

Examination of Reflective Practice Levels in Tailored Structured Observation Journals

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Abstract

Reflective practice (RP) is crucial in the professional development of teachers. This process enables them to critically analyse their teaching practices leading to informed decisions that help them progress as practitioners. However, the level of reflection may vary from one teacher to another. The analysis of documents such as classroom observation grids and reflective journals can reveal the different levels of reflection. Both tools are essential to trigger reflection in student teachers and stimulate them to seek ways to improve their teaching practice during and after the training phase. Following a qualitative research design that employed document analysis as a research instrument, this study examined the different levels of RP in tailored structured observation journals. The participants of the study were seventeen fourth- and fifth-year English as Foreign Language (EFL) preservice teachers at École Normale Supérieure de Constantine (ENSC), Algeria who filled in structured observation journals during the observation phase of the practical training. Following the framework of Larrivee (2008) where three levels of reflection were identified: surface, pedagogical, and critical, the structured observation journals were analysed. The results of the study showed that surface reflection was the most documented level with 183 instances ($n=183$) related to the different teaching methods and strategies followed by pedagogical reflection ($n=99$) and critical reflection ($n=11$). The study revealed that the structured observation journals assisted preservice teachers in being more reflective while observing lessons. However, they still needed to enhance their critical reflection skills to improve their reflective practice.

Keywords: Reflective practice; structured observation journals; preservice teachers; Larrivee Framework.

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Introduction

Teaching is one of the most challenging professions. It demands teachers to be active participants who keep evolving and growing. Reflective practice (RP) is essential in this process. This concept, which has been circulating in the field of education for many decades, had roots in the work of Dewey (1933) and was further developed by Schön (1983). It can be defined as a conscious mental behaviour that incorporates the individuals to think and reconsider their beliefs and actions and judge them leading to learning (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021; Loughran, 2002; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). RP has become widely recognized in the field of education mainly because of an international initiative that was a reaction to the traditional perception of teachers as “technicians” (Zeichner, 1994, p.10). Teachers can choose from a wide range of tools to reflect on their practices. Two of the most common RP practice tools are structured classroom observation and reflective journals. Because the topic of RP is thoroughly investigated, plenty of studies have examined observation as a tool that promotes it like Bell (2001), Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005), Barócsi (2007), Farrell (2011) and Soisangworn and Wongwanich (2013). However, there are only a limited number of research papers, such as Djouima (2011), which investigated the use of observation as a reflective tool in the Algerian context. Moreover, a few studies have analysed the levels of reflection in reflective journals. Minott (2008) carried out one study following Valli’s (1997) typology of reflection. The study showed that the preservice teachers lacked the needed skills to engage in critical reflection. Another study was conducted by Nurfaidah et al (2017) using an adapted version of Hatton and Smith’s (1995) framework. The analysis of preservice teachers’ reflective journals revealed that the notes were mainly descriptive, analytical, and evaluative, but none of the preservice teachers displayed critical reflection. Thus, the current study, which employs document analysis as a research tool, aims to analyse trainees’ levels of reflection in a special document entitled the Structured Observation Journal (See Appendix).

The Study Context

Classroom observation and reflective journals are valuable tools that foster teachers’ RP. As part of teacher education programmes in Algeria such as the one provided by ENSC, preservice teachers undertake practical training. The latter includes three phases: observation, alternate, and full-time teaching. Before taking on any responsibilities in this training, such as taking charge of a class of learners, the preservice teachers engage in classroom observation. The trainees are provided with a grid to structure their observations. In many cases, they are also encouraged to keep journals. Although both journals and classroom observation can stimulate RP, the level of reflection may vary among teachers.

Aim of the study

The present study examines the different levels of reflection in structured observation journals following Larrivee’s (2008) framework.

Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the most predominant level of RP as documented in the structured observation journals?
2. To what extent do preservice teachers demonstrate critical reflection skills?

Hypothesis

The use of the structured observation journal has the potential to make the preservice teachers' classroom observation a more organized activity. In addition, it may encourage them to employ their RP skills effectively.

Method

This study follows a qualitative research design. The research instrument employed in the study is document analysis. After being filled by the participants, the journals were collected and analysed. Then, the results were illustrated numerically for interpretation and discussion.

