

Preservice EFL Teachers' Reflectivity Levels on Evaluation Tasks Assigned During Practicum

Suna ÇELİK¹ & Evrim EVEYİK-AYDIN²

¹M.A., Altınbaş University, Istanbul, TURKEY
suna.bahadir@altinbas.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7906-3482>

²Assist. Prof., Yeditepe University, Istanbul, TURKEY
evrimaydin@yeditepe.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3375-4442>

Abstract

Serving as a bridge between theory and practice in teacher training, the investigation of preservice teachers' reflectivity has gained considerable attention in the field of English Language Teacher Education. While previous studies have predominantly investigated preservice EFL teachers' perceived levels of reflection, there has been limited exploration of their actual reflectivity in connection with the specific tasks they are assigned during their practicum experience. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the predominant levels of reflection in various evaluation tasks assigned to preservice English language teachers during their practicum. It investigates whether each participant's reflectivity level varies based on the type of task. The data involves 207 reflective tasks from nine senior students in an ELT program at a foundation university in Istanbul, analyzed using Taggart and Wilson' Profile of Reflective Thinking rubric. The findings indicate that self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and weekly observation tasks primarily induce technical-level reflection, while overall evaluation tasks with guiding questions encourage contextual and dialectical level reflections. Participants' individual reflectivity levels change depending on the type of reflective task. Five out of nine preservice teachers, who were initially more focused on technical reflections, exhibited an increase in dialectical and contextual level reflections in their overall evaluation reports. Recognizing this influence is crucial for designing effective teacher training programs that promote higher-level reflective thinking with effective tasks

Keywords: Initial teacher education, reflective tasks, reflective teaching, practicum in ELT, EFL pre-service teachers

Öğretmenlik Uygulaması Sırasında Verilen Değerlendirme Görevlerinde Aday İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Yansıtma Düzeyleri

Özet

Öğretmen adaylarının, öğretmen yetiştirmede teori ve pratiği birleştiren bir köprü olarak görev yapan yansıtma becerilerinin incelenmesi, İngilizce Öğretmeni Eğitiminde önemli bir ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Önceki çalışmalar, çoğunlukla İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının algıladıkları yansıtma düzeylerini araştırmış, ancak adayların öğretmenlik uygulaması deneyimleri sırasında yazdıkları yansıtıcı raporlardaki gerçek yansıtma düzeylerini sınırlı bir şekilde incelemiştir. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, İngilizce Öğretmeni adaylarına öğretmenlik uygulamaları sırasında verilen farklı değerlendirme görevlerinde baskın olan yansıtma düzeyini belirlemeyi ve her katılımcının yansıtma düzeyinin göreve bağlı olarak değişip değişmediğini bulmayı hedeflemiştir. Çalışmanın verisi, bir vakıf üniversitesinin İngilizce Öğretmenliği Programında Öğretmenlik Uygulaması dersine kayıtlı 9 son sınıf öğrencisinin yazdığı 207 adet değerlendirme görevidir, ve bu veriler, Taggart and Wilson'ın Yansıtıcı Düşünme Profili rubriği kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, öz-değerlendirme, akran değerlendirme ve haftalık gözlem görevlerinin çoğunlukla teknik düzeyde yansıtmaları teşvik ettiğini göstermektedir, ancak soru yönlendirmeli genel değerlendirme görevleri bağlamsal ve diyalektik düzeyde yansıtmaları teşvik etmektedir. Katılımcıların baskın yansıtma düzeyleri yansıtıcı görev türüne bağlı olarak değişmektedir. Genellikle teknik yansıtma yapan beş katılımcının, genel değerlendirme raporlarında diyalektik ve bağlamsal düzeyde yansıtma yaptığı bulunmuştur. Bu sonuçlar, daha yüksek düzeyde yansıtıcı düşünmeyi teşvik eden farklı değerlendirme görevleriyle etkili öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının tasarlanabilmesi için önemlidir.

