

# **Raising Students' Awareness on Their Teaching Performance through Reflective Teaching**

*Yenni Rozimela*  
y\_mela@yahoo.com  
Universitas Negeri Padang

## **Abstract**

This article presents a part of the results of a study conducted to explain the application of reflective teaching to improve the students' pedagogy competence in teaching English. The research was begun last February (2014), and will end by the end of this year (2014). The result described here is the students' focus of attention in their reflective teaching. The study was conducted with 15 students taking Micro Teaching unit course. Prior to the commencement of the study, the students were informed about the concept and the importance of reflective teaching. Example of doing reflective teaching was also given. The students taught English to their peers in a range of selected texts prescribed in the junior and senior high school curricula. Every student taught for times (20- 40 minutes for each). After teaching presentation, the students were required to articulate their opinions about their teaching, and write their reflection in a journal. The reflection may consist of several teaching aspects such as instructional material, teaching techniques or strategies, and language use. The result of this study shows that the most frequent aspects that became the focus of concern of the students were teaching techniques and materials. Sometimes they also reflected upon the use of teaching media and classroom management. Unfortunately, they hardly reflected on their language use. The result of this study is expected to give a useful insight to prepare students for their professional development as teachers.

**Key words:** Reflective Teaching, Pedagogic Competence, Journal,

## **Introduction**

Good teachers keep attempting to improve their teaching performance in order to obtain maximum result. Sound improvement should be based on an informed-decision making which demands knowledge, skill, and willingness. These three interconnected components have to be built and developed throughout one's teaching education and career. A strategy to do it is called reflective teaching in which teachers look back at their particular teaching presentation and take some time to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of their teaching presentation.

Some teachers may do reflective teaching consciously and regularly, while many may do it unconsciously and randomly. Some, however, might neglect this responsibility. We may have ever heard or involved in an informal discussion in a staff room where a teacher told his friend (s) about his dissatisfaction with his own teaching performance and told what he thought he did not do well. Usually his friend (s) exchanged experience of teaching the same thing and gave some advice. This is an example of the process of reflective teaching.

The reasons behind the focus of concern in a teacher's reflection vary. They may be related to what a teacher thinks the most important aspect in teaching, what he or she does not master, or something that he/she is worried about. For instance, a teacher who believes that a successful teaching is very much influenced by teaching techniques will most likely reflect upon his techniques of teaching. Another teacher who is worried of his/her classroom management may focus on his/her success or failure in managing the class.

Variety of concerns with reasons teachers have in their reflection may be appropriate at one time, but inappropriate in another time. Having observed students teaching in Micro Teaching subject for some years, I can conclude that sometimes the students focused much on a specific aspect of teaching, but ignored other aspects that they actually failed to execute them

well. Sometimes, they could identify their strengths and weakness well in their comments of their teaching, so that they could improve their teaching. If student teachers familiarize themselves with reflective teaching, they will be sensitive with their strengths and weakness. In turn, they will be able to improve their teaching performance. Furthermore, the lecturers and the supervisors will be able to help the students appropriately.

Motivated by the phenomena above, the researchers carried out a study to find out how reflective teaching could improve the students' teaching pedagogic competence in teaching. The results of the study reported here deal with the students' reflection on their teaching performance that they expressed in their journals.

## **Related Literature**

Teaching is a complex process which necessitates specific competencies. One of them is pedagogic competence. A teacher who has pedagogic competence is expected to be able to plan, run, and evaluate his/her teaching well. This competence has to be developed and improved throughout one's teaching career as a realization of professional development. An important facet dealing with this is raising awareness of one's teaching.

Knezedvic (2001:10) states that awareness raising is crucial for teachers as "it is a starting point. We cannot develop unless we are aware of who we are and what we do". He further points out that developing awareness is a process of reducing incongruities between what we actually do with what think we should do. To develop such awareness teachers should go through a process of reflection in which they think over what they have done in their teaching and what they actually should have done. The result of the reflection can be used as a source of improvement.

Pennington in Farrell (1998:10) defines reflective teaching as "deliberating on experience, and that of mirroring experience". Richards (1995) says that reflective teaching is an activity or process of responding to a past experience. It is a conscious effort to recall, consider, and evaluate a past experience of teaching. The results of the reflection are used as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source of planning and action. This means that teachers should do reflective teaching to have an informed- improvement.

Farrell (1998) proposes five related components in reflection process. First, teachers should be given different opportunities through different activities such as group discussions, observation, and journal writing. Second, ground rules have to be built to the process and into each activity. For journal writing, for example, a minimum guideline needs to be negotiated to insure a critical reflection. Third, teachers should be provided with distinct types of times which include time for individual, activity, development, and period of reflection. Fourth, teachers should be provided with teachers need to be provided with external input for enriched reflection. Other people's comments drawn from observations, experiments, research, and theories should be useful input for critical reflection. Fifth, teachers should be in a low affective state. A non-threatening environment needs to be created to reduce anxiety. These five components are developed by Farrell on the basis of the experiences of an EFL development group in Korea.

