

## Exploring Pre-service EFL Teachers' Views of Reflective Practices in a Teaching Practicum

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### Abstract:

This study aims to explore the views of Saudi EFL pre-service teachers regarding reflective practices in a teaching practicum. The research design follows Dolbeare and Schuman's framework (Schuman, 1982), which involved a series of three interviews with the participants. The first interview set the context of the participants' experiences, the second interview focused on reconstructing details within that context, and the third interview encouraged reflection on the meaning of those experiences (Seidman, 1998). Throughout the teaching practicum, the participants were also required to write weekly reflective journals. These journals captured their reflections on curriculum matters, class activities, and significant social and personal aspects during their teaching practice. The reflective journals were collected at the end of the semester to further explore the pre-service teachers' views on reflective practice. The results of the study provided insights into the specific aspects that pre-service teachers reflected upon during their practice, the different contexts in which they engaged in reflection, and their perceptions and comprehension of reflection as a concept. The findings contribute to our understanding of how pre-service teachers in Saudi Arabia approach and engage in reflective practices.

**Keywords:** pre-service teacher education, practicum, reflection, reflective practices

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## 1. Introduction

Reflective practice is a fundamental aspect of teachers' ongoing professional development and their ability to enhance their teaching skills. Through critical analysis of their actions, beliefs, and assumptions, teachers can identify areas of strength and weakness, enabling them to make necessary adjustments to their teaching approaches. This process of self-reflection also facilitates a deeper understanding of students' needs and learning styles, which leads to more effective instructional strategies and personalized learning experiences. Reflective teaching practices have gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in pre-service teacher education programs, as a means to improve teaching effectiveness and positively influence student learning outcomes in the language classroom.

Reflective teaching practices encompass a wide range of conceptions, each offering unique perspectives on the reflective process, including Schön's concept of reflective practice, which emphasizes the importance of learning from experience and professional reflection-in-action (1983). Building on the findings of previous academic studies, this study seeks to investigate the impact of reflective practices on pre-service EFL teachers' teaching. By examining the existing research-based evidence on reflective teaching practices, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and benefits of reflective practices for pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. This study also explores the influence of various factors on pre-service teachers' reflective practices, such as the use of reflective journals, collaborative reflection, mentorship, and feedback.

## 2. Aim of the Study

This study aims to identify the reflective practices among Saudi pre-service EFL teachers during their teaching practicum. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the perceived benefits and challenges associated with incorporating reflective practices in the teaching practicum. The research also aims to examine the extent to which Saudi pre-service EFL teachers engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation during their teaching practicum. Furthermore, the study aims to identify the factors that influence Saudi pre-service EFL teachers' engagement in reflective practices during their teaching practicum. Another aim is to provide valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing the integration of reflective practices in the preparation of Saudi pre-service EFL teachers.

## 3. Questions of the Study

1. What do Saudi pre-service EFL teachers reflect upon in their practice?
2. In what contexts do Saudi pre-service EFL teachers participate in reflective practice?
3. How do Saudi pre-service EFL teachers perceive and comprehend the notion of reflection?

## 4. Literature Review

Reflective practice is integral to teachers' ongoing professional development and their ability to improve their teaching skills. As Farrell (2015, 2018) suggests, reflecting on one's teaching practice allows teachers to critically analyze their actions, beliefs, and assumptions. This self-reflection enables teachers to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and make necessary adjustments to their teaching approaches. Furthermore, reflective teaching helps teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their students' needs and learning styles. This understanding leads to more effective instructional strategies and personalized learning experiences, resulting in improved educational outcomes for students. Reflective teaching also promotes a teacher's ability to adapt to the changing needs of their learners and create a student-centered classroom environment. Reflective teaching encompasses various conceptions, each offering unique perspectives on the reflective process. For instance, Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice focuses on the development of professional knowledge through the examination of real-life teaching experiences. This concept emphasizes the importance of learning from experience and professional reflection-in-action.

Reflective practice has become a crucial aspect of teaching in the current educational context, with many countries mandating its inclusion in professional standards for teachers. Research has shown that reflective practice has the potential to shape better educational outcomes by enhancing teachers' understanding of themselves, their practice, and their context. This literature review aims to analyze the research-based evidence for the power of reflective practice in the teaching practicum. Additionally, it explores different conceptions of reflective teaching and highlights its importance in the professional development of pre-service teachers.

### *4.1 Reflection and Practicum*

The teaching practicum is characterized by the systematic collection of data and active reflection, with the aim of improving the educational process. Reflection is an indispensable component of the practicum, as it centers on the assessment and development of one's own teaching practice (McLean, 1995). Reflective teaching, in this context, entails the design of lessons and the evaluation of student progress, taking into consideration learning theories, current research, practical experience, and the impact of these factors on student achievement (Parsons & Brown, 2002).

Within the framework of reflection, teachers engage in critical examination of their actions, decisions, and outcomes. Successful pre-service teachers are encouraged to become reflective practitioners and active observers of the learning process. They are expected to evaluate and interpret classroom data that has been systematically gathered, using this information as a foundation for future

planning and decision-making (Parsons & Brown, 2002). In the field of second language (L2) teaching, reflection has been identified as a prominent strategy for training teachers. It assists them in developing their own context-specific theories of L2 instruction (McDonough, 2006).