Participants

The participants of this study are seventeen (n=17) trainees, fifteen females, and only two males who are intended to become middle and secondary school English teachers. The preservice teachers are fourth (Bac+4) and fifth-year (Bac+5) students at Ecole Normale Supérieure de Constantine (ENSC). They have received theoretical-based training for three and four years depending on their profile, before undergoing practice during the final year. As part of this training, they are placed in different middle and secondary schools. The training involves an observation phase in which they are supposed to observe their mentors for two weeks before they start planning and presenting the lessons. The participants agreed to sign an ethical consent form before the start of the study. Due to matters of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, the participants in this study are referred to using codes. To do that, the real names of the student teachers are arranged alphabetically then each one of them is referred to as a student teacher (ST) followed by a number ranging from 1 to 17. For example, the first one on the list is designated the code ST 1 while the last one is given the code ST 17.

Data collection

Document Analysis is used to collect data through a designed Structure Observation Journal. The document is a combination of an observation grid and a reflective journal that aims to guide preservice teachers during the observation phase of the training by structuring their observations and providing them with opportunities for reflection. It is divided into three stages: pre-observation, observation, and post-observation. In the first stage, the preservice teachers can decide about the aspects that they are going to pay attention to while observing. The aspects are related to areas that the trainees are keen on exploring or improving. In the second stage, the student teachers need to observe and note down all that takes place in the classroom in addition to commenting on these notes. The observation grid allows the trainees to organize their observation and to consider some specific areas, which are the setting, the teacher, learners, materials and activities, stages of the lesson, and their areas of interest. In the last stage, the preservice teachers dedicate some time to thoroughly examine their observation notes. They determine what was successful and what was not. Moreover, they endeavour to link their observations to the conceptual knowledge they received at ENSC. The final task that the trainees engage in is writing their reflections. They indicate what aspects of the observed lessons they will adopt into their teaching and which ones they will discard. In either case, the trainees are required to explain the rationale behind their choices.

Procedure

The study took place between November 2023 and February 2024 (The official period of the practical training at ENSC). Before the start of the training in November, the participants received the structured observation journals, which they used in the observation phase along with the observation grid provided by ENSC. During a meeting with the trainees, 36 agreed to take part in the study. However, only 17 out of 36 returned the document while the others felt overloaded with

the amount of work they had. Upon finishing the training in February, the structured observation journals were collected. Although the observation phase lasted for two weeks only, the student teachers were allowed to keep the journals till the end of the training because there were opportunities for them to observe and reflect on their fellow student teachers during the other two phases of the training.

Data analysis

After collecting the documents, they were analysed using Larrivee' (2008) framework which was developed "based on an extensive review of the literature" (Larivee, 2008, p.342). It consists of three levels of reflection: surface, pedagogical, and critical reflection.

The surface reflection: At this stage, the teachers reflect on the usefulness of the different instructional methods and techniques.

The pedagogical reflection: This level is more complex than the previous one. The emphasis at this level is on the goals, theories, and the relation between theory and practice.

The critical level: This level, which is the highest, is mainly related to the moral, societal, and political impact of their teaching.

Results and Discussion

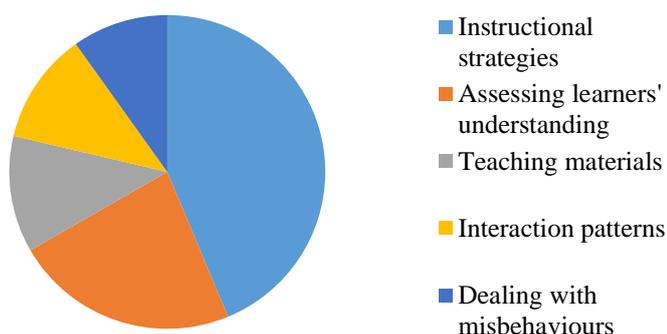
After analysing the structured observation journals, the components of the three levels were highlighted.

