

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the study's background and describes why the researcher conducted the study. It also contains a formulation of the problem, the aims of the study, an operational definition of the critical terms given to avoid misunderstanding, and the significance of the study is also presented.

1.1 Background of the Study

The term reflective writing is familiar to students in higher education. One of the popular assessment forms in university courses is reflective writing (Caravella & Johnson. 2019), and it has become one type of reflective practice commonly used in curricula that involves pre-service and practicum experience (Dressler et al., 2018). They also explained that utilising reflective writing as both a process and a practice can effectively facilitate more profound experiential learning. Reflective writing may be reflective statements, essays, portfolios, journals, diaries, or blogs (Lucas et al., 2017). According to Moon (2006), reflective writing helps students process and explore ideas and analytical skills about their thoughts, opinions, and experiences (as cited by Sani et al., 2018). One gets many benefits, so unsurprisingly, reflective writing is well-used as one of the student assessments in higher education for both ESL and EFL students.

Reflective learning has some pedagogical implications for both teachers and students. It develops the students' metacognition, an essential requirement that allows them to be aware of themselves concerning their learning needs and plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning process. For instance, reflective journal writing enables them to think and rethink the learning activities and to identify their strengths and weaknesses in every learning process (Sudirman et al., 2021). As for the teachers, increasing students' metacognition would help them design and deliver their course content successfully (Baresh, 2022). Moreover, studies have shown that learning while reflecting on the metacognitive process is an important way; however, it is not spontaneously learned and must be taught (Wallin & Adawi, 2017). Hussein (2018), in the same view, states that allowing learners to reflect on

their learning is a substantial way to focus learners and give them tools for improvement.

Further, Baresh (2022) examines the impact of a reflective journal writing strategy in developing students' writing skills by reviewing relevant literature. The paper revealed the significance of reflective journal writing to students' writing skills and the entire learning process. Another study by Ni'ma et al. (2020) revealed that reflective journals are more effective than traditional writing methods to promote students' writing skills. In addition, Sani et al. (2018) described that by writing reflective journals, all participants improved their general writing, especially in content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Then, Habibi (2017) conducted a quasi-experimental study to determine whether reflective journal writing effectively improves students' narrative text writing. Afterwards, the result of reflective journal writing is proven to improve students' writing abilities in narrative text effectively. Countless studies have mentioned the importance of reflective journal writing, especially regarding to writing ability. However, they rarely discuss reflective journal writing in terms of listening and speaking abilities as the focus of investigation.

In addition, an issue arose in one of the courses in the English Education Department, namely the Professional Listening and Speaking course. In this course, students were divided into several groups and did the listening and speaking practice every week with the different topics in the class. After that, the students got the assignment to fill out a reflective journal consisting of questions about the students working on those weekly projects. The teacher used 4F's reflection model by Dr Greenaway (2018), which includes facts, feelings, findings, and future. In fact, some of the students faced obstacles in writing reflective journals during the course, even though there are many benefits to be gained from writing reflective journals.

For these reasons, to fill the gap the present study aims to decipher the benefits and obstacles of reflective journal writing in a professional listening and speaking course. This is necessary to improve student learning outcomes in learning English, especially in listening and speaking skills, and provide the teachers with

information about the benefits and obstacles in writing reflective journals based on students' experiences, including involvements and feelings, as adapted from Roth and Jornet (2014). Then, the study was conducted in one of the public Universities in Tasikmalaya, majoring in the English Education Department. The participants were English education students, consisting of four who had experience writing reflective journals in a professional listening and speaking course.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on what has been declared in the background, the researcher formulates the problem that will be discussed further: What are the benefits and obstacles of reflective journal writing in the EFL classroom?

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, there are some definitions related to the topic:

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| 1. The Benefits and Obstacles | The advantages students receive and the difficulties they face when writing reflective journals in the professional listening and speaking course are based on their experiences, including students' involvement and feelings. |
| 2. Reflective Journal | Self-assessment forms are given by the teacher to the students, who are to express students' impressions while doing weekly projects. |
| 3. EFL Classroom | One of the English Education Department courses is a professional listening and speaking course that provides reflective journal writing as a student assessment form in English as a foreign language context. |

1.4 Aims of the Study

This study aims to decipher the benefits and obstacles of reflective journal writing in an EFL classroom.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical significance This study will enrich the literature on reflective practice and expand the research regarding the benefits and obstacles of reflective journal writing in the EFL context.
2. Practical significance This study is expected to be used as a reference for teachers to utilise reflective journal writing in teaching practice as a means of professional development and to improve student learning performances in learning English.
3. Empirical significance This study will give an overview of the benefits and obstacles of reflective journal writing, which can help improve teachers' performances.