



Reflective Teaching in an EFL Writing Instruction Course for Thai Pre-service Teachers

Nguyen Thi Thuy Loan

Kalasin University, Thailand

Reflective practice has been proved to be a meaningful way of learning about teaching and various aspects of teachers' work by several studies in different EFL teaching contexts. In Thailand, despite the commonly-reported problems about the English language education program for prospective English teachers, a few studies were conducted on how to improve the situation. By employing the reflective teaching approach, this study reports on how an educator assisted 48 Thai pre-service English teachers to learn how to teach English writing in the Writing Instruction course. The findings from the survey, the teacher-educator's notes during the course and the focus-group interview showed the considerable success of this teaching approach. Furthermore, the information from the evaluations on micro-teaching performances by the teaching groups, their peers and teacher-educator, and the students' reflections on their teaching strengths and weaknesses and their plans for reconstructing their teaching revealed some considerations for improvement. This study is thus expected to not only reflect on how teacher-educators are trying to improve the quality of English preservice-teachers in Thailand and to develop their experiences to be life-long learners, but also provide some insights to enhance reflective prospective teachers in other educational settings with similar teaching and learning cultures.

Keywords: teacher education, reflective practice, student teaching, Thai EFL teachers, teaching EFL writing

Introduction

Significance of Reflective Teaching

Reflective practice is an important tool in the practice-based professional learning settings where people learn from their own professional experiences, rather than from formal learning or knowledge transfer. In fact, reflective practice is viewed as a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, which creates opportunities for professional growth and development (Loughran, 2002). In the field of teacher-education, reflective practice plays a central role as it facilitates teaching, learning and understanding (Amobi, 2005; Kostianen et al., 2018; Lieberman & Miller, 2000; Loughran, 2002; Schön, 1987). Due to the complexity of teaching, teachers often question their practices for improving their students' performance and for their own professional development. When teachers carry out systematic enquiry into themselves and by constantly looking into their own actions and experiences, they understand themselves, their practices and their students. Reflective teaching or "a reflective conversation with the materials of a situation" (Schön, 1987, p. 31) is a process where teachers think over their teaching practices, analyze how something was taught and how the practice might be improved or changed for their students' better learning outcomes

(Kostiainen et al., 2018). This reflection process involves what is currently being done, why it is being done and how well students are learning. By collecting, analyzing and evaluating the information about what goes on in their classroom, teachers will identify and explore their own practices and underlying beliefs, which may then lead to changes and improvements in their teaching. Reflective teaching, therefore, has been widely believed as an approach for teachers to renew their practice and understand the effects of their teaching (Amobi, 2005; Kostiainen et al., 2018). In reflective approaches to teaching, teachers are reflective practitioners who, instead of merely practicing experts' views in their teaching, are encouraged to make sense of different dimensions of their teaching individually and collectively. To this end, instead of transmission of given knowledge and skills of teaching to student teachers through prepackaged materials, teacher-educators build on student-teachers' prior experiences and personal beliefs and provide them with opportunities for (re)constructing their understanding of their professional roles, students' needs, curricular objectives, and so on (Farrell, 2007, 2015). Lieberman and Miller (2000) pointed out that the practice of reflective teaching, reflective inquiry, and reflection on practice results in gaining personal and professional knowledge that is important to being an effective teacher and in shaping students' learning.

Previous Studies on Reflective Practice in Teacher-Education

Previous studies in teacher-education programs have employed several different methods to access reflections of practice, such as journal writing, audio-video recording, metaphor analyzing, concept mapping, group discussion, classroom observation (self-monitoring, peer critical friendships, or group observations) and action research (Abednia, Hovassapian, Teimournezhad, & Ghanbari, 2013; Birbirso, 2012; Lim, 2011; Wan, Low, & Li, 2011; Yin, 2018). Birbirso (2012) used journal writing to examine what can be done to facilitate effective critical reflections for pre-service TESOL teachers in Ethiopia. The results revealed that besides being able to reflect on their own assumptions, beliefs and theories, and to use this information to improve their practice, teachers could also make the shift beyond practice, and take a more critical stance on school practices and issues. Abednia et al. (2013) used reflective journals to encourage pre-service Iranian TESOL teachers to cultivate awareness of their beliefs about EFL teaching and learning. As a result of such reflections, the pre-service teachers gained heightened awareness of their assumptions and beliefs, which facilitate their evaluation, and in some cases re-evaluation, on those beliefs in terms of their appropriateness. Exploring Brunei pre-service TESOL teachers' written reflections on their observation of lesson planning and other aspects of teaching, Tan (2013) reported that reflective dialoging (through writing) helped the pre-service TESOL teachers to not only reflect and "talk through" their own reflections on planning and teaching but also "understand and see other perspectives" rather than just their own (p. 823). In a similar manner, through metaphor analysis of Chinese in-service TESOL teachers' beliefs, Wan et al. (2011) found that the teachers were not only able to reappraise them in light of their current practices but also make modifications to suit their new insight about themselves as TESOL teachers.

Employing recorded videos, Donnelly and Fitzmaurice's (2011) study on Irish teachers' perceived impacts of micro-teaching when they observed peers' and their own micro-teaching performance showed the participants' greater self-awareness and increased confidence, and becoming more reflective about their own teaching practice. Similarly, in teaching American pre-service teachers to learn from and reflect on their micro-teaching, Fernández (2010, 2012) collected data from various sources (videos, group discussion, field notes, reflective reports and peer and teacher' feedback). Her results revealed that the prospective teachers found the experience beneficial to their teaching experience and enhancement of their understanding of pedagogical and content knowledge (PCK). Additionally, planning, teaching practice, feedback and meaningful discussion with peers and teacher, support from a knowledgeable educator, and opportunity to trial, analyze and revise their micro-teaching lessons were reported to be crucial for them to learn.

