ENHANCING ELT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' REFLECTIVE THINKING SKILLS: GOING BEYOND DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2022

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Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

English Language Education

by

İzel Yenisoy

Boğaziçi University

2022

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, İzel Yenisoy, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing ELT Pre-Service Teachers' Reflective Thinking Skills:

Going Beyond Descriptive Writing

The study investigated the pre-service teachers' (PSTs) reflective writing experiences within a learning environment in which guidance was provided with explicit instruction, reflective tasks with critical friends, and constructive feedback. Within this learning context, the study aimed to explore (1) the nature of the incidents that PSTs mostly reflected on in their observation reports, (2) the development of the PSTs' criticality in time, and (3) their overall reflective writing experiences. In the study, a qualitative research paradigm was adopted, and the study was conducted with 26 ELT PSTs who were doing their practicum. The data were mainly gathered from the participants' observation reports and a semi-structured interview, and the documents collected from the participants in the workshop sessions were used as supplementary tools. The data were analyzed with an interpretive framework, and it was found that PSTs mostly reflected on the issues related to teachers' instructional practices, the conduct of the lesson, and the classroom management in their observation reports. Concerning PSTs' criticality, although they were inclined to reflect at superficial levels in their reports, they started to demonstrate some reflective features during the provision of guidance. In addition, it was revealed that PSTs found reflective writing productive, and they could overcome their challenges in reflective writing thanks to the guidance and their critical friends in time. In this sense, the study contributes to the literature by indicating that PSTs' reflective writing experiences and their reflective thinking skills could be enhanced in a learning environment that is designed with multifaceted guidance.

ÖZET

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Hizmet Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Yansıtıcı Düşünme Becerilerini Geliştirme: Betimleyici Yazıdan Öteye Gitme

Bu çalışma, yansıtıcı düşünme üzerine rehberliğin geri dönütlerle, eğitimle ve akranlarla yapılan yansıtıcı aktivitelerle sağlandığı bir öğrenme ortamında, öğretmen adaylarının deneyimleri üzerine yansıtma yapma süreçlerini araştırmıştır. Bu öğrenme ortamında çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının yansıtmalarında odaklandığı konulara, süreç içinde yansıtıcı düşünme becerilerindeki gelişime ve genel yansıtma yapma deneyimlerine açıklık getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma paradigması benimsenmiştir ve bu çalışma, uygulamalı stajını yapmakta olan 26 İngilizce öğretmen adayı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler başlıca katılımcıların yazmış olduğu yansıtmalardan ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilmiştir ve rehberliğin sağlandığı oturumlarda toplanan dokümanlar ek veri olarak kullanılmıştır. Veriler yorumsamacı yaklaşımla analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının yansıtmalarında çoğunlukla öğretmenlerin uygulamalarına, dersin işlenme biçimine ve sınıf yönetimine odaklandıklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca öğretmen adayları raporlarında yüzeysel düzeyde bir yansıtma yapma eğiliminde olsalar da yansıtıcı düşünme becerilerine rehberlik sağlandığı süreçte yansıtıcı özellikler göstermeye başlamışlardır. Bunun yanı sıra çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının deneyimleri üzerine yansıtma yapmayı yararlı bulduklarını ve yansıtma yapmada yaşadıkları zorlukları rehberlik ve akranları sayesinde zaman içinde aşabildiklerini göstermiştir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının yansıtma yapma deneyimlerinin ve yansıtıcı düşünme becerilerinin çok yönlü rehberlikle desteklenen bir öğrenme ortamında geliştirilebileceğini göstererek literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and special thanks to my dear thesis advisor, Assoc. Prof. Sibel Tatar, who always supported me during this challenging and new experience and helped me come up with such a meticulous study. She spared her time for me in every possible moment, listened to my difficulties, and showed empathy towards my experiences during this period. For this reason, I am so grateful to have an opportunity to work with her and I am so thankful to have a chance to get enlightened by her extensive knowledge in the field.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my thesis committee members Assoc. Prof. Senem Yıldız and Prof. Yasemin Kırkgöz for their insightful and enlightening feedback on my thesis.

I am also grateful to The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for supporting me financially in the course of my studies within the TÜBİTAK BİDEB 2210-A Scholarship Program for the Master's students.

My special thanks are to my dear family and my friends, who supported me all the time and never stopped believing in me even at times when I felt so desperate.

Lastly, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my dear boyfriend, who never left me alone during this period and who always supported me and listened to my feelings and experiences without demonstrating any tiredness or boredom. I could not have undertaken this journey without his support.

DEDICATION

This thesis work is dedicated to my family and my boyfriend who were always a source of encouragement and support for me during this challenging process. They encouraged me to pursue my dreams all the time and helped me realize the fact that if I believe in myself, I could achieve my goals no matter how difficult the circumstances could be in our lives.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Teaching in the twenty-first century is like a roller coaster" (Brookfield, 2017) which puts teachers under the pressure of the continuous demands and needs of the students, educational policies, and changing classroom contexts. In such an active and demanding context, teachers are required to be reflective practitioners so that they can analyze and adapt their teaching methods, instructional decisions, beliefs, and assumptions accordingly, which makes reflection an integral part of the teacher education programs (Jay & Johnson, 2002).

In the literature, many studies have been conducted and provided a variety of perspectives and aspects of reflection, which results in the various interpretations of reflection, and which makes the teaching of reflection hard in teacher education programs. In this sense, in the literature, reflection and critical reflection are used interchangeably, and the difference is not clearly defined (Black & Plowright, 2010). However, it is essential to emphasize that critical reflection results in the self-reflection and critical inquiry of the unexamined beliefs, values, and assumptions (Larrivee, 2000), and it refers to reflecting on the experiences with a critical stance. In this sense, it is argued that the implicit and explicit assumptions of the teachers, which could be defined as taken-for-granted teaching behaviors, guide the present and future actions of the teachers (Brookfield, 2017). At this point, critical reflection helps teachers uncover the unconsciously created beliefs and helps them analyze the unexamined beliefs, assumptions, experiences, and consequences of their actions (Larrivee, 2000). With respect to this, the importance of having higher level reflective thinking skills is underlined, and it necessitates teacher education programs

to help pre-service teachers (PSTs) become prospective reflective practitioners who have self-awareness of their underlying assumptions and teaching practices.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The practicum is an important and integral part of teacher education programs in which pre-service teachers have a chance to establish a relationship between what they have learned as a theory with the real teaching practices taking place in the classrooms (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). This could be achieved by engaging in a reflective practice in which teachers think back on their experiences in terms of what, how, and why they did something to get the most out of their practice (Farrell, 2008), and to have an in-depth understanding of their experiences. In this sense, it is argued in the literature that deep learning has a strong relationship with the reflective practice which occurs when an individual is involved in critical reflection (Sen & Ford, 2011). Although reflectivity could be helpful for the teachers in this sense, the skills and abilities that are required to engage in critical reflection could be difficult for PSTs (Thomas & Packer, 2013). Considering the features of a critical reflection that requires higher reflective skills and abilities such as problem-solving, discovering the underlying beliefs and assumptions, and gaining a new perspective from their experiences with the analysis (Larrivee, 2000), they find the level of critical reflection challenging to identify and explain their actions (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011).

In the literature, many studies focusing on the investigation of reflective writing experiences, and the reflective thinking skills have indicated that PSTs are inclined to reflect on their experiences at the superficial and descriptive levels, and they lacked the higher reflective thinking skills in their reflections (Bain, Ballantyne,

Packer, & Mills, 1999; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Larrivee, 2008; Power, 2012; Yeşilbursa, 2011), namely, they describe what they have experienced in the classroom rather than analyzing their experiences critically. This seems to be because of the lack of attention to reflective practices and the lack of guidance in the teacher education programs.

In the literature, it is highlighted that teacher education programs do not include real reflection in their programs (Beauchamp, 2015). In other words, although many teacher education programs have continuously given the emphasis on the reflection over the past two decades (Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000), criticisms indicate a notion that reflection may not be integrated into the teaching practices of the PSTs effectively and it may not be discussed profoundly; instead, it is argued that reflection could be talked more rather than being practiced efficiently in teacher education programs (Beauchamp, 2015). In line with this argument, some of the authors have highlighted the fact that the practice of reflection or critical reflection is not as common as it is suggested (Akbari, 2007; Otienoh, 2011). In this sense, it is possible to observe the same problem in a Turkish context. In a recent study, Hamiloğlu (2013) has indicated that teacher education programs in Turkey give priority to knowledge rather than motivating PSTs to engage in reflective practices. This demonstrates that many teacher education programs fail to embrace the critically reflective approaches into their programs.

1.2 Purpose of the study

In the literature, it is highlighted that teacher education programs do not provide PSTs with enough opportunities to help them engage in authentic and effective reflective practices, and they mostly focus on what the reflection is rather than how

the reflection could be engaged (Beauchamp, 2015). The lack of guidance and the lack of opportunities for PSTs to reflect on their experiences causes them to be left alone in such a productive phase of their practicum experience, and this prevents them from learning how to teach by reflecting on their experiences with a critical stance.

The lack of a context in which PSTs could be guided on reflective practices led the researcher to find out ways of promoting reflective thinking skills and get the most benefit out of practicum experiences of the PSTs by helping them learn how to reflect critically. With such a purpose, the needs in the field of teacher education that are suggested in the literature to promote reflection are taken into consideration. In this sense, there is a consensus in the literature that there is a need to create a context designed in the light of a critically reflective approach (Hamiloğlu, 2013), and a context in which the teacher candidates are supported, encouraged, and guided through collaborative dialogue, critical friends, and a well-designed community of practice (Kajder & Parkes, 2012). With such a purpose, the study aims to provide a collaborative learning context designed in the light of a critically reflective approach for the PSTs in which they are guided on reflective writing processes.

In guiding the reflective skills of the PSTs, it is known that the benefit gained from the pedagogical strategies could differ based on the needs of the students; thus, the reflective skills need to be modeled and practiced in multifaced strategies (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). For this purpose, it is aimed to include explicit instruction and reflective tasks with the use of different reflective models, the collaborative tasks with critical friends, and constructive feedback from the researcher in this learning environment. Creating a collaborative and multifaced learning environment and providing a variety of guidance in such a context, the study

aims to investigate the reflective writing experiences and changes in the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs in the course of their first practicum experiences. In this sense, it aims to provide an understanding of the PSTs' focus in terms of the topics that they find critical in their reflections, their criticality in time, and their perceptions of their overall experiences within this learning environment. Considering the lack of studies in which such a context is created with multifaced ways of promoting reflection, the study aims to contribute to the literature by building on the studies investigating the reflective skills of the PSTs.

1.3 Significance of the study

In the literature, several studies have been conducted to investigate the PSTs' reflective thinking skills with an aim to uncover their overall criticality in their reflections or their journal writing experiences (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018; Yeşilbursa, 2011). Many of these recent studies have provided a comprehensive insight in terms of the reflective stance of the PSTs in general without the provision of any guidance, and they have underlined the need for guidance in promoting reflective skills. On the other hand, some studies extended the literature on the investigation of the PSTs' reflective writing experiences by providing some systematic aids. To exemplify, some of them investigated the use of journal writing in enhancing the reflective skills of the PSTs supported by feedback (Bain et al., 1999; Good & Whang, 2002; Spalding & Wilson, 2002). On the other hand, some studies provided PSTs with reflective tasks or models, and they tried to provide an understanding of the change in reflective thinking skills of the PSTs (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Freese, 2006; Oner & Adadan, 2011) whereas a limited number of studies provided an explicit instruction with the use of a particular

reflective model and examined the orientation of the PSTs toward reflective thinking skills (Griffin, 2003; Schweiker-Marra, Holmes, & Pula, 2003). Although these studies have broadened the literature on the need for some reflective aids in nurturing the PSTs' reflective thinking skills, it is possible to identify a lack of study on some issues that are aimed to be discussed in the current study.

When the prominent studies stated above in the teacher education are considered, it could be seen that these studies focused on the PSTs from different fields such as the science education (Oner & Adadan, 2011), elementary or secondary education (Bruster & Peterson, 2013), and special education (Griffin, 2003). In this sense, there is a lack of studies that investigate the PSTs in the ELT department and their reflective writing experiences with the provision of guidance in time. Further to this, it could be seen that there is a very limited number of studies that investigate the PSTs' reflective thinking skills with the provision of an explicit instruction supported with some tasks to promote reflective thinking skills (Griffin, 2003; Schweiker-Marra et al., 2003). In line with this, the most striking missing component in the literature is that there is a lack of study that explores the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs by providing comprehensive and profound guidance in a program that is designed in the light of a critically reflective approach. As stated in the literature, the studies focused on a particular aid in promoting reflective thinking skills such as journal writing (Bain et al., 1999; Good & Whang, 2002), the reflective tasks or models (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Francis, 1997; Freese, 2006; Oner & Adadan, 2011), or an explicit instruction with the activities (Griffin, 2013). In this sense, in the literature, it is highlighted that there is a need for a program that is created with a critically reflective approach (Hamiloğlu, 2013) and a context in which PSTs are supported, encouraged, and guided through collaborative dialogue,

critical friends, and a well-designed community of practice (Kajder & Parkes, 2012). Considering such a need and the lack of study investigating the issue in such a context, the current study could be considered significant in that it aims to contribute to the literature by providing an in-depth understanding of the PSTs' reflective writing and thinking skills within a profound and collaborative learning context that includes the provision of explicit instruction, the reflective tasks with critical friends, and constructive feedback on reflective performances.

When the stated studies are taken into consideration in terms of their research focus, it could be seen that the studies mostly focus on the reflective stance of the PSTs in general (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Yeşilbursa, 2011), and there are some studies that investigate the reflective thinking orientations (Griffin, 2013), and their reflective thinking skills in time (Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2021); however, they are limited in number and they lack the learning context including multifaceted guidance. Considering the studies in the field, it could be seen that there is a lack of study investigating the gradual change in the PSTs' reflective thinking skills in the course of the guidance.

Many studies have focused on a particular aspect instead of providing a comprehensive picture of both reflective writing and thinking experiences of the PSTs. In this sense, Nelson and Sadler (2013) argue that teacher education programs need an understanding of both the theoretical foundation that presents an understanding of the aim and value of reflection and also the ways that reflection is practiced and implemented. They further assert that without an understanding of why the reflection is essential and how it is operationalized, reflection could turn into an experience aimed merely at achieving some externally imposed purposes (Nelson & Sadler, 2013). In this sense, there is a need to understand both how PSTs

operationalize their reflections in their teacher education courses, also their gradual complexity in the reflective thought in time as categorized as component and orientation dimension of reflection according to Nelson and Sadler (2013). Considering such a need for a comprehensive study that focuses on both component and orientation dimensions of reflection, the study aims to contribute to the literature by investigating how PSTs operationalize their reflective writing, and also how their reflective thinking skills indicate changes with the provision of guidance in time. With such a purpose, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the content of the PSTs' reflections, the development of their criticality in time, and their overall experiences from their reflective writing processes in a collaborative learning environment supported with multifaceted guidance.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The conceptualization of the term: Reflection

The origins of reflection in the field of teacher education date back to the work of John Dewey (1933), who is considered the initiator of the studies on reflective practice (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). Dewey (1933) conceptualizes the reflective practice as a cognitive action in which one thinks about his/her beliefs consistently, actively, and carefully, and he lays the foundations for the characteristics that a reflective practitioner should have such as open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. His studies are further expanded with the prominent work of Schön (1983) focusing on the time frame in the reflective practices. Schön (1983) categorizes the reflective actions of the teachers as reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action considering when the teacher is engaged in reflective practices. Based on his classification, reflection-in-action requires teachers to reflect on their experiences and take immediate decisions and while simultaneously teaching in the classroom whereas, in reflection-on-action, teachers reflect on their experiences or teaching practices after they have taught their lesson (Schön, 1983).

These preliminary studies are further developed by some prominent authors who focused on the different aspects of reflection such as the Mezirow's studies (1990) on the transformative learning in the reflective practice, and Argyris and Schön's work (1974) focusing on the learning processes in the course of reflective practices, and the work of Brookfield (1995) that differentiated the notion of reflection and critical reflection. Thanks to these groundwork studies, the foundations of the reflective practices have been laid in the field of teacher

education, and reflection has become a crucial component of teacher education programs.

Although reflective practices have been endorsed as a useful activity in the teacher education programs for centuries thanks to the groundwork studies in the field, its application and practice have faced some difficulties because of a vague definition of the term reflection (Roja, 2017). Considering the vast array of literature that pinpoints different perspectives and aspects of reflection, it could be seen that a variety of interpretations of reflection has emerged and there is a lack of consensus on the definition of the reflection in the literature (Korthagen, 2001). In a recent study that investigates the underlying components of the major definitions of reflection, it is indicated that the authors focused on a variety of components and characteristics of the reflection while conceptualizing the meaning of the term (Nguyen, Fernandez, Karsenti, & Charlin, 2014). That is to say, some authors operationalized the term considering the cognitive (e.g. problem-solving thoughts, ideas), non-cognitive (e.g. actions), or affective content of reflection whereas some conceptualized the term by taking into consideration the characteristics of the reflective thinking process (e.g. iterative, exploratory, gradual), the notion of self, the purpose of change, and the conceptual process (conscious or unconscious) in the course of the reflection (Nguyen et al., 2014). Some of the prominent major definitions that exemplify the stated components are "being conscious of why we perceive, think and feel" (Mezirow, 1991); "being aware of the uncomfortable emotions and thoughts" (Atkins & Murphy, 1993); "an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge" (Dewey, 1933). Considering the focus of the authors in the conceptualization of the term, the lack of consensual definition of reflection has brought about some crucial problems such as

the challenges in differentiating the reflection from other thinking processes, the lack of common language that could help the understanding of the term, the difficulty in assessing the reflective thinking skills (Rodgers, 2002), and the difficulty in teaching the skills because of the complexity of the concept (Jay & Johnson, 2002). All the problems revealed in the literature necessitate an in-depth and detailed understanding of the term unlike the major definitions focusing on a particular aspect of reflection in the literature. This could be accomplished with the integration of an operational term encompassing all the characteristics of the reflection and the thinking processes that are enclosed in the reflective practices (Jay & Johnson, 2002). For this reason, considering the comprehensive operationalization of the term in the study of Nguyen et al. (2014), the reflection is defined in the current study as "the process of engaging the self in critical, attentive, exploratory and iterative interactions with one's thoughts and actions, and their underlying conceptual frame, with a view to changing them and with a view on the change itself" (Nguyen et al., 2014, p. 1182).

A wide range of studies in the literature demonstrates that reflection and critical reflection are used mutually and the difference between the terms is not clearly defined (Black & Plowright, 2010). However, it is believed that the way teachers reflect on their experiences affects the outcome that they will get from their reflections (Bruster & Peterson, 2013). In other words, reflecting on the experiences may usually result in the justification of one's assumptions and ideas (Harrison & Lee, 2011) whereas critical reflection results in the self-reflection and critical inquiry of the unexamined beliefs, values, and assumptions (Larrivee, 2000).

Teachers have implicit and explicit assumptions about their teaching actions that are governed based on their past experiences, feelings, beliefs, and personal interpretations (Larrivee, 2000), and these actions that are defined as taken-for-

granted teaching behaviors guide the present and future actions of the teachers (Brookfield, 2017). The actions of the teachers are determined by this personal filtering system (Larrivee, 2000) and while taking a particular action, teachers make personal inferences and assumptions, give personal meaning to it, make conclusions and take action based on their agenda (Larrivee, 2000). For this reason, most actions of the teachers are controlled by these pre-established and unexamined assumptions that are attributed to a particular situation in the reflexive loop of the teachers (Larrivee, 2000). At this point, whether teachers just reflect on their actions or analyze them critically brings about different consequences. In other words, while reflecting on their actions, teachers could provide explanations and justifications for their teaching experiences by getting help from their pre-established assumptions without analyzing the reasons for their actions with a critical inquiry. On the other hand, critical reflection is more than thinking about one's actions and experiences, and it includes the analysis of the assumptions, values, and beliefs that one has adopted in his/her teaching behaviors (Mezirow, 1990).

In addition to the difference in terms of the outcome that one could get as a result of mere reflection and critical reflection, Thompson and Thompson (2008) have clarified the meaning of the term critical as referring to two major elements of criticality that are depth and breadth of reflection. With regards to the depth dimension of the criticality, it refers to an ability to uncover and analyze the situations with an elaborative and detailed stance and to examine the ideologies and the reasons underlying the assumptions, values, and beliefs (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). The depth perspective enables teachers to go beyond their taken-for-granted actions through a critical analysis of their agendas. On the other hand, the breadth dimension refers to the examination of a particular situation considering the broader

socio-political context in which it takes place (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). With the breadth perspective, one can be aware of the policies, power relations, moral dilemmas, and social issues within a wider socio-political context that could govern the consequences of a particular situation (Brechin, Brown, & Eby, 2000). Considering the two main dimensions of criticality, it could be asserted that the critical reflection is not only thinking critically about one's underlying reasons for their assumptions within an individualistic perspective, but it also enables the critique of the social, political, or structural factors within a broader social context (Thompson & Pascal, 2012).

Schön (1991) states that the teaching experiences of the teachers do not necessarily result in learning, and they should engage in a deliberate reflection so that they could transfer their implicit and tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and learning. However, how they engage in the reflection could have an effect on the learning processes of the teachers. In other words, Schön and Argyris (1974) identified two different learning loops: single-loop learning and double-loop learning that could be associated with the learning outcomes of the reflection and critical reflection respectively. Single loop learning includes the understanding of the inner values and trying to find solutions to overcome the problems that occur in an immediate context. In this learning strategy, individuals do not attempt to analyze their values, but they just try to conceptualize their understanding and try to find new action plans for their problems (Gribbin, Aftab, Young, & Park, 2016). On the other hand, double-loop learning encompasses the critique of one's inner values, the underlying assumptions for their actions, and goals with an aim to understand the reasons for their actions (Gribbin et al., 2016). In this sense, single-loop learning could be associated with a mere reflection on the experiences of the teachers as the

aim is to understand and find immediate solutions without an in-depth investigation. On the contrary, double-loop learning could be linked to the critical reflection of the experiences as it requires a critical questioning of the assumptions and pre-established thoughts.

Aside from the use of the terms reflection and critical reflection, the term critical reflection is used interchangeably with the term reflective practice (Roberts, Barblett, Boylan, & Knaus, 2021) although they differ from each other in terms of the epistemology attributed to them (Russell, 2018). In other words, reflective practice refers to the process in which one is engaged in continuous reflective processes to come up with a decision and solve problems in his/her daily teaching behaviors (Larrivee, 2000) and improve his/her teaching practices by using the critical thinking skills (Edward & Thomas, 2010). Moreover, Russell (2018) argues that the two terms differ from each other epistemologically. In other words, reflective practice mirrors the nature of the professional action and practice, and it is related to the learning that one could gain as a result of personal experience (Russell, 2018). On the other hand, critical reflection is related to the epistemology of the university, and it encompasses the learning that is achieved as a result of one's written analysis of the actions (Russell, 2018). Although they differ in terms of their epistemology, it could be stated that both of them affect each other in a way that engaging in critical reflection could affect the outcomes of the reflective practices. In other words, it is argued that teachers can only learn and convert what they have learned in the teacher education programs to their teaching practices in real classrooms when they are able to reflect on their information critically (Lee, 2008). Moreover, it is known that if teachers are not engaged in a critical reflection on their practices, they may not be aware of the conflict between their actions and their beliefs, and this could put them

into a magical consciousness in which they consider the situations happening in the classroom as beyond their control and teaching practices This clearly justifies the reason why the reflective practice should be a critically reflective practice. For this reason, taking into consideration the mutual attachment between these terms, the current study adopts the notion that critical reflection is the essential component of reflective practice (Fook, 2015).

2.2 The approaches toward reflective thinking skills

Various interpretations and theoretical frameworks have been adopted to conceptualize the term reflective thinking in the literature (Roja, 2017). Some authors approach the issue by focusing on the process of reflective thinking and clarifying how and when teachers engage in reflective thinking processes whereas others focus on the levels of the reflective thinking processes and categorize the gradual levels in terms of one's reflectivity and criticality. From the perspective of the process of reflective thinking, the early attempts were made by Schön (1987) and Dewey (1933). Schön (1987) clarified the process by focusing on the time frame in which the reflective process takes place. In other words, he coined the term reflection-in-action in which teachers engage in thinking processes about their teaching behaviors in the course of teaching and take decisions mostly focusing on their routinized actions and the term reflection-on-action in which teachers reflect on their teaching practices that they have already completed and have more time to activate their beliefs and knowledge about their teaching practices (Schön, 1987). Unlike Schön (1987), Dewey (1933) focused on the rationality of reflective thinking and clarified the process that teachers go through such as the identification of the problem, observing the situations, ramifying several explanations, forming a detailed

and logical conclusion, and experimenting the hypothesis about one's teaching actions. Although the interpretations vary depending on the way authors deal with the issue, it is possible to define reflective thinking processes considering the common themes and features attributed to them (Lee, 2005). In other words, according to Rodger (2002), reflective thinking could be defined as a continuous meaning-making process that enables teachers to move from one experience to another by providing them with an in-depth understanding of the connections between their experiences and thoughts, and as a meticulous thinking process that is based on a systematic analysis and that takes place through interaction with others within the social context.

In addition to the focus on the process which teachers go through while reflecting on their practices, some authors approach the term reflective thinking by focusing on the stages and levels by identifying them in terms of criticality and reflectivity. Considering the perspectives of such authors, it is contended that while trying to understand their teaching actions, values, beliefs, and assumptions, teachers engage in reflective practices, and they employ various thinking processes while reflecting on their experiences (Lee, 2005). In this sense, it is argued that reflective practices usually develop in stages that require a variety of reflective thinking skills (Larrivee, 2008). In other words, while teachers reflect on their teaching experiences, they go through a cyclical series of stages consisting of examination, struggle, and perceptual shift (Larrivee, 2008). According to Larrivee (2008), first of all, teachers engage in an examination phase in which they question the problem that they have and be aware of the way they act towards the problem, and then they notice that they want to change something in their behavior because of displeasure, stress or failure. Larrivee (2008) states that this process is followed by the stage two in which teachers

experience some conflict and fear about the experience that they have, and at this stage, they could either give up the analysis of the reasons for their behaviors and resort to their pre-established routine actions to solve the problem or analyze the assumptions that cause the problem with a critical stance. Larrivee (2008) highlights that the ones who investigate the underlying reasons for their actions reach the final stage in which they have a new understanding of the problem and experience a shift in the way of thinking about a particular situation. Considering the steps that one follows in the course of reflective practices, it could be contended that teachers' progression in the reflective practices does not necessarily develop in a linear manner (Larrivee, 2008). In other words, while engaging in the thinking processes to reflect on their experiences, teachers could think about their actions reflectively or unreflectively (Lee, 2005) and they could employ different levels of thinking processes concurrently (Larrivee, 2008).