1. Introduction

Reflective thinking has been well acknowledged as one of the most effective means of professional development for teachers. This concept was first introduced by Dewey, an American philosopher and educator, in 1930s. In his book entitled *How We Think*, he defined it as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge” (Dewey, 1933: 9). A half-century later, Schön (1983) published *The Reflective Practitioner* and termed *reflection-in-action* that occurs in response to an unpredictable event that triggers a question about tacit practices and their underlying assumptions. Hence, the practice is *reframed*, and new *knowing-in-action* is developed. Such a reflective practice is a process of learning from personal experience (Russell, 2018). In fact, questioning tacit practices also requires re-evaluating the situation from different angles to develop different perspectives for the solution of the problem (Lee, 2005). Teachers engaged in reflective thinking, hence, explore their teaching practices by constantly evaluating their past and present actions to tackle the problems they encounter in their teaching settings and to make the right decisions for their future experiences (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Kember et al., 2000; Mezirow, 1998; Taggart & Wilson, 2005).

Over time, various models have classified teachers' reflective practices at different levels. According to Van Manen (1977), teachers reflect at the technical, practical, and critical levels with a focus on different aspects of teaching. At the initial level of reflection that he referred to as *technical rationality* teachers are mainly concerned with the effectiveness of their teaching techniques with no intention to modify or criticize their practices. At the *practical level*, they analyze students' behavior to understand if their teaching goals were achieved and think about the problems to produce solutions. The highest level, however, is the *critical reflection* in which the value of knowledge, social facts, historical and ethical values are related to teaching practices. Based on Van Manen's model of reflection, Taggart and Wilson (2005) suggest that teachers who function at a *technical level* are mainly concerned with the appropriate implementation of lessons to achieve objectives. This level of reflection is usually considered novice teacher behavior because novice teachers have minimal schemata to refer to when dealing with educational challenges. At the *contextual* level reflection, the second level, teachers reflect on the assumptions underlying in-class practices and the results of the strategies used in teaching practices. The pedagogical issues and the existing relationship between theory and practices are examined. At the *dialectical* level, on the other hand, teachers think about ethical and political matters in relation to instructional planning and implementation. They are open-minded to consider cultural, social, and moral values while evaluating their teaching and the curriculum in terms of their students' learning. Taggart and Wilson's (2005) model of reflection has formed the conceptual framework of the current study to investigate EFL preservice teachers' reflectivity levels depending on the tasks assigned to them during their practicum.

1.1. Reflective Practice in Teacher Education

The professional growth of teachers starts with experiences as students in teacher education programs (Körkkö et al., 2016) as they develop practical theories to plan, implement, and evaluate in daily practice based on their initial teachings (Levin & He, 2008). One of the formidable challenges facing preservice teachers in these programs is the establishment of a robust linkage between theoretical knowledge acquired in their coursework and practical teaching skills gleaned from their practicum experiences (Korthagen, 2001). The literature suggests that this linkage can be considerably reinforced through integrated reflective thinking tasks in their practicum (Korthagen, 2001; Taggart & Wilson, 2005; Valli, 1997; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Through these tasks, preservice teachers assess their teaching approaches, reflecting on their strengths and areas for improvement, exploring decision-making processes, and enhancing skills to create conducive learning environments for future students (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Valli, 1997). They also foster a 'teacher mindset' by questioning the underpinnings of their actions (Jay & Johnson, 2002) and developing a comprehensive viewpoint on educational matters.

The most common reflective practices incorporated into preservice teacher practicum training include reflective journals, observational learning, and microteaching enriched with self-evaluation and peer-evaluation tasks. Journals empower preservice teachers to explore their professional thoughts and beliefs throughout the teaching process, raise queries about the learning process, and formulate hypotheses concerning the problems encountered in the classroom environment (Lee, 2008). Moreover, journals do more than merely chronicling experiences; they foster critical thinking and questioning skills, promote metacognition, boost active participation, enhance problem-solving skills, and stimulate creativity and self-expression (Moon, 2007).

Although reflective practice is usually an individual process, it is beneficial for preservice teachers to share their ideas and experiences with peers through mutual observation (Ferraro, 2000). Such observations induce preservice teachers to contemplate their peers' teaching skills and methodologies employed in practice. This reflective process can be further stimulated through peer evaluation tasks assigned during these observations. Peer evaluation serves as a learning tool rather than a measure of peer knowledge (Dymoke & Harrison, 2008), promoting interaction, collaboration, and connection with the real world (Loughran, 1996; Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Similarly, thinking about one's practices also leads to novel insights, implying that teachings can be further enriched through self-evaluation tasks. These tasks enable preservice teachers to critically evaluate their practices, thereby enhancing their reflective thinking and self-assessment skills (Dymoke & Harrison, 2008).