To study the reflectivity of secondary-education pre-service teachers on their teaching actions and peers' evaluation of their performance in a microteaching experience, Amobi (2005) provided guided questions for the participants to reflect on. The study suggests that reflection on teaching actions is the critical first step to make explicit reconstructing that leads to growth and improvement in teaching. Amobi further claims that this reflective approach in teacher-preparation programs is necessary for the dual goals of preparing effective and reflective teachers. Miller and Shifflet (2016) analyzed pre-service teachers' written reflections on their meaningful elementary-school memories in combination with the course material and found both positive and negatives influences of previous experiences on teachers' current and future teaching and learning. Similarly, by using autobiographical essays, Lim (2011) reported how pre-service TESOL teachers reflected on their own personal histories in relation to their professional identity origin, formation and development in a Korean context. The study concluded that the formation of teacher identity is an ongoing process of "identification and negotiation of self-images, prior experiences in learning and teaching" (p. 979). In general, the reviewed literature on reflective practice from different teacher-education contexts indicates the importance of developing reflective habits for pre-service teachers in order to lay the foundation for their ongoing and critical reflection for the betterment of their future teaching and learning.

English Language Teacher-Education in Thailand

Acknowledging the significant role of reflective practice in the field of teacher-education, Thailand has made great efforts to improve the quality of pre-service and in-service teachers, through its calls for promoting the reflective teacher attribute, correcting teachers' misled mindset on learning through reflection and developing activities for enhancing such a learning process (Chanwaiwit, 2018; Hayes, 2010; Ingersoll et al., 2007; Mehrpour & Moghadam, 2018; Scholz, 2014). These calls respond to the fundamental problems within Thai teacher-education programs. Research by the Board of Teacher Education Review from 2009 to 2011 found the absence of theoretical, pedagogical knowledge, and the critical thinking skills in teacher-education programs (Phompun, Thongthaw, & Zeinchner, 2013). In a comparative study of teacher-preparation and qualifications in six nations: United States, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand, Ingersoll et al. (2007, p. 2) found that the requirement for English teacher-education programs in Thailand "lacks adequate rigor, breadth and depth". This could account for the high levels of under-prepared teachers and students' low levels of language proficiency widely represented in the literature of ELT in Thailand. Similarly, Hayes (2010) who studied about English language learning, teaching and educational reform in rural Thailand revealed that teachers were poorly-prepared, and there were "shortages of appropriately qualified teachers" (p. 305). Furthermore, Hayes (2010) also indicated that due to the low proficiency in English, "the majority of teacher-preparation courses were conducted in Thai, and they were not subject-specific" (p. 310). Darasawang (2007) also mentions the necessity for the EFL teacher-education programs in Thailand to develop both pre-service English language teachers' English proficiency and basic pedagogical knowledge. Influenced by rote-memorization teaching styles heavily employed in Thai educational system, Thai prospective teachers lack critical thinking and reflection skills to assist themselves in organizing, teaching, observing and evaluating their own teaching in response to students' needs and are not open to current teaching methodologies (Baker, 2008; Darasawang, 2007; Nicoletti, 2015; Scholz, 2014). As stated in previous studies (Baker, 2008; Darasawang, 2007; Hallinger & Lee, 2011; Phompun et al., 2013; Wongsathorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2003), the concept of learner-centeredness has not been well-accepted among Thai teachers of English, resulting in negative attitudes and little improvement in English language education despite Thai government's push for continuous lifelong learning and a change from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches. It is argued that such resistance to changes is in part due to cultural mismatch between Thai culture and imported Western values of education reform (Baker, 2008; Darasawang, 2007).

Despite these thorny issues, few studies were conducted on how to improve the teaching professionalism in English teacher-education in Thailand (Chanwaiwit, 2018; Loima, 2016; Nicoletti, 2015; Wongwanicha, Sakolraka, & Piromsombatb, 2014). Conducting a study on the effect of understanding sociocultural learning theory in designing materials and instructional strategies, Nicoletti (2015) concluded that when Thai teachers of English understand theory, they are better positioned to design and facilitate learner-centered classrooms. Chanwaiwit (2018) studied the effects of feedback on pre-service teachers' teaching performance and found the effectiveness of teacher educators' feedback in improving the general teaching competence of student-teachers. In exploring teacher professional development trends in Thailand, Loima (2016) suggested that higher education administration should give more space and approval to encourage student-teachers and teacher-educators to perform in a more innovative and creative way. To the researcher's knowledge, the only study on reflective practice in teacher-education in Thailand was conducted by Wongwanicha et al. (2014). Besides the model for a reflective teacher in Thailand, this study indicated the need for Thai teachers to shift their mindset and to develop the characteristics of reflective thinking to become more reflective. They also suggested that school administrators and educators should employ effective methods to promote reflective teacher attributes, correct teachers' misled mindset on learning through reflection, and develop activities for strengthening such a learning process. In response to this call, the current study will report on how a teacher-educator assisted pre-service English teachers at a university in Thailand to learn teaching English writing in a Writing Instruction course by employing the reflective teaching approach. The questions posited for this study are as follows:

1. To what extent does the reflective teaching approach assist this group of Thai students in learning to teach English writing?
2. Which areas of the instruction need revisions or improvement based on the evaluations by the students and teacher-educator?

The answers to these questions are expected to partly reflect how teacher-educators are trying to improve the quality of preservice-teachers of English in Thailand and to develop their experiences to be life-long learners. Furthermore, the findings would provide teacher-educators, both in Thailand and in other educational settings with similar teaching and learning cultures who plan to facilitate meaningful learning for pre-service teachers, more insights into the strategic development of enhancing reflective prospective teachers.