Each stage and dimension of the reflective thinking process could be considered practical and useful on its own; however, there is an obvious difference in the quality of the reflective thinking processes, with the levels progressing from the superficial, to significant, and lastly to critical (Larrivee, 2008). To clarify the quality of reflective thinking, many frameworks, models, and taxonomies have been revealed with regard to the type and level of the reflective thinking processes in the literature (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Kember, 1999; Lee, 2005; Mezirow, 1991). For instance, according to the ideologies of Lee (2005), the quality of the reflective thinking processes is determined based on the depth of the reflective thinking. As stated in the study of Oner and Adadan (2018), Lee (2005) categorizes these levels as *recall* in which teachers describe their observations considering their personal ideologies, *rationalization* in which teachers try to make a connection between

different facets of their experiences and interpret them by providing reasons, and lastly *reflectivity* in which teachers investigate and analyze their experiences considering it from various perspectives with a desire to change it in their future practices. Hatton and Smith (1995) categorized the levels of the reflective thinking by focusing on the reflective activities that teachers are involved in such as the *descriptive writing* in which teachers provide a mere description of the events without any attempt to explain reflective actions, and *descriptive reflection* that is reflecting on the experience by providing limited explanations, *dialogic reflection* which is reflecting on an experience with an examination of the assumptions and various explanations, and lastly *critical reflection* which could be defined as reflecting on an experience considering its social, historical, cultural, and socio-political aspects within a broader context. Similar to the categorization of Hatton and Smith (1995), Bain et al. (1999) focus on the way teachers demonstrate their thinking processes in their reflections and they come up with a five-level scale of reflection consisting of *reporting*, *responding*, *relating*, *reasoning*, and *reconstructing*. On the other hand, Mezirow (1991) categorizes the levels of the reflective thinking within a continuum starting with non-reflective action to reflective action whereas Van Manen (1977) considers the cognitive processes and rationality that one adopts in the reflection of their teaching practices, and he categorizes the process as *technical, deliberative and critical rationality*. The reason for such a vast array of models in the literature is because of the vague criteria to assess the reflective skills of the teachers, the reliability issue of the models, and the different focus of the authors studying different aspects (Lee, 2005); however, despite various terminology attributed to operationalize the levels of reflective thinking, analysis of a vast array of the literature reveals that the levels of reflective

thinking could be defined within three main levels: an initial descriptive level that focuses on the description of the actions, events as separate entities; a more profound analytic level that encompasses the provision of explanations and rationale for the actions; and lastly critical level in which teachers analyze their practices and their consequences within a broader socio-political context (Larrivee, 2008; Yesilbursa, 2011).

The studies on the taxonomies on reflective thinking skills reveal that teachers could be classified based on the reflective thinking stage that they engage in during their reflective writing processes as non-reflectors, reflectors, and critical reflectors (Thorpe, 2004) in a similar vein to the characteristics of reflective thinking levels. In the study that is based on the work of Kember (1999) on the categorization of reflective thinking, Thorpe (2004) describes the non-reflectors as the teachers who do not appraise their ideas, actions, and values, and merely describe their experiences and thoughts. Sometimes, they could explain how they feel and think about their teaching practices at the end of their experience; however, they do not investigate how and why they have experienced these feelings and thoughts. On the other hand, reflectors could be defined as teachers who demonstrate the skills such as awareness, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis (Thorpe, 2004). That is to say, reflectors are aware of their actions and experiences, and they make sense of their feelings, actions, and thoughts about their teaching practices by providing explanations for what and how something goes well or bad about their experience. Moreover, they try to come up with some explanations and reasons for how and why they feel, act and think with an analysis of their actions (Kember, 1999). As reported in the study by Thorpe (2004), critical reflectors could be defined as practitioners who engage in higher-order thinking and analysis processes. To exemplify, these learners actively search

for the reasons for their actions and beliefs, critically examine the assumptions underlying their actions, and demonstrate a shift in their perspectives or positions regarding their practices (Kember, 1999; Thorpe, 2004). Although the levels could show variance among the practitioners, considering the features attributed to each reflective thinking process, it is essential to progress towards the levels of reflective thinking skills to finally become a critically reflective practitioner (Larrivee, 2008).

2.3 Pre-service teachers' reflective thinking skills

Ogonor and Badmus (2006) assert that the practicum experience is a crucial component of teacher education programs. Practicum teaching provides pre-service teachers with an opportunity to be exposed to professional activities in real classroom settings and relate what they have learned in the teacher education programs as theoretical knowledge to their teaching practices that take place in a real classroom context (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). In this sense, engaging in critical reflective practices help them close the gap between their theoretical knowledge and practice, make sense of the abstract notions that they have learned about teaching in the school with the concrete practices in their practicum experience, and transfer their teaching skills that they have acquired at the university program to their professional context (Çimer, Çimer, & Vekli, 2013; Roja, 2017). With reflective activities in the practicum context, teachers have a chance to improve their practice-related knowledge and teaching theories that they will use in the classroom (Ghaye, 2011). This encourages them to actively participate in the action of learning how to teach and have control over their learning processes rather than passively waiting to be taught what they should do and how they should teach as a prospective teacher (Freese, 1999).

The practicum experience opens a new window for the pre-service teachers by providing them a context in which they could involve in reflective practices to develop as prospective practitioners; however, the studies in the literature demonstrate that pre-service teachers have some difficulties and challenges with regard to teaching and engaging in reflective practices at the early stages of their teaching experiences (Azeem, 2011; Hourani, 2013; Khanam, 2015). In other words, when pre-service teachers start their practicum experience, they mostly care about how they can survive in the classroom setting because of the lack of experience in teaching, some instructional problems, and facing the classroom realities (Khanam, 2015). The unpredictable student behaviors and situations that could emerge in the classroom and in their practicum context could make them feel under pressure, stressed, or reluctant (Khanam, 2015). Moreover, the teaching experience in their practicum context may not be pleasant for them because of the unhelpful attitudes and uncooperative behaviors of the administrative staff and mentor teachers (Ahmed, Naoreen, Saifi, & Jamil, 2010). In such a hectic and chaotic context, they are inclined to focus on the technical ways of dealing with the problems instead of in-depth analysis and critique of the problems (Hatton & Smith, 1995). In addition to this, they have difficulty applying the theory that they learned in the program to their practice in the real classroom context (Choo, Abdullah, & Nawi, 2019). In other words, they hardly connect their theoretical knowledge with their practical knowledge, which in turn could prevent them from constructing the foundation of professional knowledge including what and how about one's teaching (Lovat, 1999; Penso, Shoham, & Shiloah, 2001). The difficulties that pre-service teachers experience in terms of bridging the gap between the theory and practice and also the challenges that they have in their classroom context could only be dealt with when

they critically reflect on their experiences (Lee, 2008), and this requires them to have some reflective thinking skills for a critical analysis of their experiences such as decision-making, analysis, judgment, observation, identification of the problems and problem-solving skills (Mirzaei, Phang, & Kashefi, 2014; Spalding & Wilson, 2002).

Although it is essential and necessary for the pre-service teachers to have some reflective skills for a critical reflection, a vast array of the literature reveals that pre-service teachers do not reach higher reflective thinking skills that are necessary for a critical reflection, and they are inclined to reflect on their experiences at superficial and descriptive levels (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Reed, Davis, & Nyabanyaba, 2002; Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018; 2021; Wong, Rosnidar, & Syakirah, 2017; Yeşilbursa, 2011). In other words, pre-service teachers tend to describe their experiences, beliefs, and thoughts about their teaching practices, and they do not demonstrate a critical analysis of the underlying reasons, assumptions, and the implications of their actions within a wider context in their reflective activities. Considering some prominent and recent studies in the field, Bain et al. (1999) investigated the impact of reflective journals on the level of pre-service students' reflections by randomly separating them into four different interventions. At the end of the study, they found that there was no difference between the intervention groups and students could not engage in higher reflective skills in their reflections. In a similar vein to the finding of the previous study, in the study by Wong et al. (2017), it was revealed that PSTs demonstrated low levels of reflection in their journals and lesson plan books before they were introduced to a manual for writing critical reflection. In a recent study by Turhan and Kirkgoz (2021) using the Bain's five-scale model (1999) to assess the criticality of the pre-service teachers' reflections during their practicum experience, it is found that the pre-service teachers are not

able to demonstrate higher-level reflective thinking skills in their reflections that they wrote in pairs although slight changes were identified in their perspectives on language teaching towards the end of their practicum experience. Considering some of the findings of the studies in the literature, it could be asserted that regardless of the taxonomies or models that are used to assess the reflectivity of the PSTs in the studies, there seems to be a consensus on the issue that pre-service teachers lack the abilities to reach higher thinking skills and reflect critically in their reflective writing experiences.

With regards to the descriptive nature of the PSTs in their reflective activities, various interpretations and explanations have been asserted to clarify the possible reasons for the lack of higher reflective thinking skills in the PSTs' reflective activities. Considering the components of a critical reflection such as being able to solve the problems, uncovering the underlying beliefs and assumptions, and finding out new meaning from the experience through the analysis (Larrivee, 2000), it is revealed that pre-service teachers find the level of critical reflection challenging to identify and explain their actions (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). With regard to engaging in reflective activities, it is revealed that they also experience some constraints and challenges in writing reflections on their experiences such as the absence of reflective skills, the lack of adequate knowledge of the social and cultural context of their learning, and teaching environment, and the nature and components of reflection (Hourani, 2013). Moreover, at the early stages of their teaching experiences, pre-service teachers have not totally laid the base of their theoretical knowledge and teaching ideologies, and they have not acquired enough knowledge of the socio-political, cultural, and historical aspects of their teaching context, which is essential to be acquired for a critical reflection (Penso et al., 2001). Considering

the fact that critical reflection requires teachers to consciously make decisions taking into consideration their perspectives, ideas, and knowledge and the social implications of their actions within a broader context (Yost et al., 2000), the lack of such knowledge could prevent them from thinking and reflecting critically on their experiences. In addition to the difficulties in terms of the lack of necessary contextual knowledge and abilities to think critically, the lack of training and guidance in promoting reflective practices in teacher education programs is indicated as another reason for the lack of critical reflection in teacher candidates (Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2021). In spite of the well-known and established importance of reflection in the literature, teacher education programs do not provide PSTs with sufficient amount of time and enough opportunities to help them engage in reflective practices (Hamiloğlu, 2013), and in the teacher education programs, they are simply encouraged to reflect rather than being modeled and instructed on how to reflect on their experiences (Loughran, 2002). This causes teacher candidates to primarily depend on their technical knowledge related to the teaching skills and subject matter while reflecting on their experiences, and they ignore critically evaluating their teaching experiences considering their values, assumptions, and the impacts of an educational and social context, and their personal practical knowledge, which is all necessary components to conduct a critical reflection on one's practices (Penso et al., 2001).

The descriptive nature of the PSTs' reflections and their challenges regarding engaging in critical reflective practices in teacher education programs bring about the discussion on whether reflection should be taught or not (Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Gelter, 2003; Russell, 2005; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Some argue that all teachers reflect naturally on their experiences and there is not an instructional method to be

used to teach reflection directly (Edwards & Thomas, 2010). In contrast, some authors indicate that reflection is not an intuitive act or a predisposition that teachers could genetically have (Gelter, 2003) and it is not an act that could develop with teaching experience (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011). With regards to this dilemma, some authors clarify the issue by focusing on the experiences and outcomes of the PSTs when they engage in reflective practices without guidance, and they conclude that PSTs could tend to reflect on their experiences at the descriptive level when there is a lack of guidance (Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018; Wong et al., 2017; Yavuz, 2005). In this sense, taking into consideration the consensus on the descriptive nature of the PSTs and their challenges in reflecting critically on their experiences in the literature, there is a need to teach reflective practices explicitly, carefully, and patiently in teacher education programs as advocated by Russell (2005).

2.4 Guiding reflective thinking skills in teacher education programs

Teacher education is categorized into three different models as craft model, the applied science, and the reflective model (Wallace, 1995). The craft model is associated with the training practices of the teachers and in this model, the learning of the trainees takes place through imitating their trainers' teaching practices, observation, and practice whereas the applied science model is categorized with a way of instruction in which theoretical knowledge is transmitted to the students by only the professionals who are competent in the content knowledge and the problems in teaching could be dealt with by the professionals in the content knowledge rather than the practitioners (Wallace, 1995). On the other hand, the reflective model, which is the current trend in most teacher education programs, depends on the notion that pre-service teachers develop their professional knowledge by engaging in

reflective activities on their teaching practices, and this enables them to become reflective teachers who are constantly reflecting on their practices for their professional development and future practices (Wallace, 1995). Within the reflective model, many practices and opportunities are integrated into the teacher education programs. The integration of reflective practices in teacher education programs brings about the emergence of the concept of teacher-learning which could be defined as the outcome one gets from the teaching experience and practice (Richards, 2008). By getting involved in teaching experiences, pre-service teachers develop their professional competence, and this process could be made meaningful with the help of effective reflective practices (Loughran, 2002). Through effective reflective practices, teachers learn to frame and reframe their teaching practices and setting by considering different perspectives and facets that could cause the problems within the context and they try to shift their perspectives on the issue (Schön, 1983). Thanks to this learning process, they develop their professional knowledge and their level of understanding of their practice (Loughran, 2002). Although teacher-learning was considered as a transformation of theoretical knowledge to the practice setting, the recent ideology in the teacher education programs considers teacher-learning as the construction of professional knowledge through participating in the social context and reflective activities (Richards, 2008). For this reason, teacher education programs should teach the skills that are demanded reflectivity to the pre-service teachers and provide the context in which they could make sense of their teaching practices and experiences (Freeman, 2002).

In teacher education programs, PSTs are simply encouraged to attend reflective practices; however solely encouraging PSTs to attend reflective practices could be as meaningful as giving a lecture in interactive group work (Loughran,

2002). Moreover, considering the descriptive nature of the PSTs, they do not ask for being taught about reflection, but they want to learn how to reflect on their practices (Russell, 2005). Considering a vast array of studies reaching a consensus on the fact that PSTs can reach higher reflective thinking skills with the help of various methods and ways that guide them on reflective practices (Brookfield, 2017; Griffin, 2003; Russell, 2005), the explicit focus should be given to facilitate the reflective practices of the PSTs (Loughran, 2002). In this sense, educators can help them by creating a context in which PSTs could feel comfortable in sharing their experiences with their peers, mentor teachers, receive and give feedback and engage in some meaningful reflective activities (Oner & Adadan, 2018). To be able to guide their reflective skills, first of all, educators should be capable of identifying the reflective elements in the PSTs' reflections, and they should have some knowledge on how to enhance a more critical reflection and guide PSTs on how to analyze and evaluate the outcomes of the socio-political context on their experiences (Thorsen & DeVore, 2013).

The necessity of guiding and teaching reflective skills in teacher education programs brings about the question of where, how, and what instructional methods should be employed by the educators. At this point, Griffin (2003) highlights some assumptions that are necessary to be considered while choosing instructional methods to promote reflective practices. These assumptions to be considered consist of the developmental nature of the reflection, the importance of the integration of authentic field experiences to connect theory to practice, investigation of internalized beliefs, purposeful writing during reflective practices, guidance, and a dialogue with self and others (Griffin, 2003). In line with the assumptions, various approaches to promote reflective skills have been proposed in the literature (Özbek & Köse, 2019; Power, 2012, Williams & Grudnoff, 2011).

Hatton and Smith (1995) propose four approaches that could be integrated into teacher education programs to enhance the reflective skills of the PSTs such as the application of action research projects, conducting case studies of the classrooms, schools, students, or teachers, integrating microteaching experiences to the program, and designing structured reflective tasks. In addition to broader approaches that could be integrated, Power (2012) demonstrated that some instructional strategies could help PSTs reflect on their practices critically such as a clear description of reflection, an explanation of its purpose for engaging in reflective practices and providing them with feedback along with the guidance on assessment. In a similar vein, in the study investigating the strategies enhancing reflective skills of the PSTs, Özbek, and Köse (2019) indicated some instructional factors that could help PSTs reflect on their experiences critically such as the use of reflective journals, a collaboration between peers and cooperation with an advisor, interviews, and interactions after the practicum experience, and video recording of their practicum teaching (Özbek & Köse, 2019). Although there is a variance in the instructional approaches in the literature, considering the findings of the studies, it could be asserted that it is essential to create a context in which the teacher candidates are supported, encouraged, and guided through collaborative dialogue, critical friends, and a well-designed community of practice (Kajder & Parkes, 2012).

While creating such a learning context in which PSTs are guided in reflective thinking skills, it should be considered that reflection can take place both at an individual and collaborative level (Muray, 2010). In other words, while engaging in reflective practices individually, teachers evaluate their teaching practices and try to make sense of their actions whereas, on the collaborative level, they share their teaching practices and experiences with other teachers (Murray, 2010). With the help

of a collaborative level of reflection, PSTs engage in a critical dialogue with their critical friends who assist them to uncover the hidden assumptions, look for the reasons, and open up new ways of understanding the incidents that take place in teaching (Brookfield, 2017). Engaging in such a critical dialogue, PSTs help each other in the examination of their hidden assumptions, thoughts, and ideas that could be ignored while reflecting on their teaching experiences individually (Marchel, 2007). Thanks to critical dialogue, PSTs have a chance to uncover their personal opinions that could affect their teaching practices and discuss their challenges and experiences with a critical stance (Marchel, 2007). This enhances the reflective thinking skills of the pre-service teachers (Brookfield, 2017) and it facilitates the emergence of their implicit thoughts and reflection on the experiences critically (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2018).

It is contended that providing such a collaborative context may not be enough to nurture the reflective skills of the teachers, instead, it could be supported and enhanced with the integration of some instructional tools to help them make sense of their teaching experiences and practices (Achugar & Carpenter, 2018). One of the commonly used tools to enhance reflective skills is the integration of reflective and authentic tasks into the field experiences (Freese, 2006; Roberts & Kirk, 2019). While designing tasks to cultivate the reflective skills, the teacher educators need to have some background knowledge about the students' needs, their experience, and their practicum setting so that they could integrate the tasks accordingly (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Considering the needs of the PSTs, designing and integrating some reflective tasks into their practicum experiences assist them to gain an understanding of their teaching processes by enabling them to analyze their perspectives and assumptions from different frames (Freese, 2006). In addition to this, considering the

notion that one's learning takes place in an authentic environment as problems occur in such authentic situations (Dewey, 1933) while designing the tasks, PSTs need to be provided with an opportunity to reflect on their authentic teaching practices to help them decide on their actions and think on them critically (Griffin, 2003).

In addition to the integration of some authentic hands-on tasks, another way that could be used to nurture the reflective skills is reflective writing (Freese, 2006), and one of the commonly used tools for the enhancement of reflective skills is the use of journals (Farrell, 2007; Gursansky, Quinn, & Le Sueur, 2010; Lee, 2007; Yesilbursa, 2011). While writing about their experiences, teachers go through several steps (Khanam, 2011). In other words, as depicted by Khanam (2011), teachers have a chance to think back on the details of their experiences by providing some details about events, people, behaviors, actions, and feelings. After the description, they provide a rationale why something has happened in their teaching experiences, and they try to make sense of their actions and try to find a solution for the further teaching practices (Khanam, 2011). This process of reflective writing helps them observe their experiences again as an outsider. Moreover, they have some time to think about their teaching actions and analyze their beliefs and theory-based knowledge about their teaching experiences (Tsang, 2003), and in this way, they try to make a connection between their theory-based knowledge acquired at the university with their teaching experiences in the classroom context (Yost et al., 2000).

While engaging in reflective writing, pre-service teachers engage in a dialogue with themselves that helps them think, talk and make evaluations on their practices, and in this sense, they may require some guidance in establishing and developing their inner dialogue with themselves (Dieker & Monda-Almaya, 1997).

Moreover, considering the fact that the lack of guidance during the reflective writing processes could lead PSTs to reflect on their experiences descriptively (Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2021), guiding pre-service teachers in their reflective writing experiences could help them reflect on their experiences deeply (Hunter & Hatton, 1998), and this helps them move beyond the mere descriptive writing. One of the ways that assist this process is the use of a reflective framework (Dieker & Monda-Almaya, 1997). The reflective frameworks include some guiding questions, and the questions help teachers shape their thinking processes and find a focus for their reflective writing experiences (Wildman & Niles, 1987). Moreover, the use of a reflective framework model helps teachers make sense of their experiences, and have a better understanding of their teaching practices (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011), and it could improve the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs (Schweiker-Marra et al., 2003). For this reason, it could be concluded that the provision of a workable reflective model improves the reflective skills of the teachers, and at the same time, it helps researchers examine, understand, and assess the reflective skills of the teachers (Dieker & Monda-Almaya, 1997). This notion stated in the literature makes the researcher adopt a workable reflective model in the study to guide the PSTs in their reflective practices and also to assess and observe their reflective thinking skills during their reflective writing experiences.

2.5 Reflective models that are adopted to guide PSTs in the study

To foster the reflective thinking skills and to guide the reflective writing experiences of the teachers, various perspectives and models have been adopted in the literature (Gibbs, 1983; Kolb, 1984; Tripp, 2011; Van Manen, 1977). One of the approaches that are used in nurturing reflective skills is Tripp's critical incident analysis (2011).

Considering the descriptive nature and the absence of higher-order thinking skills of the PSTs, this model is considered an effective technique because it provides various reflective thinking strategies that could help someone in thinking back on their experiences from different perspectives and within wider contexts (Tripp, 2011) and it enables someone to move beyond the mere description of the situations to an in-depth analysis of the experiences (Griffin, 2003).

Tripp (2011) defines critical incidents as "some event or situation which marked a significant turning-point or change in the life of a person or an institution (such as a political party) or some social phenomenon (industrialization, a war or some legal negotiations)". Although the term such as "turning-point events" could trigger teachers to think about the critical incidents as the extraordinary events taking place in the classroom, Tripp (2011) states that the majority of the critical incidents are not obvious or extraordinary events, instead, they are the most usual and commonplace events that occur in the routine practices of teachers, and these incidents could appear as typical at the first sight, but they become critical through the analysis. For this reason, critical incidents are not simply observed or experienced, but they are created (Tripp, 2011).

Creating critical incidents consists of two stages; one of them is the production phase of the incident and another is the explanation stage (Tripp, 2011). Tripp (2011) provides an explanation of the model in his book as follows; in the production phase, the incident is observed and the details regarding the events, people, and actions are described without any judgment or evaluation, and this phase includes the description of what happened in the incident. Tripp (2011) explains the second stage, which is the explanation phase, as a phase in which someone starts to question why the incident takes place, and the incident is explained in terms of its

meaning, significance, and its value. In this phase, various reasons, explanations and justifications are provided by evaluating the incident from different perspectives and it is analyzed critically considering the cultural, educational, socio-political implications and consequences of the incident within a wider context (Tripp, 2011). After this phase, one's position regarding the incident is stated and explained by taking into consideration the outcome that one can get after experiencing the incident. In a similar vein to the stages of the model, Thiel (1999) proposes some steps that teachers can follow in the critical incident analysis consisting of the stages such as *self-observation* in which teachers observe their behaviors or experiences and try to identify significant events; *describing what happened* that includes the description of the details about the incident; *self-awareness* in which teachers try to think about the incident from every possible aspect and provide various reasons for it; and lastly *self-evaluation* in which teachers identify the changes in their teaching practices or perspectives after experiencing the incident. Besides providing some basic steps that could help someone go from mere description to critical analysis, Tripp (2011) also suggests some thinking strategies to guide the reflective thinking processes of the teachers while following the steps in the model. Some of them are thinking about the alternatives and possibilities of the incident and considering positive, negative, and neutral sides of the incident, and this could help teachers investigate every possible reason for the incident and consider the various explanations about it. Moreover, Tripp (2011) suggests other thinking strategies that could foster more profound reflective thinking skills such as asking why questions to every possible thing about the incident, identifying the dilemmas and analyzing them, and lastly analyzing one's values and beliefs to uncover the underlying reasons that could affect one's action.

The analysis of the critical incidents brings about various benefits to the pre-service teachers. The critical analysis of the incidents enables teachers to have a clear and profound understanding of the commonplace events taking place in their teaching experiences (Farrell, 2013). In addition, Richards and Farrell (2005) state that with the analysis of the incidents, teachers have a chance to question and analyze the commonplace events that become routinized behaviors and that are conducted unconsciously, and teachers could increase their self-awareness about what they are doing and what is required to do and realize the gap between them. In addition, with the help of increasing their self-awareness, they uncover the beliefs that they have about their learners and teaching, and thanks to the continuous questioning of the incidents taking place in their classes, teachers could acquire the habit of including a critical stance in their decisions and teaching behaviors (Richards & Farrell, 2005). All the benefits and advantages stated in the literature justify the reasons why the use of the critical incident analysis model needs to be considered as one of the effective techniques in guiding the PSTs' reflective thinking skills and why it serves best as a method in guiding the PSTs' reflective thinking skills in the current study.

The critical incident analysis model (Tripp, 2011) as a reflective model seems to benefit the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs as it helps PSTs move beyond the descriptive writing by providing them with some thinking strategies. In addition to the use of a critical incident analysis model (Tripp, 2011) to mainly foster reflective thinking skills, another method that was used in the study is Gibbs' reflective cycle model (1988). Gibbs' reflective cycle model was primarily used to enhance the reflective writing skills of the PSTs in an organized and critical way in the study. In his cycle, he exemplifies how teachers could engage in reflective writing with some basic guiding questions to think about while reflecting on the experiences. The

reflective cycle consists of six main stages such as description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and taking an action (Gibbs, 1988). The nature of the cycle enables teachers to develop their reflective writing and thinking skills in a way that starts with a descriptive writing stance and leads one to reflect on the experiences with a more critical stance by writing an action plan for the further teaching experiences in future. In this sense, some recent studies indicated that the use of Gibbs' reflective cycle helped the practitioners express their ideas and engage in reflection, and it enhanced their understanding of teaching experiences and the teaching profession (Oviawe, 2020). In this sense, Gibbs' model could bring about benefits to the teachers in helping them engage in reflective writing experiences by focusing on a variety of aspects related to their experiences such as their feelings, the good and bad sides of their experience, their analysis, and their further plans with respect a particular experience, which could help them broaden their perspectives and look at the incidents from a wider perspective. In addition to this, thanks to the nature of the model, the stage of planning an action in the last step of the cycle provides feedback for the first stage by enabling teachers to observe what happened at the beginning and what changed at the end regarding their teaching behaviors and thoughts (Oviawe, 2020).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Problem statement and research questions

Reflectivity can help teachers to reach effective decisions for their teaching practices, but it could be more difficult for pre-service teachers (Thomas & Packer, 2013), especially, considering the components of critical reflection such as being able to solve the problems, uncovering the underlying beliefs and assumptions, and finding out new meaning from the experience through the analysis (Larrivee, 2000). In line with these statements, a vast array of literature has demonstrated that pre-service teachers have a tendency to reflect descriptively on their experiences (Power, 2012; Reed et al., 2002; Yesilbursa, 2011) and they find the level of critical reflection challenging to identify and explain their actions (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). For this reason, it could be said that the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs generally are not at the level which is required for critical and in-depth analysis, and this necessitates some guidance and instructional opportunities to help them acquire high levels of reflective thinking skills so that they can be life-long reflective practitioners.

Considering the problems and concerns stated in the literature, this study aims to understand how PSTs could develop their reflective thinking and writing skills within a collaborative learning environment that is supported with explicit guidance on writing critical reflections. Besides, it also aims to investigate the content of the PSTs' reflections to identify the main concerns that are touched upon and to understand how the content of the reflections could evolve in the course of the practicum experience with the help of guidance. Moreover, it is considered important

to understand the overall experiences of the PSTs to be able to uncover their perceptions on writing reflections that are supported with guidance. All of these purposes of the study paved the way for an in-depth investigation of the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the incidents that PSTs find critical through their analysis in their reflections?
2. How does reflective writing through explicit guidance and critical friends contribute to the development of criticality in PSTs' reflections?
3. What is the overall experience of PSTs from their reflective writing processes?

3.2 Research design

In the investigation of the study, a qualitative research paradigm was employed, and as an epistemological perspective of the study, the interpretive framework was internalized to provide an in-depth understanding and insight into the research questions. As the nature of the research questions necessitated a complex and detailed understanding of the issue, the theoretical underpinnings of the qualitative research design were considered to serve best for the study purposes. In other words, thanks to the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher could use multiple data sources (Yin, 2011), collect the data in a natural setting, and understand and interpret the phenomena in terms of its meaning with a naturalistic and interpretive approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and this enabled the researcher to use deductive and inductive reasoning skills to investigate the research questions (Creswell, 2013).

