical critical strategy for assessing the effectiveness of teaching is a means for heightening teaching professional development. Thus, pre-service teachers must reflect on every teaching activity in the classroom in order to review, describe, analyze and evaluate the situation to gain fresh reflective ideas for improving future practices.

By engaging in reflective teaching, teachers must strive to exhibit open-mindedness, responsibility, and commitment. Liu and Zhang (2014) argued that this type of teaching allows teachers to re-evaluate their roles, transitioning from knowledge transmitters to multi-role educators. Moreover, reflective teaching has the potential to cultivate creative and innovative approaches to classroom and

school situations, in turn, enhancing learning opportunities for students. It further facilitates the development of an informed practice on the part of the teacher.

Despite previous studies conducted on the subject of reflective teaching journal writing, there is a lack of clear evidence regarding EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of such journals, particularly those used in teaching practice. Therefore, this study will focus on exploring EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of reflective teaching journal writing in teaching practice. The results of this study are anticipated to provide an overview of the emotions, feelings, and perceptions of pre-service teachers during teaching practice. This study seeks to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of reflective teaching, as well as their reflective practice.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study focused on the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers regarding reflective teaching journal writing while they participated in a field teaching program.

1.3 Research Question

The researcher formulated the research question *“What are EFL Pre-Service Teachers’ Perceptions of Reflective Teaching Journal Writing during Field Teaching Practice?”* in order to investigate the focus of the study.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to investigate the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers regarding reflective teaching journal writing during their field teaching practice. The rationale for this study is based on the research background.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study suggest that EFL pre-service teachers perceive that their reflective teaching practice could contribute to the educational field, particularly to students in English Education departments. Specifically, they identified two ways to enhance reflective teaching practice: understanding how to reflect on their teaching practice, and gaining an effective working style, good time management, and staying on track by taking the time to plan. Reflective teaching is a critical component of both the pre and in-service levels of teaching. Coaching and peer involvement are two elements of reflective practice often found at the pre-service level. Oianen (2015) studied how student teachers develop the competencies necessary for reflective teaching during their field experiences and looked into the teacher educator's role as a coach.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined: EFL Pre-Service Teacher, Teachers' Perception, Reflective Teaching Journal, and Field Teaching Practice.

- An EFL Pre-Service Teacher is a student who is learning English in a non-English speaking country.
- Teachers' Perception refers to the mental images and ideas that teachers have about their professional activities and students, which are shaped by their past knowledge and experiences and have an impact on their professional behavior.
- A Reflective Teaching Journal is a useful instructional tool that can be used by novice, experienced, or veteran teachers to organize, collect, and examine their thoughts on their teaching performance and assess their overall teaching efficiency through classroom or audience observation and reflection.
- Field Teaching Practice is an essential part of any teacher training program, as it gives pre-service teachers experience in the teaching and learning environment.

