

# Exploring novice EAP teacher's self-reflection as a platform for professional development

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## ABSTRACT

Novice English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers are inevitably confronted with complex issues in their first year of teaching. This is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where EAP teachers are graduates of English Education departments and have no initial preparation for their tasks of teaching EAP. Professional reflection has the potential to assist novice language teachers, particularly those who teach EAP, to negotiate complex aspects in their teaching practice. For this reason, this single case study explored one participant's understandings of and experiences with self-reflection as a form of professional development. Data were garnered from a single semi-structured, open-ended interview. The findings of the study suggest that the participant made use of reflective practice to merge theory and practice and build a systematic inquiry to construct his professional identity, which led to evidence-based decision making processes. Further, professional reflection also assisted him in negotiating challenges and engage in problem solving processes. Finally, reflective practice enabled the participant to consider institutional provisions and expectations for teacher professional development, which showcased his needs for professional development as a novice teacher.

**Keywords:** EAP teacher; Indonesia; professional development; reflective practice

**First Received:**

12 March 2018

**Revised:**

23 August 2018

**Accepted:**

1 September 2018

**Final Proof Received:**

24 September 2018

**Published:**

30 September 2018

## How to cite (in APA style):

Hidayati, S. (2018). Exploring novice EAP teacher's self-reflection as a platform for professional development. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8, 441-451 . doi: 10.17509/ijal.v8i2.13310

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development refers to activities that give opportunities for teachers to enhance their teaching practice, knowledge, skills, and approaches (Bolam, 2000; Widodo, 2018). Teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning is in continuous development, necessitating engagement in ongoing learning activities (Avalos, 2011; Bolam, 2000; Borko, 2004; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Ideally, learning activities are underscored by a focus on "strengthening opportunities for individual teachers to meet their professional development needs" (Bolam, 2000, p. 278).

Teachers may show different professional development needs in different stages of their careers (Eros, 2011; Farrell, 2012a). It is therefore crucial to "recognize the necessity of career-long professional

development, as well as the need to analyse each teacher's particular professional development needs" (Eros, 2011, p. 68). Also central to teachers' development is "the understanding that professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth" (Avalos, 2011, p. 10). Drawing on the situative perspective (Borko, 2004; Putnam & Borko, 2000), in that knowledge is situated in context, "teachers' learning should be grounded in some aspects of their teaching practice" (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 12). Richards and Farrell (2005) conceptualise teacher learning as encompassing the learning of skills, personal construction, and reflective practice.

Reflection is “an essential characteristic of teaching and learning” (Elbaz, 1988, p. 171). Although the initial basis for engaging in reflection may be “some perplexity confusion or doubt” (Dewey, 1933, p. 12), reflective practice does not merely derive from impulsive and intuitive feelings; rather, it is evidence-based in that teachers need to systematically collect evidence (or data) about their work and then make decisions based on this information (Farrell, 2012b). Reflective practice can provide opportunities for teachers to think systematically, independently, and collaboratively about their practice, experiences, and decision-making. This is important in light of the purported gaps between “what researchers produce as reconstructions of teachers’ knowledge, even when this work is carried out explicitly from a teacher’s perspective, and teachers’ accounts of their own knowledge” (Elbaz, 1988, p. 172).

Farrell (2015, p. 123) defines reflective practice as

a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect data about their practice, and, while engaging in dialogue with others, use the data to make informed decisions about their practice both inside and outside classroom.

Farrell (2016a) considers reflective practice as a form of systematic inquiry that is rigorous and disciplined. When teachers engage in evidence-based reflective practice, they are able to “articulate to themselves what they do, how they do it, why they do it, and the impacts of their practice on student learning” (Farrell, 2012b, p. 14). As such, reflective practice may affirm current practice or result in changes. Reflection therefore involves processes of identifying, analysing and solving the complex problems that represent classroom thinking (Spalding & Wilson, 2002).

Reflection, for teachers in particular, can be viewed as “the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one’s teaching practices and routines” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 7). Reviewing a collection of over one hundred research-based articles on how teachers engage in self-reflection, Farrell (2016a) suggests that teachers may find reflective practice beneficial for different aspects of their teaching when using his holistic framework (Farrell, 2013, 2016a), which comprises philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. Teachers may foster stronger understandings of their teacher identity, formation and development when they reflect on their philosophy. They can build awareness of their assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching and learning, making re-evaluations, modifications or changes when they reflect on their principles. Furthermore, the positive impact reported in most of these studies on the increased level of awareness that is generated from such reflections seems to provide further opportunities and motivation for TESOL teachers to further explore, and even in some instances even

challenge, their current approaches to the practice (Farrell, 2016a).