Thanks to the naturalistic nature of the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher could collect the data within a real context in which participants studied,

and this enabled the researcher to observe the context of the participants and to understand their ideas and perspectives within their real context. With the interpretive nature of the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher could provide a complex and in-depth understanding of the research questions in the study with an interpretation of the data findings in detail and analyze them by using deductive and inductive logic processes (Creswell, 2013).

Besides adopting the theoretical underpinnings of a qualitative study, it is essential to collect and interpret the qualitative data properly so that the researcher could come up with a valid study in which the findings reflect and represent the real context accurately (Yin, 2011). Considering the utmost importance of validity, it is necessary to employ some strategies to eliminate the threats to the credibility of the findings through varied and rich data, triangulation, and respondent validation (Maxwell, 2013). With the purpose to ensure the validity of the study, detailed and varied data were gathered from the participants, and data triangulation was ensured by collecting the data from various and multiple qualitative data collection tools. As the main data collection tools, the data were gathered from 130 observation reports of the participants and a semi-structured interview that was conducted with voluntary participants. As a supplementary tool, documents that were collected in the workshop sessions such as the reflective tasks, a short questionnaire, and the unstructured notes of the researcher were also used to decide on the content and design of the workshop sessions in the course of the study. To prevent any misinterpretation of the data findings, the respondent validation was taken during the interview, and the data were analyzed considering the participants' feedback on their self-reported views and comments.

3.3 Research setting

The study was conducted at the department of foreign language education in a well-known research university located in Istanbul, Turkey. During a four-year-long education at the department, students are prepared to be prospective teachers in elementary and secondary schools through the theoretical and applied courses in education, linguistics, sociolinguistics, English and American literature, first and second language learning, second language teaching methodology, teaching four skills and grammar (writing, reading, speaking, listening), research methods, material development, classroom management, and language assessment. After students have completed their coursework in the theoretical and applied courses, with the purpose to help students practice their theoretical knowledge and teaching skills in real classrooms, they are provided with practicum courses named practice teaching in EFL I in the fall semester and practice teaching in EFL II in the spring semester respectively in the 4th year of the undergraduate program.

As research setting and context of the current study, the focus was given to the mandatory practicum course named practice teaching in EFL I that PSTs took in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year of the program. In this 14-week-long practicum course, students were expected to observe English classes and teach some English lessons in the practicum schools. For this reason, first of all, PSTs were placed into different private or state K12 schools, and every student teacher was matched with a cooperating teacher in their practicum schools and a university supervisor for the practicum course in the program at the beginning of the fall semester. During the practicum experience in the schools, PSTs observed 72 class hours, took notes about their observations, and taught at least two lessons in their practicum schools in the fall semester.

For the practicum course at the university, they enrolled in the class of their university supervisor who was responsible for guiding them in their teaching experiences, observing their teaching performances, and providing them with feedback on their reflections. In each section of the practicum course that consisted of approximately 10 students, PSTs came together with their peers and university supervisors at the campus to discuss and share their observations and experiences every week. As a course requirement of the practicum course, they were expected to write five observation reports biweekly in which they reflected on their practicum experiences and a focused final report on school-related issues, and they were also asked to conduct at least two macro teaching sessions and submit their lesson plans to the supervisor of the course for these teaching sessions.

To promote professional development and support student teachers in their practicum experience, the university supervisors provided students with some instruction on classroom observation, reflective teaching, lesson planning, and classroom management in the practicum course. In addition to the instructions of the supervisors, all the senior year ELT students who were in their practicum year came together and participated in three different sessions that were designed and integrated into the practicum course syllabus by the researcher during the fall semester. In these sessions, the researcher provided students with some explicit instruction and workshops on writing critical reflection to promote their reflective thinking skills and help them improve in their reflective practices.

3.4 Participants

In the selection of the participants, the focus was given to the senior year pre-service teachers studying at the department of foreign language education in a well-known

state university located in Istanbul, Turkey. The study participants were specifically chosen among the ELT PSTs who enrolled in the practicum course named practice teaching in EFL I in the fall semester and who were conducting their practicum as a program requirement. While selecting the study participants, different types of sampling methods were employed to be able to choose the participants that could provide valid data for the study purposes. First of all, purposeful sampling was adopted as a method of choice to reach information-rich cases to do an in-depth analysis of the issue (Patton, 2002). In other words, the reason for the use of such a method was to choose a sample that could give the most information about the issue at hand while trying to understand, gain insight and discover the qualitative problem as suggested by Creswell (2013). Instead of creating criteria to choose participants, at first sight, convenience sampling, which is one of the common types of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), was used because of the availability and accessibility of the pre-service teachers that are considered to be suitable in the investigation of the research.

In the selection of the participants, the utmost importance was given to voluntary participation, and for this reason, all the pre-service teachers enrolled in the practicum course were invited to participate in the research, and they were provided with a consent form explaining the details of the study (see Appendix A). After being informed about the details, 36 PSTs out of 67 gave consent to take part in the study voluntarily. During the study, all the participants were asked and encouraged to participate in the sessions that were integrated into the syllabus of the practicum course. Consisting of three different sessions in total, the researcher provided participants with some explicit instruction and hands-on activities related to writing critical reflections.

As the study investigates the development of the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs by providing some guidance in these sessions, participating in at least two sessions was an important criterion in the selection of the participants. Moreover, as the study examines the gradual development of the PST's criticality in the reflections, the utmost importance was given to the participants who completed all the reflective writing tasks as a course requirement of the practicum course. For this reason, although the data were gathered from 36 participants in the course of the study, towards the end of the study, a criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was employed to collect the data from the participants that could serve effectively for the study purposes. As a result, four participants were eliminated because they failed to participate in at least two sessions during the semester, and six of them were also omitted because of the missing observation reports. In the end, 26 pre-service teachers who wrote all the observation reports and who participated in at least two sessions were considered the study participants, and the data gathered from them were used and analyzed in detail.

3.5 Learning environment

Having reflective skills is not an intuitive predisposition that develops with the teaching and personal experience or a genetic disposition (Gelter, 2003), instead, it should be taught explicitly (Gelter, 2003; Russell, 2005). With this aim, the reflective skills of the PSTs could be manifested by providing them with guided reflection sessions (Hourani, 2013), a working reflective model (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011), and authentic reflective tasks (Freese, 2006). For this reason, promoting a critical stance in reflective writing practices of the PSTs could be achieved with a practicum course designed with a critically reflective approach (Hamiloğlu, 2013).

Considering the PSTs' tendency to reflect on their experiences descriptively and their lack of reflective skills, the current study created a learning environment with a critically reflective approach to guide pre-service teachers in writing critical reflections. It was considered important to provide PSTs with a collaborative learning environment in which they could work on some authentic cases and reflect on them with their critical friends. The learning environment in the study was designed and conducted as workshop sessions that were integrated into the practicum course of the program. During the 14 weeks of the PSTs' practicum experience in the fall semester, three different sessions were conducted in the sixth, seventh, and tenth week of the practicum course by the researcher, and they were implemented by focusing on a different aspect of reflective writing and reflective thinking skills in each session as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Timeline and Content of the Sessions

The sessions	Timeline	Content of the explicit instruction	Content of the hands-on tasks
First Session	6th week Nov. 11	The introduction of the Tripp's critical incident analysis model (2011) and sample demonstration on the analysis with examples	The critical analysis of a commonplace incident within pairs
Second Session	7th week Nov. 18	Revision of the Tripp's critical incident analysis model and introduction of the term critical friends	Doing analysis on the example incident with a prompt and giving feedback on the pair's analysis and discussion
Third Session	10th week Dec. 9	The introduction to writing a critical reflection and Gibb's reflective cycle (1988)	Analysis of a sample reflection with the help of a prompt and discussion

While integrating the sessions into the practicum course syllabus, two main principles were considered. First of all, it was considered to be essential to give PSTs enough time to help them get accustomed to their practicum school context and observe some English classes before the conduct of the sessions so that they could have enough experience to reflect on in the sessions. For this reason, as most of the participants started to observe their practicum schools in the second and third weeks of the practicum course, the sessions started to be conducted in the sixth week. In addition, it was considered to be necessary to teach the basic principles and terms of reflective teaching to the PSTs so that they could understand the main principles and have some background knowledge on the issue before the principles of reflective writing were introduced to them in the sessions. For this reason, the supervisor of each practicum course section was asked to cover the topic in their course before the sessions started.

The content of the sessions was planned and designed mainly in two different phases: the provision of explicit instruction on the issue and a hands-on task. In each of the sessions, the participants were provided with explicit instruction to guide them on how to reflect and think critically in writing reflections. After the instruction, they were provided with hands-on reflective tasks in which they could practice how to reflect critically on their experiences with their peers. To design the content of these sessions, the researcher took some unstructured observation notes and analyzed the reflective tasks of the participants after conducting each session. With an analysis of her notes and the reflective tasks of the participants after each session, the researcher identified the difficulties and missing components that needed to be developed in terms of writing critical reflection, and this finding was used as guidance for the researcher to design the content of the following sessions. Thanks to this procedure,

the needs of the participants and the skills that needed to be developed in writing critical reflection were identified and observed during the study, and the necessary guidance was given in each session with a different focus on the content. In the following section, the content of the sessions and tasks will be explained in detail to provide a comprehensive insight to the readers about this learning environment.

3.5.1 First session

The first session was conducted in the sixth week of the practicum course. Before conducting the sessions, PSTs had enough time to get used to their practicum school context and observe various English classes, and they wrote their first reflection papers about their class observations. The researcher did not start to conduct the first session before PSTs wrote their first reflections. The reason for this was to understand the depth of the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs in terms of their criticality in their first reflections before guidance on reflective writing was provided to them. Thanks to this, the researcher was able to have a general understanding of the initial stance of the PSTs in writing reflections, and she identified the missing components that needed to be improved in writing critical reflections in the first session.

For the first session, all the PSTs enrolled in the practicum course in the fall semester were invited to take part in the study, and the study was explained briefly and the consent form was given to them before starting the session. After getting their consent to participate in the study, a short prompt consisting of two main questions was given to the participants to identify their challenges in writing reflections and also to understand what they mostly focus on in their reflections (see Appendix B). For this aim, they were asked to write three challenges that they

experienced in writing their previous reflections, and then they were asked to state what they mostly focus on in their reflections by stating their reasons for this.

The flow of the session was implemented mainly in two phases: explicit instruction on Tripp's critical incident analysis (2011) and hands-on reflective tasks. Instead of lecture-based instruction, the introduction part of the session was conducted interactively by introducing the topic and discussing the issue with the participants. Moreover, participants were encouraged to think critically about their practicum experiences with the provision of some guiding questions during the introduction.

For the explicit instruction, first of all, Tripp's critical incident analysis model (2011) was chosen to guide participants in reflecting on their experiences with a critical stance. It was considered that the Tripp's model could help participants learn how to transfer the routine occurrences that may be unnoticed during their teaching practices into something critical through the analysis, and it could also help participants move beyond their current context and think about the incident from different perspectives within a wider context (Tripp, 2011). Consisting of the production and explanation stage, the model was explained in detail to the participants by giving some examples, and the researcher modeled a sample analysis of a commonplace incident that participants could experience in their classrooms. This process was also supported by some guiding questions that were integrated into the model to help them think critically about their experiences.

After the instruction, a hands-on task was given to participants to help them practice reflecting on an incident by using the critical incident analysis model (see Appendix C). Working in pairs, participants were asked to find a commonplace incident that they observed during their practicum experience, and they were asked to

analyze this incident by following the steps in Tripp's model (2011) and also by thinking about the guiding questions provided in the handout. During the pair work, the researcher walked around the class and guided participants in their analysis. At the end of the session, all the documents were collected to be analyzed for the following session.

3.5.2 Second session

The second session was conducted in the seventh week of the practicum course. To design the content of the second session, first of all, all the documents collected in the first session including the questionnaire, the reflective tasks, and also the notes of the researcher were analyzed. It was found that the first session was like a realization for the teacher candidates as they understood whether they described or analyzed in their previous reflections. Moreover, it was discovered that the majority of the participants had difficulty finding a particular aspect to focus on in their reflections, and they had a lack of knowledge about how to write a reflection and how to do a critical analysis of their experiences. In line with this finding, most of the participants stated in the questionnaire that they focused on description while writing reflections because of several reasons, and the analysis of the reflective tasks demonstrated that most of the participants gave mostly explanations and reasons for the incident that they worked on, but still, it was at the descriptive level.

Considering the necessity to do more practice in terms of reflecting critically on the experiences based on the findings of the first session, the focus of the explicit instruction was given to the revision of the critical incident analysis and the introduction of the term critical friend. As an instruction, first of all, the meaning of the term critical incident was highlighted again and authentic commonplace

examples that participants wrote in the first session were used as sample critical incidents to be able to demonstrate that any incident that is critical for them could be a focus in their reflections. Then, the critical incident analysis model was revised, and sample analysis was explained step by step to demonstrate how they can reflect on their experiences by thinking about the questions in the model. To highlight the importance of their peers in terms of helping them uncover their assumptions and opening up new perspectives in their reflections, the meaning and the importance of critical friends were explained and exemplified.

To help the participants practice reflecting on an incident critically and giving feedback to their peers' reflections as critical friends, a hands-on reflective task was given to them. The reflective task consisted of mainly two stages: individual critical incident analysis and giving peer feedback. For the first stage of the task, a template of a critical incident analysis model (Tripp, 2011) was prepared as a handout, and a sample commonplace incident was written on the model by the researcher so that everybody could work on the same case and share their perspectives with their peers after the analysis (see Appendix D). Besides the task handout, the participants were also provided with a critical incident analysis prompt that was designed considering Tripp's guiding questions for the analysis of the incidents (Tripp, 2011) (see Appendix E). First of all, individuals reflected on the sample incident individually by considering the guiding questions in the prompt, and then the researcher shared her sample analysis with them to model how they could reflect on an incident with a critical stance (see Appendix F).

For the second stage of the hands-on task, the researcher prepared a handout in which participants were asked to exchange their analysis papers with their pairs and read their friends' analyses and give feedback to them (see Appendix G). In this

part, they were asked to read their friend's analyses and consider how their friend analyzed the incident. Then, they were asked to write two or three guiding questions to help their peers analyze the incident critically and suggest ways that she/he could follow in the analysis of the incident to be more critical. In this way, students had a chance to analyze the incident from different perspectives and they recognized the missing components in their analysis with the help of their peers.

3.5.3 Third session

Instead of conducting the third session in the following week, the session was instructed in the tenth week of the practicum course to give participants some time to write their second reflection papers by getting help from the critical incident analysis prompt and considering the issues that they discussed in the previous sessions. In the first and second sessions, the main focus was on teaching how to think critically about the experiences and how to analyze them by considering different perspectives and wider contexts. For this reason, these sessions' focus was mostly on the introduction of reflective thinking skills to the participants. In the third session, the main focus was given to reflective writing skills and writing a critical reflection.

While designing the content of the third session, the researcher analyzed all the documents gathered from the second session, and the analysis revealed that although most of the participants moved beyond the description stage and they mostly focused on the explanations for the incident by considering it within a wider context, some of the participants did not go into detail in their explanations, and there were some variations in how they followed the stages of Tripp's model (2011). Besides the analysis of the reflective tasks, participants' first and second reflection papers were also analyzed, and the analysis revealed that there were so many

variations in how participants wrote their reflection papers in terms of their format and content. These findings lead the researcher to focus on reflective writing skills in the third session.

For the explicit instruction, first of all, the principles of reflective writing were introduced to the participants. Then, Gibbs' reflective cycle model (1988) was employed and introduced to the participants to guide them in writing critical reflections. In this session, Gibbs' model (1988) was chosen as a reflective cycle as it provides a well-organized structure in a way that the guiding questions and the structured cycle in the model could enable participants to think about different aspects related to their experience, and it also guides them to do both retrospective and prospective reflection on their experiences. Each stage of the model was explained with example extracts that were taken from a sample reflective writing of a PST on her experiences.

After the explicit instruction, they were provided with a hands-on reflective task. To guide participants in the analysis of an incident, the researcher gave participants a reflective writing prompt including the stages of Gibbs' model (1988) and some guiding questions for each stage (see Appendix H). This prompt was prepared considering the cue questions in Gibbs' model (1988). In the task, the researcher gave participants a sample reflection written by an English teacher candidate about one of her teaching experiences. They were asked to read and analyze the sample reflection in terms of its criticality and content considering the guiding questions in the prompt with their pairs (see Appendix I). At the end of the session, a whole class discussion was held to understand how participants evaluated the writer's critical stance in the sample reflection and to give them feedback on their analysis.

The analysis of the reflective tasks of this session revealed that the majority of the participants thought that the sample reflection was written from a very limited perspective, and it lacks an in-depth analysis and evaluation. This demonstrated that the participants started to be aware of the critical analysis of an incident and what a critical analysis requires.

3.5.4 Feedback

In addition to the guidance provided in the sessions designed in the light of a critically reflective approach, this learning environment was also supported with the provision of constructive feedback to foster critical reflection of the pre-service teachers as advised by Power (2012). After all the sessions were conducted by the researcher, constructive feedback was given to the observation reports of the participants that they wrote as a practicum course requirement during their practicum experience and sessions.

To give feedback and to guide participants in writing a critical reflection, a reflection evaluation rubric was prepared by the researcher considering the components of Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988) and Tripp's critical incident analysis model (2011) (see Appendix J). The rubric was mainly organized into six stages considering the Gibbs' model (1988) consisting of description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. The guiding questions in each stage were formulated and adapted considering the cue questions in Tripp's model (2011) and Gibbs' model (1988). Considering the criteria in the rubric, the researcher gave feedback to the observation reports of the participants to guide them on how to analyze and reflect critically on their experiences by helping them think about their experiences from different perspectives and within a wider socio-political context.

3.6 Data collection procedure

The data collection of the study started after the ethics committee approval was taken (see Appendix K). It was conducted during the practicum experience of the pre-service teachers in the fall semester, and all the data collection procedure was completed within 12 weeks starting at the beginning of November 2021 and finishing at the end of January 2022 as explained in Table 2 below in detail. As the focus of the study is to understand the nature and criticality of the PSTs' reflections and their overall experiences in the course of their practicum experience, it is considered that the qualitative data collection tools could provide an in-depth insight into the investigation of the research questions. This yielded the researcher to collect data mainly from two qualitative data collection tools: observation reports of the participants and a semi-structured interview. The data gathered from the main data collection tools were also supported by the documents such as the unstructured notes of the researcher about each session, the reflective tasks of the participants, and a short questionnaire that was collected to gather background information about the participants' reflective writing experiences in the first session, and these documents were used for the design of the sessions.

To be able to observe the depth and nature of the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs, participants were asked to write five observation reports in total to reflect on their observations and teaching experiences regularly. As most of them started to observe their practicum schools in the second or third week of the practicum course, they were asked to write their reflections starting from the fifth week. As it was considered important to give enough time to the participants to reflect on their observations, the collection of the papers was tried to be scheduled biweekly, and they were collected on the fifth, eighth, eleventh, twelfth, and fourteenth weeks of

the practicum course. With an aim to provide explicit guidance on the students' reflective writing processes, three different sessions were designed and conducted in the sixth, seventh, and tenth weeks of the practicum course.

Table 2. The Summary of the Data Collection Procedure

Data Collection Tools	Timeline for the data collection	The purpose
Observation Reports	1st observation report – 5th week (Nov. 7) 2nd observation report – 8th week (Nov. 28) 3rd observation report – 11th week (Dec. 15) 4th observation report – 12th week (Dec. 26) 5th observation report – 14th week (Jan. 9)	To understand the nature of the PSTs' reflections and observe the development in their criticality level
The semi-structured Interview	In the 15th – 16th week (Jan. 10 – Jan. 23)	To understand the overall experiences of the PSTs from their reflective writing processes
The Documents	1st session – 6th week 2nd session – 7th week 3rd session – 10th week	To design the content of the sessions and to monitor reflective thinking skills of the participants

After all the sessions were conducted, the researcher started to give feedback on the observation reports of the participants to provide them with different perspectives in the analysis of their incidents considering the reflection evaluation rubric. The feedback was provided individually via email, and it was given during the twelfth and thirteenth weeks of the practicum course. Lastly, after the practicum course and all the coursework of the participants finished, the researcher conducted a semi-

structured interview with the voluntary participants to understand their overall reflective writing experiences during their practicum experience.

3.6.1 Observation reports

To understand the nature of the PSTs' reflections and observe the development in their criticality level in their reflections, the data were collected from the 130 observation reports. During the fourteenth week-long practicum experience, participants wrote observation reports consisting of at least 450 words biweekly as a practicum course requirement of the program. In the reports, they were asked to choose a particular focus or an incident that they thought important by considering their observation notes and also experiences in their practicum schools, and they were asked to reflect on them by getting help from the reflective writing prompts provided in the sessions. After writing their reports biweekly, they uploaded their reports to an online learning platform Moodle so that the supervisor could give them feedback and assess their performance. They were also asked to send their observation reports to the researcher via email so that she could also give feedback to guide them in writing critical reflections.

The researcher planned the due dates for the collection of the observation reports with the practicum course supervisor, and the dates were integrated into the practicum course syllabus at the beginning of the semester. According to the plan, the first observation report was collected in the fifth week of the practicum course before the first session was conducted by the researcher. This enabled researcher to understand the initial stance of the participants in terms of their criticality in reflective writing and reflective thinking skills. The second observation report was collected in the eighth week of the practicum course after the conduct of the two

sessions, which helped the researcher monitor the progress in the reflective skills of the participants in the course of explicit guidance. The rest of the observation reports were gathered in the eleventh, twelfth, and fourteenth weeks of the practicum course after the third session was taught in the tenth week of the practicum course. Collecting the observation reports that the participants wrote in the practicum course instead of asking them to write reflections for the study prevented any forced reflection and burdensome work on the participants. With this procedure, any negative attitude toward reflective writing was avoided in the study, and the validity of the reflection content was ensured as the participants did not write their reflections just for providing data for the research, but they wrote it with the purpose to reflect on their experiences in the practicum course. Moreover, writing observation reports at least biweekly instead of writing every week enabled them to have some time to focus on different aspects of their observation and teaching experiences, which are all considered to improve the validity of the research findings.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interview

To understand the overall experiences of the pre-service teachers at the end of their reflective writing processes supported with explicit guidance, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the voluntary participants between the tenth and twenty-third of January. In the choice of an interview type for the study purposes, a qualitative interview paradigm was adopted. Unlike the structured interview which reflects the phrases and the meaning-making of the researcher (Yin, 2011), the qualitative interview provides the participants with a context in which they could make sense of their experiences, cognitive processes, and lives with their own interpretations and understanding (Brenner, 2006). As the focus is to understand how

the PSTs make meaning out of their reflective writing experiences and cognitive processes in terms of writing critical reflections, a qualitative interview design seemed to serve best for the research question purposes.

Before the conduct of the interview, the researcher sent an invitation email to all the participants and informed them about the interview, and 13 participants out of 26 accepted to interview with the researcher. Considering the conditions because of the pandemic, the participants were provided with an option to choose face-to-face or online interviews based on their preferences, and all the participants desired to do an online interview. For this reason, all the interviews were conducted on Zoom, which is one of the video communication apps, and each interview lasted for about 20-30 minutes. Considering the features of the Zoom platform in which the voice and the video were recorded at the same time, the participants were informed about the situation in the consent forms and at the beginning of the interview, and their consent was taken to record the interview.

During the conduct of the semi-structured interview, the researcher asked some open-ended questions to enable participants to use their words and express their ideas openly without being restricted by the predefined phrases created by the researcher (Yin, 2011). In the interview questions, the focus was given to three main topics: the analysis of the change or difference in the reflective writing experiences of the PSTs in the course of guidance, the role of critical friends and the guidance on writing reflections, and lastly the participants' perspectives on their reflective thinking skills and criticality during their reflective writing experiences (see Appendix L). Considering the language preferences of the participants, all the interviews were conducted in their native language, and this enabled them to share their opinions and ideas without any language barrier. During the interview, the

researcher took a respondent validation on the interpretation of the participants' sentences to ensure the validity of the findings (Maxwell, 2013) and to prevent any misunderstanding in the data gathered from the interview.

3.6.3 Documents

During the conduct of the sessions, some documents were collected such as the short prompt that was given in the first session, the reflective tasks that were collected from the participants in each session, and the unstructured notes of the researcher about the sessions. All of these documents were used to guide the researcher to decide on the content of the sessions and design the explicit instruction and reflective tasks accordingly. In the first session, the researcher gave a short prompt consisting of two questions to understand the participants' challenges while writing reflections and to figure out the initial focus of the participants in writing reflections. In the course of the guidance provided in each session, the researcher conducted various reflective tasks that enabled participants to practice reflecting critically on their experiences. Moreover, after conducting each session, the researcher wrote some unstructured notes considering the content of the sessions and the missing components that she observed and needed to be improved in the following sessions. All the data gathered from these documents were not used for the investigation of the research questions; instead, they were used as supplementary data tools to monitor the development of the reflective thinking skills of the participants in the course of the study and to understand their reflective writing experiences during the conduct of the sessions.

3.7 Data analysis

In the study, a qualitative data analysis approach was employed to provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the research questions. Each data collection tool was analyzed meticulously considering the research question purposes and the analysis was conducted in accordance with the qualitative research steps. As advised by Creswell (2013), first of all, data management was sustained by organizing the observation report files into appropriate text segments for the analysis, and the participants were coded as P1, P2, P3, etc. Then, the data were read several times to get accustomed to the data findings and have a general understanding, and then the coding process is employed through identifying the recurring patterns in the data. Lastly, the identified codes were classified under the categories and themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data findings (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative data analysis procedure was employed for each data collection tool; however, different approaches and methods were conducted for the analysis of the observation reports and interviews considering the research question purposes.

For the analysis of the observation reports, two steps were followed for the first and second research questions separately. For the analysis of the first research question, which investigates the content of the observation reports, an inductive qualitative content analysis was employed. By employing this method, the researcher has explored the nature of the reports by analyzing the meaning of the text with an interpretive stance (Kuckartz, 2014). In the analysis, first of all, codes were assigned to the meaningful segments of the text, and then the recurring patterns were identified. Based on the recurring patterns, the codes were classified under the main categories and themes.

On the other hand, while analyzing the observation reports for the second research question, which is about the investigation of the PSTs' criticality in time, a content analysis was employed, and instead of creating codes from the data, the codes in a five-point reflection scale that is developed by Bain et al. (1999) was used to assess the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs. In the scale that is summarized in Table 3, there are five reflective levels that increase step by step in terms of criticality such as reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing.

According to the scale, reporting level demonstrates the least critical level whereas the reconstructing level represents the most critical stance in terms of the reflective thinking skills. The observation reports were read several times, and the codes in the model were assigned to the statements considering the characteristics attributed to each level in the reflective scale of Bain et al. (1999).

In the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, first of all, the audio data were transformed into a written text and all data were transcribed verbatim to have an organized data set. In the analysis of the interview, the researcher followed the qualitative content analysis steps in coding the data as suggested by Mackey and Gass (2012). Namely, the researcher went through the data and initial coding was assigned to the meaningful units at the beginning. Then the axial coding was conducted by looking for the patterns and comparing the identified codes across cases, and after this process, the selected codes were assigned to the rest of the data through selective coding, and necessary adjustments were conducted (Mackey & Gass, 2012). In the data analysis procedure, it is important to sustain validity in findings so that the data are analyzed properly, and the findings truly reflect the real situations that are investigated (Yin, 2011). For this reason, the utmost importance was given to the validity of the research findings through sustaining inter-rater

reliability. For this purpose, the findings were analyzed by two researchers, namely, the researcher herself, and an associate professor in the field.