1.2. Research on Preservice Teachers' Reflectivity in EFL Context

Research with preservice teachers has underpinned the significant role of reflective practices in achieving higher levels of reflection. These studies used frameworks that defined reflectivity at low (aka descriptive, technical, practical), medium (aka dialogical, conceptual), and high (aka dialectical and critical) levels. In Egypt, El-Dib (2007) analyzed the action research reports of 100 prospective teachers considering the low, low-medium, high-medium, and high levels of reflectivity suggested by Kember et al. (2000). More than half of the participants made reflections at either low or medium-low level in all the stages of action research, i.e. statement of problem, plan of action, acting, and reviewing, by only addressing the action or problem without a rationale. The study highlighted the importance of assignments that promote reflection by integrating ideas from different courses and other fields. Parra (2012) who investigated four Columbian preservice teachers' reflections using Van Manen's definitions of technical, practical, and critical reflection found that only two of his participants showed the ability to reflect at the critical level.

In a study conducted by Naghdipour and Emeagwali (2013), the instructors of preservice teachers admitted that the lack of proper reflective tasks is what hinders reflectivity. Another support for the use of reflective tasks and pedagogical guidance on reflection came from Nurfaidah et al. (2017) who explored four Indonesian preservice teachers' reflectivity in the teaching journals they kept during practicum. Having used Hatton and Smith's (1995) conceptualization of descriptive, dialogical, and critical reflections, they found that the participants could reflect at the dialogical level by making deeper evaluations of their teachings despite their limited amount of teaching experience when they were guided on how to make reflections in their microteaching courses.

In the Turkish EFL context, Tuncer and Özkan (2018) analyzed the reflective journals written by 12 preservice teachers during practicum using the framework developed by Lee (2005). This framework involved Recall (R1), Rationalization (R2), and Reflectivity (R3) levels characterized by simple description of observations without questioning, relating a situation to previous experiences to find solutions, and the analysis of experiences with different perspectives to improve and change future practices, respectively. The participants of the study mostly made reflections at the lowest reflection level of R1. As they were given prompts for reflections, their reflectivity increased. While the reflective journals written during the first weeks of the 12-week practicum period revealed reflections at R1 level, R2 level reflections emerged after week four. However, some accounts of R3 level reflections were only found in the tasks given during the last two weeks of practicum. Their findings provided evidence for that reflectivity improves in time when prompts are used to foster higher-level thinking. In an earlier study conducted by Yeşilbursa (2011), the written reflections of 28 Turkish preservice teachers on video-recorded microteachings were found to be mostly descriptive with a focus on the self. However, some participants reflected on their past and future experiences.

While substantial research examines preservice teachers' perceived levels of reflectivity, there is a scarcity of studies examining how preservice teachers' reflectivity manifests in the tasks assigned during their training within an EFL context. It is crucial to recognize that the nature of the reflective tasks assigned to preservice teachers may influence their actual reflectivity. Understanding the impact of various task types is crucial, given that the design and execution of these tasks may play a central role in promoting effective reflection. Consequently, investigating how various tasks promote reflectivity in Turkish EFL teacher education holds practical significance for these programs. Identifying which task types are more effective in fostering reflective thinking among preservice teachers allows teacher educators to tailor their training experiences for greater focus and impact. Therefore, we seek to address the following research questions:

1. Which level of reflection is most frequently identified in the self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, weekly observation, and overall evaluation tasks assigned to EFL preservice teachers during their practicum?

2. Do their reflectivity levels change when they engage in various reflective tasks during their practicum? If yes, how?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The research primarily utilized a qualitative approach to understand and interpret the depth and nature of reflectivity on practicum tasks. Specifically, the reflective reports written by the participants during their practicum were subjected to content analysis considering Taggart and Wilson's reflectivity classification. The analysis of textual data revealed various categories, which were subsequently quantified to present numerical information in terms of the frequency and percentage of the observed reflectivity levels across all tasks. Consequently, the study combines a qualitative approach with a quantitative component.