Self-reflection is particularly encouraged for novice teachers (Farrell, 2012a, 2016b; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Widodo, 2018) who are likely to experience these gaps in the transition process of their first years of teaching, from the pre-service to in-service teaching phases (Farrell, 2012a, 2016b). During their first years of practice, teachers may face challenges in adapting to their work and experience some inconsistencies between what they have learned in teacher education and the reality of the classroom. These challenges may concern “lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management, and identity development” (Farrell, 2012a, p. 435). Farrell (2016b) labels the initial challenging phases in teaching as the first shock and the after-shock. The first shock, which typically occurs in the first week of teaching, may involve a sense of alienation and separation from colleagues – teachers may not feel welcome, and may feel responsible for negotiating their practice on their own. What follows from this sense of isolation is the after-shock, which entails frustration at the perceived disorganisation of institutional administration. It is thought that these shocks occur due to the prevalent assumption that novice teachers are able to simply apply the knowledge acquired during their teacher preparation programs, irrespective of support or guidance from administration (Farrell, 2016b). Considering the importance of self-reflection as a pathway to learning for novice teachers, this study investigated the ways in which a novice EAP teacher working in the Indonesian higher education sector made use of self-reflection for professional development.

EAP courses, as a branch of ESP, are specifically designed to cater to the learning needs of particular students within academic institutions (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Sharpling, 2002; Widodo, 2015). EAP teachers are required to build competency in and extensive knowledge of academic literacy practices, the needs of EAP students, curriculum development and program implementation (Alexander et al., 2008). However, the aforementioned knowledge and competencies are not immediately available from training courses and can take considerable time to acquire (Sharpling, 2002). Therefore, in addition to formal EAP training, “there is a need to encourage ‘reflective practitioner’ attitudes with teachers acquiring skills through experience and evaluation” (Sharpling, 2002, p. 89).

EAP has been rapidly developing over the last few decades (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Hyland & Shaw, 2016). EAP practitioners should consider themselves “as not simply preparing learners for study in English but as developing new kinds of literacy which will equip students to participate in new academic and cultural contexts” (Hyland, 2006, p. 8). Given the complex and specialised roles of EAP teachers (Alexander et al., 2008), their learning and professional development needs are pertinent

considerations. Sharpling (2002, p. 82) claims that “a reappraisal of the issue of training and development in EAP seems to be crucial since the EAP practitioner’s role is a highly complex one, for which no preparation seems to be wholly adequate.”

In Indonesian universities, English language teaching is categorised into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purposes (EGP). ESP courses, in which students are mostly exposed to subject-related texts and expected to master subject-related communication skills, are designed to prepare them for the future workplace (Harper & Widodo, 2018; Widodo, 2015). EAP courses, on the other hand, aim to equip students with knowledge and skills to be able to successfully participate in academic contexts during their study, ranging from reading textbooks to writing academic papers, actively engaging in group discussions, and conducting oral presentations. EAP study is undertaken by students who major in subjects other than English, such as business, engineering, law, medicine, and science. In Indonesia, this case is partly due to the increasing number of faculties or departments that offer international programs and double-degree programs with overseas universities, in which English serves as the medium of instruction (Widodo, 2015, 2016a, 2016b).

The challenges of ESP teaching in Indonesia relate to students’ motivation, the mismatch between expectations and reality, a lack of quality resources and heavy workloads for teachers (Marwan, 2017; Widodo, 2015, 2016a). Furthermore, communicative, learner-centred approaches are rarely implemented, and opportunities to engage in collaborative teaching and to use authentic materials are scarce (Widodo, 2016b). However, little research has been conducted to date to explore how EAP teachers in Indonesia meet the challenges they face in negotiating their practice, especially in their first years of teaching.

As there are no teacher preparation programs specialising in EAP teaching, EAP teachers in Indonesia are graduates of English Education departments. However, in some departments, courses targeting ESP teaching are offered as compulsory or specialised subjects under the English Language Teaching (ELT) major. These courses aim to equip pre-service teachers with broad understandings of fundamental aspects of ESP, such as needs analysis, materials development, and syllabus and course design (Harper & Widodo, 2018; Widodo, 2016b).

Although EAP has been taught in Indonesian universities for many years, there is little information on how EAP teachers, particularly novices, have engaged in self-reflection for their professional development. In order to address this gap, this study explores the following research question: in what way(s) does a novice teacher of EAP working in the Indonesian tertiary sector use self-reflection for professional development?

## **METHOD**

The study was designed as a pilot to investigate the self-reflection practices of a novice EAP teacher working in the Indonesian tertiary sector, with the case study design selected to facilitate this initial exploration (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2009). The case study method “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection ... and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Yin (1994) identifies the purposes of the single case study as the expansion and generation of theory, or ‘analytical generalisation,’ as opposed to proving theory or providing ‘statistical generalisation’ (p. 30). These assertions underscore case study research as an exploratory tool. Cases are not sampling units (Yin, 1994), and are therefore not used to devise statistical generalisation.