Table 3. Five-Point Level of Reflection Scale

Level	Explanation
Reporting	The student describes or reports with minimal transformation, and without adding any insight or observation
Responding	The data with little transformation or conceptualization Making judgments or observation with no added inference or explanation, asking rhetorical questions with no answers Expressing feeling such as happiness, anxiety, etc.
Relating	Aspects of data that students make connection with their current or former experiences and have personal meaning Demonstrating a superficial understanding of relationships Identification of something that they are good at, need to improve, a mistake or something they learned Superficial explanation for why something has happened or identification of something that they plan or need to do or change
Reasoning	Integration of data into meaningful relationship with theoretical concepts or personal experience, with high level of transformation Demonstrating a deep understanding for why something has occurred Analyzing an event or experience, asking questions, providing answers, considering alternatives, making hypothesis about the reasons Explaining own or other behaviors or feelings with his/her insights, inferences personal experience, with an in-depth understanding The student analyzes the relationship between practice and theory in depth
Reconstructing	Demonstrating a high level of abstract thinking to generalize learning Drawing general conclusions from their experience, formulating general principles or a personal theory, or taking a position Internalizing the personal significance of learning or making plans for own further learning based on the reflections

Source: [Bain et al., 1999]

First of all, two researchers analyzed the data separately, and after the analysis of a particular set of data, they came together in a Zoom platform to compare their coding and identify the similarities and differences in coding. In the meeting, the discussion was held on the parts that demonstrate a variety in terms of

coding, and a consensus was achieved through engaging in a continuous discussion. As a result of this process, a high agreement was achieved in the identified patterns and codes in the data, and necessary adjustments were made.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Observation reports

In the current study, the observation reports of the participants were analyzed to provide an answer to the first and second research questions. The analysis was conducted separately for each research question focusing on a different aspect by employing different qualitative analysis methods. For the first research question, the nature of the observation reports was analyzed with the use of an inductive approach, and the content analysis was applied. On the other hand, for the second research question, the criticality of the participants in their observation reports was analyzed based on a five-point level of reflection scale that Bain et al. (1999) developed. In this section, to present the data findings clearly and neatly for the readers, the findings will be presented separately for the first and second research questions in order.

4.1.1 The nature of the observation reports

In the analysis of the observation reports for the first research question, which is about the investigation of the focus area and content of the observation reports, an inductive approach was adopted, and qualitative content analysis was employed. In the analysis, as the research purpose was to identify the focus area of the participants in their observation reports, the focus was given to the main area or content that was explored in each paper. For this purpose, each report was read several times and the topics that participants focused on in a particular observation report were identified and analyzed through memoing, coding, and lastly categorizing the recurring codes.

Focusing on the recurring themes in the observation reports, the data findings were classified into six main categories as the focus on teacher's instructional practices, the conduct of a lesson, classroom management, students, self, and the learning environment, and each category was also divided into various sub-categories as illustrated below.

- Focus on the teacher's instructional practices: teaching methods & skills, teacher's language use, teacher's instructional behavior, teacher's attitudes
- Focus on the conduct of a lesson: lesson flow & organization, teaching materials and tools, assessment
- Focus on classroom management: sustaining student participation & engagement, maintaining order
- Focus on students: language use, student characteristics and attitudes
- Focus on self: own teaching experience, own perspectives on teaching
- Focus on the learning environment: classroom and school characteristics, school policy

In total, 130 observation reports were analyzed, and it was found that there was more than one focus area in some of the observation reports. For these reports, the segments that were related to different focus areas were identified, and the sub-categories and categories were employed accordingly for each different segment in a particular observation report. As a result of the analysis of 130 observation reports, in total 198 entries that were classified under a different category were identified. To be able to explore and understand the main focus area(s) of the pre-service teachers in their observation reports, the number and frequency of each category and sub-category among these 198 entries were calculated as illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. The Content of the Observation Reports

Categories	n	% of all categories	Sub-categories	n	% of all Sub-categories
Focus on the teacher's instructional practices	58	29.2	Teaching methods and skills	20	10.1
			Teacher's instructional behavior	15	7.5
			Teacher's language use	12	6.06
			Teacher's attitudes	11	5.5
Focus on the conduct of a lesson	53	26.7	Lesson flow and organization	34	17.1
			Teaching materials and tools	14	7
			Assessment	5	2.5
Focus on classroom management	44	22.2	Maintaining order	33	16.6
			Sustaining student participation and engagement	11	5.5
Focus on students	16	8	Language use	11	5.5
			Student characteristics and attitudes	5	2.5
Focus on self	15	7.5	Own teaching experience	11	5.5
			Own perspectives on teaching	4	2
Focus on the learning environment	12	6	Classroom and school characteristics	6	3
			School policy	6	3
Total	198	100		198	100

Table 4 demonstrates that participants mostly reflected on the issues related to teachers' instructional practices, how the lesson is conducted, and classroom management. On the other hand, they gave less attention to the issues related to students, their teaching practices, and the learning environment. To be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to each category, this section will provide explanations for the particular topics that PSTs reflected on in their reports by providing examples in detail.

The findings obtained from the analysis demonstrate that 58 out of 198 entries focus on the issues related to the teacher's instructional practices. When compared to other categories, this shows that participants mostly focused on the teaching practices of their mentors and reflected on them in their reports. While reflecting on the teaching practices, they mainly focused on four different aspects of their mentor's instructional practices, namely, the teaching methods and skills, instructional behaviors, the language use, and the attitudes of their mentors in the lesson. As could be seen from Table 4, while reflecting on the instructional practices of the teachers, 20 entries out of 58 focused on the teaching methods and skills; 15 of them were about the teacher's instructional behaviors; 12 of them were related to the teacher's language use and whereas 11 of them focused on the teacher's attitudes, which all will be exemplified in detail.

From the Table 4, it could be seen that participants mostly paid attention to the teaching approaches and methodologies that were employed by their mentors, and they investigated how these approaches were applied in the classroom context. Moreover, they observed the way teachers teach grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills in their lessons. The example extracts provide a sample for such issues that were focused on in the reports:

> I do not think the teacher follows (preferably) a single methodology, but I think lessons proceed according to the "Task Based Language Learning" principles. I arrived to that conclusion since the teachers are following the tasks from the book . . . In addition to that, "communicative language teaching" principles also can be found. Teacher starts most of the activities with a discussion. (P17, Observation Report 1, Teaching Methodology)

> Since the grammar is handled separately the teacher uses an implicit technique. For example, he accepts answers that have grammatical mistakes if they are meaningful and coherent. The only place that the teaching becomes explicit is the vocabulary domain. The teacher pinpoints vocabulary items that are in the reading, gives examples and writes them in a word document . . . As apart from the vocabulary in the readings, the teacher tries to apply elicitation techniques. (P13, Observation Report 2, Teaching Vocabulary and Grammar)

Besides the focus on the teaching methods, some of the participants focused on the teaching skills of their mentors. They put an emphasis on the way teachers formulated questions to foster critical thinking skills of the students, how their mentors taught accordingly considering their students' needs, and how they used the board effectively in the classroom context as could be seen in some of the example extracts respectively:

> Moreover, as the students read the text the teacher constantly interrupts and asks them questions regarding the text. These questions include comprehension questions but mostly the questions that the teacher asks pushes students to think critically about the story. (P13, Observation Report 3, Asking Questions)

> There is also one specific kid who can not write at all . . . For this student, my mentor teacher told me to write what is to be written on the top of the page and ask him to copy what I have written . . . On the other hand, with third graders, we have some students who are above average and thus their needs are not met during regular class sessions. For them, my other mentor teacher says she prepares projects to challenge these students. (P11, Observation Report 4, Teaching Students with Special Needs)

> Another thing to mention here, T does not use the board. Something we learnt in FLED306, it is always necessary to write things on the board, either traditionally or digitally. Especially with young or teenager ss, it is important to repeat the correct forms of structures and write them on the board. They tend to lose interest and focus often. (P19, Observation Report 1, The Lack of Effective Use of Board)

On the other hand, some focused on the instructional behaviors of the teacher. In other words, they put an emphasis on the way the teacher gave feedback, what kind of feedback the teacher provided and how it affected the students. In addition, participants also analyzed the way the teacher gave instructions to the students, and how she/he corrected errors:

> First of all, my mentor teacher highly valued giving positive feedback to students, right after they give out the answers for an exercise, or simply talk about their personal beliefs and opinions on a topic. Almost every opinion is welcome in the classroom, which creates a safe space for students to talk about their ideas. (P9, Observation Report 1, Giving Feedback)

> As to the instructions I mentioned in the descriptive part . . . I learned a lot about giving instructions to young learners . . . I know that we should keep instructions as simple and precise as possible. However, I think we should be much more cautious when it comes to young learners because they might have trouble understanding basic notions such as "somebody around you". (P4, Observation Report, 2, Giving Instructions)

> However, when there is a constant error happening in the class, the teacher feels the need to explicitly correct those errors. He corrects the errors either by explaining the rules for the whole class, for example when students made mistakes in the past negation form, he took the time to explain all the rules explicitly once again, or shortly stating the rule. (P21, Observation Report 5, Error Correction)

Another aspect that participants focus on under the category of teacher's instructional practices is the teacher's language use and teacher attitudes in the classroom. Considering the language use of the teachers, participants analyze the contexts in which teachers use L1 and L2, what language they use for the instruction, and how they interchangeably use them for different purposes such as the use of L1 for classroom management or the use of L2 for vocabulary instruction:

> The instruction is mostly in English. The cooperating teacher encourages the students to talk in L2. However, sometimes the explanation of activities is in Turkish. Besides, when students do not know the meaning of a word, she uses both L1 and L2 . . . Likewise, we can see extensive use of L1 when explaining grammatical forms. (P10, Observation Report 2, The Use of Language for Different Purposes)

> She commanded the students to do the certain parts of the activity and explained the misunderstood parts in English. However, whenever she needed to warn the class or tell someone off, she tended to switch to Turkish, which is the L1 of all of the students in the class. (P8, Observation Report 4, The Use of Language for Different Purposes)

In terms of the teacher attitudes, participants reflect on the way teachers formed relationships with their students, and they analyzed how their attitudes affected the communication with their students. Besides the teacher's attitudes toward the students, the participants also investigated what kind of attitudes teachers demonstrated to teaching students from different departments and grades:

> S. Hoca has a negative attitude toward the class . . . that makes him overly hostile to even the smallest thing that the students do, and in turn, students think "S. Hoca will get angry and start scolding us again" which, I think, is the main reason why they show a negative attitude in return. (P15, Observation Report 2, Teacher's Attitude toward Students)

> To me, the questions were too easy. T told us this is because the class is MF and they do not need to learn English so well. I personally do not think that this should be the case. (P19, Observation Report 1, Teacher's Attitudes toward Teaching English)

Table 4 displays that 53 out of 198 entries focus on the issues related to the conduct of a lesson in the observation reports, which is about 26.7%. This means that participants gave their focus on how the lessons were conducted after their initial focus on the teachers. This makes the category related to the conduct of a lesson as the second mostly reflected topic in the observation reports. In the content analysis, it was found that while participants reflected on the lesson, they mainly focused on three different areas such as the lesson flow and organization, materials and tools used in the lesson, and lastly the assessment. Out of 53 entries related to the conduct of a lesson, 34 entries focused on the lesson flow and organization whereas 14 of them focused on the materials and five of them were about the way the assessment was conducted in the lesson. This shows that participants mostly paid attention to

how the lesson proceeded and how it was organized with the activities included in the lesson plan.

While reflecting on the lesson flow and organization, participants gave priority to mainly two focus areas: the overall lesson plan including the warm-up, pre-, main, and post-activity phases, and the instructional activities that were used in the lesson plan. With regard to the overall lesson structure, some participants described the flow of the lesson focusing on the warm-up, pre-, main and post-activity phases, and analyzed the transitions between the activities in these phases. On the other hand, some went into detail and gave their focus on mainly the activities used in the lesson flow and provided an analysis of their type, content, and sequence as could be demonstrated from the example extracts below:

> There should be order between tasks and activities as we present them to students . . . I think there should be some systematicity and connection between the tasks. I observed that there were barely pre-lecture and post activities. The teacher sometimes asked some warm-up questions; however, I realized that the students often were not ready for the main activities. We can not talk about the main activity at all because there were just textbook activities. When it comes to post-activities, there were barely post-activities. (P10, Observation Report 5, General Lesson Flow)

> The main activity type used in classes is individual activities. The teacher uses Portal to English book set and conducts her lectures with it . . . The second most used activity type in classes is group activities. Students make groups of four by turning their chairs backwards and usually are tasked with speaking with their group mates. (P24, Observation Report 2, Activity Types)

> When it comes to the links and transitions between the activities, most of the time it is like "Now, look at the next activity guys" or "Let's move on to the next activity." It sounds like a sharp transition, but students seem to be able to follow everything. (P26, Observation Report 2, Transition between Activities)

Besides focusing on the lesson flow and organization, some of the participants reflected on the teaching materials and tools that were used during the conduct of a lesson. While reflecting on these materials, they analyzed the type of the materials

and they provided explanations for how these materials were used, designed, and implemented in the classroom context as illustrated from the sample extracts below:

> The prep D class that I observe uses the intermediate level of the Oxford publications' English File book . . . The teacher opens the digital version of the book on the smartboard and the students follow the lesson from the book or board in front of them . . . The teacher also uses fun assessment tools such as Kahoot or Socrative, although not very often. (P26, Observation Report 3, The Use of Material)

> When I look into the booklets, I have observed that there are lots of various activities. Even though the difficulty level of the activities increases or decreases according to the grade, their types are similar to each other. There are matching activities, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and true or false questions, etc. in the booklets to measure students' grammar, vocabulary, and sometimes their listening skills. In addition to them, there are some writing activities. (P7, Observation Report 1, Material Content)

On the other hand, some participants reflected on the assessment that is employed during the conduct of a lesson. These participants generally investigated the content, design, and assessment tools that were conducted by their mentors in their practicum schools, and they also focused on how the students' language learning was assessed by their mentor teachers. The first sample extract below provides an example of how participants reflected on the content of the exams whereas the second one demonstrates an example for the papers dealing with the assessment processes and ways of evaluating students during the speaking exam:

> The exam consisted of three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and use of English. The vocabulary part consisted of fill-in-the blanks activity. Students are expected to comprehend the sentences and place the appropriate word accordingly. Words are chosen from a specific topic. They are the vocabulary items of music and musical instruments, and they are all covered in class time. (P9, Observation Report 2, Exam Content)

> While reading aloud, the teacher checks whether the student can recognize the high frequency words, their intonation, their pace, and reading fluency . . . Their performance is ranked from 1 (below basic) to 4 (advanced); however, these ranks are only used by the teacher as a reference. Each rank has an equivalent such as 1 equal to "has difficulty using well-structured sentences" when assessing the accuracy . . . I like this perspective because grading may lead to competition and this can interfere the main goal of learning. (P11, Observation Report 1, Assessment Procedure)

Following the focus on the conduct of a lesson, another highly reflected topic in the observation reports is classroom management. As Table 4 illustrates, 44 out of 198 entries focus on the issues related to classroom management, which is 22%. It makes this category as the third most highly reflected topic among the observation reports after the focus on the teachers and the lessons. Under this category, participants mostly provided explanations and analysis for two aspects related to classroom management: maintaining order and sustaining student participation and engagement. 33 out of 44 entries related to the classroom management category focus on the ways how teachers maintained order in the classroom whereas 11 of them dealt with the issue of the way teachers sustained participation among the students and engaged them in the classroom. With regard to maintaining order, the analysis of the observation reports revealed that participants generally focused on various characteristics of students such as the students with disruptive and competitive behaviors and with low attention spans, the behavioral change in the students' characteristics resulting from their age groups, and lastly the problems among the student groups. In relation to these behaviors, they analyzed the ways how teachers coped with such behaviors of the students and chaos in order to maintain order in the classroom context. Besides the strategies for classroom management, some participants also focus on the problems that teachers had related to classroom management. The extract taken from the observation reports of the participants below provide an example of the classroom management strategies on how the teachers maintained order by dealing with the disruptive behaviors of the students:

> Speaking only in English is one of the class rules and every student should follow this rule during English classes. C is the only kid who acts against this rule and he does this at a level that he disturbs his friends and cause them to act against this rule just like himself . . . The lead teacher left the class to her partner teacher and took this kid, saying that they will go to the garden

> together . . . They came back to the classroom and said they signed a contract assuring that he will not speak Turkish in the classes again. The teacher explained this to the whole class and asked his affirmation. He confirmed this in front of the whole class, which is a vital point as I believe by making this she makes him to promise to the whole class that he will not do this behavior again. (P11, Observation Report 2, Dealing with Disruptive Behavior)

In addition to the participants' focus on the ways of maintaining order in the classroom, some of the participants paid attention to the ways their mentors could sustain equal participation in the classroom between the talkative and quiet students in order to give each student an equal chance to participate in the class. In addition, they analyzed the ways that teachers tried to make students with different proficiency levels and needs participate in the class and engage in the learning processes. The first example extract demonstrates how the teacher sustained equal participation among students and helped them engage in the lesson whereas the second one provided an example of the way teachers helped students with different needs engage and participate in the lesson:

> The teacher tried to engage students, who were not focusing on the lesson and sitting away from the board, with some questions but other students answered the question even though it was not directed to them. At that point the teacher shouted: "I did not ask anybody but Berke!". The teacher had a list of participation . . . The teacher was quite careful. For example, one of the students raised her hand only once for 2 hours and when s/he raised his/her hand, the teacher directly got closer as she knew that the student was shy. She did not push the student to speak louder but came closer to the student and listened the answer carefully, which encouraged the student to participate. (P22, Observation Report 1, Sustaining Participation and Engagement)

> For instance, some students, whom I will refer to as high-achievers, can speak very fluently, and they finish every assignment quickly, before their classmates . . . Whilst there are other students who don't speak willingly, whom I will refer to as low-achievers, they only try speaking when the teacher poses questions to them . . . My cooperating teacher doesn't ignore them, she always tries to give voice to them . . . However, when there is a question about the reading text, the teacher prefers others to answer in order to make them participate in the lesson. (P3, Observation Report 5, Sustaining Equal Participation)

In addition to the papers dealing with the issues related to classroom management, although it is not seen as frequently as the other categories, the data findings revealed that 16 out of 198 entries focused on the issues related to students as illustrated in Table 4, which means that 8% of the observation reports focused on this issue. Considering the papers focusing on the students, it was found that participants focused on two aspects about the students: their language use, and their attitudes and characteristics. While participants directed their attention to the students, 11 out of 16 entries focused on the language use of the students whereas five of them focused on the student attitudes. While reflecting on the language use of the students, it was discovered that participants paid attention to the contexts in which students used L1 and L2, the language characteristics of the students in terms of their proficiency levels, use of grammar in their speech, their pronunciation, and the language mistakes, and the code-switching patterns while they are using L2. In this sense, the first example extract provides an example for the papers focusing on the students' tendency to use L1 and L2 in different contexts during the lesson whereas the following example extracts demonstrate an example of the language characteristics of the students in terms of the way they use L2, typos, their grammar and pronunciation features in their speech and code-switching:

> As far as I have observed, students were using the target language while they were discussing or doing the activity. Nevertheless, when they are done with the activity and had spare time while waiting for others to finish, they start talking in Turkish about irrelevant topics . . . However, the situation is not like this with the 11th graders. They are only use English while they are responding to a question (from an activity) or when the teacher asks them to do so. (P17, Observation Report 3, L1 & L2 Use in Different Contexts)

> Students' pronunciation and grammar knowledge are generally good. They are taking grammar classes in their main course which helps them form better sentences using their grammar knowledge in skills classes. They are also improving their pronunciation through reading and vocabulary studies. (P2, Observation Report 5, Language Characteristics)

> They transfer from their L1 basically for two reasons: either they don't know the word in English . . . or sometimes they can't remember the language equivalents even if they normally know these words by heart . . . when they don't know how to write a word that they use on a daily basis while speaking, they usually prefer writing it as they hear. For example, I remember one student writing "*ther*" instead of "*there*" probably due to the fact that we don't pronounce the final "*e*". (P3, Observation Report 4, Code-switching & Typos)

Another aspect that participants reflect on in terms of the observation of the students in their practicum classrooms is the attitudes of the students towards various issues. While reflecting on these issues, participants paid attention to the students' attitudes towards the English lessons and learning English in terms of how they perceived the language learning in their life. In addition to that, they observed and reflected on the students' characteristics during the conduct of the lessons. In this sense, the first and second example extracts below exemplify the issues related to the students' attitudes toward English lessons whereas the others focus on the students' characteristics during the conduct of the lesson and group work:

> Whenever I observed a MF classroom and asked students if they like the English lessons they always told me that they do not 'care' about it . . . They supported their idea by saying that in this education system, it is impossible for them to see this course as a language teaching course. They say that the books, or the teachers teach them nothing. (P19, Observation Report 5, Attitudes towards English Lessons)

> 6 graders are going through their puberty era where youngsters usually do not want to study for exams. The reason for this is in puberty, students feel that their importance, value, and efforts are decided by their scores. This demotivates them to study for the classes and the exams because they do not want their value and effort to be decided based on an exam. (P5, Observation Report 2, Student Characteristics)

In addition to their focus on the students, participants also reflect on themselves in their observation reports. In other words, data finding shows that 15 out of 198 entries focus on the issues related to the participants themselves, which means that 7.5%. While focusing on the self, it is found that participants focus on two aspects regarding themselves: their teaching experience and their perspectives on teaching in

general. 11 out of 15 entries focused on the participants' teaching experiences whereas four of them focused on their perspectives on teaching. While reflecting on their teaching experiences, they mostly reflected on the challenges that they experienced, their teaching skills, strategies, and their use of language. In this sense, regarding the challenges and their teaching strategies, they generally focused on their time and classroom management problems and the strategies that they used to overcome these problems during their teaching experience. In addition to that, they also provided explanations for the teaching aspects that they learned as a result of their practicum teaching experience as could be seen in the example extracts below:

> First of all, I had issues regarding time management in both of the lessons. In the first one, I suspected the materials I've prepared might be a little ahead of the students' levels so, I gave more time to the main activity in my lesson plan . . . However, what happened was the students have done their activities much faster than what I anticipated, and my lesson plan was over while there was around 6 minutes until end of the lesson . . . The thing I've got from this is to always have a bonus activity, just in case. (P1, Observation Report 4, Time Management Issues and Strategies)

> It made me nervous to feel that the students didn't care about my lesson enough but that should be expected given that the students are tired, and they might not want to deal with a trainee teacher on the 8th hour of the school. How I tried to deal with this situation was walking around the class while teaching. I also tried to keep a high volume. I increased my volume when I felt like they were not following me but not in a threating way. (P1, Observation Report 4, Classroom Management Issues and Strategies)

In addition to their own teaching experiences, it is found that in some observation reports, participants provided their own thoughts and perspectives on four different topics considering their own observation experiences in their practicum schools, the teaching as a profession, teaching during the covid-19, their teaching observation of their peers, and the parent's involvement in the learning process. These categories were only found once and they did not recur in the other observation reports. With regard to their thoughts on such issues as could be seen from the example extracts below, P1 provided his/her thoughts about being a teacher considering his/her

observation experiences and the challenges of being a teacher. On the other hand, P23 dealt with the issues related to teaching during the covid-19 period focusing on the participants' experiences in his/her practicum context. P11 analyzed the consequences of the parent's involvement in the learning process by providing examples from his/her observation in the practicum context, whereas P20 dealt with the analysis of peer observation of a teacher in terms of the lesson plan and classroom management. All these issues dealt with in the observation reports are provided in the sample extracts below:

> I can finally say that being a teacher is not an easy job. Not that I thought it was an easy job before, but I have never realized it was a demanding profession to this degree. I think the reason for this comes from the fact that being a teacher is a massive responsibility. Not only to the students, but also to the society. Additionally, it is also a thankless job, in a sense. (P1, Observation Report 5, Teaching as a Profession)

> The class time has been reduced from 40 minutes to 30 minutes. This of course has brought along a lot of unfavorable consequences. The first is of course the fact that it has become harder to do time management . . . One other measurement is of course the masks we wear. But the masks cause extra hardship to the teacher. (P23, Observation Report 5, Teaching during covid-19)

> It was a well-organized lesson plan. She was very self-confident and she managed to finish the tasks on time. I was sitting at one of the back seats in the classroom during her macro-teaching . . . This situation affects the classroom management very negatively of course. (P20, Observation Report 5, Peer Observation)

> Based on everything I have observed with this kid, her parents, and her family context, I have concluded that whatever the children are exposed to and see from the home, they reflect on them during their everyday life like in the classroom, and all these affect how they cope with anything in the classroom such as a conflict with a peer or dealing with failure in a given task. (P11, Observation report 5, Parent's Involvement in Learning Process)

In addition to the focus areas stated above, data findings demonstrate that the least reflected issue in the observation reports was the context where participants conducted their practicum experience. Table 4 illustrates that 12 out of 198 entries are related to the issues about the learning environment, which is about 6%. This

makes the category the least reflected topic among the observation reports. While reflecting on the learning environment, it was discovered that participants observed two aspects related to the learning context: classroom and school characteristics and the school policy. With regard to the school and classroom context, participants provided explanations for classroom context such as the number of the students, the seating arrangement, and its effect on the learning. Moreover, they also considered the school context and tried to figure out the factors affecting the learning processes of the students in the school context, and the school characteristics in terms of its status among other schools and its effect on the students' learning processes:

> A classroom is used by multiple groups . . . Along with that, the classrooms are small. Each group has around 35- 36 students. There were almost no empty seats in any of the classes I've seen. The students are seated in couples. In each classroom, there's a whiteboard, a blackboard and a smartboard, two pin boards and some coat hangers. (P23, Observation Report 1, Physical Characteristics of a Classroom)

> In 2-A class, students have tiny desks and seats. The teachers heavily support that student sit together either as pairs, or as a 4-student group. In this arrangement, students are addressed as group 1, 2 etc. Therefore, this seating arrangement shows us that teachers want to create a sense of belonging in the class as a group. (P5, Observation Report 4, The Relationship between Seating Arrangement and Learning)

> When dealing with highly crowded classrooms, such as the classrooms in the public high schools, it is impossible to not observe the problems regarding attention and focus . . . There could always be a situation that's happening in the school garden or in the hallways. For example . . . there was a big fight between 11th and 12th grade students. Even the police were involved. (P1, Observation Report 2, Factors Affecting Learning in School Context)

Another aspect that participants focused on while reflecting on the learning context is the issues related to school policy. With regard to the school policy, participants analyzed the policies that were adopted in their practicum school about the content and procedure of a language program and how it was employed in the lessons. Furthermore, while taking into consideration the school policy, they particularly analyzed the school regulations on giving feedback and the use of L1in the classroom

context, and they provided an analysis of how these policies affected the learning environment and students in the classroom context:

> One of the first and most shocking things for me was that all levels of English classes are actually divided into two as language arts and language skills. Dividing the classes into two is very rational since English doesn't only consist of speaking or grammar. (P3, Observation Report 1, The Organization of English Classes)

> The other dimension is the use of classroom feedback to correct misbehavior of specific students. I wanted to focus on this aspect as I find it interesting that this school forbids teachers to give individual feedback for students who misbehave as the school board considers this method as labeling students . . . When I talked to the teacher who has just been recruited this school, she said she disagrees with this method as she finds this method punishes those students who behaves properly. (P11, Observation Report 3, School Policy on Giving Feedback)

4.1.2 The criticality of the observation reports

In addition to the analysis of the observation reports in terms of their content, the reports were also analyzed to provide an explanation for the second research question, which investigates the development of criticality in PSTs' reflections in time. For this purpose, the observation reports were read several times and analyzed qualitatively based on the five-point level of the reflection scale which was developed by Bain et al. (1999). According to this model, there are five scales consisting of the levels such as reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing, and these levels increase in terms of criticality as one proceeds towards the last levels. In other words, whereas the reporting is considered the least critical level in which participants merely describe their experiences without any added insight, reconstructing is considered the highest reflective scale in which participants demonstrate high levels of reflective thinking skills.