2.2. Setting

The study took place in an English language teacher education program at a foundation university in Istanbul. The reflective reports analyzed in the study were submitted to the departmental Practicum Corpus of Reflective Tasks by nine female seniors enrolled in the Practice Teaching course in Spring 2018. Supervised by the second author, they had successfully completed the School Experience course, a prerequisite for practice teaching, in Fall 2017. During that 14-week School Experience course, they spent one day per week observing classes in practicum schools, with structured tasks focusing on learners, teaching skills, strategies, classroom management, and resource utilization, based on Wajnryb's (1992) classroom observation guidelines. Additionally, they participated in weekly on-campus discussions with their supervisors and peers.

In the 14-week Practice Teaching course offered in Spring during the 8th semester of the curriculum, each preservice teacher was tasked with conducting four classroom hours on various weeks and at different grade levels within the same schools. Preservice teachers were required to implement their prepared lesson plans to achieve their teaching objectives. Throughout these teaching sessions, they were under observation and evaluation by their teacher trainers, namely university supervisors and cooperating teachers. Additionally, their peers participated in the evaluation process through peer evaluation reports. Each preservice teacher maintained a portfolio, which included a signature sheet regularly signed by their cooperating teachers after each observation hour, lesson plans designed for their teaching sessions, evaluation grids completed by both university supervisors and cooperating teachers after each teaching experience, as well as self-evaluation and peer-evaluation reports reflecting on their own teaching and that of their peers. All of the students undertaking their practicum had already been familiar with these reflective practices since their third year. Furthermore, during the practicum, preservice teachers engaged in weekly meetings with their teacher trainers at the university. These meetings, lasting for two hours each week, provided a platform for collaborative reflection on the situations they had observed in the practicum schools.

2.3. Data Collection

Data included a total of 207 reflective tasks written by nine preservice teachers. All of them were required to write their reflective reports as of the first week of their practicum. Each preservice teacher submitted 23 reflective reports throughout the semester, namely 14 weekly observation reports, four self-evaluation reports, four peer evaluation reports, and one overall evaluation report. They wrote self-evaluation and peer-evaluation reports right after each teaching to critically evaluate themselves and their peers in terms of the accomplishment of the goals they set in their lesson plan, strengths and weaknesses of their teaching, the effectiveness of the methods used, and how they handled the issues that emerged during teaching. In the weekly observation reports, they reflected on the teaching of the cooperating teachers they observed throughout the week. Finally, at the end of the practicum period, they were asked to write an overall evaluation report in which they reflected on the whole practicum experience in terms of its contribution to their professional development based on some focus questions (e.g. How did practicum affect you both positively and negatively? What aspects of your teaching do you think you will continue to develop as a teacher?).

2.4. Data Analysis

In order to find the reflectivity levels, content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980) was conducted on 207 reflective reports using the rubric developed by Taggart and Wilson (2005) to represent their three reflection levels as the coding scheme of the study. In this rubric, they clearly defined the behaviours expected of a technical, contextual, and dialectical level teacher. Teachers at the technical level simply describe their

observations using minimal schema for education problems since they do not have enough experience they can benefit from. At the contextual level, they understand the concepts, contexts and underlying assumptions of their teaching practices, and they can justify their actions and decisions by articulating their relevance to their students’ needs and growth. They can evaluate opposing views in terms of their consequences, think of possible solutions for the problems they encounter, and develop alternative ways of practice by establishing a link between theory and practice. At the dialectical level, however, teachers critically question the underlying assumptions and norms using external and internal dialogue, examine moral and ethical issues, reflect on instructional planning and implementation, evaluate opposing views, and consider the social consequences of their practices.

Data were initially coded based on these level descriptors. The identification of any statement and unit which involves reflection required multiple readings. Subsequently, the coded reflections were counted and quantified to show the frequency of reflections on different tasks. The writers independently coded data, and the inter-rater reliability was calculated. The agreement between the coders was found to be 88% with Miles and Huberman’s (1994) formula, indicating a high level of inter-rater reliability. In cases where two raters initially disagreed on the coding of certain statements, they reached a consensus through discussion.