Surface level

Surface level is the most documented in the journals with 183 examples (n=183). The examples are related to different approaches and methodologies employed by the mentors. They include aspects of teachers' instructions, assessing understanding, interaction patterns, teaching materials, and dealing with misbehaviours (See Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table1: *The Aspects of Surface Reflection in the Observation-Structured Journals*

Aspects	Number of examples (n)	Valid percent
Instructional strategies	80	43,71
Assessing learners' understanding	42	22,95
Teaching materials	22	12,02
Interaction patterns	21	11,47
Dealing with misbehaviour	18	9,83
Total	183	100,0

Figure 1 : Surface Level

Concerning the instructional strategies, the participants commented on the different instructional strategies used by their mentors during the observation phase of the training (n=80). According to Geysers (2006) and Gebhard (2006), teaching instructions are challenging for teachers because they require special language that needs to be as clear as possible to avoid confusion. Most preservice teachers pointed out that the mentors tried to simplify their instructions. One of them explained that the teacher “broke down the elements of the lesson moving from simple to complex. This instructional strategy “is helpful for better understanding” (ST 1, week 1, p.2). Others explained that the mentors did not opt for one strategy, but used various instructional strategies. One trainee commented on the mentor, “She used different strategies to give instruction. She sometimes gives instructions explicitly other times she breaks things down to simplify them more or demonstrate the answer. Using diverse strategies helps in facilitating the learning process” (ST 14, week 1, p.2). ST 15 (week 1, p.5) pointed out the usefulness of gestures in teaching vocabulary. Many researchers including, Geysers (2006) and Harmer (2007), explained that teachers are encouraged to use some paralinguistic features.

Regarding assessing learners’ understanding, the preservice teachers identified the different measures used to assess learners’ understanding (n=42). The strategies mentioned were questioning, tasks, and feedback. A trainee explained:

The teacher assessed learners’ understanding by using tasks. She made use of a single extended task to evaluate her students’ overall comprehension of the sequence. Her well-crafted questions allowed her to gauge well the level of understanding among her students. (ST 17, week 1, p.2)

Among the most commonly used assessment practices in EFL classes is feedback. Gower, et al (2005) indicated that teachers have to provide feedback for their learners who can in turn use it as an evaluative tool. Feedback can be immediate or delayed based on whether the main focus is accuracy or fluency (Scrivener, 2005). The majority of the mentors, as reported by the trainees, used timely corrective feedback. ST 3 stated that the mentor “uses timely corrective feedback. She corrects students’ pronunciation and grammar mistakes that hinder comprehension” (Week 1, p.2). Other participants suggested that the teachers used both timely and delayed feedback. ST 17 wrote, “She used a mixture of both timely corrective feedback and delayed feedback. Through this, she was able to address their mistakes and see the areas where they made common errors”(Week 2, p.2). Some preservice teachers noticed that learners did not participate in the process. ST 9

reported, “The teacher is the only one who provides feedback...There was no chance to resort to peer feedback” (Week 1, p.2).

The preservice teachers also commented on another component of surface reflection that was dealing with misbehaviour (n=18). As part of their profession, teachers sometimes lose control of their learners who may engage in disruptive behaviours (Harmer, 2003). According to Martin et al (1999), teachers need to avoid using physical punishment and focus on using some positive strategies to deal with disruptive learners. Among the strategies they suggested were having a private talk with the learner and praising any good behaviour. Harmer also suggested that the teacher could use facial expressions and gestures. The preservice teachers documented methods that were generally consistent with what was indicated in the literature. Most mentors used facial expressions or directly addressed the learners. ST 4 explained, “When dealing with misbehaviours, the teacher directly asks them to stop doing certain misbehaviour by reminding them that they are inside the classroom and they should act appropriately” (Week 1, p.2). ST 8 explained “She controls learners’ behaviours by moving inside the classroom and observing all learners. She sometimes uses her body language by staring or keeping eye contact with the talkative learners till they stop chatting” (Week 2, p.14).

Teaching materials were another element that the preservice teachers focused on (n=22). Teaching materials should be attractive, well organized, culturally appropriate, suitable for learners, motivating, and encourage communication in the target language (Spratt et. al, 2005). They should also provide context to teach some language points, practise some skills, and assess learners’ understanding (Rossner, 1987). The majority of the mentors observed relied mainly on the textbook as the only source of materials. Thus, most participants thought that the materials did not promote critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity or meet the needs of learners. Textbooks are written for the board audience and they are not tailored to meet the specific needs of learners (Moon, 2003). ST 11 suggested, “The materials did not encourage problem-solving and creativity. They are ready-made and are not adapted to promote such a high-level way of thinking” (Week 1, p.4). In the few cases in which mentors used worksheets and visuals, the preservice teachers believed that the materials were so appealing and engaging. ST 13 pointed out “The materials used by the teacher were so engaging. Learners were so motivated by the materials, so they did not stop asking questions and interacting with the teacher and with one another” (Week 2, p.5).