In this study, data from a single participant was used based on the rationale that the participant’s interpretation of their reflective practices constituted a unique case in a particular context (Yin, 1994). To recruit a participant, an invitation was sent via email or phone contacts within the researcher’s professional networks to reach potential participants. The researcher then made contact only with those who responded and who wished to participate.

The participant was a novice teacher who, at the time of data collection, had been teaching EAP at a language centre affiliated with an Indonesian university for one and a half years. He had no work experience prior to his appointment with the language centre, and had been employed soon after completing an undergraduate degree. He held a bachelor degree in English Education from a university in Indonesia.

As part of his professional development, he had been involved in various activities provided by the language centre and organised by other institutions. He had attended professional development workshops and seminars aimed at enriching teachers’ knowledge and understanding of current research in ELT. Also, he had actively participated as a presenter at conferences held by universities and EFL teacher associations in Indonesia.

The participant’s main responsibilities involved teaching ESP and EAP courses to undergraduate students across all faculties. In addition to teaching, he worked as a language consultant for students of international programs whose final paper was written in English. As mentioned earlier, the university with which the language centre was affiliated delivered both regular and international programs in Business, Medicine and Social Politics, in which English was used as the medium of instruction. International class students were required to write an undergraduate thesis or a final paper in English. To write the paper, students were supervised by two academic supervisors, working as subject lecturers, and one language consultant, an English teacher appointed by the language centre who worked closely with the students to assist them with

English-related issues. The language consultant provided language services which included grammar checks, writing tutorials, and editing assistance.

Data were collected using one semi-structured, open-ended interview of approximately 45 minutes. The interview was conducted in English and focused on the participant's understandings of and experiences with self-reflection as a form of professional development, corresponding to the research question set out for the study. The interview questions required the participant to reflect on the nature of professional reflection, the extent to which he engaged in reflective practice, the potential of reflective practice as a professional development activity for EAP teachers, especially for novice EAP teachers, and the extent to which he felt reflective practice could be used to meet the needs of novice EAP teachers.

The interview was audio-recorded for later transcription, coding, and analysis. Doing transcription is a way to reconstruct data from naturally occurring talk(s) because, in fact, in the interview, participants and a researcher jointly create data through dialogic conversation (Widodo, 2014). Selective coding was used for analysis (Clarke, 2005) to highlight the relationship between the participant's experiences and the situational and theoretical concerns foregrounded in the previous section in this study regarding reflective practice and the professional development of novice EAP teachers. This process involved a thorough familiarisation with the interview data where the interview content was contextualised within literature. Key reflections, which communicated the participant's understandings of professional reflection and the ways in which he engaged in reflective practice, were drawn out from the transcripts for discussion. The key observations drawn from the transcripts were presented as excerpts and discussed in the findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section elaborates the analysis of how the participant, a novice EAP teacher working in a higher education institution in Indonesia, made use of his self-reflection to develop teaching professionalism. Novice teachers are inevitably confronted with an array of complex issues. The teacher's job is to develop a strong professional identity through a long process of practice. As has been mentioned in the introductory section, Indonesian EAP teachers are graduates of the English Education departments and have no initial preparation for their tasks of teaching EAP.

The observations discussed below are the main findings of the study. Firstly, the ways in which the participant made use of reflective practice to merge theory and practice are highlighted. The participant internalised and merged his prior knowledge, acquired during teacher preparation, and his practice-based experience through reflective practice. Further, reflection allowed him to build systematic inquiry to construct his professional identity. This inquiry also led

to decision-making processes which were evidence-based as opposed to decisions based on intuition. Secondly, the participants' reflective practice also assisted him to negotiate challenges and engage in processes of problem-solving. He opted to collaboratively share the outcomes of his reflective practice, both formally and informally. This provided him the opportunity to learn from experienced teachers, particularly with regards to syllabus and curriculum design. Finally, reflective practice enabled the participant to consider institutional provisions and expectations for teacher professional development. His reflections on institutional culture revealed his needs for professional development as a novice teacher, including the emphasis on peer observation and a formalised induction program.

### Merging theory and practice

Critical reflection allows teachers to recall and incorporate previous learning experience as well as previously learned theories into their teaching practice for the process of making informed-decision and building teachers' own theory of their current teaching practice (Farrell, 2015, 2016a). It is argued that the reflection can explain and justify the theory to be applied in teaching practice (Brookfield, 1995; Kuswandono, 2017; Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018).