3. Findings

The first research question aimed to identify the specific level of reflection that is predominant in various tasks assigned to EFL preservice teachers during their practicum. Results of the content analysis conducted on a total of 207 reflective reports, namely four self-evaluations, four peer-evaluations, 14 weekly observations, and one overall evaluation report written by nine participants revealed 1725 reflections. 547 (32%) of these reflections were identified in 36 self-evaluation reports (4x9), 500 (29%) in 36 peer evaluation reports (4x9), 485 (28%) in 126 (14x9) weekly observation reports, and 193 (11%) in 9 (1x9) overall evaluation reports. Of 1725 reflections, 1060 were made at the technical level and comprised 62% of all reflections, as Table 1 shows. 522 (30%) of the reflections were identified at the contextual level while only 143 (8%) were made at the highest dialectical level.

Table 1.

Distribution of reflections at three levels according to task types

	Technical N (%)	Contextual N (%)	Dialectical N (%)	Total N of reflections
Self-evaluation	330 (60%)	175 (32%)	42 (8%)	547
Peer-evaluation	307 (61%)	177 (36%)	16 (3%)	500
Weekly observation	354 (73%)	100 (21%)	31 (6%)	485
Overall evaluation	69 (36%)	70 (36%)	54 (28%)	193
Total	1060 (62%)	522 (30%)	143 (8%)	1725 (100%)

Table 1 shows that of 330 (60%) of 547 reflections identified in self-evaluation tasks are technical level reflections followed by contextual (32%) level reflections. Similarly, 61% and 73% of all reflections identified in peer-evaluation and weekly observation tasks respectively are at the technical level. Overall evaluation tasks, however, induced more dialectical level (28%) reflections than other reports. Thirty-six percent of a total of 193 reflections identified in the overall evaluation were technical and contextual level reflections.

The second question is concerned with how the reflectivity levels of EFL preservice teachers change when they engage in different reflective tasks. In order to answer this question, we first calculated the frequency and percentage of all reflections identified in each participant's reports at three levels, as shown in Table 2. Preservice teachers were given a number (e.g., PST1) for easy identification and presentation of their results.

Table 2.

Distribution of reflections at three levels

	Technical Level N (%)	Contextual Level N (%)	Dialectical Level N (%)	Total N (%)
PST1	144 (77)	21 (11)	22 (12)	187 (100)
PST2	66 (43)	78 (51)	9 (6)	153 (100)
PST3	95 (67)	38 (27)	8 (6)	141 (100)

PST4	73 (47)	70 (45)	13 (8)	156 (100)
PST5	161 (70)	66 (29)	3 (1)	230 (100)
PST6	124 (48)	99 (38)	35 (14)	258 (100)
PST7	135 (64)	54 (26)	22 (10)	211 (100)
PST8	108 (69)	43 (27)	6 (4)	157 (100)
PST9	154 (66)	53 (23)	25 (11)	232 (100)

Table 2 shows that, except for PST2, all of the participants made most of their reflections at the technical level. For instance, 77%, 70%, and 69% of all reflections made by PST1, PST5, and PST8 respectively are at the technical level. Similarly, PST3, PST9, and PST7 made more than 60% of their all reflections at the technical level. In other words, eight of nine participants mostly described what they and their peers did in their teaching practices and what they observed in their practicum schools by usually focusing on the technical aspects of teaching, as in the following excerpts. In these excerpts, PST1 and PST4 are mainly concerned with what activities were done in class with no attempt to justify their choice of activities and to evaluate these practices critically.