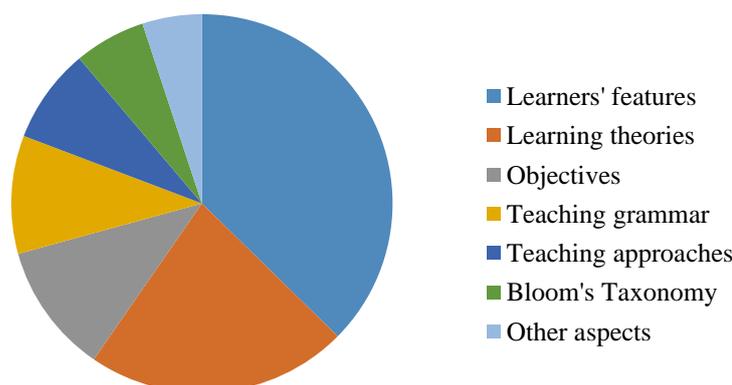
Concerning the interaction patterns, the mentors used different patterns (n=21). Grouping learners is one essential aspect of classroom management. According to Harmer (2003 & 2007), the type of classroom interaction can be affected by many factors including the size of the class, the type of furniture, and the attitudes and behaviours of learners. ST 4 wrote, “The teacher uses different types of interactions such as pair work, group work, and individual work” (Week 1, p.3). The preservice teachers pointed out the significance of using different interaction patterns. According to ST 16 “The interaction patterns employed in the class are individual, pair and class discussion. It is important to vary the learning strategies” (Week 2, p.3).

Pedagogical level

Pedagogical reflection was the second most documented level of reflection by the preservice teachers with 99 instances (n=99). They were mainly related to learning objectives, theories, and the relation between theory and practice. The preservice teachers were able to comment on the objectives and identify some theoretical aspects such as learning theories, teaching grammar, teaching approaches, and Bloom’s Taxonomy in addition to others (See table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 2: The Aspects of Pedagogical Reflection in Observation-Structured Journals

Aspects	Number of examples (n)	Valid percent
Learners' features	37	37,37
Learning theories	22	22,22
Objectives	11	11,11
Teaching Grammar	10	10,10
Teaching approaches	8	8,08
Bloom's Taxonomy	6	6,06
Other aspects	5	5,05
Total	99	100,0

Figure 2: Pedagogical Level

Teachers must set objectives when planning the lessons and work on achieving them in class. According to Hill and Miller (2013), objectives play the role of a roadmap for teachers. During the observation phase, the preservice teachers commented on whether the objectives of the lessons presented by the mentors were met ($n=11$). One trainee stated, “It was clear that the objectives of the grammar lesson have been achieved” (ST 7, week 2, p.24). On the other hand, some participants questioned the achievement of the objectives. One of them wrote, “I am not certain whether the objective of the lesson was achieved. Only a few learners managed to write their paragraphs. Later all of them copied a model answer” (ST 17, week 1, p.17). Another one conveyed, “The objectives of the lesson are hardly achieved because most learners do not have a textbook to follow with the teacher”. (ST 6, week 1, p.3).

The student teachers were able to link some aspects they observed during the lessons and the various theories they were exposed to at ENSC ($n=22$). Most of them ($n=13$) highlighted some features of behaviourism. The feature that was reported by most of them was the employment of both positive and negative reinforcement to motivate learners. According to Brown (2000), behaviourists emphasize the significance of both reward and punishment in guiding the behaviour of learners. A trainee wrote, “Learning occurs through a series of rewards or punishments. The teacher in this class used verbal praise as a positive reward” (ST 8, week 1, p.5). ST 17 also commented on this point:

The teacher made use of Skinner's notions of positive and negative reinforcement. For example, the teacher decided to reward the group with the best paragraph an additional half point in the exam. This approach did not serve only as positive reinforcement but also acted as a tool to create a sense of competitiveness among learners. (ST 17, week 1, p.5)