Reflective practice in pre-service teacher professional development involves a critical analysis of beliefs about teaching and learning, taking responsibility for classroom actions, and continuously improving one's teaching practice (Farrell, 2008). Unlike a prescriptive approach, reflective pre-service teaching does not involve the rigid implementation of pre-established instructional blueprints. Instead, reflective teachers are considered decision-makers who test classroom issues, reflect on their experiences, and seek to enhance their thinking and practical abilities. This reflective process draws from a range of sources, including theory, research, personal experiences, and practical models. It is manifested through instructional choices, critical exchanges with peers and tutors, and reflective assignment writing (Roberts, 1998).

Overall, reflection is an integral aspect of the teaching practicum, serving as a means to assess and develop one's practice. It involves critically examining actions and decisions, utilizing systematically gathered data, and drawing from various sources to inform instructional choices. Pre-service teachers, through reflective practice, continuously strive to improve their teaching by analyzing their beliefs, taking responsibility for their actions, and seeking opportunities for professional growth. This reflective approach emphasizes the importance of active engagement, thoughtful analysis, and continuous improvement in the teaching process.

#### ***4.2 Reflective journals***

One popular component of fostering reflection is through the use of reflective journals, where pre-service teachers document their thoughts, experiences, and insights. Several studies have explored the use of reflective journals as a tool for pre-service teachers to engage in reflective practices. For instance, a study conducted by Spalding and Wilson (2002) investigated the impact of reflective journal writing on pre-service language teachers' professional development. The results indicated that engagement with reflective journals enhanced the participants' skills to critically evaluate their teaching strategies. This active reflection promoted deeper understanding and the identification of areas for improvement. Additionally, the study found that the use of reflective journals supported the development of metacognitive awareness, enabling pre-service teachers to better understand their instructional decisions and their impact on student learning. Abednia et al. (2013) also found that regular journal writing helped pre-service teachers develop a greater understanding of their teaching practices and allowed them to identify areas for improvement. This self-reflection positively influenced

their teaching approaches and resulted in increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

The impact of reflective journals on pre-service teachers' self-awareness was further explored in a study by Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2017). They emphasized that the process of regularly documenting thoughts and experiences in journals led to heightened self-reflection and increased self-awareness. The journals provided a platform for pre-service teachers to analyze their decisions, teaching methods, and challenges faced in the language classroom. This reflective practice led to a greater understanding of their teaching style and encouraged professional growth.

Reflective journals also empower pre-service teachers to promote active engagement and student learning. Dumlao and Pinatacan's study (2019) examined the influence of reflective journals on student active engagement and learning outcomes. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers who actively engaged in reflective journals were more likely to implement innovative instructional strategies in the language classroom. The students of these reflective teachers exhibited higher levels of motivation, participation, and achievement compared to students taught by teachers who did not engage in reflective practices. The study further highlighted that the process of reflection led to a deepened understanding of students' needs, resulting in tailored instructional approaches that effectively catered to diverse learning styles.

Finally, reflective journals are closely related to effective classroom management and relationships. A study by Hojeij et al. (2021) explored how reflective journals impacted pre-service teachers' classroom management skills and relationships with students. The findings indicated that regular reflection through journals enabled teachers to identify and address classroom management challenges more effectively. The process of reflection encouraged teachers to develop proactive strategies, fostering a positive classroom environment and enhancing student engagement. Additionally, the study emphasized that reflective journals played a crucial role in strengthening teacher-student relationships through improved communication and empathy.

These studies demonstrate the significant influence of reflective journals on pre-service teachers' professional development, self-awareness, teaching strategies, student engagement, and classroom management skills. The use of reflective journals in the language classroom positively impacts teaching and learning by fostering critical thinking, self-reflection, and the implementation of effective instructional methods. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating reflective journals as a fundamental tool in pre-service teacher education programs, promoting reflective practices and enhancing teaching and learning experiences in the language classroom.

### ***4.3 Collaborative Reflection***

Collaborative reflection has gained increasing attention as a powerful approach to foster professional growth and facilitate meaningful learning experiences for pre-service teachers in the language classroom. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of collaborative reflection on pre-service teachers' professional development. For instance, Meirink et al. (2007) found that engaging in collaborative reflection activities led to improved teaching strategies, greater pedagogical knowledge, and enhanced self-efficacy among pre-service language teachers. The findings suggest that the collaborative nature of reflection encourages peer support, the exchange of ideas and experiences, and collective problem-solving, ultimately resulting in enhanced teaching practices.

Collaborative reflection has also been found to positively influence instructional strategies employed by pre-service language teachers. In their study, Harlow and Cobb (2014) demonstrated that collaborative reflection promotes the exploration and implementation of innovative teaching approaches, such as student-centered methodologies and differentiated instruction. Pre-service teachers who are engaged in collaborative reflection demonstrated a greater willingness to experiment with diverse instructional strategies, resulting in increased student engagement, participation, and achievement.

