

Pre-service L2 Teacher Trainees' Reflection: What Do They Focus On?

Minyoung Cho
(Korea University)

Cho, Minyoung. (2017). Pre-service L2 teacher trainees' reflection: What do they focus on? *English Teaching*, 72(1), 105-129.

Reflective practice has become an integral component in teacher education. Many studies have investigated the development of a teacher's reflective practice, but less attention has been paid to novice L2 teacher trainees' development of reflective practice. Similarly, little is known about their concerns, interest, and needs, as they manifest in reflection. This study, therefore, identifies reflective themes that teacher trainees concern about after microteaching. It further examines whether teacher trainees' reflective focus differs depending on their knowledge and experience in the teacher education program. Seventeen teacher trainees, who were either in the beginning or advanced L2 teaching courses, reflected about their microteaching, and their written reflections were analyzed by their contents. Seven themes emerged, which include teacher behaviors, classroom management, planning, microteaching context, language-specific features, student learning, and teacher roles. Overall, teacher trainees focused more on teacher behaviors and their self-image in relation to classroom management and lesson planning than issues on student learning and teaching. It was also found that this tendency was stronger for beginning trainees than advanced trainees. These findings are discussed in light of the development of reflective practice.

Key words: reflective practice, microteaching, teacher reflection, L2 teacher trainees, pre-service teacher education

1. INTRODUCTION

Reflection or reflective practice has become an integral educational practice in teacher education program. Critical evaluation of one's teaching in relation to a teacher's role in class not only improves one's teaching performance, but also helps one grow as an autonomous and independent teacher who has authorities in their decisions and

© 2017 The Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE)

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0, which permits anyone to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work provided the original work and source is appropriately cited.

performance (Akbari, 2007; Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983, 1987). While reflective teacher education is essential for both pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development, the training of reflective thinking is particularly important for pre-service teachers, because they should be able to make their own decisions and professional development after leaving teacher education program. Orland-Barak and Yinon (2007) noted that “prospective teachers would ideally acquire competencies that transcend technical thinking about ‘what to do in the classroom’ and engage in trying to establish relevant connections between theory and practice” (p. 958).

During teacher education program, teacher trainees engage in a range of teaching activities including microteaching and teaching practicum under the advisory of teacher educators or experienced teachers. Microteaching is perhaps one of the earliest types of teaching practice that teacher trainees encounter (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kilic, 2010), as it can be conducted within a regular classroom setting without the support of other institutions. Nevertheless, it still allows teacher trainees to practice and reflect on their teaching skills, by having them conduct a self-reflection and receive feedback from a teacher or their colleagues. In addition, information obtained from microteaching reflection is useful for teacher educators as well, because it helps them understand their students’ concerns, interest, and needs. Put differently, it serves as guidance for teacher educators on how to support their students’ development as a teacher. However, compared to our understanding of experienced pre-service teachers’ or expert teachers’ reflective practice, little is known about novice teacher trainees reflective practice.

Reflective thinking is a complex reasoning process that requires one to associate one’s behaviors with teaching theories, methodologies, and immediate teaching contexts (Hatton & Smith, 1995). This means that differences in the degree and depth of knowledge and experiences in teaching can create different types of reflection. Understanding how teachers’ reflection changes and develops over time along with the expansion of knowledge and experience is important to understand teachers’ shifting needs throughout their career and their ongoing professional development as a teacher. Studies exist that demonstrated the development of teachers’ reflective practice over their professional career (e.g., from novice to expert teachers) (Clarke, 1995; Livingston & Borko, 1989; Mok, 1994; Westerman, 1991), but less attention has been paid to the emergence and development of reflective practice of teacher trainees during their initial stage of teacher education. To address this gap, this study investigates teacher trainees’ reflective practice as it manifests in the reflection of microteaching. It first intends to identify emerging themes from teacher trainees’ reflection. This study further seeks to understand the development of teacher trainees’ reflective practice by comparing reflective focus between beginning and advanced teacher trainees.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Reflective Practice in Teacher Education

Reflective practice refers to the process of carefully reflecting and evaluating any belief, practice, or event in class in relation to its grounding knowledge, and searching for solutions for any problems found in this process for future improvement. Reflective practice traces back its origin to Dewey (1933), where he argued that reflective practice involves “(1) a state of doubt, hesitation, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and (2) an act of searching, hunting, enquiring, to find materials that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the complexity” (1933, p. 12).

One of the main goals of reflective practice in teacher education is to cultivate teacher candidates who are skilled at reasoning about their teaching behaviors. For example, teachers should be able to analyze why they incorporate certain pedagogical choices with respect to theory and knowledge, and conclude how they can improve their teaching to maximize student learning (Lee, 2005). Without reflection, teaching methodologies and competences will become habits or routines (Postholm, 2008). Teachers who engage in systematic analysis of the event or teaching practices can not only understand the nature and the role of a teacher at the critical level, but also reach conclusions for educational choices they had made previously or would make in the future (Lee, 2005, p. 700). It seems that engaging in reflective practice in itself is a continuous learning process for teachers.

Reflective practice in teaching can occur at various times. Schön (1983, 1987) distinguished between “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action.” Reflection-in-action refers to teachers’ awareness of their decision occurring at the time of teaching, while reflection-on-action denotes reflection taking place after teaching. Reflection in teacher education generally takes the form of retrospective approach through the analysis of teaching events that are completed already. However, reflection can also occur prospectively before teaching takes place. Akbari (2007) emphasized the role of imaginative reflection by arguing that “one of the main goals of reflective teaching is making teachers independent and autonomous in their classroom decisions, and this autonomy needs the foresight to get prepared to try other alternative solutions to the problems they confront in their day-to-day struggles” (p. 197). The emphasis of imaginative reflection is in line with one of ultimate goals of reflective practice, which is to help teachers become independent, autonomous, and authoritative in their decision-making as a teacher.