The notion of reflective practice was not a novelty for the participant, who reflected:

I have been familiar since I was at the college back then, at the English Education Department of Uni. Such issues were discussed in the TEFL Methodology and English Instructional Technology courses (lines 31-32)

The participant reveals that the concept of self reflective practice was not new to him. This can be seen as a good starting point, as when novice teachers have acquired skills to conduct reflections from their teacher education programs, they are more likely to experience a successful and rewarding transition into teaching and, ultimately, to have greater career longevity (Farrell, 2013). With regards to the purposes of reflection, the participant commented that "*professional reflection mostly deals with reflecting on what teachers have done in order to plan things to do next*" (lines 33-34), which is what Schön (1983) formulates as reflection-for-action. Also, the participant viewed professional reflection as any reflective activity "*done by teachers in order to strengthen their roles as teachers as well as strengthen their practice*" (lines 36-37), implying that the activities enable teachers to construct their professional identity in addition to teaching practice. In this sense, self-reflection may lead to deepened awareness of "what [teachers] do and thus come to new insights about their students, their teaching, and themselves" (Farrell, 2012b, p. 14).

Reflecting back on the earliest phase in his teaching career, he stated that, "*as everything was new*

for me, I started to experience feeling stressful and frustrated" (lines 53-54), feelings that Farrell (2016b) labels as the shock and aftershock that novices experience in the 'survival years' of teaching. To cope with this situation, the immediate action that he undertook was described as follows:

... I started to read some publications and accessed the website of famous ELT experts such Pak Willy Renandya, Prof. Jack C. Richards, Prof. Paul Nation and others. By so doing, I started to learn many practical things in teaching (lines 55 – 58).

This shows that he was independent and agentive in pursuing professional learning and could proactively seek ways to fill perceived knowledge gaps, such as finding useful theories and information from the academic literature to enhance his teaching. The attempt at searching for useful references and resources to adapt himself to EAP teaching indicates that the participant made individual professional endeavours to overcome challenges. His attitude of being autonomous in analysing his own obstacles in teaching as well as looking for solutions has been given special attention in the post-method perspective, which encourages "teachers' potential to know not only how to teach but also how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula and textbooks" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 10). Teachers' potential to monitor their own development can help them to foster ongoing learning through self-initiated personal development (Halford, 1998; Naci Kayaoğlu, Erbay, & Sağlamel, 2016).

Importantly, reflective practice provided a valuable learning resource for the participant in terms of merging theories into practices. Firstly, reflection enabled the participant to internalise his pedagogical knowledge and practice, as seen in following excerpt:

This theory and practice [relating process] guides me to the process of making sense all the things I have learned previously (lines 60-61).

Farrell (2016a, p. 226) argues that language teachers have both 'official' theories learned in teacher education and 'unofficial' theories gained from teaching experience. However, teachers may not be fully aware of these theories, especially their unofficial theories or 'theories-in-use' (Farrell, 2016a, p. 226). Reflective practice allowed the participant to develop awareness of his theories, and identify the changes he needed to make to become a more effective teacher. By reflecting on theory in relation to practice, the participant could therefore internalise pedagogical knowledge and practices that were useful to him.

... I made a connection between the theory and practice, especially relating to what I have been doing as part of my coursework at the undergraduate degree (lines 58-60).

During teacher education, novice teachers are likely to experience diverse contexts for practice teaching, typically including general English teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As they attempt to apply the knowledge learned in their teacher education programs into their professional roles post-graduation, they may realise that each context has unique features and presents different challenges to overcome. This includes uncovering the hidden curriculum and institutional expectations. It is therefore argued that one of the most effective ways to prepare preservice teachers to face during the first year of teaching is "making clear connections in all the preparation courses to teaching in the first year by including the completion of reflective activities and assignments that are related to the subject matter of that course" (Farrell, 2012a, p. 440). This process of internalising theory and practice is, however, not an instant process, as the participant acknowledged:

For novice teachers, ... the process of making sense of the theory into practice stage takes some time to go through. For me, it took a semester or even a year (lines 61-63).

Farrell (2013) reports a similar situation of three novice ESL teachers in Canada. The results of their reflections suggest that pre-service ESL teachers and other novice ESL teachers may derive significant benefit from instruction in the skills of reflective practice and especially from conducting reflections based on the framework on practice when attempting to map the complex transition from their teacher education programs to their first year as teachers.

The participant also made use of reflective practices as a source of information to make informed decisions. He shared a positive view of reflective practice and emphasised its utility in improving his approaches to EAP syllabus design, materials development, and course evaluation:

This [professional reflection] provides some suggestions to the existing curriculum applies, especially with regard to the syllabus, materials, and evaluation. This is very crucial for me as I'm one of the course designers so I need to collect as much as information in relation to the course itself (lines 43-46).