Another aspect of behaviourism that was documented by ST 12 is the use of samples to teach. The preservice teacher mentioned, "Taking into consideration the behaviourism theory of learning, learners were responding to a task provided by a sample and they were supposed to follow the same structure in their writing" (ST 12, week 1, p.5). This learning theory viewed language learning as "a system of habits" (Carrasquillo, 1994, p.7)

Other student teachers reported the presence of both cognitivism and constructivism (n=9). The cognitive view of learning perceived learning as a combination of some psychological processes that include schemas (Lavadenz, 2010). ST 8 explained, "The teacher also relies on cognitivism which emphasises how the mind works during the learning process. The teacher asked questions to activate the background knowledge of the students whenever encountered a keyword or a difficult one" (Week 1, p.5). On the other hand, ST 7 suggested that "The teacher adopts some features of constructivism through allowing learners to work together and through the employment of problem-solving skills" (Week 1, p.22). According to constructivists, social interaction is crucial in the process of learning a second language (Lavadenz, 2010).

The trainees also commented on the approaches used by the teachers to present grammar (n=10). All of them, except one, stated that grammar was taught inductively. ST 9 explained, "The teacher uses the inductive method in teaching grammar. She guides learners to extract the rules by themselves. The questions she used were very efficient in engaging learners in the lesson, spurring their curiosity and critical thinking skills" (Week 2, p.10). On the other hand, ST 15 suggested, "The teacher taught grammar deductively. She presented the rules directly. There were features of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)" (Week 1, p.11). According to Celce-Murcia (2001) teaching grammar following the principles of GTM includes the following steps: the explanation of the rules, practice, then production.

Other preservice teachers recognized some teaching approaches (n=8). They observed some principles of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA). ST 10 wrote "The teacher relies on CBA. The instructions were mainly learner-centered. The illustrations were provided by learners and the teacher intervened only when there were errors" (Week 1, p.5). Another trainee noticed elements of both the CBA and the Communicative Approach. ST 3 documented, "There were features of the competency-based approach and the communicative approach: contextualization, technology integration, authentic materials, minimum teacher talk time and maximized student interaction, inductive grammar teaching" (Week 2, p.17). One preservice teacher thought that the trainer teacher used an eclectic approach to present the lesson. However, this preservice teacher doubted the effectiveness of the approach. ST 11 said, "The teacher used the eclectic method which seemed to be not that helpful" (Week 1, p.5).

Some trainees noticed the use of Bloom's Taxonomy in designing the activities (n=6). According to ST 8, "The activities in the lesson were ordered according to Bloom's taxonomy." (Week 1, p.17). ST 10 also pointed out the use of the taxonomy.

The teacher organizes his lesson based on Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive abilities. In the pre-reading stage, the teacher targeted the first level which is knowledge. During reading, the focus

was on comprehension through answering questions. Finally, in the post-reading phase, the teacher targeted synthesis through stimulating learners to produce a composition (ST 10, week 1, p.17).

Another preservice teacher noticed the same aspect. ST 12 said, “She used Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains starting from remembering the previous knowledge to creating their paragraphs” (Week 1, p.11). Gregory and Chapman (2007) pointed out the importance of referring to Bloom’s Taxonomy in planning the activities and the whole curriculum.

Many other points related to learners were documented by the trainees (n=37). Many researchers believed that learners’ levels, needs, interests, and learning styles are crucial to the success of the lesson. Having different learners in their classrooms, teachers need to find a middle ground between meeting the needs of each learner as an individual and those of the group (Graves, 2000). The preservice teachers reported some aspects related to learners’ needs. ST 2 indicated, “It is important to take into consideration learners’ needs when planning a lesson” (Week 1, p.6). ST 13 also documented, “The teacher considers learners’ level when preparing the lessons. She uses two different methods while presenting the same lesson with two different classes” (Week 1, p.24).

Teachers also should consider the different learning styles. Nunan (1991, p.168) defined learning style as the “preferred” way of learning. Lightbown and Spada (2013) explained that learners differ in their learning styles. Thus, following the same teaching method with all learners is unfair to some of them. Most preservice teachers thought that the types of materials and activities chosen by the mentors did not accommodate the different learning styles of their learners. ST 2 argued, “Using a variety of materials would help the teacher cater to different learning styles and encourage creativity” (Week 1, p.6).