In professional development teachers collect their own data about their teaching. An instrument which is commonly used to collect the data is journal. Keeping a teaching journal is a data-gathering activity through which teachers can gain awareness and express their attitudes (Bailey, 1990; Bailey et al., 2000). In relation to this, Acheson and Gall, 1997) suggest that teachers who keep journals of their own teaching may differ in their attitudes and awareness from those who do not. This can be true as teachers who keep journals go through a process of looking at their teaching objectively through which awareness and willingness to improve their teaching grow.

Bailey (2006) mentions some examples of successful stories of keeping journals by teachers. Telatnik, an inexperienced ESL teacher who kept a journal reported that her journal changed her attitude toward getting feedback. She said that she became more objective and honest about other people's analysis of her teaching. She admitted that she had run a teacher-

centered teaching. After all, she managed to glean a few techniques to encourage her students to participate. Another story mentioned by Bailey is the experience of Verity, an experienced ESL teacher and teacher educator. She kept a journal of the first she taught at a university in Japan. She said that “the teaching journal became a zone for thinking“ that enabled her to externalize and make her thoughts and feelings explicit (Bailey, 2000:49). Through keeping a journal she reconstructed her existing knowledge in her new teaching context. These two stories indicate that keeping a journal is an effective way to do reflection in teaching.

To conclude, raising teachers’ awareness of their teaching is important as it is a realization of professional development. Reflective teaching is a conscious effort to raise awareness in which teachers recall their past teaching and evaluate it as a source of improvement of their future plan and action. A popular instrument to recall the reflection is journal. Teachers write their reflection (thoughts and feelings) a journal, which will be read in turn. This current study also used journal as instrument for the practice of reflective teaching.

## **Method**

This study is descriptive in nature. It was conducted to explain the implementation of reflective teaching to improve the students’ pedagogic competence in teaching English.

The participants consisted of fifteen students of the English Teaching Program of the English Department who took a Micro Teaching subject. They implemented reflective teaching and were required to write their reflection in a journal. Each student taught four times. Their teaching performance was recorded and they were encouraged to copy and watched their performance as a source of reflection. They were also asked to express their opinions about their teaching orally right after teaching.

The data were collected through field notes, students’ journals, teaching performance assessment, and interview. For the focus of this article, the data reported here were those taken from the students’ journals that show their focus of attention in their teaching. Prior to writing the journal, the students were informed about what they could write (i.e. what they thought about their teaching, the strengths and the weaknesses, and what they thought they should improve if they teach in the future).

The data obtained through the journals were read, classified, and analyzed qualitatively. The same process was done toward the field notes. Both sets of data were compared. The results of the analysis were described descriptively.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The results of the analysis of the students’ journals indicate that the students were concerned with five aspects of teaching, teaching techniques, instructional materials, teaching media, classroom management, and language use. The extent and the aspects of concern vary from one student to another. The following description shows the details. To differentiate the participants of the study (the students) from their students in the practice, the term ‘student teachers’ are used.

### **Teaching Techniques**

All student teachers were concerned with the way they delivered the lesson to their students either on a particular stage, moment, or a whole process of teaching. They used expressions such as technique, method, strategy, or approach in their journals to show their comments about this aspect of teaching. Here are some quotations taken from the journals.

- *I did not use interesting technique of teaching. So, the class was boring.*
- *I felt successful in using inductive approach in my teaching. I was successful in making my students understand the topic.*
- *I did not model how to write, but I felt I had interactive class.*

- *I focused too much on my power point. So, I did not have good interaction with my students.*
- *I felt my teaching activities were better than before.*
- *I did not use a good way of teaching. I explained the generic structure, asked the students to read. They were bored.*
- *I thought my teaching techniques were okay, but I spoke too fast.*

The quotations above show that when they reflected upon their teaching, the most important aspect they focused on was the way they taught. They judged their success and failure based on that aspect. This should be understandable because they never experienced teaching beforehand; thus, the first thing they must think much was how to teach. When they felt they were not successful, they most likely thought that the failure was due to the techniques of teaching they applied, and vice versa.

Their focus and their perception on their teaching techniques were in line with the researchers' field notes. Each student teacher had problems in the way they taught. With regards to teaching interactional texts, the student teachers tended to introduce the texts they taught with examples and explain the language expressions, but did not give exercises which enabled their students to use the texts in concern naturally. As for monolog texts, most of them did not model how to create a text well. They focused on analyzing texts and scrutinizing the structure of the texts. Furthermore, some of the student teachers did not create activities which made students practice the language and the texts they learned.

