

Unpacking teachers' reflective thinking levels in online teacher professional development: Insight from Indonesian EFL teachers

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ABSTRACT

Reflective thinking is essential for English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, as they help them evaluate their teaching strategies and understand the reasons behind different classroom occurrences. This case study explores the levels of reflective thinking of EFL teachers who participated in a 6-week online writing teacher professional development (OTPD) program to improve their writing of best practice papers. The data were collected from the written reflective journals and interviews of 16 EFL teachers, while thematic analysis was conducted using Hatton and Smith's (1995) concept of RTL. The findings indicate that the EFL teachers in the research demonstrated different levels of reflective thinking. The majority of these teachers were at the higher level of dialogic reflection, suggesting a commitment to critically examining and improving their teaching practices. However, there was also a smaller group of teachers who exhibited a lower level of reflection, primarily characterized by descriptive reflection, indicating that their reflective thinking was less critical. Assessing teachers' reflective thinking levels helps professional development facilitators and the government tailor programs to meet teachers' specific needs by identifying gaps in their reflective thinking processes. It can inform the design of targeted training that enhances teachers' ability to critically evaluate and refine their teaching practices by providing a structured framework for differentiated professional growth, ensuring that teachers at different levels of reflective thinking receive appropriate approaches, resources, and strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, English teachers have struggled to assess their reflective thinking levels to gain deeper self-awareness, critically examine their perspectives, and recognize their underlying assumptions (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). Researchers have underlined that understanding the teachers' reflective thinking levels is crucial for teachers. This understanding enables them to identify their current position in the hierarchy of reflective thinking, as highlighted by

Hatton and Smith (1995) and Tyler et al. (2022). Once aware of their standing, teachers embark on a dedicated journey, striving to elevate their reflective thinking capacity to the highest level. This elevation serves a dual purpose: improving teaching methods (Körkkö et al., 2016) and enhancing student learning outcomes (Danvers, 2021), ultimately contributing to greater success in educational institutions. Additionally, this self-awareness empowers teachers to align their teaching strategies with the dynamic

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needs of their students (Kayapinar & Alkhaldi, 2023). Teachers with the highest level of reflective thinking interrogate the efficacy of their instructional strategies, explore alternative approaches, and assess the consequences of their choices on student learning results (Gorski & Dalton, 2020) when confronting new ones (Choy et al., 2021). Through this process, teachers gain the ability to dynamically align their strategies with the evolving needs of their students.

Schön (1987) reinforces the idea that teachers who embrace reflective thinking possess the capacity to recalibrate their pedagogical presuppositions and methods aimed at revolutionizing learning through innovative strategies. Because of this reason, when engaged in an ongoing process of professional development, especially online teacher professional development (OTPD), teachers will be prompted to engage in reflection regarding their acquired knowledge in teaching and learning to sharpen their reflection thinking skills (Hennessy et al., 2022) that consider ethical, social, and political issues, as well as students' reactions, emotions, and social background (Le et al., 2023). They should become actively engaged in their process, question their practices, and try to consider solutions for the challenges of classroom practice so they can take responsibility for their own development (Ord & Nuttall, 2016).

According to Philipsen et al. (2019), the influence of online teaching and learning extends into the realm of teacher professional development. Online platforms offer an effective avenue for teachers to participate in training and development initiatives. The flexibility and accessibility of online modes allow teachers to seamlessly integrate professional development into their schedules, promoting continuous improvement in teaching methodologies, and the advantages extend beyond the development of reflective thinking skills. Le (2023) noted that online professional development complements self-reflection with a structured, guided, and collaborative approach. This approach aids teachers in honing their reflective skills and refining their teaching practices. The accessibility of OTPD enables teachers to engage in flexible, remote learning without time or location constraints. The evolving landscape of education, with its increasing reliance on online tools and platforms, underscores the importance of adapting teacher professional development strategies to align with these technological advancements for optimal effectiveness.