Various methods have been proposed and implemented to help teacher trainees develop reflective skills, which include, but are not limited to, personal narratives in diary or

journal writing, in-person observation and video reflection (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008). Different methods give different insights to the understanding of the development of reflective practice. For example, personal narratives on one's learning and teaching histories allows us to observe how teacher beliefs, values, and teaching practices are influenced by one's experience as a student and as a teacher. In-person observation has a benefit of observing real-time teaching practices performed by other teachers, but its limitation lies in the difficulties in applying lessons to their own teaching practices. Video reflection can occur by recording one's teaching practice and analyzing one's performance. Perry and Talley (2001) noted that video is "a powerful tool for bringing the complexities of the classroom into focus and supporting pre-service teachers in connecting knowledge and practice" (p. 26). Videoing is useful in that teachers can observe their behaviors in a somewhat objective way, which may otherwise be distorted by their memory. Benefits of video reflection include the possibility of observing real-time teaching practices and immediately connecting the recording with their own teaching.

These reflective methodologies can be adopted in various teaching environments, but the content of reflection may be affected by the way reflective practice is situated. One of the common forms of teaching that is implemented at the initial stage of teacher education program is microteaching (e.g., Kilic, 2010). Microteaching refers to teaching a small portion of a lesson to colleague teacher trainees, and it is generally carried out under the supervision of a teacher or an advisor. Although microteaching can also be adopted in teacher employment and in-service courses, microteaching in teacher education program serves as a venue for teacher trainees to practice and develop their teaching skills vis-a-vis teaching theories and knowledge. More importantly, it provides situated contexts in which one's teaching skills and grounding beliefs and values can be reflected upon.

2.2. Teacher Experience and Reflective Practice

While reflective practice helps teacher trainees learn and grow as a teacher, information obtained from reflection is useful for teacher educators as well. As reflection reveals candidate teachers' concerns, interest, and needs, teacher educators can prepare and develop appropriate mentorship models for their students. Reflection also reveals the process of teacher development by showing how teacher trainees concerns and interest change and evolve. Differences between experienced and unexperienced teachers' reflective practice have indicated such changes and development (Clarke, 1995; Livingston & Borko, 1989; Mok, 1994; Nunan, 1992; Reynolds, 1992; Westerman, 1991).

Novice and expert teachers differ in terms of how they allocate their attention during teaching and reflection. Novice teachers' reflection tends to be inconsistent and diversified across various issues and events that happened during the lesson, whereas expert teachers'

reflection tends to be focused (e.g., Nunan, 1992; Reynolds, 1992). Specifically, Livingston and Borko (1989) demonstrated that novice teachers showed concerns about a wide range of class issues including student involvement and the success and effectiveness of their lesson. In contrast, expert teachers' reflection focused on student understanding of materials and the accomplishment of learning in alignment with instructional goals. They also tended to be selective in the reflection, mentioning only important classroom events relevant to student learning, but rarely commenting on their teaching effectiveness.

In addition, Richards (1998a) showed that experienced teachers' decision-making tends to be more interactive (a type of decision made during a lesson in an improvisational way), but inexperienced teachers tend to rely on pre-active decision-making (a type of decision making made at the phase of planning before teaching). Livingston and Borko (1989) attributed these differences between novice and expert teachers to differences in their cognitive structure and ability to improvise in class. They argued that novice teachers' "cognitive schemata are less elaborate, interconnected and accessible than experts'" (p. 39), making them draw on large schemata they possess in reflection, rather than being selective in recalling schemata relevant to a particular situation. Additionally, novice teachers' lack of ability to improvise and associate existing content knowledge with teaching contexts leads them to rely on scripted lesson plans. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) noted that novices follow rules, the advanced or experienced consider situational factors, and experts follow their intuition.

Given these differences between novice and expert teachers, a related issue on teacher development concerns how teacher trainees' reflection evolves during their time in the teacher education program. One of the central interest in L2 reflective pedagogy has been the role of teacher education programs in preparing pre-service teachers' professional development (for a review, see Vélez-Rendón, 2002). Particularly, the effectiveness of reflective practice on the development of teacher trainees' teaching effectiveness has been considered. Yet, despite the importance of reflective practice in teacher development, critical views exist in its short-lasting effects (Park, 2014). Similarly, Johnson (1994) found that teacher trainees' own learning experience is more influential for teacher development than reflective practice that is conducted as part of teacher education. Also, Westerman (1991) showed that novice teachers' evaluation on student behaviors and completion of lesson objectives has little bearing on their reflection and teaching. He argued that only expert teachers' evaluation of student learning and goal attainment leads to the reflection and improvement in teaching.

These findings appear to indicate that teachers' reflective practice should ideally develop to adopt learning-oriented perspectives by paying attention to lesson content and student learning (e.g., Clarke, 1995). Nonetheless, reflective practice in the initial stage of teacher development is still critical for teachers' self-confidence and self-efficacy (Sarıçoban,

2016; Yıldız, Geçikli, & Yeşilyurt, 2016). The initial experience teacher trainees have as a teacher can shape their views on teaching and teacher roles that may have lasting effects throughout their professional career (Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995).

In addition to general skills, competences, and emotions that emerge from reflection, it seems important to consider how discipline-specific teacher knowledge develops through reflective practice. Previous studies on L2 teacher education have focused on understanding teacher perception in adopting particular L2 teaching methodologies (for a review, see Borg, 2003). However, rarely has other issues on L2 teaching been addressed in the literature of L2 teacher reflection, partly because reflective pedagogy in L2 is a relatively new field (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In this light, understanding specific aspects of reflective practice that are uniquely applied to L2 teaching will provide insights to L2 teacher development (Farrell, 2015).