The use of collaborative reflection in the language classroom has been effective in fostering critical thinking skills and self-awareness among pre-service teachers. A study by Gutiérrez et al. (2019) observed that collaborative reflection encouraged pre-service teachers to critically evaluate their instructional decisions, analyze student learning outcomes, and identify areas for improvement. This reflective process enhanced self-awareness, enabling teachers to make informed adjustments to their teaching practices and cater to the diverse needs of their students. In a study by Ardi et al. (2023), pre-service teachers engaged in group reflection sessions where they shared their teaching experiences and received feedback from peers and mentors. The findings highlighted that collaborative reflection promoted critical thinking, problem-solving, and improved instructional strategies. Moreover, this practice fostered a sense of professional community among pre-service teachers, enhancing their confidence and ultimately benefiting their students' learning experience.

These studies demonstrate the significant impact of collaborative reflection on teaching practices and student learning outcomes in the language classroom. Collaborative reflection fosters professional development, enhances instructional strategies, promotes critical thinking, and improves student achievement. Pre-service teachers are therefore encouraged to engage in collaborative reflective

practices to enhance their teaching effectiveness and create meaningful learning experiences for their students.

#### ***4.4 Mentorship and Feedback***

As pre-service teachers embark on their journey to becoming professional educators, they can greatly benefit from mentorship and feedback to develop their teaching skills. Research has demonstrated that mentorship and feedback are crucial elements in supporting pre-service teachers' reflective practices. From one perspective, mentorship plays a crucial role in assisting pre-service teachers in developing their professional identities and teaching practices. According to Achinstein and Athanases(2005), mentors can provide support, feedback, and guidance to pre-service teachers, helping them reflect on their teaching experiences. Results from a study by Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) revealed that mentorship positively influenced pre-service teachers' reflective practices, leading to improved teaching strategies.

From another perspective, feedback is an essential component of mentorship and reflective practices. Feedback can be provided by mentors, peers, or students, and it helps pre-service teachers gain insights into their teaching efficacy. Li et al. (2015) found that feedback from mentors positively impacted pre-service teachers' reflective practices and improved their ability to self-assess and self-reflect. Additionally, feedback fosters growth and enhances teaching quality, as highlighted in the study by Chan (2010).

A significant aspect of mentorship and feedback is represented in reflective practices that involve the act of critically analyzing teaching experiences and using that analysis for future improvements. According to McGraw and Davis (2017), reflection allows pre-service teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their teaching methods, theories, and beliefs, leading to increased self-awareness and professional growth. The study conducted by Harrison (2005) demonstrated that reflective practices positively influenced the teaching and learning processes in the language classroom. A study conducted by Johnson and Hoffman et al. (2015) found that pre-service teachers who received consistent and constructive feedback from their mentors were more likely to engage in reflective teaching practices. This feedback encouraged them to critically evaluate their instructional methods, modify their approaches accordingly, and positively impact their students' learning outcomes.

Based on these reviewed studies, it is evident that mentorship and feedback play a pivotal role in facilitating pre-service teachers' reflective practices in the language classroom. These practices contribute to the professional development of pre-service teachers by enhancing their teaching strategies, self-awareness, and ability to adapt to diverse student needs. Consequently, teaching and

learning outcomes are positively influenced, creating a conducive environment for language acquisition and student engagement.

#### ***4.5 Impact of Reflective Practice on Student Learning***

Reflective practice has been recognized as a fundamental component of effective teaching. According to Dewey's theory (1933), reflection allows teachers to critically analyze their teaching methods, gain insights, and make necessary adjustments to improve student learning outcomes. A number of studies have examined the impact of pre-service teachers' reflective practices on student learning outcomes in the language classroom. A study by Achinstein and Barrett (2004) examined the relationship between pre-service teachers' reflective practices and student achievement in language learning. The findings suggested a positive correlation, indicating that when pre-service teachers engaged in reflective practices, students demonstrated improved language proficiency, motivation, and overall academic performance. Zanting et al.'s study (2012) corroborated this idea and indicated that pre-service teachers who engaged in reflective practices demonstrated higher levels of self-awareness and were more responsive to the needs of their students.

Reflective practices enable pre-service teachers to refine their instructional strategies to better cater to the diverse needs of their students. In a study by Kheirzadeh and Sistani (2018), it was found that pre-service teachers who engaged in reflection were more likely to adopt learner-centered strategies, such as differentiated instruction and scaffolding techniques. This, in turn, substantially increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes. Reflective practices also contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' assessment and feedback skills, which are crucial for student learning. Research by Horgan and Gardiner-Hyland (2019) showed that pre-service teachers who engaged in reflective practices were better able to provide timely and constructive feedback to students, leading to increased self-efficacy and motivation for learning.

Meanwhile, pre-service teachers' reflective practices can have a positive impact on student learning by fostering reflective thinking skills among learners. In a study by Warnanda and Khoiriyah (2020), it was found that pre-service teachers who promoted reflective thinking in their classrooms created a supportive learning environment where students were encouraged to critically analyze their own learning processes. Engaging in reflective practices as pre-service teachers not only benefits their immediate students but also contributes to their own professional growth. Research by Flores (2020) highlighted that pre-service teachers who actively engaged in reflective practices were more likely to continue professional development throughout their teaching careers, which in turn positively impacted student learning outcomes over time.