Currently, most OTPD programs primarily instruct teachers in new teaching strategies and emphasize reflection on implementing these strategies and their impact on enhancing students' skills. This approach is exemplified by Kayapinar and Alkhaldi (2023), who examined teachers' self-discovery and awareness of their teaching, and

Abdar and Shafaei (2022), who explored teachers' reflective thinking and teaching styles. Shavit and Mose (2019) also contributed to the field by examining self-awareness in teaching. Additionally, Thao et al. (2023) explored teachers' reflective thinking in relation to their teaching practices. A common theme in these studies is that teachers' reflections often focus primarily on the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. The focus includes strategies aimed at improving student achievement (Amalia et al., 2020; Davis & McDonald, 2019; Mbato & Triprihatmini, 2022; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). However, less attention is given to reflecting on their own learning abilities, particularly in the context of enhancing their professional skills. For instance, teachers often overlook their capacity to compose reports based on their teaching experiences, such as best practice papers, which could greatly contribute to their career development. The current emphasis on refining teaching strategies and evaluating their impact on student outcomes is undoubtedly valuable.

Despite the advantages of reflective thinking, many teachers are still reluctant to engage in reflective practices due to constraints like insufficient and irrelevant teacher preparation, burnout, time-consuming lesson planning, and the challenge of translating theory into practice (Senom et al., 2013). In the context of teacher professional development, online programs have emerged as a transformative tool to overcome these hurdles and facilitate reflective thinking (Philipsen et al., 2019). These programs are designed systematically to encourage ongoing self-reflection on teaching practices, bridging the gap between theory and application. In these initiatives, teachers are positioned as learners, equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, which they subsequently integrate through systematic reflection. This emphasis on reflective thinking is vital in shaping effective learning environments, enabling teachers to premeditate and solve new challenges while also honing their capacity to achieve program objectives (Dinham et al., 2023; Shavit & Moshe, 2019).

English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers can derive significant benefits from a more comprehensive approach that incorporates personal reflective practices into Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) programs. By fostering self-awareness, resilience, and emotional intelligence, educators can develop a deeper understanding of their teaching experiences. This, in turn, can contribute not only to the enhancement of their professional skills but also to their overall career development. Since teaching English is quite a challenge for non-native English teachers, teachers should learn over time to fulfill additional demands in terms of the knowledge and skills of teachers (Haug & Mork, 2021). Effective teaching requires

teachers' strategy weaving multiple instructional objectives at once, namely content, language, and literacy. Specifically, adapted OTPD programs are needed to respond to particular curricular and instructional challenges EFL teachers face.

Addressing this gap is crucial for fostering the holistic professional growth of EFL teachers. Without integrating personal reflection into professional development, there is a risk of hindering teachers' self-awareness, which is essential for meaningful contributions to their career advancement. Therefore, this study aims to explore the levels of reflective thinking of English teachers within the context of writing best practice papers, contributing to a more comprehensive and effective approach to teacher professional development. The reflective thinking process is analyzed through teachers' reflection journals during the OTPD writing program, utilizing the concept of reflective thinking levels as proposed by Hatton and Smith (1995). Their model is particularly relevant as it focuses on analysis within the field of education, aligning with the research emphasis. According to Hatton and Smith (1995), reflective thinking encompasses four stages. Firstly, Descriptive Writing involves teachers recording events or experiences without delving into analysis, simply reporting what happened. Secondly, in the Descriptive Reflection phase, educators engage in reflection by recounting their experiences, which serves as a starting point for further examination. Thirdly, during Dialogic Reflection, teachers enter a dialogue with themselves or others to explore different perspectives and consider various viewpoints. They may seek feedback from colleagues, leading to deeper insights into their learning. Lastly, Critical Reflection represents the highest level of reflection, where teachers analyze their practices and underlying assumptions, critically evaluating their approaches and the reasons behind them.

The present study sets out to systematically investigate the levels of reflective thinking among EFL teachers as they develop best practice papers within an Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) writing program. Specifically, the study will analyze teachers' reflection journals using Hatton and Smith's (1995) four-stage model of reflective thinking. By identifying the extent to which teachers engage in each level of reflection, the research aims to illuminate how OTPD programs can better foster deep, critical self-reflection among EFL educators. The findings are expected to inform the design of more effective professional development initiatives that not only enhance teachers' instructional practices but also support their personal and professional growth. Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute to a more holistic approach to teacher development, empowering EFL teachers to become reflective practitioners capable

of adapting to evolving educational demands and advancing their own careers.