I wanted my students to look at the pictures in the textbook and think about what was happening in there. Students shared their ideas about the story and that activity was finished. After this activity, they read a passage to answer the questions. (PST1, Self-evaluation)

My peer’s language use was quite appropriate to students’ proficiency level. He explained every activity with simple words and structures. Every activity in the lesson plan followed each other in a meaningful order. The time management was quite good too, because he did everything that he planned to do. (PST4, Peer Evaluation)

Among all the participants, PST2 was the only one whose reflections were mostly (51%) at the contextual level. In other words, in her reports, after describing what she did or observed during practicum, she provided explanations and justifications more frequently, as in the following excerpt that illustrated how this preservice teacher justified her preference of individual activities to more communicative group activities in one of her teachings with seventh graders at practicum school. Acknowledging the role of such activities in language classes, she reflected at contextual level by saying:

If I did my teaching in another class of the same grade, I could use some pair and group work activities to let them interact more. However, within this class I specifically selected individual activities to be able to keep them under control despite my personal teaching beliefs. (PST2, Self-evaluation)

She continues her reflections about group work activities at a more dialectical level in her overall observation report as such:

As we read before in one of the assigned articles in our skills class, the implementation of communicative language teaching principles can be quite challenging in EFL contexts like ours due to some instructional, institutional, or curricular reasons. I observed most of these reasons during my practicum and I believe language policy makers should consider them all before imposing a certain methodology to teach English. (PST2, overall evaluation)

Such dialectical-level reflections were the least identified reflections in the reports of almost all participants.

In order to find whether their reflection level changes depending on the task, we calculated the distribution of each preservice teachers’ technical, contextual, and dialectic level reflections according to four types of tasks, as shown in detail in the Table provided in Appendix A. Based on those values, the following Table 3 displays the participants’ changing level of reflectivity depending on the type of task.

Table 3.

Preservice teachers’ reflectivity levels on each reflective tasks

Predominant level of reflection	Self-evaluation report	Peer evaluation Report	Weekly observation report	Overall evaluation report
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PST1	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical	Dialectical
PST2	Contextual	Contextual	Contextual	Technical	Contextual
PST3	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical	Contextual
PST4	Technical	Contextual	Technical	Contextual	Technical/
PST5	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical
PST6	Technical	Contextual	Contextual	Technical	Dialectical
PST7	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical
PST8	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical	Contextual
PST9	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical	Technical

The findings showed that five of nine participants exhibited higher frequencies of dialectical and contextual level reflections in their overall evaluation reports. Regarding PST5, PST7, and PST9, who were determined to be at the technical reflectivity level, their reflections persisted at the technical level across all reports, suggesting their reflectivity was unaffected by the task type. On the other hand, PST3 and PST8, whose predominant reflectivity level was technical, demonstrated higher reflectivity at the contextual level in their overall evaluation reports. PST2, found to be at the contextual level, remained consistently so in three out of four reflective task types. However, she exhibited more technical reflections in her weekly observation tasks. PST1 only exhibited dialectical-level reflections in her overall evaluation tasks. PST4, technically reflective, transitioned to a contextual level in her self-evaluation and weekly observation tasks. Lastly, PST6, typically at the technical level, showcased more contextual reflections in her self- and peer evaluation reports and more dialectical reflections in her overall evaluation report. Consequently, her reflectivity remained constant only in her weekly observation reports.

These findings further suggest that overall evaluation tasks seem to encourage reflections at the contextual and dialectical levels more than other tasks, while weekly observation reports predominantly induce technical-level reflections. Except for one participant, all were found to be at the technical level in weekly tasks. Similarly, the majority of participants demonstrated technical-level reflections in self and peer-evaluation tasks.

4. Discussion

This paper aims to investigate the predominant level of reflectivity in each task assigned to senior preservice EFL teachers engaged in weeks of observation and teaching during their practicum and the potential reflectivity changes depending on the task type. The reflective tasks of preservice EFL teachers revealed that they mostly made comments on the technical aspect of teaching, especially in self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and weekly observation tasks. This finding concurs with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Tuncer & Özkan, 2018; Nurfaidah et al., 2017; Naghdipour & Emeagwali, 2013; El-Dib, 2007) showing that preservice teachers mainly reflect at the technical level on issues like implementing the activities as planned, managing the class, and finishing the lesson on time (Valli, 1997). Taggart and Wilson (2005) suggest that concerns that rely on predetermined instructional outcomes often lead to the technical-level reflection, which is typical of novice teacher behavior. Experienced teachers, however, are more concerned with their students' learning than with their own teaching. Similarly, according to Hatton and Smith (1995), such reflections are natural for preservice teachers at the beginning of the development of their reflective thinking because they do not have sufficient experience in educational problems and their solutions to draw their reflections from. This view has also been shared by Tuncer and Özkan (2018) who attributed the technical-level reflections of preservice teachers to their lack of teaching experience and lack of time for acquiring reflective thinking skills.