In total, 130 observation reports that were gathered from 26 participants over the course of the study were analyzed qualitatively and the codes were assigned to

the statements based on the level that participants demonstrate in their observation reports. To provide a clear and neat understanding for the research purposes, the analysis was conducted focusing on two aspects. First of all, it was aimed to find out the overall distribution of each level in the study to have an overall picture of the level(s) that pre-service mostly reflect on in their observation reports each week. Secondly, the development of each level over the course of five different weeks was analyzed separately to be able to understand at which levels participants develop their reflective thinking in time, which will be explained in the findings section in order.

4.1.2.1 The overall distribution of the levels

In the analysis of the observation reports to identify the criticality of the PSTs in the course of their reflective writing experiences, the focus was given to the analysis of the participants' overall reflective thinking skills and the distribution of the reflective levels in the participants' observation reports over five weeks. For this purpose, the identified levels for each week were counted, and the frequency rate of each level was calculated to demonstrate both an overall picture of the levels and the distribution of the reflective levels that were employed by the participants over five weeks as illustrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5 demonstrates both the overall picture and the distribution of each level based on the five different observation reports that were written in five different weeks by each participant over the course of the study, which means 130 papers in total. In the table, the numbers in the first column refer to the observation reports that were written biweekly by all the participants, and the following columns indicate the

frequency of the reflective levels such as reporting (RP), responding (RS), relating (RL), reasoning (RO), and reconstructing (RC) respectively.

Table 5. The Overall Distribution of the Levels

Reports	RP	%	RS	%	RL	%	RO	%	RC	%
1	101	7.06	123	8.6	66	4.61	11	0.76	1	0.06
2	76	5.31	118	8.25	80	5.59	20	1.39	5	0.34
3	88	6.15	102	7.13	99	6.92	16	1.11	4	0.27
4	62	4.33	102	7.13	75	5.24	20	1.39	6	0.41
5	57	3.98	103	7.2	70	4.89	19	1.32	6	0.41
Total	384	26.83	548	38.31	390	27.25	86	5.97	22	1.49

When the observation reports were analyzed for each week, it could be seen that the level that was mostly reflected in each report demonstrated varieties; however, it could be seen that there are some similarities and differences in terms of the level that was the most focused and employed in each week by the participants. In other words, the responding level in each week has the highest percentage compared to other levels whereas the reconstructing level is the least employed.

Starting with the first observation reports of the participants, it could be seen that participants mostly reflected on the responding level, which is 8.6%, and following this, they reflect on the reporting level (7.06%), relating level (4.61%) and reasoning level (0.76%). The eye-catching finding in the first observation reports of the participants is that almost no reconstructing level is identified among the first observation reports of the participants, which means that participants do not demonstrate a high level of criticality or any abstract thinking in their first reflection reports.

When it comes to the second observation reports of the participants, it could be seen that participants' statements are mostly at the responding level, which is 8.25%, similar to the first observation reports. However, it could be seen that different from the first observation reports, the second mostly reflected level is relating (5.59%) although there is a minor difference between the relating and reporting level (5.31%), which demonstrates that there is a slight change in the focus of the levels in the observation reports in terms of the criticality. Similar to the first week, it could be seen that the reasoning (1.39%) and reconstructing (0.34%) levels are the least reflected levels in the reports, which indicates that PSTs focus on their observations and judgments whereas they do not provide enough in-depth analysis of their experiences with a critical stance in their second observation reports.

Considering the findings of the third week, it could be seen that the responding level is the most employed level similar to the reports written in the previous weeks, which is 7.13%. This is followed by the relating level (6.92%) and reporting level (6.15%) at almost equal distributions in terms of the frequency. Similar to the previous weeks, the reasoning (1.11%) and reconstructing (0.27%) levels demonstrate that the focus of the reports in the third week is still at the responding level whereas the least reflected level is reasoning and reconstructing.

Concerning the fourth observation report of the participants, it is observed that while reflecting on their experiences, participants mostly make judgments on their experiences at the responding level, which is 7.13% whereas the reasoning (1.39%) and reconstructing (0.41%) are identified as the least employed levels in the fourth observation reports. The eye-catching finding regarding this week is that although there is not a change in the focus of the levels, it could be seen that there are some changes in the relating (5.24%) and reporting (4.33%) levels in terms of the

difference between them. Although their focus is still on making judgments without providing further explanations or analysis, participants start to provide superficial explanations for their experiences instead of providing a mere description.

Lastly, the data findings of the fifth observation reports indicate the same focus in terms of the most and least employed levels in the findings. In other words, whereas the responding level (7.2%) is the most employed, reasoning (1.32%) and reconstructing (0.41%) levels are the least employed levels in the observation reports. Similar to the fourth week's findings, participants mostly reflect on their experiences at the relating (4.89%) and reporting (3.98%) levels after the mostly reflected responding level. Considering the detailed analysis of each week based on the distribution of the levels, it could be observed that in all of the observation reports, participants mostly focus on the responding level, which is 38.31% overall whereas the least employed level is the reconstructing level (1.49%) as could be seen in Figure 1 below.

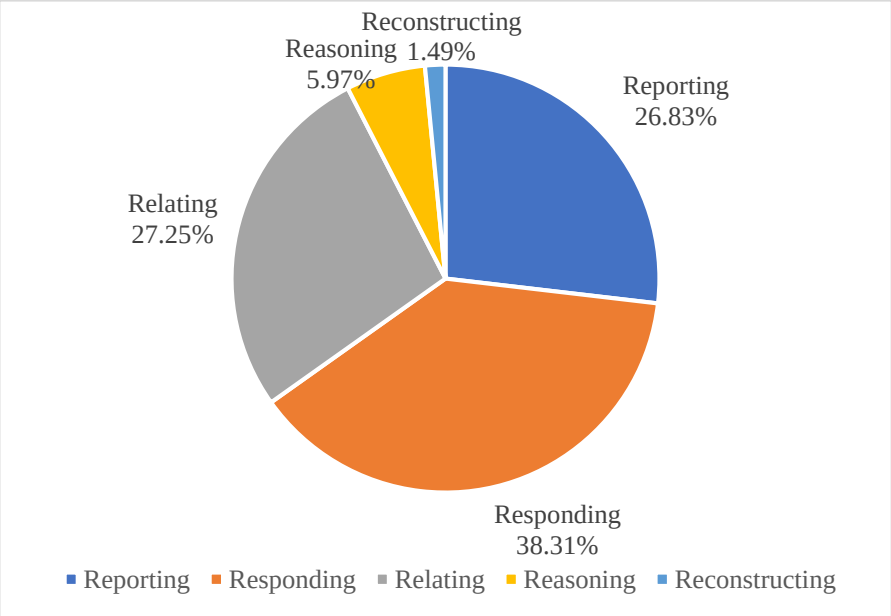

Figure 1. The overall distribution of the levels

When the highly employed level is considered in Figure 1, it could be stated that instead of providing a mere description of their experiences in their reports, which is related to the reporting level, participants mostly try to make observations and judgments on their experiences, and ask rhetorical questions without any further explanation or an in-depth analysis in their reports, which refers to the responding level based on the scale (Bain et al., 1999). However, it could be seen that when compared to the other levels in general, participants do not employ reconstructing level as much as they do the other levels; thus, it could be said that they do not provide high levels of abstract thinking for their experiences or draws a personal theory and conclusion from their experiences in their observation reports as much as they provide explanations by employing other levels in their reports.

Another eye-catching point that could be mentioned about the overall distribution of the levels is that although the participants' criticality focus is on the responding level over the five weeks, it could be seen that there is a change in the second most employed level after the first week. In other words, it is indicated in Table 5 that the focus is on the responding, reporting, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing levels successively based on their frequencies in the first observation reports; however, it could be observed that the second most employed level has changed after the first week and it becomes the relating level in the following weeks. This means that after the first week in which participants get guidance on writing critical reflections in the sessions, participants start to provide superficial explanations for their experiences, connect their experiences with personal meaning, demonstrate their understanding of their experiences, and identify the things that need to change or they plan to do, which all are related to the relating level based on the reflection scale (Bain et al.,1999). For this reason, considering the distribution of

levels, it could be seen that although the relating and reporting level is employed at almost the same frequency as illustrated in Figure 1, the pie chart indicates that relating (27.25%) and reporting (26.83%) levels are the second most employed levels at almost same frequencies in the observation reports of the participants, and it is followed by the reasoning level (5.97%). This means that although participants mostly provide superficial explanations for their experiences at relating level or mere descriptions at reporting level in their reports, it seems that they are not able to provide detailed explanations, connect their experiences with theoretical conceptualizations, or consider alternatives for their experiences, which is related to the reasoning level based on the reflection scale (Bain et al., 1999).

4.1.2.2 The criticality of observation reports in time

Considering the data findings in the previous section, the analysis regarding the overall distribution of the levels in the observation reports reveals that participants reflect on their experiences at the responding level the most whereas the reconstructing level is the least employed level among the participants. Although the main focus of the papers demonstrates similarities in terms of the most and the least employed levels in each week, Table 5 illustrates that there are also some differences in terms of the frequency of the same level for five different weeks. To exemplify, whereas the reporting level is found to be 7% in the first observation reports, it could be seen that the reporting level is employed at 3% in the fifth observation reports, which demonstrates an overall decrease in this level over the course of the study. At this point, the analysis of the overall distribution of the levels provides a general picture for the readers in terms of the PSTs' criticality; however, considering such changes in Table 5, it is thought to be essential to analyze separately the change of

each level throughout the study to provide an in-depth understanding for the research question and purposes. In other words, the analysis of each level over five weeks could provide an understanding of the development of the PSTs' criticality in time and the changes that occur in the course of the guidance. For this purpose, the number of each level was counted and calculated for each week, then to be able to demonstrate a neat picture, the distribution of each level was integrated into a column chart as could be seen in Figure 2 below.

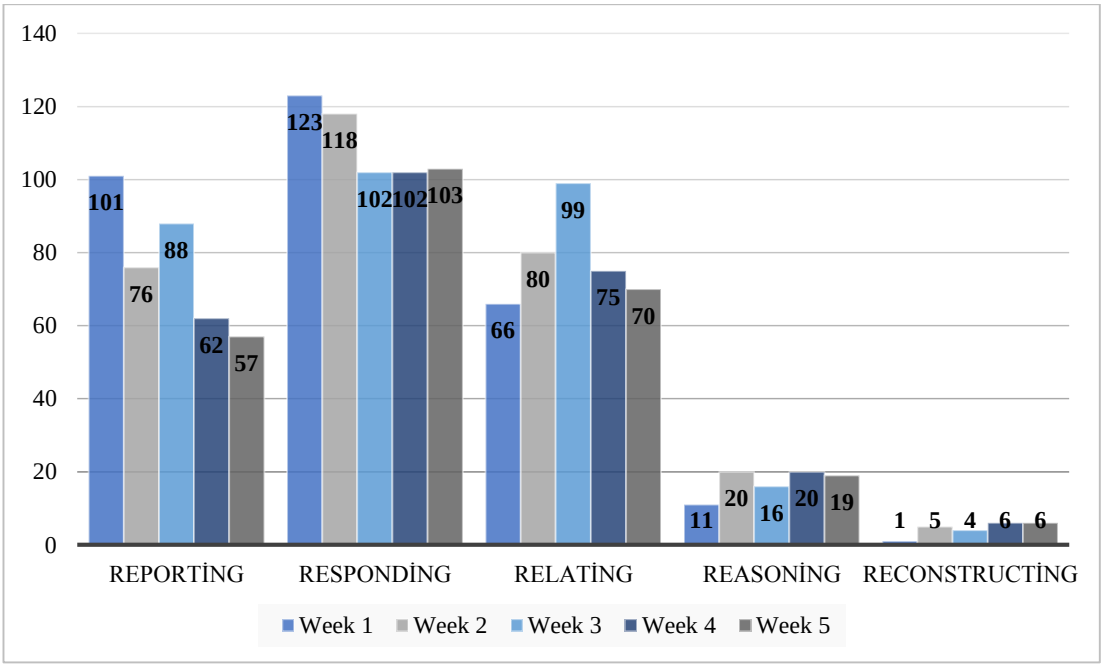

Figure 2. The distribution of each level in time

When the Figure 2 is analyzed, it could be seen that it illustrates the distribution of each reflection level based on the five observation reports that were written in five different weeks over the course of the study. In this section, first of all, each level will be explained in detail considering the changes taking place in Figure 2 and providing example extracts, then the change of each level will be compared with other levels to draw a conclusion about the changes in the criticality of the PSTs.

In the previous section, it was demonstrated that reporting was the thirdly most reflected level in the overall observation reports, which is 26.83% after the relating level (27.25%) with a slight change. According to the five-point reflection scale (Bain et al., 1999), reporting level refers to the statements that cannot go beyond the descriptive writing. In other words, while engaging in reflective practices, if the participants are reflecting at the reporting level, it means that they merely provide description of the events or actions without presenting any observation or insight for their thoughts or experiences. Considering the distribution of the reporting level over the five observation reports written in different weeks, although the frequency demonstrates varieties, it seems that participants give descriptions in all of their reports, and these are some example statements that are taken from different weeks:

> After they complete reading and listening, they do some activities based on the story, such as discussing some parts of it in the classroom or doing creative writing. (P2, Observation Report 1, Reporting)

> After they thought about their break, the teacher explained that she would throw a ball to a student to start the activity, that student would have three minutes to talk and after that, he was supposed to throw the ball to another student in order for him to share his ideas. (P3, Observation Report 2, Reporting)

> Furthermore, the teachers make them do some activities on Quizlet. The students answer the questions on their tablets while seeing their progress on the board. (P7, Observation Report 4, Reporting)

> The teacher makes announcement at the beginning of the class. She explains how the lesson is planned, what they are going to do respectively, and which topic they will cover. (P9, Observation Report 5, Reporting)

As could be seen from the example extracts, while reflecting on their experiences at the reporting level, they do not demonstrate any reflective feature, instead, they describe what they see in the classroom or school context and provide descriptions of the teachers and students' behavior. When the statements that are reflected at the

reporting level are taken into consideration in the Figure 2, it could be observed that participants reflected on their experiences at the reporting level the most in their first observation reports. In their second observation reports, there is an eye-catching decrease in the reporting level of the participants. Although the participants seem to reflect on their experiences at the reporting level more in the third week, Figure 2 demonstrates that in the fourth and fifth observation reports, the statements reflected at the reporting level are on the decrease. Thus, the data findings in Figure 2 indicate that after the first and second guidance sessions, which were both conducted after participants wrote their first reports, participants started to give less focus on the mere description of the events taking place in the classroom. On the other hand, in the third week, there seems to be an increase in the reporting level of the participants although the third guidance session was conducted before participants wrote their third observation reports. However, considering the frequency of the level, it does not seem to be a high difference in the second and third observation reports. When it comes to the fourth and fifth observation reports, it could be seen that there is a gradual decrease in the statements reflected at the reporting level. This means that participants started to reflect on their experiences at the reporting level less after the feedback provided to the participants after they wrote their third observation reports. When the frequency of the reporting level is considered over the weeks, it could be seen that towards the fifth observation report, participants' tendency to provide a mere description in their reports decreased gradually, and they preferred to explain and reflect on their experiences by starting to employ other levels such as the responding or relating levels as could be seen in Figure 2.

When it comes to the responding level, this is the most employed level in the observation reports of the participants with a frequency of 38% in the overall

distribution. According to the reflection scale model (Bain et al., 1999), if participants reflect on their experiences at the responding level, it means that they are inclined to provide their observations and judgments without giving any explanation, reasons or an in-depth analysis for their thoughts. In addition to that, at the responding level, participants could also ask some rhetorical questions about their experiences without demonstrating any tendency to find an answer for their questions or they could simply report the feelings that they experienced in their observations or teaching practices. The examples exemplify the statements at the responding level below:

> She chose people from the class list to make it possible for the students who do not participate too much or distracted from the lesson to get back the class. This is also an effective way of gaining the attention of the students. (P9, Observation Report 5, Responding)
>
> The instructions that the teacher gives are clear and easy to follow. They are parallel with the students' levels of English. She asks questions that do not challenge students. (P10, Observation Report 2, Responding)
>
> The classroom was too hot and even I had a hard time staying awake. Even if the teacher warned the students about it from time to time, both the teacher and the students looked too tired to speak in English or study English. (P12, Observation Report 4, Responding)
>
> Experiencing these situations, I felt confused at first. (P6, Observation Report 3, Responding)
>
> Overall, this was my experience, and I am very pleased by it even though I have still quite a long way to go. (P12, Observation Report 2, Responding)

As could be seen in the example statements, P9 and P10 make judgments about the strategy of the teacher and the instructions respectively; however, they do not provide any justification for their thoughts. On the other hand, P12 make observations about the classroom context and the feelings of the students whereas P6 and P12 merely explain their feelings.

Considering the distribution of the responding level in Figure 2, it could be seen that there is not much change in the statements at the responding level over the weeks. However, one striking thing about the distribution of the responding level is that although participants mostly reflect on their experiences at the responding level in their first observation reports, there is a decrease in the statements reflected at the responding level in the second observation reports and also the third observation reports that were written after the guidance sessions. When the other reports are considered, it could be observed that the statements reflected at the responding level stays in the same frequency in the following weeks. Considering the fact that the responding level is the most employed level in the first observation reports, it could be said that participants are beyond the reporting level in their first observation reports, which means that they could provide some observation and judgments regarding their experiences although they could not provide explanations for their ideas which requires a more critical stance. However, considering the reporting and responding level based on the scale (Bain et al., 1999), they are not so different levels in terms of the reflective features; thus, it could be stated that the participants are still in the descriptive stages in their first observation reports. On the other hand, the decrease of the responding level in the second and third observation reports demonstrates that participants start to provide explanations for their experiences considering the high increase in the relating level in the third observation reports as illustrated in Figure 2.

With regard to the third reflective scale which is the relating level, it is the second most employed level in the overall distribution. According to the model (Bain et al., 1999), when participants reflect at the relating level, they demonstrate certain thinking characteristics in their reports. For instance, they try to provide personal

meaning or superficial explanations for why something has occurred in their experiences, and they try to relate their reflection topics with their current or previous experience (Bain et al., 1999). In addition to that, considering their observation or teaching experiences, they try to identify something that have learned from their experiences or something that need to be improved, changed or plan to do. The example extracts below provides a sample for the statements reflected at the relating level over the five weeks:

> In the group activities, the students around the same table work together. This tells us that teachers approach language learning as a very hands-on and interactive process. Students work together in activities as a class as well. Therefore, a sense of belonging is supported heavily. (P21, Observation Report 3, Relating)

> If I were the teacher, I would use more English in my lectures. I would emphasize the importance of English and do creative activities that encourage them to speak. (P10, Observation Report 2, Relating)

> To be more precise, materials and sources should be more meticulously selected in this case, because if the students do not feel 'challenged' enough or consider the activities, exercises, or topic as 'piece of a cake', they might lose their interest or to some extent disregard the lesson itself. That was not the exact case that I encountered during my observation. (P16, Observation Report 1, Relating)

> For example, a warm-up activity where the main goal is to activate prior knowledge or background information on the part of students clearly attracts students, because they have a sense of confidence that enables them to share what they have already known regarding the topic. (P16, Observation Report 3, Relating)

Considering the example statements reflected at the relating level, it could be seen that P21 provides a personal meaning considering the seating arrangement in the classroom whereas P10 identifies something that need to change and that she/he would do. On the other hand, P16 provides a superficial explanation for the experience and connects a superficial relationship in his/her reports.

Considering the distribution of the relating level over the weeks, it could be seen that participants try to provide superficial explanations for their experiences or

relate their experiences to themselves the most in their third observation reports. It could be seen that although the relating level is the least in the first observation reports, it demonstrates an increase after the first week. This means that during the course of the guidance that was provided after the first observation reports, participants start to provide some explanations for their experiences and observations, which demonstrates that they start to move beyond the descriptive statements in their observation reports. Although there is some increase until the fourth week, Figure 2 demonstrates that after the third week, there is some decrease in the statements reported at the relating level. It means that when all the sessions are conducted and ended, participants start to reflect at the relating level less. When the frequency distribution of the other levels in the fourth week is analyzed, it could be said that participants either provide judgments for their observations focusing on the responding level or they provide in-depth understanding and reasons for their experiences at the reasoning level considering the increase in the reasoning level in the fourth observation reports.

With regard to the reflection scale (Bain et al., 1999), the reasoning is the fourth level in terms of the criticality, and in the current study, it is found that the reasoning level is 6% in the overall distribution of the levels over the weeks, which makes it one of the least employed levels in the observation reports. Considering the overall distribution, it could be said that participants do not provide an in-depth understanding or explanations for their experiences all the time. Although the situation seems like this in the overall distribution, Figure 2 illustrates that there are some increases in the reasoning level starting from the first observation reports. In other words, it is found that the frequency of the statements reflected at the reasoning level is the least in the first observation reports. This means that compared to other

levels in the first week, participants do not analyze their experiences by considering alternative explanations and reasons or demonstrate a deep understanding of their experiences as much as they reflect on their experiences at other levels in the first observation reports. This means that they were not able to demonstrate higher reflective thinking skills in their first reports. Although participants do not demonstrate a high level of thinking in the first week, one striking thing is that there is some increase in the second week in which participants wrote their reports after the guidance sessions. When the first and the second reports are compared, it could be said that participants started to provide in-depth explanations and reasons for their experiences in their reports more after the first and second guidance sessions were conducted. However, it could be seen that there is some decrease in the reasoning level in the third week; however, it increases again in the fourth week and stays almost at the same frequency in the fifth week. Although there is a minor decrease in the third week, considering the distribution of the level after the first week, it could be seen that after the first observation reports, participants start to demonstrate high order reflective thinking features in their observation reports more, and it stays almost at the same frequency in the following weeks. Considering the increase in the high order reflective features in the participants' statements after the first week, it is seen that they try to connect their experiences with the theoretical concepts and demonstrate an in-depth analysis of their experiences by providing different perspectives, thinking about the incident within a wider context, or asking questions about it and trying to find out answers for these questions in their observation reports more. These are some of the example statements reflected at the reasoning level and that demonstrate high-order reflective features:

> Thinking about the why part, I realized that the high school students are in their adolescence and they're currently looking for an identity each and every

> second and, in my opinion, the sociocultural setting wherein they live does not allow them to find the best version of themselves. (P23, Observation Report 3, Reasoning)
>
> When I consider this incident within a wider social context, I immediately think that this happened owing to the changes the students are going through. Since they were almost teenagers, sometimes it might be difficult to handle and control them. I remember some of my friends' adolescences that being rebellious or not listening to anyone or basically making someone angry at them were considered cool. Furthermore, sometimes they found making someone angry funny. Also, a student might act unusual in order to make people pay attention to himself more. I think all of them sometimes might be about the effects of adolescence. I consider this incident may have happened because of the stages that students were going through owing to the fact that adolescence is something very rough and sometimes predicting how a teenager will act might be impossible. (P3, Observation Report 3, Reasoning)
>
> Problems with grammar naturally occurs in a public-school setting in which the resources are limited. This situation can be explained by the crowded classrooms. Due to this reason, students can not have adequate time to practice, Also the teacher needs to use the time wisely in order to catching up with the MEB curriculum. Therefore, there is no sufficient time to focus on every student's grammatical mistakes. Due to these reasons students are doing grammatical mistakes. (P17, Observation Report 3, Reasoning)
>
> Overall, I am against stigmatizing the use of L1 just to create a more "professional" look that would impress parents. I believe that the school administration should choose what is pedagogically valuable rather than ostentatious. There is a growing literature that shows practices such as translanguaging can add more value to the language classroom, and if used correctly, can facilitate language learning instead of hindering it. (Wei, L., 2018) (P4, Observation Report 5, Reasoning)

As could be seen from the example extracts, P23 provides explanations for the reasons why the students demonstrate disruptive behaviors in her practicum school context by considering the incident within a wider context. P3 also analyzes his/her experience considering the development of the students' age group and provides alternative explanations for the reason for the disruptive behavior of a particular student. Likewise, P17 analyzes the problems related to the grammar of the students and provides alternative explanations for the reasons, and lastly, P4 tries to explain his/her beliefs about the prohibition of L1 in the school context and justify his/her thoughts with the theoretical conceptualization.

In addition to the reasoning level, another level that is categorized as a higher reflective thinking level is the reconstructing level based on the scale (Bain et al.,1999). When the overall distribution of the level is considered, it could be seen that it is the least employed level in the observation reports over the weeks. Although the overall picture demonstrates that participants lack the statements at higher-order reflective levels in their observation reports, Figure 2 indicates that there is an increase in the frequency of the statements at the reconstructing level after the first week. In other words, it is found that there is only one statement reflected at the reconstructing level among all the first observation reports of the participants. It means that at the beginning of their practicum experience and before the sessions were conducted, participants did not demonstrate any high-level reflective thinking skills. The eye-catching point here is that although there is not a big difference, it is observed that the statements reflected at this level increased in the second observation report. This indicates that although participants do not demonstrate any reflective thinking features, they start to demonstrate a high level of reflective thinking after the first and second guidance sessions were conducted. Although there is a minor decrease in the third week, the statements at the reconstructing level increased again in the fourth week and stay at the same frequency in the fifth observation report. It shows that participants continue to reflect on their experiences at the high level more in their fourth and fifth observation reports in which the individual feedback is provided. What could be concluded from the distribution of this level over the weeks is that although there are some minor changes, the statements at the reconstructing level have increased towards the last observation reports of the participants, which means that although they are not reflective at the beginning, they start to be reflective by demonstrating high order reflective thinking

features in their statements towards the end of their reflective writing experiences. Concerning the higher-order thinking features, while participants reflect at the reconstructing level, they try to come up with a general principle or personal theory regarding their experiences, draw conclusions, state their position, and plan for their further experiences and learning, which all are the examples of the higher-order reflective skills as described in the reflection scale (Bain et al., 1999). These are some of the statements that are identified at the reconstructing level during the study:

> This incident again showed me that every student has different needs. It is impossible to expect each student to have the same level of knowledge. This is where the teacher should play a role in both designing the materials and managing the situation in class. A teacher should be aware of his/her students' needs all the time and s/he should act according to them. (P3, Observation Report 5, Reconstructing)
> This incident definitely showed me that each lesson differs from the other, meaning every class, every lesson has its own dynamics. Even though there is a class routine, the attitudes of the students might not fit into one single pattern each day. A teacher may encounter lots of unexpected situations in her lessons, and she should be able to manage the class as effectively as possible. I think this happens over time when both the teacher and the students get used to each other. (P3, Observation Report 3, Reconstructing)

> Based on everything I have observed with this kid, her parents, and her family context, I have concluded that whatever the children are exposed to and see from the home, they reflect on them during their everyday life like in the classroom, and all these affect how they cope with anything in the classroom such as a conflict with a peer or dealing with failure in a given task. For teachers to be able to solve any misbehavior, we need to know more about the home background and work cooperatively with the parents if possible because it is not possible to fix the root of the misbehavior without fixing the same behavior at home. (P11, Observation Report 5, Reconstructing)

The example extracts demonstrate that P3 provides his/her position about the issue by drawing a general conclusion from his/her experience in his/her observation reports whereas P11 also states his/her position about the issue by drawing a general conclusion and also she/he formulates a personal theory at the end of his/her statements.