Method

Context and Participants

This study was conducted in a Writing Instruction course of 14 weeks, meeting for 180 minutes weekly, for 48 fourth-year prospective English teachers, whose English proficiency level was pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate, at a university in Thailand. The aim of this course is to introduce key theories, approaches and techniques in teaching English with a focus on teaching EFL writing, including lesson planning, creating teaching materials, and assessing and evaluating learning activities. These students were following the five-year bachelor's degree program with a minimum of 24 credits in pedagogy courses and one year of practicum as set by Teachers Council of Thailand (Ingersoll et al., 2007; Scholz, 2014). However, these students started to study English subjects in their third year of study while they spent their first two years studying general subjects in Thai and two English grammar courses mainly taught in Thai by a Thai lecturer. Before their one-year full-time practicum in the fifth year of study, the students were required to take pedagogy courses on teaching the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Based on the course objectives provided by the university, the course content was

developed by teacher-educators who were responsible for teaching them. The Writing Instruction content and materials in this study are outlined in Table 1 below, and this course was taught by a seasoned foreign teacher with her BA in ELT, MA in TESOL and PhD in English Language Studies, and she has had seven years teaching in Thailand. The score for this course includes 5% of their class-attendance, 45% of assignments allocated by the teacher-educator, and the other 50% is from midterm and final tests (20% and 30%, respectively). In this course, the 45% class assignment was divided into two parts: 15% for class discussion and 30% for their micro-teaching on week 12-14 of the course.

TABLE 1
Writing Instruction Course Outline

Week	Teaching points	Materials
1	Discussion on how languages are learned Discussion on ideas about language learning and teaching	Chapter 4 (<i>How to teach English</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2003) Lecture 1 (<i>English Methodology</i> , Le Van Su, 2005)
2	A general introduction to how to teach English Some basic principles of English language teaching	Chapter 4 (cont.) and Chapter 6 (<i>How to teach English</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2003) Lecture 2 (<i>English Methodology</i> , Le Van Su, 2005)
3	A brief review of English language teaching methods	Lectures 3 and 4 (<i>English Methodology</i> , Le Van Su, 2005)
4	Why teaching writing? What kinds of writing should students do?	Chapter 8 (<i>How to teach English</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2003)
5	Procedures for teaching writing Teacher roles in writing classes	Module 11 (<i>A course in Language Teaching Practice and Theory</i> , Penny Ur, 2004) Chapter 18 (<i>The Practice of English Language Teaching</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2001)
6	Approaches to teach writing	Chapter 18 (<i>The Practice of English Language Teaching</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2001)
7	Writing activities	Unit 13 (<i>Teach English: A Training Course for Teachers</i> , Adrian Doff, 2012)
8	Writing activities (Cont.)	Unit 21 (<i>A Practical Handbook of Language Teaching</i> , David Cross, 2005)
9	Creating and using worksheets	Unit 21 (<i>Teach English: A Training Course for Teachers</i> , Adrian Doff, 2012)
10	Providing feedback	Chapter 7 (<i>How to Teach Writing</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2004)
11	Providing feedback (cont.)	Chapter 7 (<i>The Practice of English Language Teaching</i> , Jeremy Harmer, 2001)
12	Micro-teaching 1	
13	Micro-teaching 2	
14	Micro-teaching 3	

Teaching Procedure

48 students were randomly divided into 10 groups of four or five, and they worked with their groupmates during the course. To equip the students with knowledge and skills to teach EFL writing, selected reading materials were delivered before each class for them to read and discuss in their groups at home. In class, instead of lectures, the discussion on each teaching point was conducted in English with the teacher-educator’s questions and students’ answers. Sitting with their assigned groupmates, students had another chance to read and discuss their understanding of the materials before answering the questions. To encourage their prior reading at home and their active participation in class, each group had to share their understanding of the reading materials, and 15% of the class assignment scores was awarded to their proper answers (3% each time). Sometimes, the teacher-educator demonstrated a certain teaching technique in class to facilitate students’ understanding of the theory and how it is practiced. Also, students were at times required to show their understanding of a teaching approach through their mini-teaching (2-5 minutes), and 3% was also given for their decent performance. When students performed such teaching, feedback on their instructions, gestures and class management was also provided by the teacher-educator and peers. In the last three weeks of the term (weeks 12-14), each group was required to

do the micro-teaching of their writing lesson selected from secondary or high-school English textbooks in about 25 minutes, and their teaching was video-recorded. The purpose of this teaching activity was to give students an opportunity to put the knowledge and skills learned in the course into practice.

The criteria for evaluating their teaching was provided for them to refer to in preparing their lessons (Table 3). The evaluations were divided into three topics: lesson planning, teaching and classroom management, and there were three rating levels (good, average and bad). Before their performance, their lesson plans and all teaching materials were submitted for the teacher-educator's reference. Based on the given criteria, each group's teaching was evaluated by their peers (in groups) and the teacher-educator, right after each group finished their teaching. After the feedback forms were collected, oral feedback from the teacher-educator and peers was conducted. As voluntarily offering feedback is uncommon in Thai culture (Scholz, 2014), 1% was added to the 45% assignment scores for those who had good comments on their peers' teaching. All written feedback forms were then given to the teaching group. The teaching group was also asked to evaluate their own teaching, using the same form and watching their recorded teaching at home. Additionally, they were asked to write their reflections on two guiding questions: 1) What were your strengths and weaknesses about your teaching? and 2) What would you do differently if you were teaching that lesson again? All feedback forms and reflections were submitted to the teacher in the following class before the grades were given.