METHOD

Research Design

This case study examines the reflective thinking levels exhibited by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia while learning how to compose best-practice papers. These teachers engaged in a tailored OTPD program conducted by a state university in Central Java, Indonesia. This six-week program, integrating synchronous and asynchronous components, aims to enhance EFL teachers' competency in writing best practice papers. It leverages a combination of interactive online sessions, mentorship from volunteer mentors affiliated with the university, WhatsApp group discussions, and a repository of online learning resources, all of which are meticulously tailored to provide participants with authentic learning experiences.

The data collection for this study involved teachers' reflective journals and group interviews. Reflective journals are integral to the Online Teacher Professional Development (OTPD) program. Participants were required to write reflections on their learning experiences each week, maintaining a reflective journal. Each participant compiled six journals, one for each week of the six-week training program. These journals were crucial data sources, providing insights into the cognitive processes involved as teachers reflected on their learning.

Each reflective journal entry averaged approximately 300-500 words. The language used was Indonesian, and the format of the journals followed a consistent structure: a narrative of weekly experiences, reflections on learning outcomes, and plans for future improvement. A total of 97 entries were collected from 16 participants, each contributing an average of six entries, one per week of training. The themes of the journal entries varied weekly, focusing on different aspects of the training, such as new teaching strategies, challenges faced, and personal growth.

The reflective journals were collected through Google Forms and distributed weekly to participants. This online platform facilitated the systematic gathering and organization of journal entries, ensuring that all reflections were collected efficiently and securely. This method provided a structured and accessible way for participants to submit their reflections and for the researcher to compile and analyze the data.

To gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the writings produced by the participants, the researcher also conducted group interviews, in the form of a focus group discussion, involving four selected participants. These

individuals were purposefully chosen based on the uniqueness and profound insights presented in their writings. Uniqueness in this context refers to how the participants' reflections provided novel or particularly insightful perspectives on their learning experiences. This could include distinctive approaches to problem-solving, creative strategies implemented in their teaching, or unique challenges they encountered and overcame. Profound insights pertain to the depth and clarity of the participants' reflections, such as their ability to critically analyze their teaching practices, articulate significant learning outcomes, or demonstrate substantial personal growth. Participants were selected based on their exceptional reflections on learning processes, providing insights that enriched the understanding of the OTPD program's impact.

The group interviews, conducted via Zoom (60–90 minutes), were scheduled at mutually convenient times for participants and researchers. Ethical considerations were prioritized, with consent forms ensuring participants understood the research objectives and data usage. Participants were granted the freedom to withdraw their involvement in the research if they foresaw any issues or losses associated with participation. It is noteworthy that all names utilized in this study were pseudonyms, a measure taken to safeguard participants' identities and uphold ethical standards.

Thematic analysis was used to find and generate themes from the reflective journal entries and interviews. In determining thematic analysis, this study utilized the framework by Hatton and Smith (1995), which describes teacher reflective thinking through four dimensions: descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection, and critical reflection. The thematic analysis process included several steps: transcribing the reflective journals and the interviews, reading and re-reading data, coding and generating patterns, building themes, reviewing and defining themes, and reporting. In the initial stage of analysis, the data were familiarized by transcribing from Indonesian to English. The transcription was performed by a bilingual researcher proficient in both languages to ensure accuracy and consistency. The translation process involved a balance between literal translation and free translation to maintain the meaning and context of the original reflections while making them comprehensible in English.