#### Teaching Materials

The second theme emerging in the journals is materials. Ten student teachers were concerned with they used in the class. Examples of quotations are as follows.

- *I did not master the materials very well.*
- *I did not prepare the song well. I focused too much on the materials in the power point.*
- *The reading questions were not good. I didn't teach vocabulary.*
- *The texts were too long and contained many new vocabulary.*
- *The materials were not suitable. They were too difficult and not interesting.*
- *The texts were long, so that the students were bored to read.*

The quotations indicate that their concern on the materials were mainly on the problems in choosing or preparing the materials. They viewed from the suitability of the materials with their students' level and interest and the completeness. This means that they were aware that judgment in choosing instructional materials should be seen against students. However, no one wrote their reflection about their satisfaction on the materials they used.

Based on the researchers' field notes, it was found that the student teachers' main problem was choosing the materials which were considered appropriate for the students' level and interesting for their students. Some of the texts they used were sometimes too long and difficult in terms of the language, and some were too easy. They also had problems in designing the exercises and the tasks. They tended to ask low level questions and some of the tasks were less communicative. Unfortunately, this did not become the student teachers' concern in their reflection.

#### Teaching Media

Even though all student teachers used multimedia, they still gave comments on this aspect. Seven student teachers wrote their concern on the media they chose and used. Similar to the materials, they only looked at the problems on the media; no one wrote their feeling of satisfaction. The following quotations show that.

- *I should use the board. I should not depend on my multimedia only.*

- *I should use printed material. I should not show it on the screen.*
- *I was not good in using media.*
- *I needed pictures to teach new vocabulary.*
- *I did not prepare my media well.*

Two of the student teachers as shown in the quotations viewed that multimedia only were not sufficient. They thought that presenting the materials on the screen led to boredom. This goes with the researchers' field notes. Some of them who relied on multimedia could not develop their teaching activities interestingly. They tended to stand by the table or next to the screen, pointing out the pictures on the screen. In effect, variations of activities and teacher movement were limited. This seemed to affect the students' interest and enthusiasm.

### **Classroom Management**

Four student teachers reflected upon their classroom management. Here are some quotations to show their concern.

- *I felt successful in getting students attention, so I had good interaction with them.*
- *I was able to control the class.*
- *Some students made noise. I could not control them well.*
- *I only paid attention to one side.*

Those who reflected upon their classroom management merely viewed this aspect from their ability to control the class. The researchers' notes, however, indicate that the students had some other classroom management problems which they overlooked. To mention a few, the problems included seating arrangement and group work management, and giving turn. It was found that these problems had some influence on the student teachers' planned activities.

### **Language Use**

Of the sixteen student teachers, only three reflected on their language use. They were aware of their language problems. Here are the comments they wrote in their journal.

- *I often made grammar mistakes.*
- *I made some mistakes in my power point and also in my explanation.*
- *I still had problems in choosing and using sentences suitable for my students. I often used long and complex sentences. Sometimes my sentences were confusing.*

Even though almost all student teachers had various grammar problems, only three of them looked at this matter. Their ignorance on this aspect might be due to some reasons. First, they might be overwhelmed with their concern on the techniques and the materials of teaching. Second, they might overlook this matter because they found that their instruction and language were understood by the students. Third, they might not be aware of their grammar mistakes. It was quite disappointing to find out that the students did not really reflect on their language use, while they had various language problems such as using 'auxiliary' in question forms, making passive sentences, and using plural and singular nouns.

### **Conclusion**

The results of a study reported in this article show that the students were able to reflect upon their teaching presentation. Most of the points they raised in their journals corresponded to the researchers' field notes. Their journals reveal that the students were concerned with five aspects of teaching- techniques of teaching, materials, media, classroom management, and language use. The most aspect that all students focused was teaching technique, while the least one they considered was language use. Generally, the students' focus of attention in their reflection corresponded to the researchers' notes. Even so, there are discrepancies between the

extent to which the students viewed the seriousness of the problem of each aspect and the researchers' notes. For instance, the students did not see their problems in classroom management and language use as they were. In addition, only few of them that reflected on these aspects. More investigation is needed in order to unveil this. This study intends to interview the students in order to find out the reason behind this fact.

## References

- Bailey, K.M. 2006. *Language Teacher Supervision: A Case-Based Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. Action research, teacher research, and classroom research in language learning. In Marianne-Celce Murcia (ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 489-498.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1990. The use of diary studies in teacher education programs. In Jack C. Richards and David Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 215-226.
- Farrell, T. 1998. Reflective teaching: the principles and practices. *English Teaching Forum*, 36 (4), pp. 10-17.
- Knezdevic, B. 2001. Action Research. *IATEFL Teacher Development SIG Newsletter*, 1, 1, pp. 10-12.
- Richards, J. 1995. The teacher change cycle. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 4, pp. 705-731.