Data Collection and Analysis

To answer the first research question, a five-point Likert survey was conducted at the end of the course to learn about what the students perceived to gain from the course. Teacher-educator's notes during the course were also checked to provide further understanding of how this reflective teaching approach worked with this group of Thai pre-service teachers. For research question 2, all evaluations (11 forms for each group, including 1 by themselves, 9 by peers and 1 by teacher-educator) on their micro-teaching were examined to identify which areas of the instruction need to be revised or improved. Furthermore, the information from their reflections (strengths, weaknesses and what they would change to make their teaching better) together with their lesson plans was also employed to answer this question. These self-reflections were repeatedly read to identify the common themes of participants' reflectivity on their strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement. The focus-group semi-structured interview was also conducted at the end of the course to clarify the findings from the survey and evaluations.

Results

The findings from the survey and evaluations on students' micro-teaching performances are presented in this section while their detailed discussion is provided in the Discussion section altogether with the information from teacher-educator's notes, students' reflections and interview.

Effectiveness of the Reflective Teaching Approach

To learn about the effectiveness of this teaching approach and what these students believed to gain from the course (Research question 1), the 5-point Likert survey was administered at the end of the semester. As recommended by Sullivan and Artino (2013) that a mean score is not a very helpful measure of central tendency of Likert-scale data, the percentages of students' positive (strongly-agree and agree), neutral and negative (strongly-disagree and disagree) attitudes are also included in Table 2.

TABLE 2
How the Course Assists Them to Learn Teaching English Writing

No	Items	Mean	Positive	Neutral	Negative
1	I am more aware of my instructions, my gestures and attitudes as a teacher	4.23	79.7	20.3	0
2	I learn general theories about teaching English	4.17	76.6	17	6.4
3	I also learn about classroom management skills	3.94	72.3	27.7	0
4	I know how to correct and provide feedback on students' writing	3.85	72.3	19.2	7.5
5	I know steps/sequences in teaching English writing	3.83	61.7	31.9	6.4
6	I know how to develop and use relevant teaching materials/aids for teaching writing	3.77	63.8	29.8	6.4
7	I know how to use relevant teaching activities to teach a specific writing task/genre	3.74	59.6	38.3	2.1
8	I know what and how to teach English writing	3.74	57.4	36.2	6.4
9	I know techniques to teach a specific writing task/genre	3.70	59.6	31.9	8.5
10	I have sufficient knowledge of methods for teaching English writing	3.51	53.2	27.7	19.1

As suggested by Wiboolsri (2008) for the mean score of 3.5 as the acceptable value representing a positive attitude, it can be concluded that these students were positive towards this teaching as all means of the surveyed items were higher than 3.5. However, no items had the absolute agreement although more than half of these 48 students showed their agreement to all items. As seen in Table 2, the top two highest percentages of students' agreement were on Items 1 and 2 (79.7% & 76.6%, respectively) while others ranged from 53.2% to 72.3%. A closer look at Table 2 reveals that the top three items are not about PCK of teaching EFL writing, but general theories of teaching English (Item 2), their awareness of the instructions, gestures and attitudes as a teacher (Item 1) and classroom management skills (Item 3). Additionally, two out of these three items (1 & 3) did not receive negative response. Regarding PCK, only Item 4 received almost three-quarters of positive answers (72.3%) and the lowest neutral stance of all (19.2%). The other items on PCK (5-9) had around a third of undecided responses. Finally, with the highest percentage of disagreement (19.1%), the lowest mean score and percentages of agreement (3.51 & 53.2%, respectively), Item 10, which investigates the students' beliefs to have sufficient methodological knowledge for teaching English writing from the course, is the most noticeable finding from this survey.

Areas Need to be Revised and Improved

Table 3 shows the evaluations on students' micro-teaching by 10 teaching groups (self), their peers (9 groups each time) and teacher-educator. The numbers in the table are the rating frequencies that each evaluating group gave to each criterion. Except for the frequencies by "self" and "teacher", those by peers were calculated by dividing the total frequency numbers of nine groups' ratings on each criterion for 10 teaching groups by ten. For example, for Item 1, 10 teaching groups were graded as "good" 68 times and "average" 22 times; their averages for this item are 6.8 and 2.2, respectively.

In general, it is interesting to see the complete absence of "bad" performance from the students' evaluations (self and peers), which could partly manifest Thai cultures of being uncritical to others (Baker, 2008). Although the average frequencies for each performance level (good, average and bad) by three groups of evaluators were not noticeably different (seen in the last row), the discrepancy among their evaluations for each criterion tended to reveal the answer to research question 2 (areas of revision/improvement). In the planning, most teaching groups thought they were good while their peers and teacher-educator found there was room for improvement. For example, 9 out of 10 groups believed that they identified the objectives/content of their teaching correctly (Item 1), two and four groups were judged by peers and teacher-educator, respectively that improvement was needed. Similarly, as compared to their peers' and teacher-educator's evaluations, more teaching groups were confident about their selected teaching methods (Item 2), organizing logical teaching sequences (Item 3) and using simple, relevant and interesting visual aids (Item 5). For Item 4, while the teacher found mistakes and

inappropriate materials of all ten groups, half of students' evaluations rated this item as "mistake-free" and "appropriate".