The data were read repeatedly by the researcher and a second independent reviewer to identify and code sections that represented different levels of reflective thinking. To ensure the reliability of data identification and coding, inter-rater reliability was assessed by comparing the coding outcomes of both reviewers. Discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved through consensus to ensure consistency and accuracy in the thematic analysis. This coding involved annotating

paragraphs based on their alignment with the dimensions of reflective thinking as defined by Hatton and Smith (1995). Notes and comments were added to the coded sections to help identify and build potential themes. The comments referred to these annotations that helped pinpoint key ideas and patterns in the reflections. After coding and theme-building, the results were described in the findings of this study. To ensure the credibility of the findings, member checks were conducted. This involved sharing the analysis with participants to verify that the interpretations accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants

The research encompassed a cohort of 16 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from various provinces across Indonesia. This group consisted of 6 male and 10 female educators, with ages ranging from 20 to 50 years. Collectively, these participants possessed a diverse range of teaching experience, spanning from 5 to 34 years. Their professional backgrounds included instruction at both junior and senior high schools. The diverse range of teaching experiences provided participants with a broad spectrum of perspectives and insights, including practical strategies for integrating reflective thinking into teaching practices and challenges encountered in adapting to new pedagogical approaches. These perspectives are particularly relevant to the study as they offer valuable context for understanding the ways in which reflective thinking can influence teachers' professional development and their ability to respond to dynamic educational demands.

Procedure

In this study, participants were organized into distinct cohorts, each overseen by a volunteer mentor from the university. The program featured weekly live sessions held on Zoom every Saturday for about 1.5 hours. These sessions included a 20-minute video presentation covering the fundamental principles of argumentation and argumentative writing, followed by a 20-minute video discussion. Teachers engaged in a 20-minute small group discussion in Zoom breakout rooms, focusing on the provided materials, followed by a 10-minute reflection in the main session. Weekly, teachers were required to write reflective journals summarizing their learning experiences from the week's activities. They also completed assignments given by their mentors through a WhatsApp group, which involved writing, research, and discussion tasks related to the structure of the best practice paper they had previously developed. Mentors were essential in guiding teachers through these assignments, addressing any challenges, and offering feedback on their work via Google Docs.

The themes listed in Table 1 are included to illustrate the core topics covered during the live sessions of the professional development program. These themes are directly relevant to the reflective journals written by the participants. Each theme represents a key area of focus in the training, guiding the content and discussions of the weekly sessions. By aligning the themes with the journal

assignments, the study aims to ensure that the reflections captured in the journals are closely connected to the learning objectives of the program. This alignment helps to assess whether the participants' reflective writing accurately reflects their understanding and engagement with the themes presented during the sessions.

Table 1
The Live Session Learning Themes

Week	Theme
1 st week	An overview of the teacher as researcher and best practice.
2 nd week	An Introduction to Online Library and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy and Tools
3 rd week	An Introduction to Quill Bot for Academic Writing
4 th week	An Introduction to Best Practice: Theory
5 th week	An Introduction to Best Practices: Practices
6 th week	An Introduction to Argumentation and Argumentative Writing

Source: Authors' Data

FINDINGS

This study examines the reflective thinking levels of 16 EFL teachers by analyzing their written reflection journals as part of their participation in a tailored OTPD. Table 2 illustrates the reflective thinking levels assessed according to their written reflective journal, using the four levels of reflective thinking outlined by Hatton and Smith (1995). The subthemes in Table 2 are derived from the central theme of reflective thinking. They are categorized to provide a comprehensive overview of different aspects of reflective thinking observed in the

participants' journals. These sub-themes emerged through a process of thematic classification, where reflections were analyzed and grouped according to the type and depth of reflection. The classification into subthemes helps to highlight specific areas within the broader theme of reflective thinking, allowing for a detailed examination of how teachers engage with and reflect on their learning experiences. This elaboration clarifies the nature of reflective thinking exhibited by the EFL teachers and underscores the different levels of reflection captured in their journals.