Despite his being new to teaching practice, he was assigned to take part in collaborative course design. He commented that reflections provided opportunities for course developers to "find some data with regard to what teachers have found during teaching that course" (lines 27-28). As such, prior experiences were used as the basis to make evidence-based decisions, i.e. reflection-on-action.

Similarly, to improve the current curriculum, he reflected for action, using past experiences and prior knowledge as useful data to make informed decisions for change. The participant claimed that:

In relation to the outcome of the professional reflection activities ... this reflection has also appeared in the curriculum structure (lines 74-76).

In addition to curriculum development, the participant included other pedagogical aspects in his reflections, such as “*teaching, teachers, students, and the management*” (line 48). This implies that the participant addressed various aspects of the reflection framework proposed by Farrell (2016a), including theory, practice and beyond practice.

When the participant reflected on the aspects of teaching as well as students, he reflected in the stage of ‘practice’ within the framework. Reflections at this stage start with detailed exploration of observable teaching actions and students’ reactions or non-reactions during lessons. The reflections thus enable teachers to reflect when they are teaching (reflection-in-action), after they teach (reflection-on-action) and before they teach (reflection-for-action). However, when the participant reflected on other aspects of teaching, such as teachers’ planning, teaching methods, approaches and techniques, these reflections took place at the level of ‘theory’ within the framework.

When the participant reflected on other teachers and management, the reflections were situated at the ‘beyond practice’ level. Reflection at this level is considered ‘critical reflection’ which necessitates exploration of sociocultural aspects in teaching and learning, including moral, political and social issues.

### **Dealing with challenges and problem solving**

Professional reflection has the potential to assist novice language teachers, particularly those who work in EAP, to negotiate complex aspects in their practice (Borko, 2004; Farrell, 2012a, 2016b; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). The participant emphasised the potential of reflection to negotiate challenges, and commented that, when “*teachers may face many challenges, professional reflection is needed to improve their teaching practice as well as their professional development*” (lines 40-42). Further, he described his experience as a novice as follows:

I have been engaging with professional reflection in some ways. This is due to the fact that I’m a novice teacher with 1.5 years of teaching experience. So at the first of teaching, I encountered some problems, obstacles and challenges (lines 52-54).

Challenges and difficulties are unavoidable in the novice teachers’ professional life, and problems may range from feelings of alienation, frustration and perplexities (of disorganised management) (Farrell, 2016b), disillusionment, and failure (Halford, 1998), to a mismatch between teachers’ beliefs and practices (Naci Kayaoğlu et al., 2016). The participant recognised gaps between the knowledge and experiences that he obtained from teacher education and his experiences

during the first years of teaching, which resulted in feelings of frustration. However, he also noted that those issues were not sufficiently tackled during the preparation program, as he described in the following excerpts:

Reflecting on my experiences, the first time of teaching posed many obstacles and challenges which were considered stressful for beginning teachers. Those aspects were unfortunately not addressed during the pre-service coursework (lines 105-107).

He then argued that these gaps can in fact be anticipated in teacher education programs to help novice teachers:

The training of pre-service teachers should then address those issues as those are commonly faced by beginning teachers. The ways the teachers should deal with their new problems on the first teaching period should be given much attention (lines 107-109).

It has been asserted that novice teachers should take responsibility for their own professional development by engaging in reflective practice through their first years of teaching so that they can evaluate and manage any issues they face in their particular contexts (Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Farrell, 2016b; Naci Kayaoğlu et al., 2016). Also, when they have entered a new institutional context, novice teachers will need to acquire appropriate contextual information (e.g., the nature of the institutional culture and its expectations, the existing knowledge levels of the students and their linguistic backgrounds) in order to be able to function effectively. Thus, learning to teach in the first years involves developing familiarity with the specific values, norms of practice and patterns of social participation in the new institutional context so that novice teachers can integrate as smoothly as possible (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

In EAP teaching in particular, challenges include the complexity of content, understanding EAP students’ needs, curriculum, and program development (Alexander et al., 2008), “putting specificity into practice” (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 5) and the lack of available EAP teacher preparation. The last problem is also evident in universities in Indonesia, in which teachers of EAP do not receive pedagogical knowledge specialised in EAP in teacher preparation program.

To cope with these difficulties, the participant opted to engage in collaborative actions. Murray (2010) categorises reflective teaching as both individual and collaborative. Individual reflection refers an individual teacher’s attempts to develop awareness of their classroom practices by collecting data via techniques such as keeping a teaching journal, analysing critical incidents, audio- or video-recording a lesson, making a

written account of lessons in the form of checklists or lesson narratives, keeping a teaching portfolio, compiling case reports and conducting action research (Murray, 2010; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). On the other hand, collaborative reflection involves reflecting with colleagues via activities such as sharing teaching journals, peer mentoring and peer coaching, forming or joining a teacher support group, forming or joining local and national teachers' associations, connecting with other associations, taking active part in an international professional association, and participating in workshops and conferences (Murray, 2010).