TABLE 3
Micro-teaching Evaluations by Selves, Peers and Teacher-educator

No	Criteria	Good			Average			Bad		
		Self	Peers	Teacher	Self	Peers	Teacher	Self	Peers	Teacher
Planning										
1	Identifying the objectives/content of the teaching	9	6.8	6	1	2.2	2	0	0	2
2	Selecting the relevant teaching methods	7	6.2	6	3	2.8	2	0	0	2
3	Organizing logical teaching sequences	9	5.5	6	1	3.5	3	0	0	1
4	Using mistake-free and appropriate instructional materials	5	4.1	0	5	4.9	10	0	0	0
5	Using simple, relevant and interesting visual aids	8	5.8	6	2	3.2	4	0	0	0
Teaching										
6	Motivating students to learn	8	5.7	5	2	3.3	4	0	0	1
7	Organizing relevant teaching activities	2	5.7	5	8	3.3	5	0	0	0
8	Organizing student-centered teaching activities	5	6.0	7	5	3.0	2	0	0	1
9	Providing appropriate feedback on students' work	5	5.1	3	5	3.9	5	0	0	2
10	Fluent, clear and comprehensible presentations/instructions	5	5.5	7	5	3.5	3	0	0	0
11	Teacher's enthusiasm	8	5.0	10	3	4.0	0	0	0	0
12	Teacher's appropriate gestures and movements	5	5.3	8	5	3.7	2	0	0	0
Classroom management										
13	Using class-time effectively	4	6.8	7	6	2.2	2	0	0	1
14	Creating democratic classroom environment	4	4.2	9	6	4.8	0	0	0	1
15	Making norms of classroom behavior	7	4.6	3	3	4.4	6	0	0	1
Average		6.06	5.49	5.86	4	3.51	3.3	0	0	0.8

In a reversed manner, in the teaching section except for Items 6 and 9, more groups received favorable evaluations from their peers and teacher-educator than from self-evaluations. Take Item 7 as an example. While five groups were rated to organize relevant teaching activities, only 2 teaching groups believed that they did it well. Regarding Items 6, while peers and teacher-educator thought half of the teaching groups did not motivate their students effectively, eight groups believed they did. Similarly, only three groups were found to provide appropriate feedback on students' work (Item 9), half of the evaluations by selves and peers rated this item positively. However, for Item 11, peers thought that half teachers did not perform the teaching enthusiastically, the teacher-educator found all of them did while only eight teaching groups believed they did. Likewise, more teacher-educator's than the students' positive evaluations were given on Item 12 (*teachers' appropriate gestures/movements*). In class management, more peers and teacher-educator's positive evaluations were given on class time management and creating democratic learning environment than self-evaluations (Items 13 & 14). In contrast, while setting proper behavior for students in class (Item 15) was believed to be adjusted by peers and teacher-educator, seven teaching groups thought they managed it well.

Discussion

Although there was no absolute agreement to each surveyed item and a relatively high percentage of neutral and negative stances (around a third) to some items (Table 2), the high mean-scores (higher than 3.5) given to all items in the survey conducted at the end of the course tended to indicate that this reflective teaching approach benefited these Thai pre-service teachers and eventually, to some extent, was a success. In fact, as recorded in the teacher's notes, at the beginning of the course the students resisted this way of teaching by reporting to the chair in charge of the program that the materials were too difficult for them to understand, and they wanted to have materials in Thai. Moreover, they even said that this teaching method was 'strange' to them, and they expected to have this subject taught in Thai by a Thai lecturer. Such expectations and negative reaction to this teaching partly reflect the reported literature on Thai students' passive-learning styles, low levels of language proficiency (Hayes, 2010; Wongsathorn et al., 2003) and their deeply-ingrained teacher-centered approaches in Thai educational system (Baker, 2008; Darasawang, 2007; Hallinger & Lee, 2011; Phompun et al., 2013; Wongsathorn et al., 2003). Hence, they initially did not accept to "discover" the knowledge through their prior reading of the materials, group discussion, performance on the mini-teaching demonstrating their understanding of the theories and frequent feedback provision. However, at the end of the course, besides the high mean-scores, more than 50% of these Thai prospective teachers showed their positive attitudes to all surveyed items. This attitudinal change could suggest that their engagement in active learning through discussion, observation, evaluation, and summation during the course would relatively adjust their misled mindset on learning through activities and reflection. In fact, as stated in previous studies (Amobi, 2005; Fernández, 2010, 2012; Kostiainen et al., 2018), such a reflective approach on learning and teaching actions is the critical first step to make explicit reconstructing that leads to professional growth and improvement.

Regarding PCK to teach English writing (Items 4-10, Table 2), the relatively-high percentages of their neutral and negative attitudes tended to reveal the challenges these Thai students, who were not taught English writing as a subject at their secondary schools (Nguyen, 2018a, 2018b), had in studying this course. As revealed in the interview, their first time to learn English writing was in their third-year at this university. It was thus arduous for them to visualize and thoroughly understand theories on different teaching sequences, activities and techniques, and selecting appropriate approaches to teach a specific writing task or genre was tough for them. This interviewed information could partly account for the lowest mean score and the highest percentage of disagreement to Item 10 (*having sufficient knowledge to teach English writing*) in the survey. It is generally accepted that acquiring something completely new would take neophytes time. Yet, with the highest positive answers among the PCK items and the lowest neutral stance of all, Item 4, (*how to provide feedback*), was reported in the interview to be obtained from their two previous academic writing courses at the university. These findings confirm Miller and Shifflet's (2016) claim on the influences of previous learning experiences on teachers' current and future teaching and learning. In summary, despite the initial counteraction, this reflective teaching tended to effectively adjust these Thai prospective teachers' mindset on learning through engagement and reflection, promote their reflective attribute and encourage a life-long learning process. As reported in previous research, (Chanwaiwit, 2018; Hayes, 2010; Ingersoll et al., 2007; Scholz, 2014; Wongwanicha et al., 2014), such a teaching approach is of great need in Thai teacher-education program.