These studies indicate a strong relationship between pre-service teachers' reflective practices and student learning outcomes in the language classroom. Through critical introspection and adjustment of teaching strategies, pre-service teachers enhance their skills to meet the diverse needs of students and provide effective assessment and feedback. Additionally, reflective practices promote the development of reflective thinking skills and improved academic performance among students.

In conclusion, the current study has benefited greatly from previous research on reflective teaching practices. The literature review highlighted the role of reflective practice in pre-service teachers' ongoing professional development, their ability to improve their teaching skills, and their understanding of their students' needs. It also emphasized the effectiveness of reflective journals, collaborative reflection, mentorship, and feedback in enhancing teaching practices and student learning outcomes. By building upon these previous studies, the current study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by focusing specifically on Saudi pre-service EFL teachers' perspectives of reflective practices in a teaching practicum.

## **5. Methodology**

### ***5.1 Design of the Study***

The qualitative research design was followed as it provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration through interviews (Mason & Fienberg, 2012) and reflective journals (Spalding & Wilson, 2002), allowing a deeper understanding of the "how and why" questions (Yin, 2015). This approach enabled the collection of detailed textual data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Initially, semi-structured interviews were conducted to specifically address the research questions. Additionally, each participant completed a reflective journal entry in MS Word format at the end of each week for 11 weeks, exploring the experiences of Saudi pre-service EFL teachers in reflective journal writing.

To ensure ethical considerations, full clearance was obtained from the university's ethics committee before the study began. The participants were thoroughly informed about the study's purpose and their voluntary participation. Consent forms were signed, and the participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point.

### ***5.2 Participants***

The study focused on a group of eight female practicum EFL students during the second semester of the 1444 H academic year. These students were enrolled in Sharqra University's Department of English Language and Literature, which is part of the College of Science and Humanities. The Department of English Language and Literature provides a suitable pool of participants with relevant experiences and insights into the subject matter. Furthermore, focusing on the second semester of the

academic year 1444 H aligns with the desire to investigate the development and progression of practicum EFL students over a significant portion of their academic program. By focusing on this particular university year, the study can assess the impact of the curriculum and teaching methodologies that have been implemented thus far, as well as any potential improvements or modifications that could improve the students' language learning experience.

During the practicum phase of this study, the participating pre-service teachers were placed under the mentorship of experienced supervising teachers. The supervising teachers played a pivotal role in assuming the responsibilities of classroom mentors and school-based supervisors. Their primary objective was to facilitate a gradual transition of instructional and assessment responsibilities to the pre-service teachers, thereby ensuring a seamless transfer of accountability. To ensure the effectiveness of the practicum, a faculty advisor, acting as a tutor, meticulously observed, documented, and evaluated the performance of the pre-service teachers in their classrooms. This diligent scrutiny was undertaken throughout the entire duration of the practicum, aiding in the comprehensive assessment of the pre-service teachers' teaching techniques and their impact on student learning outcomes. Moreover, the tutor provided valuable feedback and constructive suggestions to facilitate the professional growth and development of the pre-service teachers. This guidance aimed to promote their instructional skills, hone their classroom management skills, and foster an ongoing commitment to their continuous professional development. Through this extensive academic endeavor, the researcher sought to explore the dynamics of the practicum experience for EFL pre-service teachers, shedding light on the crucial role played by supervising teachers and the invaluable support provided by the faculty advisor in maximizing the potential of these prospective teachers.

### ***5.3 Instruments***

**Interviews.** They are the main source of my data collection for the study. They provide the explanations and interpretations through the voices of interviewees who can provide important insights into this particular situation (Yin, 2015). Essentially, in-depth interviewing provides the researcher with an understanding of other people's experiences, and the meaning they make of those experiences (Gerson & Damaske, 2020). Accordingly, the nature of the study was fully explained to each pre-service teacher. They were requested to sign a consent form. Each interview was expected to be one hour long, although some of the pre-service teachers took more time.

The researcher follows Dolbeare and Schuman's (1982) design of a series of three interviews. The first interview established the context of the participants' experience. The second interview allowed the

participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context, and the third interview encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 1998).