Table 2
Overview of Themes of EFL Teachers' Reflective Thinking Levels

Theme	Subtheme	Teacher's comment
Descriptive Reflection	Factual Description	Description of learning experiences and learning resources
	Chronological or Thematic Organization	Discussion of group activities, emphasis on process and organization
	Personal Response	Acknowledgement of learning
	Surface-Level Analysis	Limited self-awareness and critical analysis
	Focus on Description with Light Analysis	Description of objective and context, contextual information
Dialogic Reflection	Identification of Challenges and Complexities	Description of experiences and engagement in analysis and problem-solving.
	Integration of Theory and Practice	Description of the application of knowledge and skills, identification of new knowledge, detailed planning
	Identification of Areas for Improvement	Description of Increased Confidence
	Openness to Feedback	Description of the discussion and sharing session
	Commitment to Ongoing Growth	Description of application in future practice

Source: Authors' Data

EFL Teachers' Descriptive Reflection

Based on data from the teachers' reflection journals, it was found that 7 out of 16 teachers were at the descriptive reflection level. They provided a descriptive account of the teacher's learning experiences, sources, and initial understanding of the concept of a best practice paper. However, this description lacked deeper analysis, as they did not explore the implications of these experiences or reflect on the personal growth that resulted from them. Teacher 2 wrote in their journal as stated in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

... I get ideas for teaching methods from journal articles that I read. The sources for writing my best practice paper also mostly come from journal articles, reference books, and several book chapters. At this first and second meeting, I learned the concept, principles, characteristics and benefits of a best practice paper. I just realized that good teaching practices in class can be processed into scientific writing, but with simple or uncomplicated characteristics. At first, I was still confused about the concrete concept of best practice paper, but I discussed it in a small group guided by a mentor and there was also discussion with my group mates there, so I got a little new insight into the more concrete concept and characteristics of best practice paper... (Teacher 2)

The reflection writing of Teacher 2 in Excerpt 1 aligns with the descriptive reflection level in Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework for teacher reflective thinking. Her writing provides a factual description of where she obtained her ideas for teaching methods, citing sources such as journal articles, reference books, and book chapters. She also describes the structure of the learning experience, including how she attended each meeting and the schedule of these sessions, during which she learned about the concepts, principles, characteristics, and benefits of best practice. This description is organized chronologically or thematically, presenting a clear overview of the events.

However, the reflection remains at a descriptive level, as Teacher 2 does not engage in deeper analysis or critical reflection. While she mentions initial confusion and subsequent discussions with a mentor and peers, she does not explore these experiences in depth or reflect on their personal implications. Her account is primarily focused on narrating the learning process rather than offering a deeper analysis of her thoughts, feelings, or the broader implications of what she learned. Consequently, the reflection demonstrates self-awareness but lacks critical analysis, staying largely at the surface level. The other teacher expressed a personal response toward the program as shown in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

... Until the second week, I learned a lot not only from the mentor but also from fellow participants through their sharing of experience and perspective. I do believe collaboration will help me a lot. I thank the mentor for the generous ideas and persistence patience in escorting us towards our final goal ... (Teacher 4)

Towards the end of the statement in Excerpt 2, the teacher expressed gratitude for what he learned from the mentor and fellow participants, highlighting the value of collaboration and shared experiences. As displayed in Excerpt 3, another teacher also focused on the description of the program with light analysis.

Excerpt 3

At the first meeting, the discussion focused on the overview of the best practice paper ... At this second meeting, discussions in small groups focused on the stage of finding ideas for writing best practice papers. At this stage, several friends in our group conveyed their ideas about best practice... The processes at the third meeting were understanding the concept of the best practice paper, reflecting and writing a draft, focused on timeline and schedule in writing the best practice paper. Apart from that, discussions in small groups also lead us to finish our outline draft which will be developed into a best practice paper... (Teacher 9)

This writing in Excerpt 3 was more descriptive in nature, providing a straightforward account of activities and practical considerations related to the Best Practice paper. Teacher 9 did not engage in in-depth self-analysis or critical examination of teaching beliefs, assumptions, or the broader implications of teaching practices, which were the characteristics of the higher levels of reflection.