Based on the discrepancy of evaluations on students' micro-teaching among three groups (self, peers and teacher-educator), most instructional areas in Table 3 needed be revised, and they were divided into three groups. The first group consists of Items 4 and 9, for which all raters thought improvement was needed. Mistakes and inappropriate instructional materials (Item 4) were found in all ten teaching groups by the teacher-educator and in five and four groups by self and peers, respectively, but no teaching groups acknowledged them as their weaknesses in the reflections (Table 4) and plans for improvement (Table 5). This could indicate their unawareness of the importance of teachers' language proficiency in teaching and developing teaching materials. Although Thai pre-service teachers' low proficiency level was frequently-reported in the literature (Chanwaiwit, 2018; Darasawang, 2007; Hayes, 2010), raising their awareness

through giving more weight in grading this item would be necessary. Furthermore, the English teacher-preparation program at this university should also be revised by adjusting the curriculum where prospective teachers can acquire sufficient knowledge and language skills earlier (not until their third year of study) and before taking pedagogical courses. Actually, while studying this Writing Instruction course, these pre-service students did not finish their last obligatory writing course (Essay-Writing). That did not give them a complete picture of how a language skill is learnt and adequate knowledge for studying conceptual theories on teaching it. Item 9 (*Providing appropriate feedback on students' work*), received low frequencies of "good" performance by all three groups of evaluators (Table 3) although in the survey nearly three-quarters of these students perceived to learn this technique the most among PCK (Item 4, Table 2). As seen in Table 4 (Item 6), six groups perceived it as their weakness, and this weakness was mainly from their lack of confidence and experience in giving feedback (Table 5, Feedback). Therefore, it is necessary for this course to offer them more teaching opportunities to practice this skill thoroughly.

TABLE 4
Strengths and Weaknesses Perceived by 10 Teaching Groups

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Planning		
1. selecting relevant teaching methods	3	4
2. organizing teaching sequences logically	3	4
3. selecting relevant visual aids	3	0
Teaching		
4. creating good atmosphere for learning	8	0
5. organizing appropriate student-centered activities	0	6
6. providing appropriate feedback	3	6
7. giving clear and fluent instructions	5	0
8. teacher enthusiasm	4	1
9. teacher's appropriate gestures	3	2
10. organizing relevant activities	4	0
Class management		
11. managing the class well	3	5
12. appropriate use of class time	2	3
13. creating democratic atmosphere in class	2	0

The second group of areas to be revised consists of Items 1 (*Identifying the teaching objectives/content*), 3 (*Organizing logical teaching sequences*), 5 (*Using simple, relevant and interesting visual aids*), 6 (*Motivating students to learn the lesson*) and 15 (*Making norms of classroom behavior*) (Table 3) where the teaching groups believed to do well while their peers and teacher-educator thought improvement was still needed. A closer look at their reflections revealed that four groups reconstructed their evaluations through admitting their weakness in organizing teaching sequences logically (Table 4, Item 2), and their plan to change the teaching focus for their new teaching (Table 5, Items 1-2). Due to their mere teaching of grammar despite their stated objective of teaching a specific writing genre in their lesson plans, four groups planned to reselect the teaching lessons. This could indicate the influence of the grammar-translation instruction deeply-entrenched in their English classes at secondary education (Hallinger & Lee, 2011; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). In fact, as claimed by Chamcharatsri (2010), Thai students generally believed that it would be ineffective if writing teachers in Thailand did not focus on grammar. As seen in Item 11, Table 4, five groups admitted not managing the class well, but only two groups had plans to fix it (Table 5, Item 9). Moreover, although using irrelevant visual aids were not reported as their deficiency (Table 4, Item 3), four groups planned to change the way to warm-up the class, and three groups planned to have more interesting activities in their re-teaching (Table 5, Items 3 & 8, respectively). For Item 6 (Table 3, *motivating students to learn*), no groups admitted it as their flaw, and the same number of groups who evaluated themselves as "good" on this criterion still believed that they did it well after watching their teaching videos (Table 4, Item 4).

The findings on their non-reconstruction of these criteria tended to show Thai culturally-based values of classroom behavior. As stated in Baker (2008), since Thai classroom behavior includes fun, enjoyment

and comfort, Thai teachers and students are occasionally not consciously aware of the roles they play in learning. Because of this, although their peers and teacher-educator suggested revising this teaching aspect, the teaching groups neither accepted their shortcomings nor planned for changes. This suggests more illustrations or explanations on appropriate motivating classes to be provided for these pre-service teachers to sense the suitability of having fun in an EFL writing class. Furthermore, this also indicates that, to understand Thai classrooms, foreign teacher-educators in Thailand need to take this culturally-based belief and practice into consideration in order to suitably adapt their ELT methodologies and training to the local context.

TABLE 5
What to Fix in Their Next Teaching

Topics	Details
Teaching focus	1. stick to the lesson objectives (4) 2. focus on writing (3)
Teaching techniques	3. change ways to warm-up (4) 4. talk less and give clearer instructions (5) 5. choose appropriate teaching approaches (3) 6. follow student-centered approach (6) 7. vary teaching techniques (4) 8. develop more interesting activities (3) 9. check students' participation (2) 10. be more active (2) 11. manage time appropriately (3)
Feedback	12. check students' work carefully (4) 13. involve students in feedback provision (4) 14. be confident in giving feedback (5)
Teachers' gestures	15. not use fingers to point to students (3) 16. not give students snacks as rewards (2)

**The numbers in brackets indicate the number of groups reporting on each item*

The last group of instructional areas to be revised are those for which more teaching groups than their peers and teacher-educator thought improvement was needed (Items 7: *Organizing relevant teaching activities*, 8: *Organizing student-centered teaching activities*, 10: *Fluent, clear and comprehensible presentations/instructions*, 13: *Using class time effectively*, & 14: *Creating democratic classroom environment*, Table 3). As seen in Table 4, while four groups graded their organizing relevant activities to the teaching topic as their strength (Item 10), six groups admitted organizing student-centered activities as their shortcomings and no groups believed they were good at it (Item 5). As noted by the teacher-educator, these prospective teachers were successful in having their students' participation although their activities did not effectively assist their students to learn since the learning aspects were not adequately incorporated. Despite their incomplete success in organizing such activities, the teacher-educator recognized their effort in organizing them, promising a positive change in their future performance in the EFL teaching context in Thailand where the concept of learner-centeredness has not been well-accepted among Thai English teachers (Baker, 2008; Darasawang, 2007; Hallinger & Lee, 2011; Phompun et al., 2013; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). This was also the main motivation for the teacher-educator to rate most of the teaching groups positively for creating good environment for all students to participate (Item 14, Table 3). In fact, their willingness for employing the learner-centered approach and adjusting their instructions was also reported in the reflections by more than half of the teaching groups (Table 5, Item 6 & 4, respectively).