Borg (2006) identified distinctive features of foreign language teaching compared to other educational disciplines. Among others, L2 teaching is more dynamic and practical than other subjects, and the scope of teaching is comprehensive to include not only linguistic knowledge, but other aspects such as culture and communication skills. Moreover, as interaction plays a pivotal role in L2 teaching and learning, teaching methodologies should facilitate student involvement by incorporating more communication between a teacher and learners, and between learners. It is also seen that creativity, flexibility, and enthusiasm are important characteristics of language teachers.

Furthermore, teachers' language proficiency or non-nativeness becomes an issue with respect to teacher knowledge (Medgyes, 2001). Farrell and Richards (2015) argued that language teachers' professional competence and their capacity to apply various teaching methodologies in class are largely determined by the teacher's proficiency in the target language (p. 55). The importance of teacher proficiency lies in the fact that teachers' input functions as a language model for students. In this sense, it seems desirable for teachers to reflect on their knowledge and their use of the target language as part of the reflective practice (Farrell & Richards, 2015; Medgyes, 2001).

To summarize, it is well-recognized that reflective practice is essential for effective teaching and teachers' professional development. Without a doubt, its importance expands to teacher trainees who are in the initial stage of teacher development. Reflective teaching not only enables teacher trainees or pre-service teachers to build knowledge and awareness of their educational choices but also shapes their perspectives as a teacher, helping them continuously advance in their professional realm in the long-term (Lee, 2005). Despite the importance, however, relatively scant attention has been paid to teacher trainees' reflection and their reflective practice that occurs in the initial stage of teacher education program. Similarly, little is known about how reflective practice evolves or changes along with the accrued experience in the program. Therefore, the present study attempts to understand

interest and concerns of teacher trainees as they manifest in their reflection of microteaching. It also compares beginning and advanced teacher trainees' written reflection in terms of their reflective focus in order to understand how their interest and concerns change along with their experience in L2 teaching. Specifically, the following questions are asked:

1. What does L2 teacher trainees' reflection reveal about their concerns and interest in L2 teaching?
2. How does beginning teacher trainees' focus in reflection differ from that of advanced teacher trainees?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

Participants were 17 prospective second language (L2) teachers who were enrolled in an undergraduate L2 teaching program in a state university in America. Table 1 shows the participants' background regarding their native language, target language, L2 teaching experiences and courses taken as part of the teacher training program.

As indicated in Table 1, most participants chose their target language as English and four participants' (BT2, BT4, BT5, BT8) target languages were Japanese or Spanish. Nine participants were native speakers of the target language, and the rest eight participants were non-native speakers of the target language. Those who were classified as beginning trainees (BT) ($n = 9$) were from an introductory course on L2 teaching, which is designed for the first-year teacher trainees who had just joined the program. On the other hand, the participants classified as advanced trainees (AT) ($n = 8$) were from an advanced course on L2 teaching theories and methodologies, which has pre-requisite of taking some introductory courses of L2 learning and L2 teaching. As can be seen in Table 1, in terms of courses taken, while beginning trainees had no or little experience of taking courses related to L2 learning and teaching, the advanced trainees had taken more diverse courses including L2 learning, L2 teaching, teaching L2 listening and speaking, and teaching L2 reading and writing. As for the participants' previous L2 teaching experience, four among nine beginning trainees and seven among eight advanced trainees had previous teaching experience as a private tutor, and these experiences ranged from three weeks to two years. However, none of the participants had any formal teaching experiences such as working as a student teacher or a teacher, so all participants were considered as initial teacher trainees who had just started their career in L2 teaching.

TABLE 1
Participants' Demographic Information

ID	L1	Target L2	Previous teaching experience	Previous courses
BT1	Korean	English	Yes	None
BT2	Japanese	Japanese	No	None
BT3	English	English	No	None
BT4	English	Spanish	No	L2 learning
BT5	English	Japanese	No	Bilingualism
BT6	Japanese	English	No	None
BT7	English	English	Yes	L2 learning
BT8	English	Spanish	Yes	None
BT9	English	English	Yes	None
AT1	English	English	Yes	L2 teaching
AT2	Japanese	English	Yes	L2 teaching, L2 learning, Teaching L2 Reading & Writing
AT3	English	English	Yes	L2 teaching
AT4	Korean	English	Yes	L2 learning, L2 teaching, Bilingual education
AT5	Japanese	English	Yes	L2 learning, L2 teaching
AT6	English	English	Yes	L2 learning, L2 teaching
AT7	English	English	No	L2 learning, L2 teaching
AT8	Filipino, English	English	Yes	L2 learning, L2 teaching, Teaching L2 Listening & Speaking, Bilingual education, Language concepts for L2 learning and teaching

Note. BT = Beginning Trainee; AT = Advanced Trainee

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected as part of the regular course requirement, and all participants engaged in microteaching and reflection. As the participants were from the two different courses, the contents of the two courses differed; however, the two courses were similar in that both introduced teaching methodologies and techniques and included microteaching as part of its practical application. The goal of the microteaching was to provide teacher trainees with opportunities to practice their teaching skills before they engage in authentic teaching environments. The microteaching was carried out as a form of co-teaching, where two candidate teachers formed a group and taught 20 minutes of their lesson to colleague students. The original lesson plan was 50 minutes, and the trainees received feedback on their lesson plan from an instructor. During microteaching, half of the students in the course played the role of a student, and the rest of the class observed and evaluated the teachers' teaching activity. The participants' microteaching was video-recorded and teacher trainees wrote a reflection on their performance as a teacher, after watching and analyzing

their teaching. Although general guidelines were given for the written reflection, there were no specific questions or prompts that elicit specific types of reflection. All enrolled students engaged in microteaching and reflection, but reflections from those who agreed to participate in the study were used for analysis. Although the researcher was the instructor of the two courses, contents of their reflection were not graded, so the influence of the researcher's position in their reflection is considered minimal.