**Table 1**

*The three interviews adopted from Dolbeare and Schuman (1982)*

Interview	Interview Questions	Type of Question
Interview 1	What was your undergraduate degree? What do you understand by the term reflection? When was the first time you heard the term reflection? Give me an example of a time you engaged in reflection.	Initial and intake questions Semi-structured Open-ended
Interview 2	Tell me a bit more about yourself. Can you share with me some examples of classes you participated in that incorporated reflective activities? Explain how you did those activities. How did the cooperating teacher help you to reflect?	Follow-up questions Semi-structured Open-ended
Interview 3	When do you think back on your teaching practice? Is there anything you wanted to change? Were there any limitations that you can recall that did not help you to be reflective? Can you share some of those experiences? Do you think the practicum helped you to be reflective? How?	Follow-up questions Semi-structured Open-ended

The model proposed by Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) for in-depth, phenomenological interviewing entails conducting a trilogy of distinct interviews with each participant. Every interview furnishes a fundamental level of information that enhances the understanding of the subsequent one. To fully utilize the interactive and cumulative nature of the interview sequence, interviewers must ensure that they stay focused on the specific objective of each interview. Interviews follow a logical structure, and relinquishing control over their direction means forfeiting the power and advantages derived from that logic. Hence, during the three interviews, the interviewer must strike a careful equilibrium between fostering sufficient candidness in the participants to share their narratives and maintaining enough direction to ensure the effectiveness of the interview framework (McCracken, 1988).

**Reflective Journals.** The participants were required to write a weekly reflective journal as part of their practice. In the teaching practice booklet (that was given to the participants), they were given a directive to write a reflective journal in which they would keep a log of all their accomplishments by naming each and describing each briefly (Abednia et al., 2013). In these journals, they recorded their reflections on curriculum matters, class activities, as well as social and personal matters that are

significant to them on their teaching practice. The researcher requested the reflective journals at the end of the semester as part of the data collection for this study. During the semester, the researcher reminded the pre-service teachers to keep writing in their reflective journals. At the end of the semester, the researcher collected these weekly reflective journals from the five pre-service teachers. These reflective journals formed part of the data, and were used to extend the views of the pre-service teachers on reflective practice (Zulfikar&Mujiburrahman, 2017).

## **6. Results and Discussion**

### ***6.1 The interview***

**Interview one.** In response to the first question that focused on the participants' undergraduate degree and its influence on their understanding and use of reflection, some pre-service teachers expressed how their undergraduate degree, such as a degree in English language teaching or a Bachelor of Education, helped them develop an understanding of reflective practices. They mentioned the courses and modules that emphasized the importance of reflection in the teaching profession. Some participants highlighted the importance of their undergraduate degree in laying the foundation for reflective practices, while others expressed limited experiences in engaging with reflection during their studies. For instance, a pre-service teacher stated, "My undergraduate degree in education provided me with the necessary theoretical knowledge, but it did not emphasize practical reflection in teaching contexts."

By comparing the participants' responses to previous research, common themes and patterns can be identified. For example, some pre-service teachers demonstrated a limited understanding or lack of exposure to reflective practices during their undergraduate studies, highlighting the need for enhanced incorporation of reflective activities within teacher education programs. Previous research (e.g., Harrison et al., 2005) has also shown that pre-service teachers' understanding and integration of reflective practices can be influenced by the nature of their undergraduate programs. Gutiérrez et al. (2019) found that programs that explicitly incorporate opportunities for reflective practice tend to foster better understanding and implementation of reflection among pre-service teachers.

Regarding the second question: "What do you understand by the term reflection?" the participants' responses revealed their comprehension of reflection and how they perceived its usefulness in a teaching practicum. Some participants defined reflection as a process of self-assessment and critical thinking in order to improve teaching practices. One pre-service teacher expressed, "Reflection allows me to examine my teaching strategies, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make necessary adjustments to enhance student learning outcomes." Previous research has highlighted the

significance of pre-service teachers' understanding of reflection. Turhan and Kirkgöz(2021) argued that for reflection to be effective, pre-service teachers need to grasp the concept fully and view it as an essential component of their professional growth. Pre-service teachers who perceive reflection as a valuable tool for professional development reflect the findings of studies emphasizing the importance of pre-service-teachers' reflective practices in improving instructional effectiveness (Schön, 1983).

In response to the third question, the participants exhibited a range of experiences with the term "reflection." Some participants stated that they were introduced to reflection during their undergraduate studies, while others recalled hearing about it during their initial teacher training courses. One pre-service teacher expressed her initial encounter with reflection as follows: "I first heard about reflection during my practicum course. It was introduced as a crucial aspect of professional development, enabling us to critically analyze and improve our teaching practices." This opinion indicates that this pre-service teacher acknowledges the importance of reflection for enhancing teaching skills and professional growth. This opinion is in line with Mena et al.'s (2017) assertion that reflective practices can help pre-service teachers develop their pedagogical knowledge and improve their teaching effectiveness.

As for the fourth question, the participants provided a variety of examples of when they engaged in reflection. Some highlighted instances where they reflected on their lesson planning and delivery, while others mentioned reflecting on challenging classroom situations or student interactions. These responses corroborate previous research by Farrell (2012), who found that pre-service teachers frequently reflect on lesson planning and implementation, as well as classroom management strategies. One pre-service teacher offered the following example: "During my teaching practicum, I had a student who was struggling with a particular topic. After the class, I reflected on my instructional strategies and realized that I could have provided more scaffolding to support the student's understanding. I then modified my method for future lessons." This example demonstrates the pre-service teacher engaging in reflection to improve instructional practices, which aligns with the work of Scales and Boyle (1977) on reflective practice and improvement.