Regarding their verbal instructions (Item 10, Table 3), half of the teaching groups thought improvement was needed because, as revealed in the interview, they were not very fluent in English speaking. However, only three groups were advised to get improved on giving comprehensible instructions by the teacher-educator. This difference is likely caused by these pre-service teachers' lack of confidence in their English speaking ability as claimed in the literature (Chanwaiwit, 2018; Scholz, 2014). In the same manner, their insufficient confidence and inexperience in teaching could also account for

their reported weaknesses in using appropriate gestures and movements as a teacher (Item 9, Table 4) and suggestions for improvement in their next teaching were made (Table 5, Items 15-16). Finally, for Item 13 (Table 3), although six groups thought that they needed to use the class time appropriately, only three groups perceived it as their weakness (Table 4, Item 12), and put this aspect as a point for their improvement (Table 5, Item 11). The adjustment from their initial evaluations showed in their reflections was in line with those by their peers and teacher-educator (Table 3, Item 13).

Conclusion

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of an adapted reflective teaching to a group of 48 Thai pre-service teachers in learning to teach EFL writing, and the instructional areas needed for improvement were also investigated for making proper adjustments to the culturally-based teaching and learning contexts in Thailand. The findings from the survey and teacher-educator's notes showed the relative success of this teaching approach in shifting these prospective teachers' negative attitude and misled mindset on learning by doing, observing, analyzing and reflecting, and in encouraging their reflective attributes to a certain extent. As stated by Wongwanicha et al. (2014), to become reflective it is imperative for Thai teachers to have a mindset change and sufficient knowledge. Though not all of them were positive about this teaching, their reflections were not so informative, and their reconstruction was not very satisfactory, these neophytes had a chance to actively participate in the knowledge construction process instead of passively listening to lectures. In fact, as argued by previous scholars (Amobi, 2005; Farrell, 2015; Gan & Yang, 2018; Loughran, 2002), critical reflection does not come naturally to most teachers; providing these student-teachers with appropriate opportunities for discussion, feedback and reflection on their own teaching experiences in the long run would develop their reflective habits and make them more aware of their teaching actions. Although learning through reflection was an unpleasant experience for Thai teachers (Loima, 2016; Wongwanicha et al., 2014), the high mean scores from more than half of the participants for all surveyed items about what they obtained from the course tended to indicate the usefulness of the teaching approach to this group of Thai prospective teachers.

Based on the discrepancy between the students' and teacher-educator's evaluations on their micro-teaching and students' reflections, suggestions for adjustments on most teaching criteria were made. Besides improving these pre-service teachers' low language proficiency level and their lack of confidence and experience in giving instructions, organizing logical teaching sequences and giving feedback, their culturally-based beliefs of the appropriateness of "having fun" in class and learning activities need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, their mistaken assumption about "teaching writing is teaching grammar" should also be fixed in the training course.

Though these findings were from a small group of Thai prospective teachers at a setting in Thailand, this study could provide teacher-educators, both in Thailand and in other educational settings with shared teaching and learning cultures, some insights into the application of modified reflective teaching in training future teachers to teach EFL writing. In fact, in the large-group teaching setting where teacher-centeredness and memorization-based schooling are deeply-entrenched in Thailand (Baker, 2008; Darasawang, 2007; Hallinger & Lee, 2011; Phompun et al., 2013; Wongsathorn et al., 2003), instruction with tasks demanding students' active engagement, critical reflection and generation of personal ideas is not widely used (Wongwanicha et al., 2014). Therefore, reflections on this topic in other educational contexts in Thailand and in other countries where English is taught as a foreign language are necessary to facilitate meaningful learning for pre-service teachers. Furthermore, extensive sharing of this practice is expected to come up with common strategic plans to enhance reflective prospective EFL teachers. As ELT methodologies and training need to be adapted to suitably fix the local context (Baker, 2008), besides sound pedagogies and solid professional knowledge, prospective teachers need to be equipped with the ability to identify their teaching strengths and weaknesses and competence to deal with complexities of educational practices. Therefore, teacher-educators should allow more opportunities for

prospective teachers' critical reflections, which would necessitate the development of autonomous, qualified and self-directed professionals.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my special thanks to Ifzal Syed for his considerable assistance in organizing the data, his insightful comments and in-depth discussion on the findings which made it easy for me to complete this article.

The Author

Nguyen Thi Thuy Loan (PhD) is an English lecturer at Department of English, Faculty of Education and Educational Innovation, Kalasin University, Thailand. Her research interests include teacher education, written corrective feedback, genre analysis, English written discourse, second language writing instruction and research, academic writing, ESL, ESP, citations and reporting verbs. Her recent publications on these topics can be found in high impact peer-reviewed international journals.