The first collaborative strategy selected by the participant involved collegial reflection with more experienced teachers (line 58). Novice teachers should be allowed to self-reflect on their classroom practices, and the support of an experienced colleague as a mentor may serve well to encourage them to engage in reflections and give them feedback about their practice (Halford, 1998; Naci Kayaoğlu et al., 2016). The participant also reported that sharing his stories let him reflect on his teaching practices and that he found such sharing empowering and beneficial:

Reflecting has helped me shape my professional development process. It is also worth noting that this reflection has shaped my beliefs and practices as teachers. I also believe this process is a continuous one so it offers abundant benefits for EAP teachers (lines 78-80).

In terms of sharing knowledge, the result of my reflections to be shared with other teachers during lunch break. This is informally done between colleagues at LTC to share what we have discovered in our teaching (lines 70-72).

Teachers can benefit from sharing their reflective teaching experiences with their colleagues either in informal discussion or following a specific framework (Kabilan, 2007; Murray, 2010). Collaboration is beneficial in that it "can help teachers become more assertive and decisive about their personal learning; it can also boost their confidence and empower them to find solutions to challenges they face in their teaching" (Murray, 2010, p. 4). It "paves the way for the reconstruction of knowledge, which subsequently reifies itself into a new shared knowledge" (Kabilan, 2007, p. 699).

More specifically with regard to collaborative work, the participant accounted for the value of the junior – senior relationship, in which senior or experienced teachers were expected to act as mentors.

I think for EAP teachers, especially for novice ones, the program should involve collaboration between junior and senior teachers in a mentoring program. This is seen essential because novice teachers need someone having more experiences in teaching as well as having faced challenges and obstacles in teaching. As they are newcomers in

the EAP world, they need mentors to guide them through the journey for becoming EAP professionals (lines 99-103).

Mentoring is perceived as one of the most effective support programs for new teachers, as it provides opportunities for new teachers to have someone to talk to, sharing their ideas as well as finding assistance when they encounter difficulties (Halford, 1998). For this 'individual induction program' to be meaningful, descriptive feedback, instead of judgement, and time commitment are required (Halford, 1998, p. 35). Time commitment refers to institutions' responsibilities to allocate sufficient time for the mentors to work with beginning teachers.

As well as conducting collaborative reflective practice with his immediate colleagues, the participant also attended conferences and workshops, exchanging information with experts and other experienced teachers in a more formalised setting, which he recounted as follows:

This experience is strengthened by the opportunities I have gained during the conferences I attended in which I could share and exchange my experiences with more experienced teachers, researchers, and course developers (lines 63-66).

The participant considered taking part in such activities as a "means of improving my teaching practices" (lines 69-70). He revealed that the ideas that he shared on those occasions derived from his individual professional self-reflective practices, as expressed in the following excerpts:

I used it as the source for my research papers (lines 68-69).

In relation to the outcome of the professional reflection activities, I have published some articles in journal or conference proceeding (lines 74-75).

Conducting research, attending and presenting academic papers in workshops, seminars and conferences as well as publishing articles in journals are of importance for teacher professional development in Indonesia as the records of those activities will be listed in teachers' professional portfolios, used as a reference for future career development. As is the case in the participant's workplace, a language centre affiliated with a university, when a teacher is able to show a progress in his/her portfolio, he/she is considered qualified to take on more responsibilities, for example teaching more advanced classes, being assigned more challenging and rewarding jobs such as a program and curriculum developer, and being appointed to more prestigious positions, such as a tenure faculty member or a human resources manager or a language centre director.

To sum up, the participant benefited from reflective practices to negotiate pedagogical and professional challenges and issues. Collaborative reflections allowed him to exchange ideas with other beginning teachers and senior teachers. Individual reflections served as sources for his academic papers, which are beneficial for his career trajectory. From the participant's perspective, professional reflection is beneficial for novices in that:

it can be used to assist teachers in their transition stage from the pre-service stage into real teaching world (lines 83-84),

and

it trains them to be reflective practitioners. This reflection then helps achieving such goals [of going through transition process] (lines 84-85).

### **Institutional provisions and expectations for professional development**

For novice teachers to survive in the first-year teaching stage and develop their teaching capacity, not only individual teacher attempts but also support from the institutions are required to assist new teachers with teaching profession (Farrell, 2016b; Richards & Farrell, 2005). To support teacher development activities, schools or teaching institutions and administrators are responsible for opportunities for teacher continued professional education that are well planned, supported and rewarded (Halford, 1998; Naci Kayaoğlu et al., 2016; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Widodo, 2018).