**Interview two.** The participants responded to the first question, "Tell me a bit more about yourself," by sharing their personal background and experiences. Some highlighted their educational background, language proficiency, and motivation to become EFL teachers. For instance, one participant stated, "I have a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching, and I am passionate about helping learners improve their English skills". This aligns with previous research that found pre-service teachers often have a strong sense of commitment and personal motivation to pursue teaching

(Birello, 2015). On the other hand, some pre-service teachers emphasized their lack of prior teaching experience and expressed concerns about their ability to effectively incorporate reflective practices into their teaching. A participant mentioned, "I haven't had much teaching experience yet, so I'm not sure if I can effectively incorporate reflection into my lessons". These concerns echo the findings of Jaspers et al. (2014), who noted that pre-service teachers may struggle with integrating reflective practices due to their limited teaching experience.

When asked the second question to provide examples of classes that incorporated reflective activities, the participants highlighted various instances. Some described using reflective journals to encourage self-reflection among students. As one participant mentioned, "I asked my students to keep reflective journals where they could write about their learning experiences and their progress in English". This reflects the use of journals as a common reflective activity, highlighting students' self-reflection and critical thinking in the learning process (Farrell, 2015). Other pre-service teachers mentioned engaging students in group discussions or peer feedback activities to encourage reflection. One participant stated, "I organized group discussions after each lesson where students could share their thoughts and give feedback to each other. It helped them reflect on their learning and perspectives". Such practices align with the notion of social constructivism, where reflection is fostered through interaction and collaboration (Turhan&Kirkgöz, 2021).

In response to the question about their reflective activities, several pre-service teachers discussed various approaches they adopted. One teacher stated, "I conducted regular self-reflections after each lesson where I analyzed my strengths and weaknesses, identified areas for improvement, and set goals for future lessons." Another participant mentioned, "I maintained a reflective journal to record my thoughts, observations, and reflections on classroom experiences." These findings are consistent with previous research, which highlights the significance of self-reflections and journaling as effective reflective practices in a teaching practicum (Moon, 2005; Farrell, 2008). Reflective journals, in particular, have been regarded as powerful tools for deepening reflection and facilitating professional growth (Farrell, 2008).

When discussing the role of cooperating teachers in supporting their reflective practices, the participants offered diverse perspectives. One participant expressed, "My cooperating teacher encouraged regular discussions about my teaching experiences and provided constructive feedback to facilitate my reflection process." Another participant mentioned, "My cooperating teacher modeled reflective practices by sharing their own experiences and guiding me through reflective discussions." These findings align with previous research, which emphasizes the importance of cooperating teachers'

guidance and feedback in fostering pre-service teachers' reflective practices (Moon, 2005). Cooperating teachers' modeling and open discussions have been found to enhance pre-service teachers' ability to critically reflect on their teaching (Larrivee, 2000).

**Interview three.** In their answers to the first question, many pre-service teachers underlined how important it is to reflect on their teaching practice at the end of each day or after each class. One participant stated, "I think back on my teaching practice right after the lesson when everything is still fresh in my mind. It helps me identify areas for improvement and strategies that worked well". This finding aligns with the research conducted by Van Manen (1977), who suggests that immediate reflection allows pre-service teachers to recall specific details of their teaching experience and evaluate their instructional practices more accurately. It also corroborates the study by Moon (1999), which highlights the significance of reflection as an ongoing process in order to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Regarding the second question, pre-service teachers expressed a desire to change various aspects of their teaching practice. This included modifying their lesson planning strategies, integrating more student-centered activities, and improving classroom management skills. One participant mentioned, "I wanted to change my way of lesson planning. I realized that I was focusing too much on the content and not enough on students' needs and interests". This finding supports the previous research conducted by Zeichner and Liston (2014), who emphasizes the importance of pre-service teachers recognizing the need for continuous improvement and the willingness to adapt their instructional practices accordingly. It also concurs with the study by Younget al. (2005), which highlights the significance of a growth mindset among pre-service teachers in order to foster reflective teaching practices.

In response to the third question, the participants acknowledged certain limitations that hindered their reflective practice. Commonly mentioned limitations included time constraints, lack of guidance, and limited opportunities for peer observation and feedback. One participant shared, "I felt limited in my ability to reflect due to time constraints. The workload was overwhelming, and I couldn't dedicate sufficient time for self-reflection". This finding aligns with previous research by Farrell (2012), highlighting the impact of contextual factors on pre-service teachers' reflective practice. The study stresses the importance of institutional support and providing adequate time and resources for reflection to foster effective teaching practices. Additionally, the work of Hatton and Smith (1995) emphasizes the need for pre-service teachers to have opportunities for dialogue and collaboration to enhance their reflection and professional development.

In response to the fourth question, "Can you share some of those experiences?" several participants highlighted the impact of specific practical experiences on their reflective practices. For instance, one pre-service teacher mentioned, "During my teaching practicum, I had a challenging lesson where many students struggled to understand the material. This experience pushed me to reflect on my teaching strategies and adapt them to better meet the students' needs." This aligns with the findings of previous research conducted by Moon (1999), who emphasized the importance of practical experiences in promoting reflection among pre-service teachers. Moon argued that hands-on experiences in the classroom facilitate deeper reflection on teaching practices.