The participants' written reflection was analyzed by their contents. Following Eddy-U (2015), theme was taken as the unit of analysis, and the participants' written comment on a coherent theme was identified and indexed. There were no pre-defined themes because the current study intends to identify emerging themes from the participants' reflection. Next, the participants' comments were classified based on the identified themes, and the frequency of the themes mentioned by the beginning trainees and advanced trainees were tallied and compared.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Emerging Themes from Teacher Trainees' Reflection

The first research question intends to identify emerging themes from the participants' reflection after microteaching. The participants showed overall satisfaction with their performance as a teacher in the microteaching, but they also made critical comments on their teaching. Seven themes emerged from the analysis.

4.1.1. Teacher behaviors

Video recording allowed participants to notice their behaviors which may otherwise remain unnoticed. Teacher behaviors mentioned by the participants include manner of delivery, teachers' position and movement, and other attitudes or gestures they displayed during the lesson. Clear and fluent delivery of instruction seemed to be an important concern for many participants.

There were times when I would stutter and that could be improved by practicing what I'm going to say more. (BT#1)

I sounded a bit clumsy at times. I should remember to write down some ideas so that I can smoothly be able to speak. (BT#2)

Also, the participants pointed out that teachers' unconscious disruptive body movement and their stiffness or their staying in one position is problematic.

I realize that I use my arms a lot when I talk and I think I should try to minimize that because some students may find it distracting to have a teacher move around too much like that. (BT#4)

Kris and I could've moved around more, instead of just standing still. I feel that it would've helped us be more animated and capture the attention of the students more. (BT#5)

4.1.2. Classroom management

Teacher trainees made harsh evaluations on their classroom management skills. Examples of classroom management included time management, controlling student behaviors and engaging students in class activities. Particularly, time management was a problem for many participants.

We thought our lesson will be too much, but once we started it was pretty quick and finished earlier than what we were supposed to do. ... Maybe next time, we can make it longer and cut if there is no time for lesson during teaching the class. (BT#6)

As BT#6 experienced, novice teachers may not have a good sense of estimating how long a certain activity would take. Time issue has been brought up in many trainees' reflection, but approaches taken by beginning and advanced trainees differed slightly. For beginning trainees, difficulties in time management have been associated with their unpreparedness in a planning phase, while advanced trainees seemed dissatisfied with their lack of adaptability in changing the format of an activity or not making improvisational decisions at the time of teaching.

Because it is difficult to predict how long each part of the activity will actually take, it is efficient to plan more activities than can be done as Shelly and I had. (BT#4)

An improvement I could make, and something I should have done while conducting the lesson, was to make decisions on what to do in class and what to skip. Teaching requires assimilation and adjusting to the class. ... My unexpected

obstacle was the lack of time. As the teacher, in order to give the students more time to speak, I should have made a quick decision and skipped some slides that were time consuming. (AT#5)

In addition, although teacher trainees expressed general satisfaction with their peers' participation during the lesson, some trainees commented on difficulties in controlling students in terms of the content and topic of conversation during activities.

I feel that it is necessary for the students to get into speaking mode. Granted, I should have had better control over the topic, since I did notice that some students were off topic. (AT#6)

I gave them time to discuss and do some group work, but when I wanted to stop the time, it was hard because they still keep talking. I see these problems in real teaching. After they finish talking about their main point, they continue going to talk about other stuff that does not relate to the lecture and the teacher tries to stop, but they do not. (AT#2)

Both examples illustrate challenges of controlling student talking, as peer interaction is a common form of in-class activity to facilitate language development. What seems interesting is that AT#2 was able to make a prospective reflection, not necessarily retrospective in nature, by associating his observation with potential problems he/she may face in real teaching.

4.1.3. Planning

Reflection revealed practical challenges of implementing lesson plans in class due to unexpected and dynamic classroom environment. Many participants acknowledged the discrepancy between their plans and reality, but the participants seemed to understand this as something that can happen any time.

I learned from the teaching demonstration that I cannot present a task to students, expecting my lessons will somehow work out perfectly like a magic. If there needs to be adjustments, I have to make some changes of adaptations to the particular situation that I might have not expected in the planning phase. (AT#4)

As AT#4 mentioned, teacher trainees seem to consider flexibility and adaptability as important teacher characteristics that enable one to make impromptu decisions in

unexpected situations.

Another aspect of planning students regretted included material preparation or time allocation for an activity.

If I could change something, maybe having some handouts would also have benefited with our presentation. ... We did give the map as a print out for the students to refer to, however from my understanding, it seemed a little confusing to them. Maybe some instructions on the handout would also have benefited our lesson. (BT#3)

By planning each part of the lesson with a little buffering time allows for both teachers and students to adjust if things do not go according to plan, such as if students have a hard time understanding the material or need more time to complete the assignment in class. (BT#4)

As they reflected, class materials or activities can be thoroughly prepared in the planning stage that teacher trainees can apply immediately.

4.1.4. Microteaching context

Reflections pertaining to the context of microteaching emerged. The setting of microteaching is different from other teaching practices in terms of the student formation, the existence of a supervisor, and even the purpose of teaching. Specifically, topics such as teaching colleagues and expecting student level, the format of co-teaching, and lessons from peer observation have been raised. Below shows challenges of teaching colleagues in an artificial setting.