Another reason for reflections at the technical level can be explained by the nature of school experience and practice teaching courses. The focused observation tasks the participants were given bi-weekly during the previous semester might have directed their attention to the structure and planning of the lesson, the use of materials and teaching aids, and classroom management component of teaching. Although they were not given such focus during the second semester, they might have been under the impression that their teaching practices would be evaluated by their teacher trainers on these grounds, as it had usually been the case in microteaching-based courses they received during the previous years in the program. Therefore, they might have set their minds on such technical aspects of teaching as reflected in their writings.

The study also provided evidence that the level of reflectivity may show some variance depending on the type of tasks. In the final overall evaluation task assigned at the end of the practicum, preservice teachers

made higher-level reflections more often. This can be explained by three reasons: The guiding nature of the task, the time of the task, and the practice effect. First, as Langer (2002) and Clarke (2004) pointed out guided reflective writing through questions that yield evaluative answers promotes higher-level reflective thinking. In overall evaluation tasks, preservice teachers were supposed to consider some issues that were not directly observed in a particular teaching but critically evaluate the contribution of practicum on their own professional development as language teachers. In order to answer such questions, they needed to evaluate the whole experience from a broader perspective to share their professional understanding of the issues to also make contribution to the future implementation of practice teaching. In that sense, the questions given to preservice teachers as part of their training in practicum are of great importance and should focus on the quality of teaching and on questioning values as suggested by Zeichner and Liston (1987), not merely on what teacher does in the classroom. Second, the overall evaluation report has been the final assignment of the practicum. As Lee (2005) explained, time is a crucial factor that leads to change in reflectivity. Nurfaidah et al. (2017) also suggest that preservice EFL teachers show a deeper level of reflection at the end of the practicum period. Despite the existence of some studies that revealed no changes in reflectivity levels of prospective teachers at the beginning and at the end of the practicum (e.g., Armutcu & Yaman, 2010), reflectivity can be accepted as a skill acquired in time with the right type and amount of assignments guiding teachers. Third, the participants were assigned reflective tasks as of the first week of their observations at their practicum schools. As Griffin (2003) noted, reflective practices constantly emphasized throughout the semester through the reflective assignments and in-campus discussion meetings might have increased preservice teachers' reflectivity in the final task. Frequent engagement with reflective practice might have helped them learn how to question different aspects of their teachings and observations more critically. Hence, it is likely that some of the participants might have reached a more advanced level of reflection eventually due to regular reflections throughout the practicum.

5. Conclusion

The study holds significant implications for initial teacher education programs. As Sewall (2009) pointed out, the design of reflective tasks can profoundly influence the development of reflectivity. Reflective thinking, as frequently emphasized in the literature, is nurtured through consistent and deliberate reflection on personal experiences (Posner, 2005). Given that the nature of tasks may impact the quality and depth of reflection, it is essential for school experience and practicum courses to incorporate a diverse range of well-guided reflective practices. These practices should offer preservice teachers ample opportunities to critically assess their teaching experiences and those of their peers and cooperating teachers.

These tasks should not only center on the effective implementation of lesson plans but also emphasize the rationale behind decisions made before and during teaching. Furthermore, they should encourage the evaluation of situations within the broader educational, political, social, and cultural context of teaching. However, inexperienced preservice teachers require educational scaffolding from their teacher trainers. Teacher trainers can provide support in the form of clarification, exploration, focus, and interpretation of reflective situations in a collaborative setting. This assistance aids preservice teachers in learning how to engage in reflective practices effectively by the end of their practicum (Clara et al., 2019). Preservice teachers who initially analyze situations through clarification and exploration can progress to higher synthesis levels with directive facilitation provided in their education.

Similarly, to teach preservice teachers how to reflect at more advanced levels, teacher trainers who prepare them for practicum experiences through microteaching can employ reflective activities. These activities may involve pre- and post-teaching discussions on the theoretical foundations of teaching practices, case analyses, examination of opposing viewpoints regarding experienced and inexperienced teachers' real classroom teachings, and thought-provoking questions concerning the societal consequences of these teachings.