Regarding the fifth question, "Do you think the practicum helped you to be reflective? How?" the participants shared their opinions on the effectiveness of the practicum in fostering reflective practices. One participant stated, "The program provided structured opportunities for reflection through regular feedback sessions with my mentor teacher. These sessions allowed me to critically evaluate my teaching techniques and make necessary changes." This finding corresponds to the research conducted by Zanting et al. (2012), who highlighted the significance of mentorship and feedback in supporting pre-service teachers' reflective practices. As such, mentorship helps create a safe and supportive environment for pre-service teachers to engage in critical reflections.

In contrast, some pre-service teachers expressed concerns about the limited focus on reflective practices. One participant shared, "While the practicum course had some reflection components, they were not given as much emphasis as other aspects like lesson planning and classroom management." This finding resonates with the research of Farrell (2012), who argues that professional development programs should provide a comprehensive emphasis on reflective practices to enable pre-service teachers to develop their reflective skills effectively.

## ***6.2 Reflective journals***

The pre-service teachers' weekly reflective journals play a crucial role in capturing their thoughts and experiences throughout their teaching practice. In this study, these journals served as a platform for the participants to document their accomplishments, reflect on curriculum matters, class activities, and personal experiences that impacted their teaching practice. The researcher emphasized the importance of these reflective journals throughout the semester and collected them at the end of the study as part of the data collection process. By analyzing these journals, the study aimed to extend the understanding of pre-service teachers' views on reflective practices in the teaching practicum.

Examples in the form of excerpts from the pre-service teachers' weekly reflective journals highlighted the significance of self-reflection and continuous improvement in their teaching practice.



One pre-service teacher wrote, "This week, I experimented with a new teaching strategy in my English class. Although it didn't have the desired impact on student engagement, I reflected on the factors that led to this outcome. I realized that I need to further develop my instructional skills and adapt the strategy based on students' needs. This reflective practice has helped me understand the importance of evaluating and adjusting my teaching methods for better student learning outcomes (Week 3)." This quote demonstrates the pre-service teacher's active engagement in reflective practice and her recognition of the need for ongoing professional development.

Comparing these reflections to previous research on pre-service teachers' reflective practices in a teaching practicum, it is evident that the pre-service teachers in this study shared similar concerns and experiences. In a study by Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman(2017), pre-service teachers' reflective journals also highlighted the importance of self-reflection and a commitment to continuous improvement. The researchers found that reflective practices were instrumental in helping pre-service teachers recognize their strengths, identify areas for growth, and make necessary adjustments in their teaching strategies. This correspondence between the findings of the present study and previous research supports the notion that reflective practices are essential for pre-service teachers' professional development.

Another pre-service teacher reflected on her experience with curriculum matters in her journal: "This week, I successfully implemented a new teaching strategy that I learned in my methods course. I used cooperative learning structures to engage my students in group work activities, and I observed a significant improvement in their participation and understanding of the content. This experience has taught me the importance of aligning my teaching practices with the curriculum objectives to enhance student learning (Week 7)." A third pre-service teacher wrote about her reflections on class activities: "During today's lesson, I attempted to incorporate differentiation strategies to meet the diverse needs of my students. Although the lesson went smoothly, I observed that some students struggled to grasp the concepts while others excelled. This experience has highlighted the importance of individualizing instruction to ensure that all students are actively engaged and able to make progress (Week 10)."

Other excerpts from the pre-service teachers' reflective journals emphasized the role of reflection in fostering a positive classroom environment. One pre-service teacher stated, "During the practicum, I encountered a challenging classroom management situation. Reflecting on this experience made me realize that establishing clear expectations, building relationships with students, and maintaining a supportive learning environment are crucial for effective teaching. I've learned that by reflecting on such incidents, I can identify strategies to prevent similar situations in the future and create a positive classroom climate for enhanced student engagement and achievement (Week 13)." This quote

showcases how reflection enabled this pre-service teacher to develop insights into effective classroom management strategies and highlights the importance of reflective practices in creating a conducive learning environment. Korthagen et al.'s (2017) findings align with the current study, reinforcing the significance of reflection in pre-service teachers' professional growth. The researchers also found that pre-service teachers who engaged in reflective practices were better equipped to address classroom management challenges and establish positive relationships with their students.

Upon comparing the content and purpose of the weekly reflective journals of pre-service teachers with previous research on reflective practices of pre-service teachers during a teaching practicum, it becomes evident that there exist significant similarities in both the content and purpose of these journals. Similar to the findings of Good and Whang (2002), the pre-service teachers in this study utilized their reflective journals as a means to document their achievements and challenges in the teaching practice. Furthermore, the journals provided a platform for the pre-service teachers to critically analyze their teaching strategies and make improvements, aligning with the findings from Kim (2018).

The pre-service teachers' weekly reflective journals align with the key principles of reflective practice outlined by Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983). Through the process of writing these journals, the pre-service teachers engaged in reflective thinking, examining their experiences and evaluating their teaching practices. The act of documenting their reflections allowed the pre-service teachers to gain self-awareness, which is critical for professional growth and development (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018).