EFL Teachers' Dialogic Reflection

Data from the teachers' reflection journals revealed that 9 out of 16 teachers were at the dialogic reflection level. Unlike the descriptive reflection level, which primarily involves recounting experiences and sources without deeper engagement, the dialogic reflection level involves a more nuanced exploration of the teacher's thoughts, feelings, and personal growth. These teachers not only described their learning experiences and initial understanding of the best practice paper but also engaged in a deeper analysis of the implications of these experiences (see Excerpt 4), reflecting on how the dialogue, both internal and with others, contributed to their development. Teacher 1 wrote in their journal.

Excerpt 4

...After identifying new knowledge about how to find ideas in writing a best practice paper, I can apply this knowledge and skills in my writing by

determining the title/topic, participants who will be involved, skills & subjects that will be used as topics, problems which will be appointed, as well as the solutions implemented... (Teacher 1)

Based on the Teacher 1 journal, the statement in Excerpt 4 appears to align with the “dialogic reflection” level in Hatton and Smith’s (1995) framework for teacher reflection thinking. This writing exposed the identification of new knowledge about how to find ideas in writing a best practice paper. This indicates a level of self-awareness and recognition of learning, which is characteristic of dialogic reflection. It also showed the application of knowledge and skills. Teacher 1 explained how he planned to apply this newly acquired knowledge and skills to a different context, specifically in writing a best practice paper. This step represents the application of learning, which is a hallmark of dialogic reflection as it involves connecting theory to practice. He also stated detailed planning. The writing outlined specific actions the teacher intends to take, such as determining the title/topic, participants, skills & subjects, problems, and solutions. This level of planning and consideration of practical steps was indicative of dialogic reflection, which involves thinking through the implications of new knowledge and planning for its application.

Teacher 3 in Excerpt 5, on the other hand, engaged in a thoughtful internal dialogue, reflecting on how his new learning could be applied to his teaching practice or other pertinent contexts.

Excerpt 5

I composed my reflective journal for this program the same way as my usual teaching diary entries. In addition to detailing the events, I also assessed whether I could incorporate this new knowledge to my real condition as the reflective journal guidelines allowed us the freedom to document our thoughts and experiences. (Teacher 3)

This statement depicted in Excerpt 5 illustrates a meaningful internal dialogue with himself as Teacher 3 evaluated how new knowledge could be applied in practical teaching scenarios. The process of reflecting on how new insights can be integrated into current practices, along with planning for future applications, aligns with the characteristics of dialogic reflection. Additional examples in Excerpt 6 from Teacher 3 further support this finding.

Excerpt 6

“Through the weekly sessions and discussions, I realized that I could apply the concept of argumentative writing to enhance my lesson plans. I have begun incorporating the new strategies into my lessons, focusing on how they can address specific issues in student engagement and understanding.”

Teacher 3’s reflection in Excerpt 6 shows a clear intention to apply learned concepts to practice, including detailed planning for integration, which is indicative of dialogic reflection. These examples collectively illustrate how dialogic reflection involves meaningful engagement with new knowledge, planning for practical application, and ongoing self-assessment. This approach highlights the teachers’ efforts to move beyond surface-level documentation and toward deeper reflection on the implications of their learning.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study on EFL teachers’ level of reflective thinking indicate that a notable proportion of the participants, specifically 9 out of 16 teachers, predominantly engage in dialogic reflection. This observation aligns with findings from previous research, such as that by Chung and Fisher (2022), which also reported a prevalence of dialogic reflection among EFL teachers. The present study similarly examines the reflective thinking levels of EFL teachers, using comparable methods and contexts, thereby reinforcing the consistency of these findings. Their study, conducted across various regions, found that EFL instructors frequently engaged in dialogic reflection, indicating a tendency toward critical examination of their teaching practices. This form of reflection, characterized by a focus on dialogue and self-assessment, underscores the importance of incorporating critical self-examination and peer collaboration into teacher development programs (Yuan et al., 2022). These insights suggest that professional development initiatives that promote dialogue and diverse perspectives can be beneficial in advancing EFL teachers’ pedagogical skills. The present study also supports this idea, highlighting the importance of such initiatives in fostering reflective thinking and enhancing teaching practices.