To conclude, the study underscores the fact that prospective teachers need guidance and support to become more critical of their actions through well-structured tasks that promote higher level reflectivity. However the study is not without limitations. The findings of the reflectivity levels are limited to the data that came from nine preservice teachers. Further studies can be conducted to analyze more of the reflective reports produced by more participants. Further studies can also involve other types of reflective tasks like oral reflections, video-stimulated reflections, narratives, with different types of guiding questions, and even action research. Besides, the current study did not aim to investigate the development of participants' reflective thinking skills. With that focus, a longitudinal study can be designed to include the analysis of all reflective reports assigned to preservice teachers throughout their initial teacher education program in

order to get more insights into the development of their actual levels of reflectivity. Lastly, further studies can also investigate other factors that affect the depth and nature of preservice teachers' reflectivity, like their personality traits and learning preferences.

Note on Ethical Issues

The study does not incorporate data gleaned directly from the participants. Instead, it entails the analysis of written tasks that the preservice teachers agreed to contribute to the corpus of reflective reports within this program for potential future research. The tasks analyzed in this study were submitted in Spring 2018. Hence, the authors confirm that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in our country (Date of Confirmation: 26/09/2023).

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Appendix A: Number and percentages of reflections in each task

		Self evaluation reports N (%)	Peer-evaluation reports N (%)	Weekly observation reports N (%)	Overall evaluation reports N (%)	Total Reflections N
PST1	TL	49 (82%)	69 (88%)	19 (83%)	7 (27%)	144
	CL	0 (0%)	9 (12%)	4 (17%)	8 (31%)	21
	DL	11 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (42%)	22
	Total	60	78	23	26	187
PST2	TL	26 (46%)	15 (39%)	21 (64%)	4 (17%)	66
	CL	29 (51%)	24 (61%)	11 (33%)	14 (58%)	78
	DL	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	6 (25%)	9
	Total	57	39	33	24	153
PST3	TL	23 (66%)	26 (70%)	42 (88%)	4 (19%)	95
	CL	10 (29%)	11 (30%)	6 (12%)	11 (52%)	38
	DL	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (29%)	8
	Total	35	37	48	21	141
PST4	TL	22 (45%)	27 (57%)	17 (38%)	7 (47%)	73
	CL	25 (51%)	19 (40%)	19 (42%)	7 (47%)	70
	DL	2 (4%)	1 (3%)	9 (20%)	1 (6%)	13
	Total	49	47	45	15	156
PST5	TL	64 (70%)	43 (72%)	45 (47%)	9 (53%)	161
	CL	27 (29%)	17 (28%)	14 (23%)	8 (47%)	66
	DL	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	3
	Total	92	60	61	17	230
PST6	TL	18 (26%)	20 (32%)	80 (78%)	6 (25%)	124
	CL	42 (61%)	38 (60%)	16 (16%)	3 (13%)	99
	DL	9 (13%)	5 (8%)	6 (6%)	15 (62%)	35
	Total	69	63	102	24	258
PST7	TL	46 (67%)	25 (49%)	55 (72%)	9 (60%)	135
	CL	16 (23%)	22 (43%)	14 (18%)	2 (13%)	54
	DL	7 (10%)	4 (8%)	7 (10%)	4 (27%)	22
	Total	69	51	76	15	211
PST8	TL	17 (68%)	47 (68%)	35 (85%)	9 (41%)	108
	CL	6 (24%)	20 (29%)	6 (15%)	11 (50%)	43
	DL	2 (8%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (9%)	6
	Total	25	69	41	22	157
PST9	TL	65 (71%)	35 (63%)	40 (71%)	14 (48%)	154
	CL	20 (22%)	17 (30%)	10 (18%)	6 (21%)	53
	DL	6 (7%)	4 (7%)	6 (11%)	9 (31%)	25
	Total	91	56	56	29	232
Total	547 (32%)	500 (29%)	485 (28%)	193(11%)	1725 (100)	

Note. TL, CL, and DL stand for technical, contextual, and dialectical levels of reflection. The values provided within parenthesis show the percentage of all reflections that References.