Overall, the pre-service teachers' weekly reflective journals in the teaching practicum provide valuable insights into their experiences, growth, and challenges throughout the practicum period. These journals serve as a tool for the pre-service teachers to critically examine their teaching strategies and make improvements based on their reflections. They also demonstrate the pre-service teachers' engagement in self-reflection, their commitment to continuous improvement, and the impact of reflective practices on their teaching approaches. These findings align with previous research on pre-service teachers' reflective practices, highlighting the importance of reflection in professional development and the creation of positive classroom environments. By analyzing these journals, the study contributes to the existing literature on reflective practices in pre-service teacher education, further extending our understanding of their views on reflective practices.

## 7. Conclusions and Implications

The findings from the interview and reflective journals provide valuable insights into pre-service EFL teachers' views of reflective practices in a teaching practicum. It is evident that the participants' understanding and engagement with reflective practices are influenced by their educational backgrounds and experiences. While some pre-service teachers received a solid foundation on reflective practices during their undergraduate degree, others expressed limited exposure and experiences with reflection. This indicates a need for more comprehensive and practical approaches to incorporating reflective practices in pre-service teacher education programs.

The participants demonstrated a clear comprehension of reflection as a process of self-assessment and critical thinking to improve teaching practices. They highlighted the usefulness of reflection in identifying strengths and weaknesses, making adjustments, and enhancing student learning outcomes. This understanding aligns with previous research and emphasizes the importance of reflection in professional growth and development.

The participants provided examples of when they engaged in reflection, such as reflecting on lesson planning and delivery, challenging classroom situations, and student interactions. These examples reflect common areas of focus for reflection among pre-service teachers. Additionally, the use of reflective journals and group discussions as reflective activities highlights their effectiveness in facilitating self-reflection and critical thinking.

The participants' experiences with reflective practices were influenced by various factors. The participants with a strong educational background and prior teaching experience expressed more confidence in incorporating reflection into their teaching. On the other hand, those with limited teaching experience expressed concerns and highlighted the need for support and guidance in integrating reflective practices. This emphasizes the importance of providing adequate support and mentorship for pre-service teachers to effectively incorporate reflection into their teaching practice.

The role of cooperating teachers was also identified as significant in supporting pre-service teachers' reflective practices. The participants acknowledged the guidance, feedback, and modeling provided by cooperating teachers, which facilitated their reflection process. This highlights the importance of mentorship and open discussions in enhancing pre-service teachers' ability to critically reflect on their teaching.

However, some pre-service teachers expressed concerns about the limited emphasis on reflective practices within the practicum course. They felt that more balanced attention should have been given to reflection alongside other aspects like lesson planning and classroom management. This raises the

importance of creating a comprehensive program design that adequately addresses reflective practices and prepares pre-service teachers for reflective teaching.

These findings suggest that while pre-service EFL teachers have a clear understanding of reflective practices and their potential benefits, there is a need for more comprehensive and practical approaches to incorporating reflection in pre-service teacher education programs. Adequate support and mentorship, along with a balanced emphasis on reflective practices, are crucial in fostering pre-service teachers' reflective skills and promoting their professional development. By addressing these factors, teacher education programs can better equip pre-service teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in reflective practices and enhance their effectiveness as future EFL teachers.

## المستخلص

استكشاف آراء معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية قبل الخدمة حول الممارسات التأملية في التدريب

العملي

ابتسام وهيب الوهبي

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف وجهات نظر معلمي ما قبل الخدمة السعوديين فيما يتعلق بالممارسات التأملية في التدريب العملي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. يتبع تصميم البحث إطار عمل دولبير وشومان (شومان، 1982)، والذي تضمن سلسلة من ثلاث مقابلات مع المشاركين. حددت المقابلة الأولى سياق تجارب المشاركين، وركزت المقابلة الثانية على إعادة بناء التفاصيل في هذا السياق، وشجعت المقابلة الثالثة على التأمل في معنى تلك التجارب (سيدمان، 1998). طوال فترة التدريب العملي، طلب من المشاركين أيضا كتابة سجلات تأملية أسبوعية. ركزت هذه السجلات على التأمل في أمور المناهج والأنشطة الصفية والجوانب الاجتماعية والشخصية المهمة في أثناء ممارسة عملية التدريس. تم جمع سجلات التأمل في نهاية الفصل الدراسي لمزيد من استكشاف آراء المعلمين قبل الخدمة حول الممارسات التأملية. وقدمت نتائج الدراسة نظرة ثاقبة للجوانب المحددة التي قام معلمي قبل الخدمة بالتأمل فيها في أثناء ممارستهم لعملية التدريس، وكذلك السياقات المختلفة التي شاركوا فيها في عمليات التأمل، وتصوراتهم وفهمهم لعملية التأمل كمفهوم. وتساهم النتائج في فهمنا لكيفية تعامل المعلمين قبل الخدمة في المملكة العربية السعودية مع الممارسات التأملية والانخراط فيها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريب المعلمين قبل الخدمة، التدريب العملي، التأمل

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