I was nervous at first because I am not used to teaching to my peers. I have taught in classes before, but this is because they are learning English. Teaching to my peers who already know the English language made it a little intimidating. (AT#6)

As AT#6 illustrated, teaching L2 to their peers may not necessarily authentic, and this is even so if participating students already know the target language a candidate teacher is teaching. A related issue concerns the gap between the presumed student proficiency and real language ability of the participating students.

The free talk did not work as well as I have hoped compared to the ESOL class I

used to be a part of. Possibly because my ideal class would fall under a high beginner to low intermediate class learning English who were briefly exposed to English. The students that participated in my teaching were all native like or well beyond the level I was targeting, thus more off topic speech. (AT#6)

The second problem was that the target level was intermediate level high school and perhaps even college students learning English, so to be perfectly fair I did not expect anyone to accurately act as such. (AT#7)

Granted, the gap between participating students' real language proficiency and a teacher expected level of proficiency poses challenges for a teacher to make predictions regarding student performance and to make prospective decisions accordingly.

While the context of microteaching presents challenges, this can also benefit novice teachers who need support from others. The availability of peer observation and co-teaching experience were positively described.

From Jon's and Laura's teaching demo, I could see that he was using many pictures and gestures for class to give them visualized more so they could understand their concepts of the lesson easily. My presentation had pictures too but they were really decent pictures. (AT#2)

Being able to work with a partner did take off the stress for organization ideas. I liked being able to exchange different teaching ideas and methods, as I found Michael also had some experience with teaching. (BT#3)

AT#2's comment showed that a teacher trainee can learn by observing and comparing colleague teachers' teaching performance with their own. Also, BT#3's comment indicates that co-teaching gave an opportunity for beginning trainees to collaborate with other teachers and learn from each other.

4.1.5. Language-specific features

Reflective comments related to language teaching were identified, which include complexities in L2 teaching, teachers' knowledge in L2, non-native issue, and the use of L1. AT#1's example below represents how the trainee is aware of complex issues in foreign language teaching.

To keep students' engagement into the task, the teacher can introduce cultural

tasks that incorporate how skills from the task can be used in real-life tasks, such as the letter to Santa task. Although students may think they are just writing a letter to Santa about their gift, they can use elements from the letter in other real-world tasks. For example, the basic format of letter writing is not only applied in a letter to Santa, but to other people as well, such as their teachers, parents, friends, etc. Furthermore, there was how to make a polite request to somebody and thanking them, as well as being able to make a coherent description to someone who is not physically present with you. (AT#1)

AT#1's comment addressed distinctive characteristics of foreign language teaching. Language instruction should be practical for real world use, and the scope of instruction expands to include linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural knowledge. These features are distinctive to foreign language teaching.

Another issue was teachers' knowledge of the target language or non-nativeness. In a co-teaching context, one teacher can be more fluent than the other teacher, which led some trainees to reflect on the importance of teachers' knowledge of the target language.

I've noticed that mastering my knowledge is one of the highlighted elements in becoming successful teacher. I had brief time to prepare for Chinese and I didn't get a professional aid. Then, it was hard to completely grasp the language itself. (BT#2)

Similarly, BT#1 expressed her concern as a non-native teacher teaching target language to native speakers.

At first, I was very nervous and even embarrassed because I am not really good at speaking English. It was somewhat tough job for me because of the fact that I am not a native speaker but have to teach English in front of native speakers. (BT#1)

If I were to use this lesson plan again, one thing that I would do differently is to explain things in the student's native language. (AT#1)

Although BT#1's case was related to the artificial context of microteaching where those playing the student role were not real language learners, a teacher's non-nativeness or lack of proficiency in the target language has been an important issue for many foreign teachers in relation to teacher's knowledge. Moreover, reflection in terms of the use of L1 is a unique option available for L2 teachers, which can be reflected upon for effective teaching.

4.1.6. Students learning

Teacher trainees also revealed their concerns for students' learning and progress as they relate to their behaviors in class. Topics mentioned by the participants included comprehension checks, effectiveness of their explanations or instructions, evaluations of the teaching methods or techniques they adopted in the lesson.

First, some trainees confessed that they were relatively less attentive to student learning, progress, and difficulties in completing given activities.

We provided a list of the vocabulary words that would be important to catch throughout the lesson and video, however, there was no instance of FFI or comprehension check that would've ensured that the students were able to recognize and the provided vocabulary find useful. (BT#8)

Additionally, some trainees reflected upon teaching materials, techniques and even teaching approaches they adopted. Below are examples.

Furthermore, a power point seems like a very formal method of presenting information to little children. Instead of using the power point for the full lecture, I would write the Santa letter on the board to make the lesson seem less formal and more personable around children. ... by using TBLT to demonstrate and practice how language is used in the real world, teachers may also include words and phrases that native speakers use, but are not included in the textbook, so that students' production of language will sound more authentic. (AT#1)

Taking a look at the actual tasks that I had my acting students undergo, I felt that it would be a good idea to introduce the relevancy and importance of being able to retell a story/experience with other people they may meet with in the future. (AT#3)

AT#1 evaluated her choice of power point materials, which may not be appropriate for the target pupils of her lesson. AT#1's reflection on task-based instruction was associated with effective teaching or learning of the target language. In addition, AT#3 showed his opinion that being explicit about the relevance of the in-class task to the real-world tasks would be helpful for students.

4.1.7. Teacher roles

It was found that reflection after microteaching gave the participants opportunities to contemplate teaching and the role of a teacher and to experience a sense of being a teacher.

By experiencing microteaching, I was able to grasp the concept of being a teacher and what constitute as a teacher. This is by building a rapport between teacher and students in which may be one of the crucial keys in efficient and successful teaching. (BT#2)

During micro-teaching however, I actually felt like being in the teacher position where I'm not just explaining concepts, but actually being able to share in a non-presentation format. (BT#3)

These examples indicated that the participants seemed to develop their perspective on teacher roles in the classroom, by becoming a teacher during microteaching. Moreover, there were instances where the trainees' perception on teacher behaviors changed.