The recent study reveals a notable prevalence of EFL teachers operating primarily at the descriptive reflection level. This observation is consistent with findings from previous research, which highlight a similar trend. For instance, Turhan and Kirkgoz (2018) reported that EFL teachers across various language contexts predominantly engaged in descriptive reflection, characterized by documenting classroom events and experiences without extensive critical analysis. Similarly, Liu (2017) found that many teachers focused on describing their teaching experiences without delving deeply into the underlying effective teaching. In conjunction with these findings, the present study highlights the importance of fostering reflective thinking that encourages teachers to engage more critically with the core principles of pedagogy, which can enhance both self-awareness and teaching effectiveness.

In the context of Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework, the study shows that none of the teachers were found at the lowest level of descriptive writing or the highest level of critical reflection. This suggests that while the teachers were engaging in reflective practices, they were not fully embracing the most profound levels of reflective thinking. Specifically, the study's participants demonstrated reflective practices that were more descriptive in nature, capturing their learning experiences and actions but lacking deeper analytical insight.

Although the teachers did not reach the highest level of critical reflection, many were engaged in dialogic reflection. They discussed their learning experiences and acknowledged the benefits of certain practices. However, they did not advance to the level of critical reflection, which involves delving into the deeper meanings and consequences of their practices and contemplating their potential effects. This limitation may be attributed to the absence of clear guidance on how to engage in critical reflection, as noted by Fraser et al. (2022), who highlighted the need for explicit instruction on critical reflection as a writing genre. The lack of such guidance seems to stem from the program itself rather than the teachers. Teachers should receive explicit training to cultivate this skill, indicating that the problem lies within the design of the program and the insufficient support provided to encourage critical reflection. Russell (2005) also noted that effective reflection requires explicit teaching to develop the necessary awareness and analytical skills.

This study underscores the need for professional development programs and educational policies to focus on fostering higher levels of critical reflection among EFL teachers. Currently, teacher education programs often lack structures to support transformative learning through critical reflection (Klein & Wikan, 2019). The current reflective form used in the study may not have been sufficiently analytical, which could have limited the participants' ability to reach a higher level of reflective thinking, such as critical reflection. By enhancing teachers' reflective practices and moving from simple documentation to more analytical forms of reflection, their pedagogical effectiveness could be significantly improved, potentially facilitating deeper reflection and growth.

To address these gaps, it is advisable for professional development programs and educational authorities to assess teachers' reflective thinking levels prior to training because it allows professional development programs to be tailored to the individual needs of teachers. Since different levels of reflective thinking may require distinct instructional approaches and resources, understanding these levels ensures that programs are

designed to effectively support teachers' growth and enhance their reflective practices.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the level to which EFL teachers exhibit reflective thinking when creating best practice papers as part of the OTPD writing program. The program aimed to guide teachers in evaluating their learning process through reflective activities. The study found that, despite the 6-week duration of the PD training, the predominant reflection levels among teachers were dialogic reflection, followed by descriptive reflection. The persistence of descriptive reflection among some teachers may be influenced by several factors. These could include the teachers' prior experience with reflective practices, which may limit their ability to engage in deeper analysis, as well as the level of support and guidance provided during the training. This suggests that while the length of the training program was adequate, the content may not have been fully effective in elevating teachers to higher levels of reflection. The dominance of dialogic reflection among the EFL teachers indicated a willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue about teaching and learning, but the persistence of descriptive reflection for some teachers also indicated a focus primarily on documenting their teaching experiences and classroom events without delving deeply into critical analysis. This implies that while some teachers are engaged in dialogues, others may have adhered to more surface-level reflections.

The study had certain limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of EFL teachers. Second, the effectiveness of training may vary based on factors like the intensity of the training, the topics covered, and the prior experience of the teachers. The study's relatively short duration may not have allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the long-term impact of PD, specifically the OTPD program, on reflective practices. This limitation suggests the need for future research to include more participants and to do longitudinal studies in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of training on reflective practices, especially to know the teachers' reflective thinking levels and also tailored programs (novice, experienced teachers, or teachers in different educational contexts) may address the unique needs and challenges of each subgroup.

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