When the distribution of the levels is analyzed considering the changes over the weeks, it could be concluded from the table that all the levels demonstrate changes after the first observation reports. In other words, compared to the first reports, in the second reports of the participants, it could be seen that the frequency of the statements at some levels such as the relating, reasoning, and reconstructing increased whereas the others such as reporting and responding decreased. It means that after the first and second sessions, which were conducted before participants wrote their second observation reports, there happened some changes in the frequency of the levels. When it comes to the third observation reports that participants wrote after the third guidance session, it could be seen that there is an increase in the frequency of the statements reflected at the reporting, and relating levels whereas the responding and reasoning levels demonstrate a decrease, and the reconstructing stays almost the same. This means that after the third guidance session, participants started to provide explanations for their experiences or relate their observations to themselves more. When it comes to the changes in the fourth and fifth week in which the constructive feedback was provided to the participants, it could be observed that there is a decrease in the reporting and relating levels whereas the reasoning and reconstructing levels demonstrate an increase in the fourth week and stays the same in the fifth week. This means that during the provision of feedback, participants tried to reflect on their experiences or observations at the high reflective thinking levels more by realizing the missing parts in their observation reports with feedback.

Another finding that could be understood from the table is that when the frequency of the statements at different levels is analyzed in the initial and the last reports, it could be said that the reporting level displays a decrease towards the last

weeks, and in a similar vein, the frequency of the statements at the responding level also demonstrates a decrease when the first and last observation reports are considered. Unlike the reporting and responding level, it could be observed that there is a tendency to increase in the relating, reasoning, and reconstructing levels when the first observation reports and the last observation reports of the participants are considered. This means that whereas the reporting and responding levels related to non-reflective features such as providing mere description or judgment are on the decrease, the relating level that demonstrates mid-reflective features such as the superficial explanation of the reasons is on the increase, and in a similar vein, the reasoning and reconstructing levels that are related to high reflective features are on the increase when the initial and last observation reports are taken into consideration. This demonstrates that whereas the non-reflective features indicated a decrease, the reflective and critical reflective features started to increase in the observation reports in the course of the participants' reflective writing experiences with the provision of guidance.

4.2 Semi-structured interview

In the semi-structured interview, the overall experiences of the PSTs in writing observation reports were explored to provide an in-depth understanding of their perceptions about this process, which is the aim of the third research question in the study. The semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 13 volunteer participants were all transcribed and analyzed by using qualitative content analysis. First of all, the transcribed data were read several times, and they were coded considering the recurring themes and the interview questions, and then the frequency of each code was evaluated as indicated in Table 6 below.

Table 6. The Themes Emerged from a Semi-Structured Interview

Categories	n	%	Sub-categories	n	%
The use of reflection	11	10.9	Productivity and usefulness of reflection	4	4
			Not getting help	1	1
			Feeling lost before the guidance	6	5.9
The challenges in writing reflection	22	21.8	The lack of knowledge on writing reflection	9	8.9
			Doing an analysis	6	5.9
			Finding a topic	5	5
			Remembering experiences	1	1
			The lack of organized syllabus	1	1
The factors helping in the challenges	13	12.9	The guidance in the sessions	6	5.9
			The feedback	2	2
			Talking to friends	2	2
			Increase in observation hours	1	1
			Taking notes	1	1
			Looking critically	1	1
Criticality of the reports and PSTs	26	25.7	Integrating more reflective features	13	12.9
			The development of criticality	13	12.9
The way of observing the classrooms	13	12.9	Change from general to specific observation	7	7
			Change from teacher to student-oriented observation	6	5.9
The benefits of reflecting with a critical friend	16	15.8	Uncovering the reasons	9	8.9
			Gaining different perspectives	3	2.9
			Feeling relaxed	3	2.9
			Being more critical	1	1
Total	101	100		101	100

The data indicated that there were some recurring themes related to the experiences of the participants, and these themes were coded as indicated in Table 6. Table 6 demonstrates that while writing observation reports, participants got different experiences in general, and they experienced some challenges in writing reflections and overcame them through different methods. Also, they indicated a change in terms of their focus in their reports, their criticality, and the way of observing their practicum classrooms over the course of their practicum experience and had some good experiences with their critical friends. In this section, each theme will be explained step by step focusing on the statements of the participants in detail.

With the purpose to understand the participants' experiences and their perceptions on the use of reflection for their experiences, they were asked to evaluate their overall reflective writing experiences and state their opinions about it considering the reports that they wrote, the sessions that they attended, and their experiences in their practicum context in general. The data findings indicated that in general participants found reflecting on their experiences beneficial and productive, and they stated that writing reflection enabled them to think back on their experiences and notice the issues and the underlying reasons for their experiences that they could not realize while doing the observation in their practicum classrooms:

> I think it was a nice experience. For example, when you write, when you think about the points you missed, for example, you can see them better. For example, while you are observing, you don't pay much attention to things like why this happened at that moment, why the student reacted like this, and why the teacher chose such a way. You know, you just observe because you are involved in the experience . . . Then while you are passing this to the observation report, you both describe them, and then you know, you can concentrate more on the reasons . . . because you assess them somehow . . . I think it is very productive in this respect. (P2, Interview, January 2022)

> I think it was fun to do this, by the way, because one doesn't think too much while observing something going on. I mean, you don't think about things like why this happened, what was the teacher's purpose in using such a coping mechanism, or what else he could have done differently, but while

> writing a report, you really concentrate on them you know, it proved to me that if I experienced something similar, I could handle it more rationally. (P3, Interview, January 2022)

As could be seen from the statements of the P2 and P3, writing reflection helped them have some time to think back on their experiences again, question the reasons, and provide explanations for their experiences that they did not think of before. Although in general, they found it beneficial, there was a participant who argued that writing reflection was not beneficial for her for now because she was not a teacher and did not have her own classroom where she could reflect on and use the knowledge that she got from her reflections:

> To be honest, since I am not a teacher right now, if I got into a reflective thinking mindset in my own class, which I think I will when I become a teacher, it seems like reflection did not work for me right now because I cannot use it for something. (P13, Interview, January 2022)

In addition to their thoughts on the efficiency of writing reflections, it was understood that many of the participants felt lost before the provision of guidance in the sessions. Participants mentioned their difficulties related to writing reflections before the sessions and demonstrated their feelings before the guidance was provided to them. They stated that their experiences, in general, were hard and they felt lost because of not knowing what to do; however, after the sessions, writing reflection and reflecting on their experiences became more productive and easier for them as they learned what to focus on, how to write, and how to analyze their experiences, and they started to get the benefits of writing a reflection:

> I didn't know much about what I should do in the first place. That's why the first report was based on one-to-one observations like I saw that, they did this, I did this, and so on. In the following reports, I learned that I should focus on something. As such, the internship observation started to be more productive for me. (P19, Interview, January 2022)

> I want to describe it as progress. Frankly, I was a bit lost in my first reflection report, you know, we had just started our internship and one doesn't quite know what to focus on when they just start it. Also, it was difficult to write

> something about an observation on it . . . After that, when we moved on to the second report, you taught critical incident analysis. After that, I always started to write by focusing on it . . . there was a prompt that you gave, I always tried to add my own comments by looking at the questions there and answering those questions. I think doing this was fun. (P3, Interview, January 2022)

In addition to their feeling of being lost, participants extended the challenges that they had while writing their observation reports, and as Table 6 displays, PSTs had some challenges on various issues during their reflective writing experiences. Considering the frequency of the challenges, it could be seen that they mostly had difficulty in the lack of knowledge about writing reflection before the guidance was provided to them. In other words, during the interview, participants stated that they did not know what to write, how to write, what to include in the reports, or what to focus on. They lacked the necessary knowledge for the structure of writing a reflection. Some of the participants stated their challenge in the lack of knowledge as follows:

> I mean, the biggest difficulty I had was that I hadn't written anything like this before and we weren't given an example. If we were given a sample reflection, maybe we could have written the first one at least according to it, it could be more structured, but when we are left free like that, we don't know what to do. That's what challenged me at the beginning. (P21, Interview, January 2022)

> So, the problem I had, in general, was that I think I wrote some long reports because I felt like ah I needed to focus on that, too. So I frankly had a hard time finding a particular focus. (P3, Interview, January 2022)

> I didn't know what to write at first . . . You know, I was jumping from topic to topic, so I had a little trouble with that. Then, when we were told to set a focus for ourselves and write on that, it became a little more comfortable. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

The example extracts of the participants indicate that the lack of knowledge on how to write reflections caused them to have unstructured observation reports and scatter their focus on many aspects instead of reflecting on a particular issue. In addition to the lack of knowledge on the issue, Table 6 indicates that they had also difficulty

analyzing their experiences. That is to say, during the interview, participants said that they had a hard time providing explanations, reasons, and providing the meaning for their experiences although some of them were aware of the necessity of it in their reports. As the reasons for such a difficulty, some stated that they did not know how to do a critical analysis, whereas some lack the theoretical knowledge, and others find it difficult as could be seen in the answers of the participants below:

> But there was a problem. I could not understand why, in the observation lessons that I did, I couldn't understand why the teacher chooses such a method, how the students react to it, or how they think about it, for example. It can be a bit of a problem in that respect, so I see something, but sometimes I can't analyze or see the reasons for it. I had a little trouble with that aspect. (P2, Interview, January 2022)

> At the beginning of the term, I knew less about the school I went to, and I knew less about the teacher. That's why I was writing in a shallower way, you know, from the outside, first-person perspective, and actually I had more difficulty in reasoning . . . Because as I said, I don't have much self-confidence in the field, so I thought maybe I would say something ridiculous when I added my own opinion, so you know, I wrote in a descriptive way, like it happened like this, the teacher said that, the children did it like this, so like taking the easy way out. (P23, Interview, January 2022)

The examples explain that participants had a hard time uncovering reasons and explanations for their experiences. Moreover, as P23 indicated, they also avoided writing their opinions or evaluations on their experiences because of the lack of theoretical knowledge in the field or feeling unsafe about doing the analysis. This situation seems to cause them to write descriptively. In addition to the lack of analysis, another challenge that participants experienced is the difficulty in finding a particular focus or topic to reflect on. They stated that observing the same classes became a routine for them, and they got used to the flow of the lesson, and behaviors of the teachers and students; thus, they sometimes had a hard time choosing a topic that they could reflect on as could be seen in the statements of the participants below:

> As I observe the same lessons all the time, it always seemed like observing the same thing . . . I was stuck on what to write more, I had a lot of trouble with that. (P13, Interview, January 2022)

> There was a problem in this regard, it continued well until the middle of the semester up to a certain point. I could find a different focus each week, but towards the end, the situation became difficult for me as the lessons became monotonous and the same things were repeated every week. You know, after a point, I say that I observed everything, the events that took place in that class became very routine, and I had a little difficulty in that matter. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

Although it is not as frequent as the other challenges, a particular participant stated that he experienced difficulties in remembering his experiences while reflecting on them because of the lack of note-taking skills during the observation, whereas another student stated that she experienced challenges because of the lack of organized syllabus in the program, which put her some burden on writing the reflections and meeting the needs of the practicum course. The participant stated that she experienced some difficulties because of the mismatch between the guidelines of their professor with the instructions provided in the sessions in writing a reflection, and the lack of an organized syllabus in the program as explained in the extracts below:

> At first, I guess I wasn't taking very good notes while making observations. Since I was in a new environment, I was focusing on the lesson, and something was missing in the note-taking part. That's why when I wrote a report a few days later, I felt like I was trying to write by remembering the past, it was a challenge rather than the writing itself. (P4, Interview, January 2022)

> We talk about analytical, critical thoughts, etc. in the sessions we held together, but we were not told that at the beginning, we felt that way. We thought that it was enough to report what we saw with its date as an observation report, but it was not, nothing like that was expected from us, and we learned this late . . . because we didn't have a certain syllabus or guidance. (P19, Interview, January 2022)

Considering the challenges of the participants, they were asked to state whether they could overcome these challenges, and if they did, they were requested to state how

they accomplished this. The findings indicated that the participants were able to overcome most of their challenges thanks to various factors. Most of the participants demonstrated the benefits of the sessions that the researcher conducted in overcoming their challenges, and they stated that the tasks and the guidance in the sessions helped them write the reports easier, be aware of the value of their own ideas, and understand how to do an analysis for their experiences by looking at them with a critical stance. In addition to the tasks, they also implied that the feedback that they got from their professor and from the researcher helped them overcome their challenges:

> While writing the last one, you gave feedback. I focused on it and wrote accordingly . . . I was writing easily by looking at the table you shared with us and the questions that I can answer there. This process made it easy for me. (P3, Interview, January 2022)

> I was in frequent contact with my mentor teachers, with my teacher at the university. The teacher gives feedback, and I took them into consideration. Also, I was constantly interacting with my friends . . . I think the week I wrote the second report, we wrote something detailed with you in class . . . and it helped me . . . There was an analytical part, and a part that we produced a solution. That week, I was able to form a frame in my head. (P20, Interview, January 2022)

> The sessions we held together also made a difference because as I said, while I don't care about my own opinion . . . I understood that my perspective as a professional is the most important thing, and it was obviously important for me to understand that it can be subjective and that it is not a bad thing to bring different perspectives. (P23, Interview, January 2022)

Although most of the participants indicated the benefits of the guidance in the sessions, some also stated that talking about their experiences and sharing their observation notes with their peers enabled them to realize the things that did not focus on in their observation reports, and reading their friends' papers and giving and receiving feedback from them also helped participants in terms of learning how to write a reflection:

> In other words, most of my friends and I were going on the same day to the internship, and we were telling each other about the events we experienced that day like today, something like this happened or we were showing each other the notes we took. I was thinking like, I skipped over this subject, I didn't dwell on it much, and I was thinking that this might be my new focus, so it was helpful in this way for my next topic and focus. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

In addition to the help of their friends, with regard to their difficulty in finding a focus to reflect on, the increase their observation hours, taking notes and deciding on what they are going to focus on in their observations, and starting to look at the incident critically helped them find a particular focus and topic to reflect on and enabled them to focus on specific issues:

> As the observation hours increased like this, I gained more information, and because I observed more, I started to realize more and more things. You know, I think it was better in that way because as I said at first, I was more generalizing. You know, like there are so many students, they generally do this and that. There were no specific things because I did not observe too much. Afterward, for example, because I got more information, I made it more specific, it was good in that respect. (P2, Interview, January 2022)

> I started to write more easily. Before I go to the class, I was keeping in mind that I would pay attention to this subject. For example, I went to the lesson one day, and I observed how peer relationships are, how students interact with their friends, and how they form their relations with the teacher . . . I paid attention to such things. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

Besides the investigation of the challenges, the researcher tried to understand the focus of the observation reports in terms of their criticality and the participants' self-perceptions of their reflective thinking skills, which was the second focus of the interview. They were asked to state what they mostly focus on in their reports in general and clarify the change in their focus if there is any. The data findings indicated that participants generally separated their reports into two sections, namely, description and analysis. In the analysis part, some stated that they mostly focused on what they would do if they were a teacher, and some focused on the analysis of the incident within a wider context:

> I split it into two parts, usually when I'm writing. First of all, I am describing. I'm starting with the descriptive part . . . Afterwards, in the reflection part, I am telling my own ideas like the teacher did this, I agree because of this and that reason . . . In general, I compared the teacher's own practices with my own thoughts and wrote them that way. (P2, Interview, January 2022)

> While I was writing, I guess after describing an event or situation, I focused more on what this says about the teacher, what it says about the school, and what it says about the English teaching of the school, so I focused on these, that is, what it can tell us in a wider context . . . I tried to focus on what it could say about things other than what happened in the classroom. (P5, Interview, January 2022)

Although there seems to be a general structure in terms of the focus of the observation reports, most of the participants focused on the change in their observation reports in terms of criticality, and they indicated that they started to integrate more reflective features in their reports toward the end. In other words, almost all the participants stated that their first observation reports were superficial, namely, they mostly focused on the description of the incidents in their first observation reports, their feelings, and their comments. Although the focus on description could be because of the lack of analysis skills, some stated their reason for their focus on the description with its benefits to them. In other words, they stated that description enabled them to notice the things that she/he did not realize while observing the lessons, and it helped them consider different perspectives for the justification of the incidents. Moreover, they gave importance to the description as they wanted to provide a detailed context for their mentor teachers so that she/her can understand their analysis or comments:

> I focus on the descriptions of the events . . . Because the other person will also read this report, and I think it is an important issue for the other person to know how the incident happened. I think I mostly focus on the description. After that, I think I talk a little bit about what I think of the situation . . . My teacher who will read needs to know how it happened so that she/he can better understand what I'm thinking, so I focused more on explanations. (P21, Interview, January 2022)

> When I put it in writing, I describe the event. When I write this, I see a perspective that I didn't realize during the observation. I said oh, it was like, this may be the reason for this. I could also bring a justification in my own way. Actually, I focused on the description, both for the reader so that she/he who will read this can understand the context better, and so that I can see another point of view for myself. (P16, Interview, January 2022)

Although their first reflections demonstrated descriptive features and they were mostly superficial and they lacked an analysis of the experiences, toward the end, they said that they started to look for the reasons, investigate underlying reasons, do more analysis, and discover the meaning of the incident within a wider context, connect their experiences with theoretical concepts and take future-oriented perspectives for their further teaching experiences:

> I would say that the first two reports are more superficial because the first one was like, I saw that they did that, and so on. The second was about the teaching methods, but it was also very obvious and superficial . . . Then I started to observe students more. I started to look at the exams, for example. I tried to examine it through our education system, but I tried to look at it from a broader perspective. (P19, Interview, January 2022)

> I guess I wasn't thinking too much about things, okay if this happened, this is what happened, like this, if the teacher warned someone, he warned it like this, okay that's his style. But I think now I can think more deeply. Okay, he warned this person like this, but in another lecture, he warned in a different way. I can think more deeply like, what might be the reason for such a difference, what causes it, it is because of the behavior and actions of the students, the teacher's own personality, or the factors related to everything at the time of the event. (P21, Interview, January 2022)

> I found the teacher to be one hundred percent right. For example, at first, I was looking at what else the teacher can do. Later it turned into this, these children are now in the last hour, and they saw ten hours today. They are in the tenth-hour class today, and they are now exhausted, and they don't want to do that . . . maybe that kid is going through something at home, maybe he's going through something with his friends. By trying to reason like this . . . I try to think about the reasons of about these kinds of things because when we don't understand the reasons, we can't find the solutions. (P23, Interview, January 2022)

Considering the statements of the participants, it could be observed that they started to analyze the incident within a wider context, started to question the reasons for their experiences, and considered alternative explanations for their observations,

which are all connected to the features of a critical reflection. Moreover, as could be seen from the P21 and P23, although they did not analyze the practices of the teacher and accepted the things blindly, they started to look at the incident from a different perspective and started to question the taken for granted actions of the teacher.

In addition to the investigation of the focus in the observation reports in terms of criticality, to be able to understand how participants think about their reflective thinking skills, they were asked to evaluate all the reports that they wrote in the course of their practicum and explain their self-perceptions on their criticality by evaluating themselves out of 10 which is the highest score in criticality. Data findings indicated that all the participants believed that they were descriptive in their first reports whereas they improved their criticality toward the end, which demonstrates a similar pattern with their focus in their reports. In other words, participants believed that they had a descriptive stance in their first reports, namely, their reports were superficial, and they wrote what they saw or what happened in their practicum schools. Although some tried to provide an analysis, it was too limited and looked at the incident from one perspective. In contrast to their first reports, they believed their criticality improved, and they included a more reflective stance in their reports toward the end. They started to consider alternatives, add their thoughts and explanations, make hypotheses about the incidents, analyze their experiences within a wider context, and look for the reasons for their experiences:

> I mean, it was probably two or so at the beginning, but I think it increased later on . . . I focus more on the description, I focus more on describing the event, rather than the analysis, so I give them a lower rating, frankly . . . I guess it was the paper that I approached most critically . . . I used my critical thinking skills there. As I observed that student a little more, I realized that a child who wants attention may want to attract the attention of the teacher. maybe he wanted to rebel or make his friends laugh . . . I tried to write a little retrospectively, adding my own observations and the teacher's feelings, it was a paper that I approached very critically. (P3, Interview, January 2022)

> There is a change, I would give two for the first two I wrote, and I would give a 4 for the last three reports . . . While addressing this issue . . . Here, I thought about what this incident could tell about the teachers' attitude towards their students. I might not have been able to do this before. You know, I could not have taken this event just like this and I may not be able to understand what meanings can be made from this incident before. (P5, Interview, January 2022)

> I talked a little bit about the integration of technology . . . I saw that the level of integration was limited to the digital version of the coursebook . . . I criticized that . . . For example, I mentioned that the boards are not up to date. Apart from that, I mentioned that the internet provided by the ministry of education . . . does not even open a page that can be used as an educational tool . . . Teachers are also responsible for at least five classes, and it is impossible for them to do this for each lesson, and their workload is actually too much . . . This is not something that teachers can fix; this is an external factor. School administration has a voice. (P16, Interview, January 2022)

As could be understood from the example extracts, P3 exemplifies how they started to consider alternative explanations and reasons for their experiences whereas P5 provides an example of how they looked for the meaning of their experiences. On the other hand, P16 demonstrates an example of how participants started to consider the incidents within a wider context and look for the explanations and reasons which are beyond the classroom context. Although all the participants except for one stated their improvement in terms of their reflective skills, one participant explained her improvement in terms of the structure of her observation report, and she stated that although her first reports were scattered around different topics, the last ones were organized as a structure:

> Of course, I think it got better towards the end. Because if we are going to think in an essay logic, there are too many scattered topics, in the beginning, I jumped from topic to topic. But towards the end, I explained what I wanted to tell in an essay style in the form of introduction, development, and conclusion. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

To be able to understand whether there is a similar change in the participants' way of observing the lessons like the changes in their reports and their criticality, participants were also asked to share their observation experiences and explain the

way they observe the English lessons and exemplify the things that they focused on while observing the lessons in their practicum schools. The data findings revealed two recurring patterns regarding their observations: the change from general to focused observations and a change in the teacher to student-oriented observations. To begin with the former issue, it was found that when they were asked to explain the way they observed the classrooms, they came up with an explanation of the change in their observation focus at the beginning and toward the end of the term. They stated that they mostly focused on the school and classroom characteristics, the seating pattern in the classrooms, how the lesson started and ended, and a general lesson flow with a desire to observe everything in the classroom in general without a focused stance at the beginning of their first observation experiences in their practicum context. On the other hand, they explained a change toward the end and stated that they started to focus more on the specific issues with a more focused and critical stance. Also, it was found that they engaged in a more detailed and focused observation, and they looked at the recurring patterns and their reasons, and alternative explanations for a particular case while observing, focused on more specific pedagogical issues such as the classroom management, and language transfer. The sample extracts exemplify how their focus has changed from a more general and unfocused stance to a more focused and critical stance during their observation experiences:

> I generally focus on how the lessons work. I focused so much on them in the first weeks like how the lesson begins, how it continues, and how it ends, after a while, when I get used to it, it's more like how the teachers teach the lesson. Okay, there is a lesson plan anyway, but every teacher really approaches every lesson differently. I realized that they have a different relationship with students . . . As I said, I focused on more general issues at the beginning, and I chose to focus on finer details towards the end. (P21, Interview, January 2022)

> In the first lesson I observed, I looked more at environmental factors like what kind of opportunities the school has . . . or how many students there are in the class . . . I was paying more attention to these at first. After that, I started to approach the subject more qualitatively . . . like why the student said that here. I'm observing 4th grade, they know past simple, but they can't use it in a very consistent way . . . I started to focus on these and wonder why they might be happening . . . As I said at the beginning, while I was focusing on what kind of presentation was prepared, what activities were done, and how the books and textbooks are, towards the end, I started to focus on both classroom management issues and dialogues. (P3, Interview, January 2022)

In addition to the change in the way of observing the classrooms, another recurring pattern was the perspectives that they adopted while observing the lessons. It was found that participants' focus did not change much during their practicum experience. Although there was not a striking change, it could be seen that they tried to observe the lessons by adopting different perspectives and changing them over the course of their practicum experience. In other words, it was found that most of the participants observed the classrooms by adopting a teacher-oriented perspective and focused on the methodology or the teaching practices of their mentors first. Then, they started to observe the lessons considering the issues in the students' eyes. In other words, they started to put themselves in the shoes of the students and considered the impacts of the teachers' behavior on the students and their consequences on the students:

> I guess my focus hasn't changed much . . . It might be because I've been observing the same lectures. Since there was no change, I observed as if I was a student . . . At first, I did not connect the incidents to a very large model, like, it may be because of this, this may have happened. But for example, in the latest report . . . I made generalizations like the system is always like this, and the children have always gotten used to the system like this. (P13, Interview, January 2022)

> It didn't change much, I observed it in a little more detailed way. As I said, I tried to add more comments. As the term progressed . . . I started to get bored because of the monotony of the lesson. That's why I started to observe a little more through the eyes of the students. (P10, Interview, January 2022)

On the other hand, some focused on the students first by adopting a student-centered perspective and then started to observe the lessons from a teacher-oriented perspective toward the end of the term as could be seen from the statements of P16. In addition, some looked at the incidents from both perspectives simultaneously and considered alternatives and explanations of their experiences by considering the issue from both perspectives:

> First, there was a more student-oriented observation at first, but later, there was more of an observation from the teacher's point of view, such as what can be done or how we can deal with problems. At first, I made an observation to get to know the students . . . to get to know the environment, then I actually made an observation that would highlight the teacher's approaches. (P16, Interview, January 2022)

> You know the first thing I focus on while making observations is what the teacher is doing, what kind of activities he is doing, and the attitude of the teacher. Afterward, I look at the student, I mean, this teacher is doing such and such activities, such a language is used, and so on. After looking at them, I was looking at how it affects the student, how the student feels about it, what kind of academic outcome they receive, and how it motivates the student. I was observing the teacher first. I was trying to understand what was done, then I was looking at the consequences of it that way. (P2, Interview, January 2022)

As could be seen from the examples, participants observed and analyzed the situations that were taking place in the classroom with a change in their focus on the teacher or the students during their practicum experience. However, one thing that could be noticed is that they changed their perspective because of the boredom that they had after observing the same classrooms, which is the reason for not changing their focus much. Another thing that could be seen is that similar to the focus of their reports, it seems that they tried to provide some explanations and reasons during their observations and tried to look at the incidents from two main perspectives although the focus of most participants was on the teachers at the beginning.