Sometimes, I see teachers who cannot finish their lectures in 50 minutes and keep doing their stuff and realize that the time is already over or teachers who finish earlier than class time, then, if they do not have anything to cover, they finish earlier which wasting our time of study. ... I thought how come teachers could not manage the time well so the students can be next class on time without rushing. However, after I finished this teaching demo, I realized that it is the most difficult issue for teaching. (BT#6)

Based on his difficulties in time management as a teacher, BT#6 came to understand a teacher's perspective or challenges in managing time, which had been previously perceived from a student perspective.

To summarize, seven themes were identified from teacher trainees' written reflection, which seem critical for effective teaching and teachers' profession growth. For some participants, the first experience of teaching in a relatively formal context came as a challenge. However, the participants commented that it turned out to be satisfactory and valuable experience, as it gave them hands-on experience of practicing their teaching skills as well as opportunities to reflect teacher roles and their qualifications as a teacher.

4.2. Differences in Reflective Focus Between Beginning and Advanced Trainees

Based on the identified themes, the second research question examined whether there were differences in terms of reflective focus between beginning trainees and advanced trainees. Table 2 and Figure 1 show the percentage of learner comments on seven identified themes.

TABLE 2
Frequency of Reflective Focus Across Seven Themes by Teacher Trainees

Theme	Raw Frequency		Percentage	
	Beginning trainees	Advanced trainees	Beginning trainees	Advanced trainees
Teacher behaviors	15	4	13.89	4.35
Classroom management	19	14	17.59	15.22
Planning	17	10	15.74	10.87
Microteaching context	13	10	12.04	10.87
Language-specific features	12	20	11.11	21.74
Student learning	11	20	10.19	21.74
Teacher roles	21	14	19.44	15.22
Total	108	92	100	100

FIGURE 1
Percentage of Reflective Focus of Beginning and Advanced Trainees



Note. 1 = Teacher behaviors; 2 = Classroom management; 3 = Planning; 4 = Microteaching context; 5 = Language-specific features; 6 = Student learning; 7 = Teacher roles

The figure indicates that overall, beginning trainees expressed concerns of most of the themes than advanced trainees, except for two themes of language-specific features and

student learning. This in turn indicates that the beginning trainees' reflection spreads out equally across seven categories, but advanced trainees' reflection seems to be focused on language-specific features and student learning.

In addition, there exist sharp contrasts between the two groups in the categories of teacher behaviors, planning, language-specific features and student learning. Beginning trainees reflected frequently on teacher behaviors and planning, whereas advanced trainees paid more attention to language-specific features of the lesson and student learning. It was also found that classroom management, microteaching context, and reflection on teacher roles seem to be important concerns for both beginning and advanced trainees, but the ways the two groups reflected on these issues varied slightly.

I think a little more movement, rather than just staying in one place could have been better. (Beginning trainee) (BT#3)

I noticed that I seem a bit distant from the class and not too interactive by just standing near the desk and reading off the power point. Instead, what would have been better to do, especially if my students are in elementary school, is to go closer to the projector screen and point or guide with my hands the parts that I want the students to repeat after. (Advanced trainee) (AT#1)

We thought our lesson will be too much, but once we started it was pretty quick and finished earlier than what we were supposed to do. ... Maybe next time, we can make it longer and cut if there is no time for lesson during teaching the class. (Beginning trainee) (BT#6)

Now that I think about different modifications of my own activity, it would have been really good if I came up with these modifications before the demonstration. Although I might not have enough time to imply all those options in a lesson, in a long-term, planning for more than I need will allow me to become a better teacher who can always think beyond all unexpected situations with a handful of back-up plans. (Advanced trainee) (AT#4)

As the above excerpt illustrates, both BT#3 and AT#1 commented on teacher behaviors or positions during teaching. However, they differed in that the advanced trainee's reflection was more elaborate and related to student learning (AT#1), while the beginner's comment reported his own observation without specific plans for future changes (BT#3).

Also, both the beginning trainee (BT#6) and the advanced trainee (AT#4) commented on their lesson planning. However, the beginning trainee focused only on time constraints

simply by making a lesson plan longer so that he/she can easily cut it off, while the advanced trainee thought of creating multiple back-up plans to cope with unexpected situations. Overall, the beginning trainees' reflection seemed to remain relatively vague and superficial, compared to the advanced trainees.

As such, similarities and differences were found in the reflection of beginning trainees and advanced trainees. Despite the differences in the level of teacher education they received, they were still in the teacher education program and considered as novice in the teaching profession. In this sense, it seems natural to observe similar patterns between the two groups. At the same time, differences in the focus of reflection imply that the teacher trainees were continuously developing their reflective practice while in the teacher education program.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The current study attempted to understand teacher trainees' reflective practice as it manifests in the early stage of teacher education. Written reflections based on microteaching revealed seven reflective focuses that teacher trainees concerned about. Some of them were about general teaching skills such as teacher behaviors, classroom management, planning, but other unique themes were also identified which include language-specific features and microteaching contexts. Moreover, differences existed between the beginning trainees and the advanced trainees in terms of their focus in reflection.

Overall, the observed seven themes corroborate with previous findings that teacher trainees' reflection seems to remain self-centered, compared to experienced teachers who can reflect themselves within the large context of teaching and curriculum goals (e.g., Mok, 1994). Specifically, in this study, a large portion of reflection was devoted to the reflection of their performance as a teacher, mostly focusing on their behaviors and mistakes in the lesson. This parallels previous findings that pre-service teachers tend to express concerns about their self-image and their performance as a teacher, rather than perceiving their performance from the perspective of pupils' learning (Farrell, 2011). Kagan (1992) considers it as a natural process that pre-service teachers experience, because once the image of self as a teacher is settled and stabilized, their focus will shift to the design of instruction, and finally to student learning (p. 155). Therefore, considering the view that changing self-image is part of a teacher's professional growth, the initial concern for their self-image as a teacher is an important element for teacher development which has its own merit.