Motivation is another essential feature reported by the preservice teachers. Scrivener (2005) considered motivation as an important driving factor that pushes learners forward. Harmer (2003, p.51) pointed out that researchers have distinguished between “extrinsic and intrinsic”. Extrinsic motivation is influenced by some external factors while intrinsic motivation stems from within. Some trainees noticed instances of extrinsic motivation. ST 12 explained, “The teacher uses positive reinforcement to allow learners to participate by promising them to get a half point” (Week 1, p.11). ST 16 also pointed to the use of praise as a motivational technique, “She made sure that her students would hear a compliment even if their answers were wrong” (Week 1, p.2).

The preservice teachers also commented on other points. Two of them believed in the significance of building a positive rapport with learners. Learners need to respect and trust their teachers which leads to a relaxed learning environment that allows them to reach their potential (Gower et al, 2005; Brown & Lee, 2015). ST 11 wrote, “It is important to establish a good relationship between the learners and the teacher. The teacher seems to be easy-going and learners feel comfortable to participate” (Week 2, p.6). One trainee, ST 17, pointed out two other theories. The first one is cultural diversity. The preservice teacher explained,

The teacher made use of Vygotsky’s theory of cultural diversity. She introduced to her learners a listening script that was a conversation between the grandmother and Jenny. The grandmother described her childhood and how she used to live in her town Yorkshire. The learners were able to discover new information about the lifestyle of people in England (ST 17, Week 2, p.5)

When teaching a foreign language, the teacher should provide the cultural contexts that are associated with it. According to Brown (2000), culture is closely connected to language, so developing cultural competence in learners is essential. The same student-teacher felt dissatisfaction concerning the way the mentor dealt with the weak learners in class. ST 17 commented,

This approach will inadvertently neglect the learning needs of students who may require additional support. In contrast, I believe in a teaching approach that prioritizes inclusivity and ensures equitable attention to all learners. Every student regardless of their proficiency level should have opportunities for engagement and understanding. While achieving the objective of the lesson is important, it should not come at the expense of leaving some students behind (ST 17, Week 2, p.18).

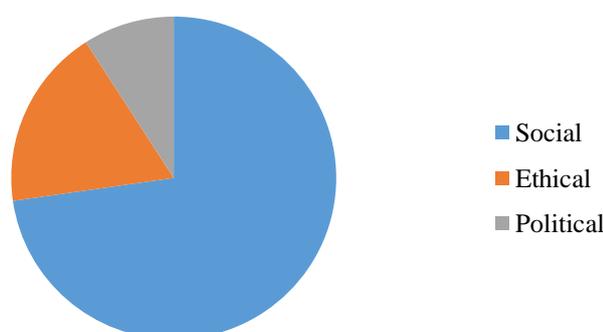
Critical level

The critical reflection is the least documented level of reflection by the preservice teachers with only 11 instances (n=11). It is about the examination of the social, political, and ethical outcomes of education. Teaching is not only about skills and methods; it has broader implications. According to Roberts (2008), based on a Freirean viewpoint, education is a biased process that cannot be separated from the moral, social, and political context where it occurs. The results are summarised in Table 3 and illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Table 3: The Aspects of Critical Reflection in Observation-Structured Journals

Aspects	Number of examples (n)	Valid percent
Social	8	72,72
Ethical	2	18,18
Political	1	9,09
Total	11	100,0

Figure 3: Critical Level



Eight preservice teachers reflected on the social impact of learning while two examples are related to ethics and one to politics. Some trainees pointed out the applicability of the knowledge provided in the class to their daily lives. ST 5 commented on the possibility of applying reduce, reuse, and recycle (3Rs) in their daily lives stating, “Learners become aware of the 3Rs which they can apply in real life situations. Applying these solutions in their daily lives would help learners to become

responsible citizens” (ST 5, week 1, p.6). Concerning ethics, one trainee addressed the topic of counterfeiting. ST 9 said “The teacher was able to draw learners’ attention to the dangers of counterfeiting as unethical behaviour. They discuss how this issue is found in almost every country and it has terrible effects on the person, the company, and the economy” (Week 2, p.6). Another preservice paid attention to a political aspect related to citizens’ rights and duties. ST 8 wrote, “When learners identify their rights and duties, they will be able to defend them in the real world” (Week 1, p.4).