Department of English, Faculty of Education and Educational Innovation
13 Moo 14, Songpleuy, Namon,
Kalasin, Thailand, 46230
Tel: +6643602053
Mobile: +66834621300
Email address: thuyloancailay@gmail.com

References

- Abednia, A., Hovassapian, A., Teimournezhad, S., & Ghanbari, N. (2013). Reflective journal writing: Exploring in-service EFL teachers' perceptions. *System*, 41(3), 503-514. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.05.003
- Amobi, F. A. (2005). Preservice teachers' reflectivity on the sequence and consequences of teaching actions in a microteaching experience. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter, 115-130.
- Baker, W. (2008). A critical examination of ELT in Thailand: The role of cultural awareness. *RELC Journal*, 39(1), 131-146. doi:10.1177/0033688208091144
- Birbirso, D. T. (2012). Reflective practicum: Experience of the Ethiopian context. *Reflective Practice*, 13(6), 857-867.
- Chamcharatsri, P. B. (2010). On teaching writing in Thailand. *Writing on the Edge*, 21(1), 18-26.
- Chanwaiwit, P. (2018). Using effective feedback to improve professionalism as an English student teacher. *The New English Teacher*, 12(2), 1-4.
- Darasawang, P. (2007). English language teaching and education in Thailand: A decade of change. In D. Prescott (Ed.), *English in Southeast Asia: Varieties, literacies and literatures* (pp. 187-204). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Donnelly, R., & Fitzmaurice, M. (2011). Towards productive reflective practice in microteaching. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 48(3), 335-346. doi:10.1080/14703297.2011.593709
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2007). *Reflective language teaching: From theory to practice*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2015). *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education: A framework for TESOL professionals*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Fernández, M. L. (2010). Investigating how and what prospective teachers learn through microteaching lesson study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 351-362. doi:0.1016/j.tate.2009.09.012
- Fernández, M. L. (2012). Learning through microteaching lesson study in teacher preparation. *Action in Teacher Education*, 26(4), 37-47. doi:10.1080/01626620.2005.10463341
- Gan, Z., & Yang, C. C. R. (2018). How prepared are the preservice ESL teachers to teach: Insights from university supervisor feedback. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 15(1), 99-117. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2018.15.1.7.99
- Hallinger, P., & Lee, M. (2011). A decade of education reform in Thailand: Broken promise or impossible dream? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(2), 139-158.
- Hayes, D. (2010). Language learning, teaching and education reform in rural Thailand: An English teacher's perspective. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Education*, 30(3), 305-319.
- Ingersoll, R. M., Gang, D., Meilu, S., Lai, K. C., Fujita, H., Kim, E., & Boonyananta, S. (2007). A comparative study of teacher preparation and qualifications in six nations. *The Consortium for Policy Research in Education*, 1-117.
- Kostiainen, E., Ukskoski, T., Ruohotie-Lyhty, M., Kauppinen, M., Kainulainen, J., & Mäkinen, T. (2018). Meaningful learning in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 71, 66-77. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.12.009
- Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (2000). Teaching and teacher development: A new synthesis for a new century. In R. Brandt (Ed.), *Education in a new era* (pp. 47-66). Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Lim, H.-W. (2011). Concept maps of Korean EFL student teachers' autobiographical reflections on their professional identity formation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(6), 969-981. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.05.001
- Loima, J. (2016). A decision-maker or a collaborator? Reflecting teacher's professional development trends in Thailand. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1215216. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2016.1215216
- Loughran, J. J. (2002). Effective reflective practice: In search of meaning in learning about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 33-43. doi:10.1177/0022487102053001004
- Mehrpour, S., & Moghadam, M. (2018). Exploring the effect of self-reflection through awareness raising on novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs enactment. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 15(3), 630-648. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2018.15.3.5.630
- Miller, K., & Shifflet, R. (2016). How memories of school inform preservice teachers' feared and desired selves as teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 53, 20-29. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.10.002
- Nguyen, T. T. L. (2018a). The effect of combined peer-teacher feedback on Thai students' writing accuracy. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 6(2), 117-132.
- Nguyen, T. T. L. (2018b). Reflections on modified genre-based instructions to teach essay writing to Thai university students *The Asian EFL Journal*, 20(9.1), 148-174.
- Nicoletti, K. (2015). *English teacher education: A case study of teachers learning by doing*. Paper presented at the 7th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences "ASEAN 2015 Challenges and Opportunities", Prince of Songkla University.
- Phompun, C., Thongthaw, S., & Zeinchner, K. (2013). Pre-service teacher education in Thailand in the third space. *International Forum of Teaching and Studies*, 9(1), 11-20.
- Scholz, A. (2014). *Investigating the perception of EFL teachers in Thailand: To what extent do they feel prepared to teach?* (Unpublished master's thesis). North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the profession*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sullivan, G. M., & Artino, A. R. (2013). Analyzing and interpreting data from Likert-type scales. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 5(4), 541-542.

- Tan, J. (2013). Dialoguing written reflections to promote self-efficacy in student teachers. *Reflective Practice, 14*(6), 814-824.
- Wan, W., Low, G. D., & Li, M. (2011). From students' and teachers' perspectives: Metaphor analysis of beliefs about EFL teachers' roles. *System, 39*(3), 403-415. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.012>
- Wiboolsri, Y. (2008). *Measurement and achievement test construction*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Wongsothorn, A., Hiranburana, K., & Chinnawongs, S. (2003). English language teaching in Thailand today. In K. H. Wah & R. L. Wong (Eds.), *English language teaching in East Asia today: Changing policies and practices* (pp. 441-453). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.
- Wongwanicha, S., Sakolraka, S., & Piromsombatb, C. (2014). Needs for Thai teachers to become a reflective teacher: Mixed methods needs assessment research. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 116*, 1645-1650.
- Yin, J. (2018). Empowering teachers through core reflection: A case in Korea. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 15*(4), 1005-1020. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2018.15.4.8.1005>