In addition, it was found that classroom management and planning were recurring

themes in both beginning and advanced trainees' reflection. Despite the current study's attempt to differentiate beginning trainees and advanced trainees, they were still novice pre-service teachers who have little experience of teaching, compared to in-service or experienced teachers. It is generally believed that expert teachers have procedural routines or repertoire of classroom management as an automatic part of their teaching (Hattie, 2003; Livingston & Borko, 1989), which does not warrant teachers' central attention in reflection. However, for novice teachers or teacher trainees, classroom management becomes a challenge, as they do not have routines or ability to control class. Thus, teacher trainees' concern about their lack of ability to properly manage class or learner behaviors comes on the surface of teacher reflection. It is also likely that this reflective focus will last until they accumulate enough experience to make classroom management as part of their teaching routines.

Teacher trainees' tendency to adhere to planning can be understood in this regard. When a lesson went differently from one's original plans, the trainees tended to consider it as a mistake and attributed it to problems of their lesson plan or lack of preparedness. However, classroom environment is dynamic and unpredictable, making it difficult to always comply with the original plan. Teachers should be able to make impromptu decisions based on the given classroom circumstances. Generally, expert teachers are more skilled at anticipating and solving unexpected in-class problems than novice teachers (Hattie, 2003; Richards, 1998b). Livingston and Borko (1989) argued that teaching is an improvisational performance and that planning only gives an outline of the general guidelines for unpredictable classroom events. They further noted that "difficulties that novices encounter when deviating from scripted lesson plans can be understood as limitations in their ability to improvise" (p. 39). From this standpoint, it is no surprise to find out that the participants in the current study tended to rely on their lesson plan and attribute unexpected class incidences to their unpreparedness rather than their lack of ability to improvise.

Another interesting theme found in the study is L2-related features in reflection, which include student interaction, L2 proficiency and non-native issues, and dynamic aspects of language teaching, which overlap with unique features of L2 teaching Borg (2006) identified. It seems that the participants in the current study were well aware of the importance of student engagement and speaking practices in language learning, as indicated by their attempts to incorporate a small talk or communicative activities in their lesson. Also, complexities in language teaching appeared in the participants' reflection on the need to teach not only language but also related cultural aspects. Another L2-specific issue the participants raised in their reflection is teachers' linguistic knowledge and non-nativeness. Lafayette (1993) highlighted the importance of a teacher's proficiency or target language knowledge, by stating that "among the components of content knowledge, none is more important to foreign language teaching than language proficiency" (p. 135). Since

teachers' use of L2 becomes a source of learners' language input, the issue of linguistic competence or language proficiency should be reflected upon for L2 teachers throughout their teaching career (Farrell & Richards, 2015; Medgyes, 2001).

As for the second research question regarding differences in the focus of reflection between beginning and advanced trainees, it was found that beginning trainees tended to be attentive to relatively diverse aspects of teacher behaviors and classroom management such as a teacher's position, gestures, and the manner of delivery. On the contrary, advanced trainees' reflection seemed to be focused, particularly paying attention to the influence of their behaviors and teaching techniques on student learning. These findings parallel to differences between novice and expert teachers and it seems that differences in the degree and depth of knowledge in classroom management between novice and expert teachers can explain the findings. Expert teachers who are skilled at orchestrating classroom routines have extra mental capacity to shift their attention to learners and the goals of a lesson from the broader perspective of institutional goals (Emmer & Stough, 2001). As the observed differences between beginning and advanced trainees are descriptive in nature, it is difficult to generalize the findings. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to point out that the differences between beginning and advanced teacher trainees resemble differences between novice and expert teachers. This implies that similar transitions from novice to expert teachers appeared at the earlier stage of teacher education and teacher trainees were also developing reflective practices like experienced teachers.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study showed that teacher trainees' engagement in microteaching and reflection were valuable venues for them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. As knowledge and perspectives gained from earlier experience influence teachers' view on learning and teaching (Bramald et al., 1995), teacher educators should pay attention to teacher trainees' initial sense-making process as an educational practitioner. For this reason, it is highly suggestive that any form of teaching practicum be accompanied by reflective practice.

Based on the merits of teaching practicum and reflective practice that follows, some practical suggestions can be made to promote reflection as part of pre-service teachers' professional development. Pre-service teachers can engage in various types of reflective practice such as action research projects, microteaching, and other supervised practicums. Journal writing or reflective essays that consider the source of their beliefs as a teacher can support reflective thinking. It would also help to draw on teacher metaphors as the basis of creating teacher image and establishing beliefs and philosophies in teaching (Hatton &

Smith, 1995, p. 36). The development of reflective thinking can be fostered by the support of mentors and educational programs (e.g., Fletcher, 1997). Kullman (1998) emphasized the role of mentors or feedback sessions in helping student teachers reflect on their classroom experiences.

Furthermore, the current findings indicated that teacher trainees' concerns at the initial stage of teacher education are centered on establishing their self-image as a teacher and constructing routines and repertoire for classroom management. These are important elements for teachers' self-confidence and competence in dealing with unexpected situations. Kagan (1992) noted that pre-service and first year teaching is a period during which novices should acquire the three primary goals as a teacher: (a) acquisition of knowledge on pupils, (b) use the knowledge to establish their self-image as a teacher, and (c) cultivate procedural routines and repertoire integrating classroom management and instruction. Although these focuses are expected to eventually shift to learning-oriented perspectives, it seems desirable for teacher educators to pay attention to and listen to novice teacher trainees' needs that are legitimate at its own stage.