In summary, the analysis of the documents revealed that surface reflection was the most common. The preservice teachers’ task at this level was to note down what took place in the classroom. They were able to reflect on the different instructional strategies, methods, and techniques employed. This level was more accessible to them because it was a mere description of what took place in the classroom though they attempted to evaluate some teaching practices.

Concerning the pedagogical level, the preservice teachers also managed to reflect on the objectives of the lesson and to connect their observations with different theories bridging the gap between theory and practice. This was possible because they were equipped with conceptual knowledge, which was received over several years through different modules such as Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Material Design and Development, and Educational Psychology among others. This made pedagogical reflection the second most documented level of reflection. The last level of reflection is critical reflection and it was the least reported. The lack of critical reflection in the structured observation journals is consistent with the results found by Minott (2008) and Nurfaidah et al (2017). This level is considered to be the highest level of reflection and it involves examining both their personal and professional beliefs. The results suggested that the preservice teachers have not developed their critical thinking skills during their years of training at ENSC may be because of the type of teaching instructions or even the type of exam questions that focus on testing knowledge and do not give room for analysis. Another reason is the changing nature of the training itself. The preservice teachers used to be assigned as groups to training schools in Constantine. However, the new rules have allowed them to undertake the training in their hometowns. In many cases, a preservice teacher may be the only trainee in the school. Thus, they are deprived of the opportunities to observe their fellow preservice teachers presenting their lessons and from the benefits that the group discussion of the post-observation phase may bring. In addition, their supervisors from ENSC find it impossible to accompany them to their training school which makes the relationship between the preservice teachers and their supervisors limited to correcting language errors in their training reports.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the levels of reflection in the designed Structured Observation Journal. Classroom Observation and journals are among the most commonly used tools to promote RP. Combining an observation grid with a journal would help trigger preservice teachers to be more reflective. The results suggested that the designed structured observation journal stimulated the preservice teachers to be more reflective. However, they lacked the needed skills that allowed them to critically reflect on their practices and those of others. This study can be replicated using a larger sample and by triangulating the results using other research tools. It is also worth investigating the place of critical thinking in teacher education programmes and whether preservice teachers are trained to be critical.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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Appendix
The Structured Observation Journal

Date of observation:

Grade level:

Pre-observation

What is your prsonal focus today?

Observation notes

General aspects

The setting

What to consider?	Your notes	Your comments
How is the classroom arranged? (Eg. rows, groups, U shape ...)		
Does the teacher keep the same seating arrangement throughout the lesson? Explain		
What media and equipment are available?		
How is the atmosphere? (eg. welcoming, engaging, collaborative ...other)		

The teacher

What to consider?	Your notes	Your comments
How does the teacher greet the learners and start the lesson?		
Does the teacher manage the class effectively? (eg: classroom organization, engaging instruction, behaviour management ...)		
Describe the instructional strategies used by the teacher (eg: explicit instruction, demonstration, visual clues, break it down ...)		
How does the teacher encourage learners to participate and to ask question?		
How does the teacher assess learners' understanding? (Eg. questioning, tasks, discussions ..)		
What strategies does the teacher use to provide feedback? (eg: timely corrective feedback, delayed feedback, peer-feedback ...)		
How does the teacher deal with learners' misbehaviour and unexpected situations?		

The learner

What to consider?	Your notes	Your comments
What is the level of learners' engagements?		
How do learners respond to different instructions and activities? (Eg. active engagement, confusion, enthusiasm ...)		
What are the types of learners' interaction employed during the lesson? (eg. individual work, pair work, group work, class discussion...)		
Do learners ask questions and seek clarification? Provide examples		
Overall, are the learners passive or active participants? Explain		

Materials and activities

What to consider?	Your notes	Your comments
What type of materials used during the presentation of the lesson?		
Are these materials aligned with the objectives of the lesson? Explain		
Are they engaging and appealing to learners? Explain		
Do they support different learning styles? Explain		
Do they promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills? explain		
Do they encourage creativity? explain		

Stages of the lesson

Stages	Notes	Comments
Stage 1:		

Stage 2:		
Stage 3:		

Your personal focus

Aspects	Notes	Comments

Post-observation

What went well?	What did not go well?	Can you make a connection to theories?

Your reflection

After analysing the observed lesson, what specific aspects would you consider borrowing and incorporating into your teaching practice? On the other hand, what aspects would you choose to discard or not adopt? Please, provide specific reasons for your choices.

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