The institution where the participant worked supported teachers' professional development in relation to both opportunity and funding, as the participant described:

I also take part in professional development seminar held by the language centre. The seminar is highly suggested by the management for all teachers currently working at the language centre to improve their professional development (lines 14-17).

... as my institution provides funding for anyone presenting in the conference held outside the institution (lines 20-21).

This is mostly because the management provides room for teachers to take part in academic activities other than teaching (lines 21-23).

As for EAP teachers, the institution organised a discussion on a regular basis, which was held at the beginning of each semester, on "*program and materials development as well as course and syllabus designs*" (lines 2-3), in which the participant could "*take part in the syllabus discussion process for two courses*" (lines 17-18).

To foster effective and meaningful professional development, institutional managers should possess an awareness of the career cycle (Eros, 2011), in particular the needs of novice teachers. The participant highlighted the need to address the potential challenges faced by novice teachers, including those related to emotional aspects of teaching as well as pedagogical approaches. In order to respond to these challenges, institutions could build up a corpus of novice teachers' stories and experiences from a variety of different contexts, and then use these to construct an induction program for novice teachers to explore (Eros, 2011).

The participant asserted that the institution where he was employed had provided the novices with opportunities for development. For example, provisions had been made for teachers to be observed by their peers and experienced teachers and learn from the feedback – an initiative the participant thought had a lot of merit:

At the language centre, there is also one program for developing teachers' professional development. This program is referred to as peer observation (lines 113-114).

There are several different methods of conducting reflections on practice (Farrell, 2016a), and one of the most common ways of reflecting on classroom teaching is to engage in classroom observations.

The observation is done by using analytical rubric so this activity is not for judging whether the teacher is capable or not for teaching. This activity is usually done by permanent teachers to the non-permanent teachers. The permanent teachers usually have around 5 years teaching experience (lines 114-117).

The participant commented on the usefulness of this as follows:

Those who do the peer observation will share what they discover in relation to the materials, methods, class management, and the like. The results will then be used to improve the teaching practice (lines 117-120).

However, it is important to note that teachers' self-initiated development activities must also be emphasised, as institutionally-run professional development activities do not always guarantee sustainable development (Farrell, 2016b; Naci Kayaoğlu et al., 2016). This is particularly important for novice teachers during the early stages of their career to acquaint themselves with institutional procedures and to implement their instructional practices within both institutional and professional guidelines (Farrell, 2012a; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

The participant argued that there was room to improve the provision of development opportunities



within his institution of employment, and that *“the institution can actually provide some more rooms for personal reflection to be taken into account in developing curriculum”* (lines 93-95). He added that:

Also, the peer observation program needs to be further developed in order to achieve the goals of professional reflection (lines 95-96).

These observations suggest that, despite insufficient institutional support, teachers can potentially benefit from peer observations as a collaborative reflection between novice and experienced practitioners as a trigger to professional reflection. Firstly, the corpus of such rich stories from the context of first year teaching experience can well inform and be used as sources for a teacher induction program. Also, stimulation in post-observation discussions, according to Lakshmi (2014, p. 202) can be obtained from critical friends who can promote greater awareness and deeper reflections, where teachers construct “their own explanations of teaching derived from their own practices. As a result of such discussions with the critical friend, teachers can become more ‘critical of their own habitual practices’ and may ‘try out alternative ideas in their classrooms’” (Lakshmi, 2014, pp. 201-202). With the implementation of peer observation, the institution had accommodated a professional development program by considering the stages in teachers’ careers. It is fundamentally important for administrators to acknowledge the features of different career stages and to build on this knowledge to design stage-appropriate professional development (Eros, 2011).

The shock for novice EAP teachers centres around their attempts to balance a difficult act between learning to teach while at the same time as developing their conceptions of ‘self-as-teacher’ or their identity as a teacher within an established institutional culture (Farrell, 2016b). In recognition of the challenges that novice teachers inevitably face, and that novice teachers will need support, the participant maintained that the institution should introduce an induction program where *the ways the teachers should deal with their new problems on the first teaching period should be given much attention*” (lines 109-110) – issues that are not addressed in teacher preparation programs. In addition, he suggested that institutions should appoint mentors to help novice teachers during their first year of teaching as when teachers are *“newcomers in the EAP world, they need mentors to guide them through the journey for becoming EAP professionals”* (lines 102-103). In reality, however, not all institutions offer induction programs or appoint mentors. This is especially true when novice teachers are employed on temporary contracts and receive little support from the administration (Farrell, 2016b), as in the participant’s workplace, where teachers are hired on a permanent and non-permanent basis.