In the interview, another thing that was investigated was understanding the participants' perceptions on reflecting with a critical friend on their experiences both

in the sessions and during their practicum experience in general. As the researcher created a collaborative environment in the sessions, it was important to understand whether participants got benefits or challenges in sharing their experiences with their critical friends. The data findings demonstrated that all the participants got various benefits from reflecting on their experiences with a critical friend. Most of the participants stated that reflecting with a critical friend enabled them to realize various interpretations and ideas and uncover the reasons that they did not think of before about their experiences, and this helped them reflect on the incidents or their experiences from a variety of perspectives:

> I think it was nice, I like pair works in general because the other person can complete a point that you might have missed . . . Helping each other . . . helps you understand better . . . There was one question, and we needed to give a specific example of the question. I observe the same class and same classroom with my friend. He said, "We can say that". I hadn't thought of it, but he thought of the example. It had such an effect. (P2, Interview, January 2022)

> My friend brings a different point of view and says that he may have done something like this, maybe he did it this way, maybe you shouldn't focus on this, for example, I got feedback from my friend. A friend of mine may have seen it because she looks at things from a different mentality that I can't see. (P23, Interview, January 2022)

> I felt much better and felt more productive because I see something, but she can't see it, sometimes she sees what I can't see, and that was very nice, you know, the emergence of many common things, more perspectives. (P13, Interview, January 2022)

In addition to uncovering the perspectives that they never think of, they stated that while reflecting on their experiences with their peers they were able to experience various classroom observations of their friends and they were exposed to various experiences that they could not experience in their practicum schools, and this enabled them to gain different perspectives on the analysis of the different issues:

> My friends also told me about their experiences. We chose a common experience together. Since my friends also told me about their experiences there, I had a chance to listen to other people's experiences, and I was looking

> objectively at something that someone can focus on in their report, so this perspective may have also contributed to my learning. (P5, Interview, January 2022)

> That is, in the first activity, we became a partner with a friend of mine who worked in secondary school and she was very surprised by the incident I told because there is a younger age group in secondary school and the communication of students with each other is much different than in high school, and the incident I told shocked my friend . . . Therefore, she did not witness such an event in secondary school due to the different age group. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

In addition to the stated benefits, it was also found that sharing the same experiences with their friends helped them not to feel alone in their practicum journey and in their first teaching experiences. This helped them feel supported and sure about their way of analyzing and interpreting their observation experiences:

> We both had very close thoughts . . . Also, as I have just said, I thought that my trainee teacher was not very authoritarian. Then I criticized myself about whether I am behaving strictly or I am trying to be more authoritarian, but when my friend said "I would have had the same reaction", it made me feel relaxed. (P9, Interview, January 2022)

> I feel more comfortable if I am not the only one going through a particular situation and if my other friends have similar experiences. That's why it was much better to be able to gather and talk with my friends for a whole period, it felt much more comfortable. (P19, Interview, January 2022)

> If I did it myself, it would be more difficult. When you do it with someone, there are more ideas . . . When I was going to the practicum school, I was getting stressed. I feel more comfortable when I talk to my friends who go to the same school as me and see that we are on the same page with my friends. (P25, Interview, January 2022)

Besides the psychological benefits of sharing their experiences with their critical friends, participants also stated that when they share and reflect on their experiences with a critical friend, this enables them to become more critical in their reflections with the help of engaging in a critical discussion with their friends:

> We were sitting and talking about our experiences . . . but we were trying to look as objective as possible, and we were trying to make comments as we did in our sessions . . . I can say that working with a friend enabled us to be less superficial. (P19, Interview, January 2022)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study provided an in-depth understanding of (1) the nature of the incidents that PSTs reflect on in their observation reports, (2) the development of PSTs' criticality in their reflections through the provision of guidance in time, and lastly (3) their overall experiences from reflective writing. For these research purposes, a learning environment was created and in this learning environment, explicit guidance was provided in three different sessions; namely, two guidance sessions were conducted after participants wrote their first reports, and the third session was conducted after they wrote their second observation reports. In addition, they were provided with some reflective writing prompts that were adopted from Tripp's critical incident analysis model (2011) and Gibbs' reflective cycle model (1988), and they consisted of some guiding questions so that PSTs could reflect on their experiences by getting help from them in their following reflections. After the sessions were conducted, feedback was given to all the observation reports of the participants to guide them in reflective writing.

Considering the experiences of the PSTs in such a learning environment, the study presented a detailed analysis of the PSTs' experiences in terms of reflective writing and reflective thinking processes. In this sense, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of two main dimensions of reflection: the component dimension, which is related to the content, process, and the outcome of reflective writing, and the orientation dimension which is about the complexity of the teachers' reflective thoughts (Nelson & Sadler, 2013). Under the component dimension of reflection, the study provided an in-depth understanding of what PSTs mostly

reflected on in their reports, how they reflected on their experiences with the help of guidance in time, and their outcome from this experience. On the other hand, in terms of the orientation dimension, the study provided an insight into the gradual improvement in the PSTs' reflective thinking skills in the learning environment that is supported by guidance, critical friends, and feedback. In this section, to be able to discuss the data findings in a meaningful and organized way, the study findings will be discussed, first of all, focusing on the reflective writing experiences of the PSTs under the component dimension of reflection, and then the focus will be given to the gradual change in the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs under the orientation dimension of reflection.

To begin with the component dimension of reflection, the findings of the observation reports indicated that while reflecting on their experiences, PSTs mostly focused on the issues related to instructional practices, the conduct of the lesson, and the classroom management respectively, whereas they paid less attention to the issues related to the students, their teaching practices, and the classroom and school context. At this point, the study demonstrates similarities with some prominent studies in the field in that PSTs mostly pay attention to the instructional processes, teaching, and the teaching methods in their reflections (Erginel, 2006; Penso et al., 2001; Tsang, 2003). In addition to that, the interview findings indicated that most of the PSTs observed the lessons focusing on the teachers at the beginning and they started to turn their focus on the students and their learning processes toward the end of the term. Taking into consideration the PSTs' focus in their reports, the study findings are in line with the notion that teachers are inclined to reflect on the teachers' practices, the flow and structure of the lesson, and teachers' management of the classroom instead of focusing on the analysis of the students' learning outcome

from the lesson during their first teaching experiences in the classrooms (Kagan, 1992; Reynold, 1992). In this sense, their tendency to focus on the instructional practices of the mentors in their reports could be considered a part of their developmental journey in becoming a teacher because they feel the need to understand and deal with the problem of teaching first of all before giving their focus on the students and their learning processes (Kagan, 1992). In addition to that, considering their preliminary focus on the teachers' instructional practices, it could result from the hectic and chaotic context in which they found themselves in their first teaching experiences. In other words, being in the first phases of becoming a teacher is a stressful and challenging process for the student teachers as they are under the observation of the students, mentors, and their professors, and they are constantly evaluated based on their teaching performance and reflective performance (Calderhead, 1991). Most of the time, because of the complex nature of being a teacher and their lack of teaching experiences, at the beginning phases of their professional development in teaching, they mainly seek the ways of surviving in the classroom context, and thus, they focus their attention on the technical ways of dealing with the problems (Hatton & Smith, 1995). This could force them to search for ways of learning how to teach and how to deal with the stressful nature of a practicum experience. In this sense, being able to handle accomplishing the teaching performance and becoming a successful teacher require them to improve their knowledge in teaching (Calderhead, 1991), and the need of extending their knowledge in teaching could trigger PSTs to give their preliminary focus to their role model in the classroom and his/her instructional practices and teaching strategies in the lessons.

In addition to the focus of the PSTs in their reports in terms of the content of their reflection, the study findings also provide an insight into how the PSTs engage in reflection in terms of their experiences and the process that they are preoccupied with, and the outcome that they get from the use of reflection for their practicum experiences. The study findings indicated that although a particular participant found reflective writing useless because of not being a teacher for now, many participants found the reflective writing productive and beneficial for their experiences. In this sense, the study indicates similarities with some prominent studies in that PSTs have positive opinions and attitudes toward writing reflections on their experiences (Filiz, 2008; Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018). As a justification for its usefulness, they asserted that it enabled them to think back on their experiences and noticed the reasons that they could not be aware of during the observation of the classroom context. While reflecting on their experiences, they stated that they tried to find alternative explanations for the actions of the teachers and questioned why something happened. It could be stated that engaging in the reflective practices encourages PSTs to actively investigate the reasons for their experiences and try to come up with some explanations to understand their teaching experiences better. In this sense, PSTs' engaging in the meticulous inquiry of the reasons could be associated with Dewey's (1933) notion of open-mindedness which is one of the reflective teaching traits and which is associated with an ability to be open and attentive to the various and different viewpoints. Through reflecting on their experiences while writing reflections, it could be stated that PSTs have a chance to question the underlying reasons, broaden their perspective and develop their reflective characteristics, which could result in engaging in a more critical stance toward their experiences.

Many PSTs stated the productivity of reflective writing on their experiences; however, when they were asked to evaluate their overall outcome from this experience, the majority of them focused on their feeling of being lost in reflecting on their experiences before the guidance was provided to them, and they stated some challenges that they experienced during this process. However, it was found that the majority of the challenges of the PSTs disappeared toward the end of the term. In terms of their challenges, it was found that the majority of the PSTs had difficulty in the lack of knowledge on how to write a reflection and how to do an analysis of their experiences at the beginning. They stated that they did not know what to focus on and write, and how to write a reflection before the guidance; however, with the models and the tasks in the sessions, the reflective writing process became easier and more productive for them. With regard to both reflective writing and thinking skills, in the study of Hourani (2013), it was found that PSTs had difficulties in reflective writing and thinking because of the lack of training in meta-cognitive reflective skills, and they thought that it was necessary for them to be taught on how to write and think reflectively. In a similar vein to the current study findings, when the PSTs' feeling of being lost and their challenge on writing reflection before the guidance is considered, it seems that there is a lack of focus on teacher education programs in terms of promoting guidance in reflective practices and reflective writing (Hamiloğlu, 2013). Although many teacher education programs integrate issues related to reflecting on the experiences, only being told about the reflective practices rather than demonstrating how to engage in reflection may not be enough for the PSTs (Russell, 2005) because simply encouraging PSTs to reflect on their experiences is the same as giving them a lecture on doing group work (Loughran, 2002).

In the study, most of the participants stated the benefits of the models and the activities that were provided to them in the sessions to overcome their challenges in terms of engaging in a reflection, and also some of them stated the benefits that they got from their professors and the researcher. At this point, it is known that students could learn through having an opportunity to practice the skills that they wanted to adopt in their future experiences with the help of experienced practitioners (Schön, 1987). In this sense, instead of only talking about reflection, teacher education programs could take into consideration integrating authentic and reflective tasks in the program (Oner & Adadan, 2018; Roberts & Kirk, 2019) so that PSTs could learn the skills on how to analyze the incidents taking place in the classroom for their further teaching experiences. Moreover, it is necessary for the teacher educators to model the reflective thinking skills and how to engage in reflection in a variety of ways (Spalding & Wilson, 2002) so that PSTs get more benefit from their initial teaching experiences with a self-awareness of what and how they are doing while learning from their experiences. Moreover, this process should be supported with the provision of structured feedback on their reflective performance so that PSTs could extend their teaching experiences (Freese, 2006) by learning from them with the knowledge of how to reflect on their practices and observations.

Another mostly stated challenge was the fact that PSTs had difficulty in finding a particular focus or topic to reflect on in their observation reports because of observing the same teacher and the classroom context. The routinized pattern in the lessons and the predictable behaviors of the teachers hindered them from finding a new focus and aspect to reflect on, which in turn could affect the way they reflected on the experiences. In other words, this could limit them in terms of developing their teaching perspectives and knowledge as they would be limited to a particular stance

in the analysis. In overcoming this challenge toward the end of the term, the PSTs stated that some factors helped them find out a focus that they reflected on such as having an opportunity to observe more classrooms, starting to look critically at their experiences, and talking with their friends. Considering the factors helping them in this process, it could be more beneficial and effective to provide PSTs with a variety of learning opportunities, and with a variety of observation practices in terms of observing the different teaching strategies, teaching skills, the classroom context, and the lesson structure, etc. (Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018). This could enable them to be aware of different teaching perspectives and gain a variety of stances while reflecting on their experiences. In addition to the benefits of observing more classrooms on overcoming the challenge related to finding a focus in their reports, they stated that talking to friends about their observations and sharing their notes with each other helped them realize the things that they did not focus on before in their observations, and also giving and receiving feedback to their observation reports helped them understand what they could focus on and how they could write on their experiences. At this point, sharing their observation experiences and talking about them with a friend could contribute to extending their knowledge base in the way of observing the classrooms, and could help them improve their abilities in identifying various aspects that they could reflect on in their observations (Sellars, 2017), which could, in turn, broaden their perspectives on the issues related to teaching with being exposed to a variety of teaching experiences and observation perspectives of their friends.

In addition to the stated challenges, one of the participants also stated that he had a hard time remembering his/her experiences while reflecting on his observations, and he overcame this challenge with note-taking skills on the aspects

that he saw and considered important, and with deciding on what to focus on beforehand. This could be related to the nature of the reflection; namely, because of engaging in reflection on action. Another possibility is that while engaging in reflection on action, PSTs reflect on their experiences after a certain period of time, particularly, based on their due dates. This could make the reflection on their experiences challenging for them and could decrease the benefit that they could get from it because they will not be able to remember the occurrences or reasons for their observations. Regarding this issue, Schön (1996) pointed out that engaging in both reflections in action and reflection on action brings about more improved practice. For this reason, as advocated by Hourani (2013), PSTs could be encouraged, guided, and provided with the tasks to practice reflection in action besides reflection on action. In this way, they could benefit from their experiences in a productive way while observing their practicum classrooms without a need to remember all the details about their experiences.

With regard to the component dimension of reflection, the study provided an in-depth understanding of the issues related to the PSTs' focus in their observation reports, the process that they engaged in, and the outcome that they get from attending the reflective practices. It demonstrates that PSTs mostly pay attention to the instructional practices in their initial phases of learning how to be a teacher. During this process, reflective writing could help PSTs analyze their practices with a critical stance through questioning, providing alternative explanations, and reasoning, which enhances their knowledge on how to instruct and nurtures them in developing their teaching perspectives with a chance to uncover the underlying assumptions or the stances that may not notice during a mere observation in a practicum context. As indicated in the study, PSTs could feel lost in engaging in

reflective practices and could have difficulty reflecting on their experiences with a critical stance because of the lack of training in reflective skills. Considering the ways that help them overcome these challenges, this necessitates the integration of some guidance on how to write a critical reflection and how to analyze their experiences, and the provision of feedback and creating a collaborative context in teacher education programs.

In addition to the component dimension, the study also presents a profound insight into the orientation dimension of reflection, which reveals an understanding of the teachers' gradual complexity in their reflective thought (Nelson & Sadler, 2013). With regard to the PSTs' reflective thinking skills, the study provided an insight into the criticality stance of the PSTs in their reports in general, the gradual development of the reflective features in their reports in time, their self-perceptions of their criticality, and the change in the way of their observing the classrooms with a critical stance. Lastly, the study also highlighted the benefits of creating a learning environment that is supported with explicit guidance, critical friends, and feedback in the development of reflective thinking skills.

With regard to the general stance of the PSTs in terms of criticality, the analysis of the observation reports revealed that PSTs reflected on their experiences at the responding level the most (38.31%), and it was followed by the relating (27.25%) and reporting (26.83%) level at almost the same frequency. Although the focus was on these levels, it was found that the reasoning (5.97%) and the reconstructing (1.49%) were the least employed levels in the observation reports. It means that in general PSTs mostly made observations and judgments about their experiences in their practicum schools and expressed their thoughts or feelings about it without demonstrating any attempt to provide explanations for their beliefs or an

in-depth analysis of their experiences. With regard to the highly employed level in the reports in general, it could be stated that PSTs could be considered non-reflectors at the beginning of their initial teaching experiences because of their preliminary focus on making a judgment without providing any explanation or analysis in their reports as characterized in the study of Kember (1999). In the study of Kember (1999) and also Thorpe (2004), three different practitioners are categorized with regard to their criticality in the reflective thinking skills as non-reflectors, reflectors, and critical reflectors. On the basis of the study, non-reflector refers to the practitioners who provide summaries without providing any explanation, or who make use of their existing perspectives, thoughts, or knowledge and do not provide any further explanation for their thoughts, or they could simply provide their feelings without giving any further explanation (Kember, 1999; Thorpe, 2004). On the other hand, the reflectors explain what and how aspects of their experiences; in other words, they explain what and how one believes, perceives, or behaves, and they provide an initial understanding of their experiences without providing a detailed analysis (Thorpe, 2004). On the other hand, the critical reflectors search for the reasons why something occurred in their experiences, analyze their perceptions critically, take a position on the issue that they reflected on, or formulate a new understanding as a result of their experience (Thorpe, 2004). In this sense, when the features attributed to the non-reflectors are taken into consideration, it could be stated that PSTs mostly engage in a quite superficial evaluation of their experiences with a mere provision of their judgments, thoughts, and feelings at the beginning of their teaching experiences.

With regard to the other levels that were employed in the reports, PSTs sometimes demonstrated some reflective features by providing superficial

explanations for their experiences at the relating level (27.25%), and some non-reflector features by giving a mere description at the reporting level (26.83%). Unlike these features, they barely demonstrated some critical reflective features at the reasoning (5.97%) and reconstructing levels (1.49%) in all of their reports. In this sense, considering PSTs' engagement in the relating level, it could be stated that PSTs may have a tendency to be reflectors who could provide superficial explanations for what and how aspects of their experiences on the basis of the categorization of Kember (1999). However, with regard to the overall criticality frame of the PSTs in the study, PSTs seem to lack the high-level reflective thinking skills that are required to do an in-depth analysis and formulate a personal theory from their experiences in their observation reports; instead, they are inclined to be non-reflectors by mostly providing superficial observations or judgments by commenting on their experiences or using their insights without an in-depth analysis. In this sense, the study findings are in tandem with some prominent studies in terms of the non-reflective characteristics of the PSTs in their reports; however, in terms of the reflective level of the PSTs, it is possible to see some differences.

In the literature, some prominent studies investigating the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs have found that PSTs mostly reflect at the descriptive level in their reflections; in other words, they describe the events or situations taking place in a classroom context without providing any judgment, comment, explanation, or analysis (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018; Wong et al., 2017; Yesilbursa, 2011). Considering the PSTs' focus on reflecting at the responding level based on the scale (Bain et al., 1999), it could be seen that contrary to the findings of these studies, in the current study, PSTs are beyond the mere description as it could be seen that while reflecting on their experiences, they mostly provide their

comments and insights, and they make judgments about the events, feelings, and thoughts related to their experiences, which is considered as the second reflective level in the model (Bain et al., 1999). Although PSTs are beyond the reporting and descriptive level in the study, when the characteristics attributed to the reflectors and critical reflectors based on the descriptions of Kember (1999) are considered, they still reflect on their experiences without providing any detailed explanations or in-depth analysis most of the time, which are necessary skills to be considered as a reflector or critical reflector. For this reason, although participants display some reflective features in their statements at the relating level and some critical reflective features at the reasoning and reconstructing levels, it could be seen that they are more inclined to demonstrate non-reflector features and reflect on their experiences at superficial levels. In this sense, the findings of the study are in line with the other prominent studies in that PSTs tend to engage in reflections at superficial levels while reflecting on their experiences (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Power, 2012; Watts & Lawson, 2009).

The overall frame illustrates that PSTs are inclined to reflect at superficial levels and display non-reflective features in their reflections; however, an in-depth analysis of the PSTs' criticality in time portrays a different and a promising stance with regard to the development of some reflective and critical reflective features with the help of the guidance. The analysis of the first observation reports that were written in the lack of guidance demonstrated that PSTs mostly provided judgments and comments without giving detailed justification or explanation for their thoughts, and they provide a mere description of the events taking place in the classroom, which could be categorized as non-reflective features in their reports. In these observation reports, they barely provide an in-depth analysis of their experiences and

there is almost no statement demonstrating high reflective thinking skills at the reconstructing level, which is the highest reflective thinking skill based on Bain et al. (1999). The findings were cross validated with the semi-structured interview in that PSTs stated that they mostly focused on the descriptions of the events, their comments on the issues, and their feelings in their first observation reports before getting any guidance on reflective writing. However, when the PSTs' criticality level is monitored in the course of the guidance, it could be seen that PSTs started to integrate more reflective and critical reflective features in their reports in time compared to their first reflections, and they started to consider an improvement in their criticality in the course of the study thanks to the guidance that was provided with explicit instruction, reflective tasks, critical friends and feedback in a learning environment created by the researcher.

With respect to the change in the reflective stance of the PSTs after the guidance, it could be stated that the reason for the lack of high reflective thinking skills in the first observation reports could be explained because of the lack of guidance on writing critical reflections, and it could be stated that they are inclined to reflect at superficial levels and do not employ high reflective skills when there is a lack of guidance (Turhan & Kirkgoz, 2018; Yavuz, 2005). Although the non-reflective features could be considered a negative way and could be associated with the lack of reflective thinking skills, in fact, the focus on the judgments, comments, and opinions without any further explanation, or the description of the events could also base the foundation for the further analysis of the experiences. To exemplify, some of the PSTs stated that they focused on description more, as a justification they stated that while describing the situations in their reports, they could realize the reasons that they may not notice during their observations, and they focus on the

description with a purpose to provide themselves and their mentors the overall picture of the incident so that they could understand their perspective in the analysis. In this sense, Hatton and Smith (1995) clarified the importance of two aspects, namely, the first one is about talking about the experience as one observes it to be able to clarify the perspectives, which serves as an important starting point for a useful reflection, and the second aspect is being able to provide one's comments and beliefs on the experience. With respect to the former aspect, instead of directly associating the non-reflective features of the PSTs with their lack of ability in reaching higher levels in their reflections, their initial non-reflective stance could serve as a basis for a useful reflection in time. In other words, considering their ability to improve in reflective stance in the course of their reflective writing experiences even at the beginning of their first reflective writing experiences, the practice of reflection could be considered as a continuous process of improving the complexity of a reflective thought rather than regarding it as a basic transmission from one level to another in a hierarchical order (Lyons, 1998). In this process, even though they may not provide an in-depth analysis at the beginning, their initial stance in reflecting with the focus on their judgments and comments could be considered a pioneer for the further development of their reflective skills with the provision of guidance that will foster the development of other reflective skills (Hatton & Smith, 1995). At this point, the point that needs to be considered is whether they will demonstrate growth in their reflective skills that could result in self-development and a variety of perspectives (Ward & McCotter, 2004).

On the other hand, in terms of the development of the PSTs' reflective thinking skills in the course of the guidance, the study findings are in line with the study of Griffin (2003) and Ho (2009) in that PSTs indicated growth in their

reflective thinking skills in the course of guidance. It is important to mention that it was the first time for the PSTs in this study to start to engage in their first teaching experiences in real classroom contexts, and it was their initial attempt to engage in reflection on their practicum experiences. In this sense, considering the fact that engaging in reflection takes some time, and becoming a reflective practitioner is a process that requires time, and teaching experience (Brubacher, Case, & Reagan, 1993), the development in their reflective and critical stance is promising in that it indicates the potential of the PSTs in enhancing their reflective skills even at the beginning of their teaching experiences (Yeşilbursa, 2011), and their potential in enhancing their reflective skills with the provision of guidance (Yost et al., 2000).

Similar to the change in the PSTs' criticality in their reports, the same change could also be identified in how they observed the classroom context. The interview findings indicated that while observing the practicum classrooms, PSTs focused on everything that they saw in the context at the beginning of the term; however, toward the end, they started to restrict their focus on the observation of particular incidents, and they started to think about the reasons and alternative explanations of the events taking place in the classroom, and they started to analyze the incidents within a wider context and observe the incidents from different perspectives. In this sense, PSTs increase their self-awareness of what they observe and why, and this helps them improve their observation skills (Farrell, 2008). With the improvement in their observation skills, instead of mere observation of their experiences, PSTs gain various perspectives in the way of observing the classes and new awareness on the issues related to the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Farrell, 2008).

With regard to the improvement in the PSTs' reflective thinking skills and the distribution of their criticality level in time, it was found that there was an eye-

catching decrease in the non-reflective features, and an increase in the reflective and critical reflective features in the second observation reports that were written after the provision of two sessions. Although the change was not as striking as in the second week, the criticality of the PSTs was higher than in their first reports. This eye-catching change in the reflective features clearly demonstrates that the guidance on reflective writing, its explanation, and its purpose in the sessions enabled participants to start to reflect on their experiences with a critical stance as suggested in the study of Power (2012). In addition to the clarification of the reflective processes in the sessions, in the interviews, some of the PSTs stated that the models and the reflective tasks designed in the light of the reflective models in the sessions assisted them in how to analyze their experiences with a critical stance, and they considered the guiding questions in the prompts while reflecting on their experiences and this made their reflective writing processes easier. This highlights the importance of providing a workable model that could guide PSTs in reflective thinking skills so that they could extend their knowledge of their teaching and observation experiences (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011). It also indicates that when PSTs are instructed to use prompts including questions that could help them explore reflective thinking, they could reexamine the events in the classroom context and provide further interpretations that help them gain new perspectives (Marchel, 2007).

In terms of the useful models in the sessions, Tripp's critical incident analysis model (2011) was instructed and practiced for enhancing the reflective thinking skills along with the Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988) for guiding the reflective writing processes of the PSTs. Considering the fact that the critical reflective features almost doubled in the second week in which Tripp's model (2011) was employed, it seems that the model provided benefits to PSTs in terms of trying to employ high reflective

thinking skills, and it increased the tendency and orientation of the PSTs to move towards the reflective and critical reflective features. This could be because of the nature of the model; in other words, consisting of two phases as description and explanation, the model helps PSTs move beyond the descriptive characteristics and enable them to analyze their incidents by providing them with some thinking strategies on how to think about the incident from different perspectives and within a wider context (Tripp, 2011). Moreover, considering the increase in their higher level reflective skills, it helps them develop a high level of abstract thinking by formulating a general meaning of the incident within various contexts. As such, it demonstrates parallelism with the study findings of Griffin (2003) in that reflecting on the experiences with the use of critical incident analysis could increase the reflective abilities of the PSTs and lead them to move towards growth and inquiry. In addition, creating and analyzing critical incidents can be considered a huge and essential venue for teaching critical reflection (Bruster & Peterson, 2013) considering its benefit in employing higher-order reflective skills.

With regard to the guidance on reflective writing, PSTs were provided with a prompt including some guiding questions related to each step of Gibbs' reflective model (1988). According to this model (Gibbs, 1988), participants wrote their reflections step by step; in other words, they demonstrated their feelings, evaluated the good and bad sides of their experiences, made sense of the situation, and provided an action plan for their further experiences. As mentioned before, in the interview, PSTs stated that they started to write properly and learned how to engage in reflection thanks to the help of the sessions. Moreover, after the provision of guidance on reflective writing before they wrote their third observation reports, a striking change was observed in the increase in the reflective features that are

associated with the relating level according to Bain et al. (1999). In this sense, the Gibbs' model (1988) could be a useful method in that it enables PSTs to develop reflective features in their reflections and broaden their perspective as illustrated in the study of Mohammed (2016). For this reason, the Gibbs' model (1988) could be used to teach PSTs how to engage in reflection step by step in terms of enhancing both reflective writing and thinking skills because it provides a well-organized structure in a way that the guiding questions and the structured cycle in the model could enable participants to think about different aspects related to their experience, and it also guides them to do both retrospective and prospective reflection on their experiences.

In the interview, participants also stated the benefits of the reflective tasks that were created based on Tripp's (2011) and Gibbs' (1988) models. In this sense, considering the benefits of the tasks in general, it is important to mention that the researcher took notes of the missing points or the needs of the student teachers in terms of writing critical reflection at the end of each session, and she designed the content of each session considering the issues that she identified in her unstructured observation reports. This clearly reveals that being aware of the PSTs' needs could enable teacher educators to design reflective tasks and activities accordingly, and help them foster their reflective thinking skills (Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Lee, 2005). In addition to that, the authentic nature of the reflective tasks in the session could also provide opportunities for the PSTs in working on their own experiences with their friends. With regard to this, the integration of authentic reflective tasks into the practicum experiences of the PSTs could enable them to engage in higher reflective thinking skills, which is also demonstrated in the study of Freese (2006) and (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011). In addition to the content of the sessions and the

reflective tasks, PSTs also stated that the feedback helped them uncover and increase their self-awareness in terms of how they wrote and how they should write. In the feedback, instead of evaluating them in terms of critical or not, the researcher guided them through extending their perspectives on the issues. Taking into account the constructive feedback that they got from the researcher, they started to consider alternative perspectives on the issues and questioned the possible reasons by broadening their knowledge. In line with this, individual and continuous feedback could help PSTs nurture critical reflective skills and enable them to engage in critical self-evaluation (Power 2012), and it could help them gain a critical stance and a reflective orientation in their teaching experiences (Feese, 2006; Oner & Adadan, 2011).