Along with these implications, limitations of the study should be addressed. First, the participants may not represent all levels of teacher trainees due to the relatively small sample size. It should also be noted that many participants were native speakers of the target language, and considering that language proficiency is an important variable for teacher reflection and development, the current findings may be limited to be applied to teacher trainees who were non-native speakers of the target language. Additionally, as the comparison between beginning trainees and advanced trainees remains descriptive, any generalization of the findings should be made cautiously. Furthermore, student reflection that is conducted as part of their course assignment may not represent the participants' genuine thoughts (e.g., Park, 2014).

Despite these limitations, the importance of this study lies in its attempt to understand initial teacher trainees' concerns, interest, and needs for their professional development. It is also important to note that the current findings indicated that teacher trainees were making progress in terms of the reflective practices, even during the very initial stage of the teacher education program. Teacher trainees' reflection was found to be a useful indicator to reveal such changes. To better understand these changes, however, future research can adopt longitudinal and/or triangulated approaches to the study of teacher reflection.

REFERENCES

Akbari, R. (2007). Reflections on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in

- L2 teacher education. *System*, 35(2), 192-207.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Borg, S. (2006). The distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(1), 3-31.
- Bramald, R., Hardman, F., & Leat, D. (1995). Initial teacher trainees and their views of teaching and learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(1), 23-31.
- Clarke, A. (1995). Professional development in practicum settings: Reflective practice under scrutiny. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(3), 243-261.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: Heath and Company.
- Dreyfus, H. L., & Dreyfus, S. E. (1986). Peripheral vision expertise in real world contexts. *Organization Studies*, 26(5), 779-792.
- Eddy-U, M. (2015). Motivation for participation or non-participation in group tasks: A dynamic systems model of task-situated willingness to communicate. *System*, 50, 43-55.
- Emmer, E. T., & Stough, L. M. (2001). Classroom management: A critical part of educational psychology, with implications for teacher education. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(2), 103-112.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2011). Exploring the professional role identities of experienced ESL teachers through reflective practice. *System*, 39(1), 54-62.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2015). *Reflective language teaching: From research to practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Farrell, T. S. C., & Richards, J. C. (2015). Teachers' language proficiency. In T. S. Farrell (Ed.), *Reflective language teaching: From research to practice* (pp. 55-63). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Fletcher, S. (1997). Modelling reflective practice for pre-service teachers: The role of teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(2), 237-243.
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. E. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 397-417.
- Harford, J., & MacRuairc, G. (2008). Engaging student teachers in meaningful reflective practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(7), 1884-1892.
- Hattie, J. A. C. (2003, October). *Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence?* Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
- Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(1), 33-49.
- Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice

- English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10(4), 439-452.
- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Professional growth among preservice and beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(2), 129-169.
- Kilic, A. (2010). Learner-centered microteaching in teacher education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 3(1), 77-100.
- Kullman, J. (1998). Mentoring and the development of reflective practice: Concepts and context. *System*, 26(4), 471-484.
- Lafayette, R. C. (1993). Subject-matter content: What every foreign language teacher needs to know. In G. Guntermann (Ed.), *Developing language teachers for a changing world* (pp. 125-157). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.
- Lee, H. J. (2005). Understanding and assessing preservice teachers' reflective thinking. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(6), 699-715.
- Livingston, C., & Borko, H. (1989). Expert-Novice differences in teaching: A cognitive analysis and implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(4), 36-42.
- Medgyes, P. (2001). When the teacher is a non-native speaker. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd., pp. 429-442). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Mok, W. E. (1994). Reflecting on reflections: A case study of experienced and inexperienced ESL teachers. *System*, 22(1), 93-111.
- Nunan, D. (1992). The teacher as decision-maker. In J. Flowerdew, M. Brock & S. Hsia (Eds.), *Perspectives on Second language teacher education* (pp. 135-165). Hong Kong: City Polytechnic.
- Orland-Barak, L., & Yinon, H. (2007). When theory meets practice: What student teachers learn from guided reflection on their own classroom discourse. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 957-969.
- Park, L. E. (2014). Shifting from reflective practices to reflexivity: An autoethnography of an L2 teacher educator. *English Teaching*, 69(1), 173-198.
- Perry, G., & Talley, S. (2001). Online video case studies and teacher education. *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education*, 17(4), 26-31
- Postholm, M. B. (2008). Teachers developing practice: Reflection as key activity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(7), 1717-1728.
- Reynolds, A. (1992). What is competent beginning teaching? A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(1), 1-35.
- Richards, J. C. (1998a). Teacher beliefs and decision making. In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Beyond training* (pp. 65-85). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (1998b). What's the use of lesson plans? In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Beyond*

- training* (pp. 103-121). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (Vol. 5126). Basic books.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sarıçoban, A. (2016). Foreign language teaching practicum beliefs of student teachers. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 12(1), 166-176.
- Vélez-Rendón, G. (2002). Second language teacher education: A review of the literature. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35(4), 457-467.
- Westerman, D. A. (1991). Expert and novice teacher decision making. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(4), 292-305.
- Yıldız, M., Geçikli, M., & Yeşilyurt, S. (2016). Turkish prospective English teachers' reflections on teaching practice. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 4(4), 696-703.

Applicable levels: Tertiary

Minyoung Cho
Department of English Language and Literature
College of Liberal Arts
Korea University
145 Anam-ro, Seongbuk-gu
Seoul, 02841, Korea
Phone: 02-3290-1980
Email: mycho1219@gmail.com

Received on December 1, 2016

Reviewed on January 15, 2017

Revised version received on February 15, 2017