### **Challenges in reflections**

In addition to challenges in teaching, the participant also found barriers to engaging in reflective practice. One of the barriers the participant recognised to conducting reflections concerned time constraints. He commented that,

The barriers include ... time. I think the most apparent barriers for teachers working in my institution is time. They have to teach many classes since they get low remuneration. So teachers will be busy doing teaching. Some of my friends said that they teach many classes so that they don’t have enough time to do such thing (lines 87-90).

Heavy workload has been noted previously as a barrier to teachers’ engagement in professional development (Marwan, 2017). A heavy teaching load is a serious threat to teachers’ professionalism. It is very difficult for teachers to deliver quality teaching if they do not have enough time for good preparation and to undertake professional development. Similar situations are evident in other contexts, where a considerable number of teachers feel reluctant to continue their professional development on account of their busy schedule, but are compelled to do so under high institutional expectations (Naci Kayaoğlu et al., 2016). Under such conditions, it would be ill-judged to think of reflective practice as a feasible solution that can be implemented immediately. In terms of dealing with this, institutions are responsible for assigning teachers a reasonable workload, and for allowing them time to undertake professional development activities with appropriate remuneration.

The next hindrance was related to teachers’ personal commitment to engaging in professional reflection. The participant argued that conducting reflective practice required a certain level of commitment and motivation on behalf of teachers, as he explained:

Since this reflection is voluntary in nature, it needs high inner motivation to do such a thing. Sustaining this process is hard therefore teachers need to be highly motivated in doing this reflection (lines 91-93).

Commitment is referred to as motivation to express or share the outcome of such reflections in either individual or collaborative work. Teachers’ commitment is closely associated with time and teaching load. It is difficult for teachers to get motivated to conduct reflections while they struggle with time management relating to their main responsibilities. This is especially relevant for contract teachers, who are paid solely on the basis of teaching hours, potentially compelling them to prioritise teaching and put their professional reflections aside.

Finally, the participant contended that institutional support was needed to allow EAP teachers to function

effectively in accordance with their roles, by providing more space for personal reflection to be included in developing a curriculum (line 95). Additionally, it was perceived that reflective practice could help teachers navigate challenges by reflecting with colleagues and senior teachers in post-observation discussion, which implied “the peer observation program need to be further developed” (lines 95-96).

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored the ways in which a novice EAP teacher engaged in self-reflection for professional development. Reflective practices served as a gap filler to merge the official theories he learned in teacher education and the theories he acquired through teaching experience, which constituted his own theories (theories-in-use). The gap refers to the potential disconnect between what student teachers perceive as theoretically-based information and what novice teachers discover as a classroom reality. Linking prior knowledge to teaching practice is indeed a crucial stage in novice teachers’ development as the process will help them immerse themselves in the teaching profession and negotiate challenges. This process of merging theory and practice allowed the participant to make informed decisions on EAP teaching, and make meaningful changes toward curriculum and syllabus design. In addition, the outcomes of his reflective practice empowered him to internalise pedagogy and knowledge.

The participant’s reflective practice provided ample opportunity to unfold the complex situations he found in his first year of teaching and to explore options for negotiating them in his teaching practice. He conducted individual as well as collaborative reflective activities for this purpose. Furthermore, the participant highlighted challenges in engaging in reflective practice. The first obstacle was the time required to carry out reflections, which was easily subsumed by teachers’ busy schedules. Self-commitment for reflective practice was also impacted by heavy workloads which potentially detracted from teachers’ motivation to conduct individual or collaborative reflections. However, given the complexities of EAP teaching, institutional support is necessary to negotiate these challenges and for teachers to engage beneficially in a variety of professional development initiatives.

As has been indicated previously, the study reported here adopts a case study design with a single participant. A bigger sample would have yielded richer data. The intention of this design was to yield qualitative data to facilitate a broader study in the areas of EAP and teacher professional development, not to generalise the observations made in this study. The observations have been used to highlight issues raised in the literature review with a view to deeply understanding the issues and setting parameters for a future study. Nevertheless, the observations made in this study have the potential to inform attempts and desires of novice teachers who would like to engage in professional development initiatives.

The present study has provided insights into a novice EAP teacher’s reflective practice on teaching practice and praxis as a platform for professional development. This information is of therefore importance for novice EAP practitioners who are in an attempt to find an individual way of developing their professionalism. It also raises issues of relevance for teacher education, pre-service teacher program in particular, and teaching institutions. While self-reflection conducted during early teaching career might assist a novice teacher to cope with and negotiate challenges, foundation of such practice in teacher preparation program and support from working institutions ought to be encouraged.

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