PSTs demonstrated their positive perspectives on the provision of explicit guidance supported by the reflective models, reflective tasks, and constructive feedback on their reflective writing performance. In addition to this, with regard to another component of the learning environment in the study, PSTs also highlighted the benefits of reflecting on their experiences with their critical friends in a collaborative context. In the sessions, PSTs were provided with the opportunities to reflect with their critical friends on their authentic teaching experiences in order to help them gain different perspectives and extend their critical stance by being exposed to a variety of analyses ways of their friends. In this sense, PSTs stated that working with a critical friend enabled them to uncover the reasons for the incidents that they did not realize and gain a different perspective from other people's experiences which is also supported in the study of Freese (1999). Moreover, it helped them feel relaxed in that they realized that they shared the same experiences, and challenges with their friends (Miller, 1990). The benefits of reflecting with

critical friends indicated the nature of the reflection as a social process in which it is the outcome of continuous dialogic interaction with others (Bakhtin, 1986), and it is a social inquiry that enables PSTs to recognize their underlying thoughts and make sense of their experiences and build on them through evaluation of their understanding (Miller, 1990) with the help of being exposed to a variety of interpretations and perspectives (Glazer, Abbott, & Harris, 2004).

When the PSTs' potential in the development of the reflective thinking skills with well-organized guidance is considered, the study is in line with the notion that PSTs could be assisted to engage in critical reflective thinking skills with the provision of systematic and multifaceted guidance (Brookfield, 1995; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Griffin, 2003; Hunter & Hatton, 1998; Russell, 2005). Furthermore, it is essential to create a context in which the teacher candidates are supported, encouraged, and guided through collaborative dialogue, critical friends, and a well-designed community of practice (Kajder & Parkes, 2012). In line with the assumptions of Kajder and Parkes (2012), the study sheds light on the fact that PSTs' reflective thinking skills could be nurtured and enhanced within a learning context in which explicit guidance is provided with reflective tasks and reflective models, the help of critical friends, and the provision of constructive feedback. This necessitates a critically reflective ideology in the teacher education programs which is different from the traditional approaches (Hatton & Smith, 1995). In addition, it highlights the need for a context in which necessary conditions are created to enhance the PSTs' higher-order thinking skills to help them get the most out of their first teaching experiences with the continuous and systematic guidance in reflective writing practices (Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, & Lester, 2002).

5.1 Conclusion

This study provided an in-depth understanding of the reflective writing experiences of the PSTs within a learning context in which guidance on reflective writing and thinking skills is provided in multifaceted ways through explicit instruction, reflective models and tasks with critical friends, and constructive feedback. Creating a learning environment to guide PSTs in the course of their reflective writing experiences, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of (1) the nature of the incidents that PSTs find critical in their observation reports, (2) how reflective writing through explicit guidance and critical friends contribute to the development of criticality in PSTs' reflections, and (3) the overall experience of PSTs from their reflective writing processes.

Through investigating the research questions, the study provided a profound insight into the component and orientation dimension of reflection. In other words, concerning the component dimension, the study indicated that PSTs' preliminary focus was on reflecting on the instructional practices of the teachers that they observed in their practicum classrooms. In addition to this, they also focused on the issues related to the conduct of a lesson and classroom management whereas they paid less attention to themselves and the learning context in their reports. Their preliminary focus in their reports also reflected on the way they observed the classrooms; in other words, most of the PSTs stated that they mostly observed the teachers at the beginning of the term whereas they turned their focus to the students toward the end. In addition to this, when their outcome from the reflective practices and the process that they engaged in reflection is considered, the study demonstrated that PSTs had several challenges in engaging in reflection at the beginning; however, many of the PSTs found reflective writing productive and got benefits from

reflecting on their experiences although it was hard for them at the beginning of the term before the guidance was provided. Thanks to the benefits of working with their critical friends and the guidance in the sessions, they were able to overcome their difficulties and get more benefit from reflective writing toward the end.

With respect to the criticality of the PSTs, the analysis of the observation reports and the interviews indicated that they mostly demonstrated non-reflective features in their observation reports in general and focused on the description of their experiences. However, when the development of their criticality was analyzed in time in the course of the guidance, it was indicated that although they mostly reflected on their experiences at superficial levels in their first reports and they believed that they were descriptive at the beginning, they started to demonstrate some reflective and critical reflective features and engaged in a high level of reflective thinking more in the course of the guidance, and they considered themselves more critical and reflective toward the end. In this sense, the study contributes to the literature in that PSTs' reflective thinking skills could be nurtured and enhanced by integrating multifaceted guidance into the practicum teaching experiences of the PSTs that consist of explicit instruction, reflective tasks with critical friends, and constructive feedback.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

The study sheds light on some important implications that could be implemented in teacher education programs. First of all, the study demonstrated that the PSTs could enhance their reflective writing and thinking skills within a collaborative learning environment in which guidance is provided through explicit instruction, reflective tasks, and individual feedback on the PSTs' reflective writing experiences. It also

indicates that PSTs could extend their observation skills and observes the learning context in their practicum classrooms with a critical stance with the help of the improvement in their reflective thinking skills. This indicates that it is essential and necessary for teacher education programs to create a learning environment designed in the light of a critically reflective approach to enhance both observation and reflective skills of the PSTs.

The study highlights the importance of multifaceted guidance in promoting the reflective thinking skills of the PSTs. To help PSTs get the most out of their first teaching experiences and to learn how to become reflective practitioners, teacher educators could provide continuous guidance on reflective skills of the PSTs with the use of an appropriate workable reflective model and provide them with reflective and authentic tasks in which PSTs have a chance to reflect on their practicum experiences. In addition to this, the study indicates the importance of feedback in the course of the reflective writing experiences of the PSTs. In this sense, teacher educators need to provide constructive feedback on the reflective performances of the PSTs by guiding them with some reflective thinking questions and strategies. Another dimension to think about in such a context is to make it collaborative with the help of critical friends. The study implies that PSTs get benefit from their critical friends as much as they get from the multifaceted guidance. This underlines the importance of creating a collaborative context in practicum courses in which PSTs could share their experiences and feelings with their friends, and have a chance to gain different perspectives on their experiences by engaging in a critical reflection with their friends.

While creating such reflective aids and a context, the study indicates the importance of considering the needs of the students. In other words, in the study, the

researcher monitored the PSTs' reflective needs by analyzing their reflective tasks and taking some observation notes about them after conducting each session. The unstructured observation notes and the analysis of the reflective tasks were used to decide on the content and the tasks in the following sessions to be able to guide PSTs in accordance with their identified needs. In this sense, the study demonstrates the importance of knowing the students' needs, monitoring the areas that they need to improve to enhance their reflective thinking skills, and designing explicit instruction and tasks in accordance with their needs. For this reason, it is essential for teacher educators to continuously monitor their students' needs and design activities and course content accordingly.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

In this study, some limitations were identified, and in this section, some suggestions will be provided for further studies. First of all, the criticality of the PSTs in time with the provision of guidance was observed within a short and limited period of time. Thus, in the study, very little improvement was observed in the high-level reflective skills of the PSTs, and such a limited time may not be enough to observe the overall development of the high-level reflective thinking skills. For this reason, further studies could investigate the development in the criticality of the PSTs over a longer period of time by conducting a longitudinal study.

Another limitation is related to the data collection tools. Considering the number of participants in the study (n=26), a semi-structured interview was conducted with only 13 participants, and it was conducted only at the end of the study to understand the overall experiences of the PSTs. However, to understand the development of the PSTs' criticality levels in detail, in further studies, researchers

could conduct more interviews with each participant, and they could conduct more semi-structured and retrospective interviews at the end of each observation report of the participants to understand how they reflect on their experiences in detail.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

Institution supporting the research: Bogazici University

The title of the research: Enhancing ELT Pre-service Teachers' Reflective Thinking Skills: Going beyond the Descriptive Writing

Project Director: Associate Professor Sibel Tatar

E-mail address: xxx

Phone number: xxx

The name of the researcher: İzel Yenisoy

E-mail address: xxx

Phone number: xxx

Dear teacher candidate,

Izel Yenisoy, a master's student at the Department of Foreign Language Education at Bogazici University, is conducting her thesis research entitled "Developing Reflective Thinking Skills of Pre-Service Teachers: Going Beyond the Descriptive Writing". The aim of this study is to understand ELT pre-service teachers' reflective thinking skills. To conduct this study, a necessary ethic approval has been taken from the Ethics Committee for Master and PhD Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities (SOBETİK). To help us in this research, we kindly invite you, teacher candidates, to participate in our study. Before your decision, we would like to inform you about the study. If you would like to take part in the study after reading the information in this consent form, please sign this form and give it to us.

If you accept to take part in this study, we will request to do two interviews with you. The first interview will be conducted at the beginning of the semester to help us understand your perceptions of reflection in our research. The second interview will be a focus group interview that will be conducted at the end of the semester to understand your overall experience from the reflective writing processes. Based on your availability and preferences, these interviews will be conducted face to face or on an online platform (Zoom) and will be recorded, and they will last about 15-20 minutes.

Second, you will be asked to take part in some instructional tasks that will be conducted in the practice teaching course as part of the course to improve your reflective skills such as comparing two written reflections or working with a partner on an incident encountered in your practicum at schools. Based on these activities, you will be asked to write five journal entries in total in which you will reflect on any incident that you observe during your practicum experience and five feedback to your peers' reflection.

Participants will not be offered any reward, money, or extra course credits. However, they will have opportunities to enhance their reflective thinking skills. This study is conducted for academic purposes and the confidentiality of the participants is the primary concern of the research. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms will be used in all the data that will be collected from the participants. During the study, all data will be kept in a personal computer and a locked drawer, and they will all be deleted and destroyed when the study ends. Participating in this study is completely voluntary. When you give your consent to participate in the study, you have the right to withdraw your consent at any stage of the study without giving any reason, and your wish to leave at any stage of the study

will not affect you adversely in any way. If you would like to leave the study at any stage, all the data that you have provided until that moment will be completely deleted from the personal computer and all the data on paper will also be torn into pieces and destroyed. If you would like to have additional information about the research, please contact Assoc. Prof. Sibel Tatar at the Foreign Language Education Department (Phone: xxx, Address: xxx) or with the researcher using the contact information in the form. If you would like to learn about your rights in the research, you can consult the Ethics Committee for Master and PhD Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities (SOBETİK) (xxx).

If you accept to participate in this study, please sign this form and give it to us.

I, (the name of the participant) ....., have read the text above, and I totally understand the scope and aim of the research and all the responsibilities that I will take voluntarily. I had an opportunity to ask questions about the study. I understand that I can leave this study whenever I want and without giving any reason, and I understand that I will not face any adverse consequences or problems if I want to leave the study.

In these circumstances, I agree to participate in this study voluntarily, without any pressure or coercion.

I have received a sample of the form / I don't want to receive a sample of the form. (In this case, the researcher keeps this copy)

Participant's Name-Surname: .....

Signature:.....

Address (Phone Number, Fax No, if any):.....

Date (day/month/year):...../...../.....

During the interviews that will be conducted face to face or online:

☐ I accept the audio recording.

☐ I accept the video recording.

Researcher’s Name-Surname:.....

Signature:.....

Date (day/month/year):...../...../.....

APPENDIX B

A SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE PROMPT

Read the questions and answer them based on your experiences in writing a reflection.

1. Write three difficulties that you experience while writing your observation reports. Explain why they are difficult/challenging for you.

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_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. In your observation reports, what do you usually focus on?

Please give numbers to the statements below by considering your focus in your reflections. Then, state your reasons why you focus on some of them more than others.

1- Never	2- Rarely	3-Sometimes	4-Usually	5-Always

a. Writing description and details about the incident. (what happened, who was involved, where it happened, etc.) ☐
b. Considering and writing multiple explanations for your actions / beliefs and stating reasons for your beliefs/actions. ☐
c. Looking at the incident from different perspectives and analyzing the incident within multiple contexts (e.g. school, social, educational context) ☐

_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____

APPENDIX C

FIRST SESSION REFLECTIVE TASK

Name & Surname: Name & Surname:

Course Section: Course Section:

Critical Analysis Pair Work

Task 1. Think about some commonplace events that you have observed in your practicum schools. In pairs write 2 commonplace incidents below.

_____

_____

Task 2. Critical Incident Analysis

PART I: Production stage of the incident (what happened)

Details	• What happened? • Where did it happen? • When did it happen? • What made it happen? • What did I do?
Feeling	• How did I feel? • What did it feel like? • How did I react?
People	• Who was involved? • How did they feel? • How did they react?

In pairs, choose one incident among the commonplace incidents that you wrote in Task 1. Look at the questions above. Then, write a description for your incident in 3-4 sentences with your pair.

_____

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PART II: Explanation stage of the incident (why the incident happened)

Explanation and meaning Within the immediate context	• What does the incident mean? • What is my understanding of this incident within an immediate context? • Why did the incident happen? • What are some of the underlying reasons why this incident took place? • How /In what ways did the incident affect the people involved in the immediate context of the incident? (students, mentor teacher, etc.)
General meaning and significance of the incident within a wider context	• What is my understanding of the incident when I consider it within a wider social context? • What is the meaning of the incident within a social/educational/wider context? • How was the incident affected by the wider context in which the incident occurred? • What is the significance of the incident? • Why is it significant to me?
Position	• What are my beliefs/opinions about the incident? • What did I learn from the incident? • How did the incident change my beliefs/ understanding of teaching?

In pairs, think about the questions above in general. Write an explanation for your incident in 5-10 sentences. In your explanation;

a. suggest an explanation and meaning for your incident.

b. state the general meaning and significance of your incident within a wider social context

c. lastly, state your position and opinions about the incident.

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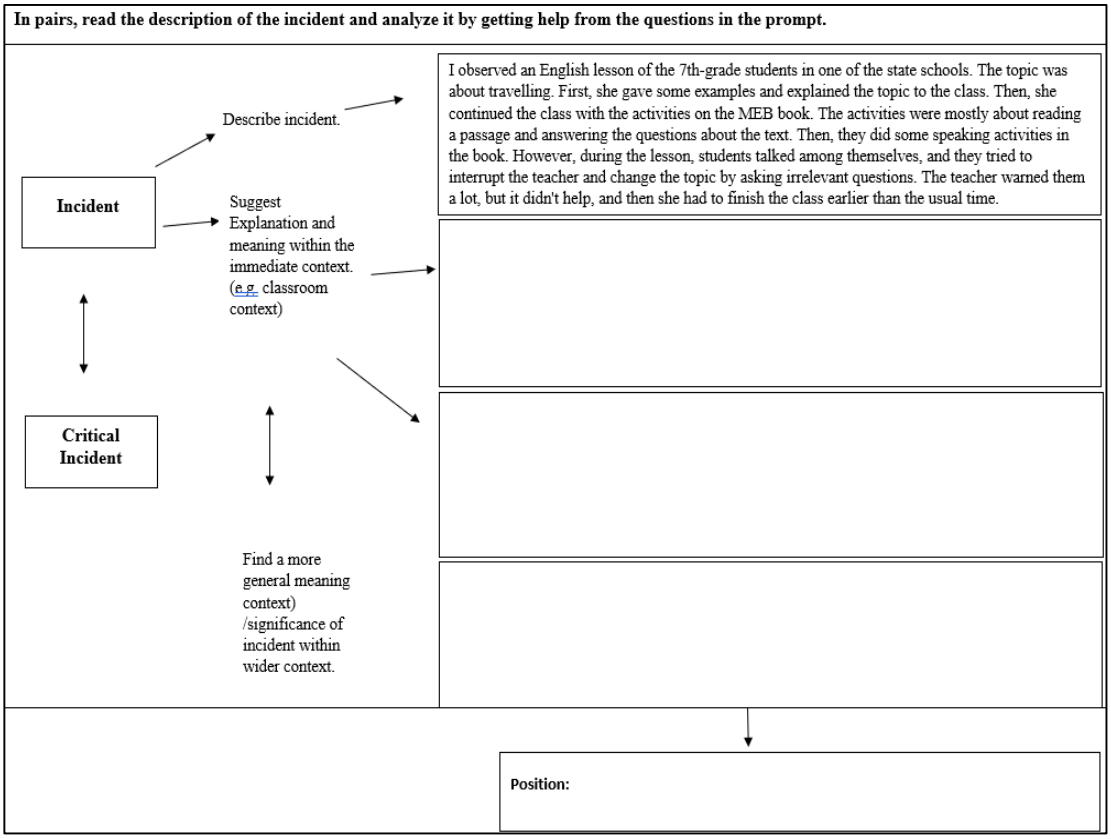
APPENDIX D

SECOND SESSION REFLECTIVE TASK



APPENDIX E

CRITICAL INCIDENT ANALYSIS PROMPT

PART I: Production stage of the incident (Description)

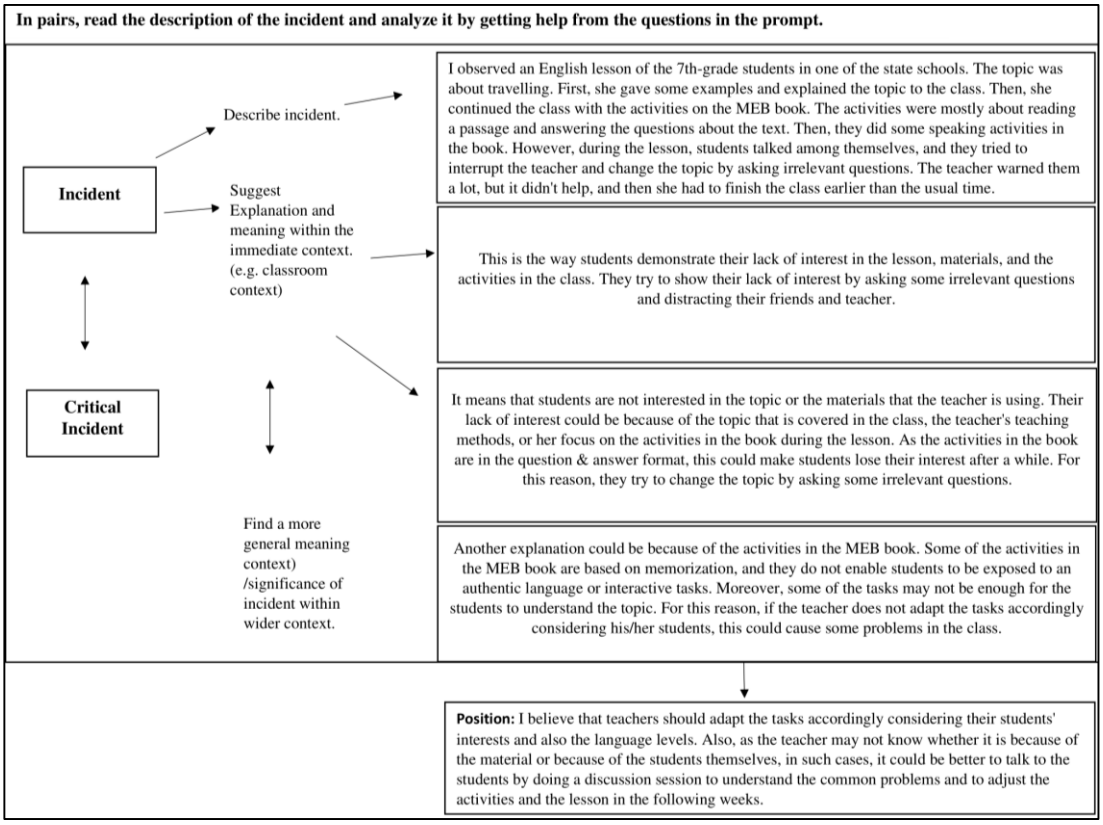
Details	What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? What made it happen? What did I do?
Feeling	How did I feel? How did I react?
People	Who was involved? How did they feel? How did they react?

PART II: Explanation stage of the incident (Analysis)

Explanation & meaning Within the immediate context	What does the incident mean? What is my understanding of this incident within an immediate context? What are some of the underlying reasons why this incident took place? How /In what ways did the incident affect the people involved in the immediate context of the incident? (students, mentor teacher, etc.)
General meaning & significance of the incident within a wider context	What is my understanding of the incident when I consider it within a wider social context? What is the meaning of the incident within a social/educational/wider context? How was the incident affected by the wider context in which the incident occurred? What is the significance of the incident?
Position	What are my beliefs/opinions about the incident? What did I learn from the incident? How did the incident change my beliefs/ understanding of teaching? What is my future plan or action for this incident?

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE CRITICAL INCIDENT ANALYSIS



APPENDIX G

PEER FEEDBACK HANDOUT

1. Read the analysis of your friend.
2. Think about how your friend analyzed the incident. (Whether it has only description of the events / explanation of the reasons for the incident / the analysis of the incident within the immediate and wider context, etc.)
3. Write at least 2-3 guiding questions about the incident for your friend to help him/her analyze the incident critically.
4. Then, talk to your friend and suggest ways that she/he can follow while analyzing an incident (e.g. You can do this / You can look at the incident from this perspective, etc.), and explain how your questions can help him/her.

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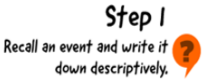
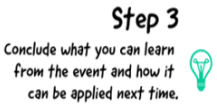
APPENDIX H

GUIDING QUESTIONS ON REFLECTIVE WRITING

	• **Description**	What happened? Provide a clear description of the teaching activity(ies) that you led. At this stage resist the temptation to make judgements or to try to draw conclusions: simply describe.
	• **Thoughts and Feelings**	What were your thoughts about the experience? How did you feel during the experience? How did you feel after the experience?
	• **Evaluation**	Looking objectively at both positive and negative aspects of the experience. What was bad and good about the experience?
	• **Analysis**	Explaining why the experience happened within an immediate & wider context). What sense can you make of this situation? How does your experience relate to that of others?
	• **Conclusion**	What can be concluded (if anything) in a general sense from your experiences of teaching and the analysis you have just undertaken? What did you learn? Are there any areas that you have improved / that you need to improve?
	• **Action Plan**	What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, and personal way of teaching? How might you change your future practice? What can you do differently for your future teaching practices?

APPENDIX I

THIRD SESSION REFLECTIVE TASK

Name & Surname: Name & Surname:

Section: Section:

Reflection Analysis Handout

Pair Work

Read the reflection that was written by an English teacher candidate about one of her teaching experiences in a practicum school. While reading it, think about the questions in the "writing a reflection tool" paper. Then, look at the questions on the back page of the handout and analyze the reflection in terms of its criticality and content.

Reflection

In this lesson, my students were to define synonyms and antonyms and to demonstrate the differences between the two. I introduced the lesson by reading the children's books "If I Were a Synonym" and "If I Were an Antonym". After reading the books I began the lesson by saying: "Here are two strange sounding words: synonyms and antonyms. What do they mean? Synonyms are words which have the same, or very nearly the same meanings. Antonyms are words with opposite or very nearly opposite meanings. All parts of speech, like verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions, can have synonyms and antonyms but the synonym or antonym would need to be the same part of speech. Here are some examples." I believe the preview of the lesson was the strength. I told students what they would be learning. I provided examples in children's books and a PowerPoint presentation.

Unfortunately, I spent so much time on the preview stage of the lesson that we had to rush through the other activities. I think I took too much time teaching because I didn't know what my students did or did not know about synonyms and antonyms. I feel like I talked too much. I wish I had included more communicative activities involving the students. That way they would get more of the practice they need, and I would have a better understanding of what they know or don't know. Improving my pacing will improve student engagement and provide more opportunities for me to assess.

When I teach this lesson again or in future lessons, I will limit the time I spend in preview. I will use more of the 10-minute mini lesson approach and move into student activity sooner. If I give students more time on task, I will have a better idea of which students will master the learning outcomes and which will need additional assistance. I liked the materials I used in the preview so I will need to find alternate uses for them. The two children's books could be placed in a learning station or exhibited for independent reading after the lesson.

Knowing that I need to change the pacing of my lesson, I will read and reflect on Fisher and Frey's book, Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility. This structure will help me pace my instruction so I can give more time on task to my students.

Analysis Questions

1. How would you score this reflection in terms of its criticality out of 10? Please explain your reasons for your score.

Score:

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2. If you think that this reflection is not 10 out of 10,
    a. From what other perspectives would you analyze this incident?
    b. What other ideas/perspectives/analysis would you add to make this reflection more critical?

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APPENDIX J

FEEDBACK RUBRIC

Description	Does the writer provide an objective description of the incident without including any judgments? Does the writer include a clear description of the context? (e.g. what happened, who was involved, where it happened, the writer's role in the incident, etc.)
Feelings	Does the writer include his/her feelings and thoughts about the incident?
Evaluation	Does the writer explain the positive and negative aspects of the incident? (e.g., what went well and what did not go well, or what could be improved) Does the writer draw on any evidence to support his/her evaluation of the incident? (e.g. students' thoughts, mentor's opinion, peer observation feedback, etc.)
Analysis	Does the writer suggest explanations and reasons why the incident happened? Does the writer analyze the incident from different perspectives? (e.g. considering students' reactions, mentor's thoughts, etc.) Does the writer provide explanations and meaning of the incident within an immediate context? Does the writer suggest a general meaning and significance of the incident within a wider context (social, educational, etc.)? Does the writer provide an in-depth analysis of the incident within the immediate and wider context? (e.g. considering the factors related to classroom, school, family, a social or educational context that may affect the incident) Does the writer draw on any evidence to support his/her analysis of the incident? (e.g. literature, or research)
Conclusion	Does the writer explain what s/he has learned in a general sense from the incident or the analysis of the incident? Does the writer explain how the incident has changed his/her way of teaching or beliefs about teaching?
Action Plan	Does the writer explain what s/he will change, continue, or improve in his/her future teaching practices? Does the writer explain what actions or plans s/he will take to build on the knowledge or skills that need to be improved?

Sources: [Gibbs, 1988; Tripp, 2011].

APPENDIX K

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 01.11.2021-36424

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı	:	22
Toplantı Tarihi	:	13.10.2021
Toplantı Saati	:	14:00
Toplantı Yeri	:	Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar	:	Prof. Dr. Ebru Kaya, Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra Seggie, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen
Bulunmayanlar	:	

İzel Yenisoy
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"Enhancing ELT Pre-service Teachers' Reflective Thinking Skills: Going beyond the Descriptive Writing" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2021/64 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 13 Ekim 2021 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. COVID-19 önlemleri kapsamında kurul üyelerinden ıslak imza alınamadığı için bu onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Fatma Nevra Seggie tarafından bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Prof. Dr. Fatma Nevra SEGGIE
ÜYE

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr.Fatma Nevra SEGGIE
Raportör

SOBETİK 22 13.10.2021

Bu belge 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5. Maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

APPENDIX L

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your experiences in writing observation reports in the practicum course this term. How was it for you?
2. Can you explain some of the difficulties or challenges that you experienced while writing your first reflections at the beginning of the term?
3. When you think about your experiences at the beginning and at the end of the term, have you realized any difference in these challenges?
    a. What helped/hindered you to overcome these challenges?
4. While writing your observation reports, what do you think you focused on most? (e.g description of the incident, feelings, evaluation, analysis, the outcome of the incident, your future plans or actions about the incident, etc.) Please explain why you focus on some of them more than others.
5. When you think about your first and recent observation reports, have you realized any differences in the way you reflect on your experiences? If so, please explain how your focus has changed.
6. You worked with your friend in the analysis of the incidents and also you gave feedback to each other for your analysis in the practicum course. Can you explain what you felt and thought about working with a peer while reflecting on an incident?
    a. Can you remember a moment in which your friend helped or hindered you in the analysis?

7. Think about your first and recent observation experiences in your practicum school. Could you explain what kind of things did you focus on while observing the classrooms?
8. Towards the end of the term, have you recognized any difference in the way you observe and analyze the classrooms? Can you give me some examples?
9. After all of your reflective writing experiences, how can you evaluate your reflections from 1- 10 in terms of criticality? (1-10) Why?
    a. Can you give me some examples from your reflections that you think were reflective?

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