

ASSESSING TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES THROUGH REFLECTIVE LEARNING JOURNAL

(A Classroom Action Research on the 11th Graders of SMA Dharma Karya UT, South
Tangerang, Indonesia)

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ABSTRACT: *In TEFL, the processes of both teaching and learning play prominent roles toward the successfulness of the students' achievements. Thus, these processes should be assessed and the assessment coming from the students' sides will help the teachers to see the real problems faced by their students. The purpose of this classroom action research is to describe students' reflections on the processes of teaching and learning through reflective learning journal. Total number of 19 students of 11th grade of Senior High School Dharma Karya UT, Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia, participated in this study. The research was conducted in 2 cycles and each cycle consisted of 2 meetings and each meeting covered 2 learning hours (2 x 45 minutes). Reflective learning journal writing was used as the instrument in collecting the data. It was distributed to the students before the treatment and after. The results of the study were analysed by using RMIT reflective cycle (2006) in which the writers only focused on the 'reflection' domain. The findings revealed that before the treatments, the students put negative reflections on English teaching and learning process. While after the treatments, their reflections were strongly positives.*

Keywords: *reflective journal writing, reflective journal writing as tool assessment, RMIT reflective cycle*

Introduction

Since English is taught starting from Elementary level in Indonesia, it should be assumed that the students on the higher levels (secondary and tertiary) are able to use this foreign language simply. However, it is found that most Indonesian students still have problem to deal with English.

The demand of English curriculum which requires students to focus more on grammar puts English as theoretical subject rather than practical one. Lack creativity of English teachers in supplying students with various teaching strategies, materials, activities and assessments make the problems are getting complex. Students' achievement in English is low.

According to Munawaroh (2017:66), "the factors that influence learning achievement are learning method and teaching method". This opinion explains that both learning and teaching processes play prominent roles in the successfulness of the students' output, so as in English class. Thus, an effective way to assess how both teaching and learning of English run should

be taken into serious consideration. There are many instruments can be applied as tools in the assessment of class activities and one of them is reflective journal writing.

“Reflection gives meaning to experience; it turns experience into practice, links past and present experiences, and prepares the individual future practice” (Plack, et.al.,2005:200). Therefore, by having reflection, the students will describe their experiences and use them as the points to prepare next steps in learning.

Based on the background above, the writer was interested to do a small classroom action research on the 11th grade class of SMA Dharma Karya UT, one of private schools in the city of South Tangerang, Indonesia. The writer’s observations in this Science major class showed that the English teacher found difficult to motivate the students in learning English. On the other hand, it was seen that the students did not really pay attention to what the teacher explained. Small interviewed the writer had with the students supported these demotivated situations in which the students frankly said that they were not interested in joining English class for several reasons and one of the reasons was that the methods of teaching and learning which were boring. Referring to these findings, the writer proposed her study of classroom action research entitled: “Assessing Teaching and Learning Processes through Reflective Learning Journal”. It is hoped that this study will capture real problems the students experienced in English class by having their reflections on English learning both before and after the writer gave treatments.

Literature Review

Reflective Journal Writing

It was Dewey (1933) who firstly introduced reflective thinking as one type of assessment to think over of what has been done. In terms of education, this reflective thinking was developed by Schön in 1987 into two, i.e. “reflection-on-action” and “reflection-in-action”. The first reflection refers to any events that have been experienced while the other one refers to the events that are on progress (concurrent events). Commonly the reflective thinking is expressed through journal writing, hence it is called reflective journal writing.

Boud (2001) cited in Khanjani, et.al. (2007:60) gave opinion that “journal writing can be viewed through many different lenses: as a form of self-expression, a record of events, or a form of therapy. It can be a combination of these and other purposes”.

Further, Varner & Peck (2003) assumed that learners can be promoted to be self-guided and put attention to tasks, to relate experiences of new learning and also to overcome problems in real learning process through journal learning.

Letch (2012:440) added, “Pedagogically, the reflective journal assignment required students to reflect on their own experiences in relation to topic, seminar discussions and the required readings”. Reflective journals can also be considered as students’ diaries related to their histories of learnings.

Reflective Journal Writing as Assessment Tool

Since it encourages critical thinking, journal writing can also be used as one of crucial aspects to evaluate the successfulness of teaching and learning. As Williams (2018:3) claimed, “For the teacher, reflective journal writing serves as a window into student thinking and learning.”

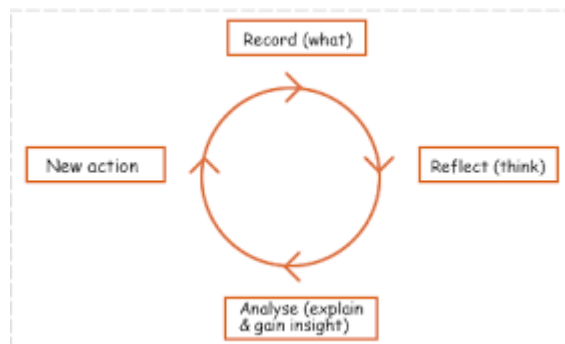
By asking the students to reflect on their experiences of the learning process, the students will have opportunity to express their experiences either good or bad. They will critically think over what they have achieved or have not.

“.....reflective journals can actually be a helpful learning tool for a much wider range of the subjects” (Fenwick & Pearsons, 2000; Stevens & Cooper, 2009).

Reflective journal writing does not only help the students but also the teachers to respond to class materials. On the students’ side, the reflections assist them to give opinions on what they need from the learning process.

As an evaluative tool, Fortson & Sisk (2007:2) described that reflective journaling contributes in two aspects: “(1) students learn to self-evaluate and change behavior based on what they have learned through reflection and faculty feedback and (2) faculty members can informally evaluate areas in which the students need intervention, re-assignment, referral to written resource, or further discusses”.

There are many reflective writing forms of analysis and one of them is the reflective cycle used by RMIT as follows:



Adapted from (RMIT, 2006)

This cycle shows that reflection refers to a process in which the students start by thinking over of they have got along their learnings (record), and then they do reflections (think) toward their achievements, and after that they analyze the results of their reflections (explain and gain insight). These three steps will lead the students to take new actions; actions that will make them improved.

Methodology

This classroom action research was conducted at class of the 11th grade, Science major, SMA Dharma Karya UT, South Tangerang, Indonesia. SMA stands for *Sekolah Menengah Atas* or Senior High School level. SMA consists of 3 grades, i.e. 10, 11, and 12.

The writer ran the research in two cycles in which each cycle consisted of two meetings. One meeting took 90 minutes or it was called 2 hours learning sessions (45 minutes x 2). A total

number of 19 students became the subjects of this research. The writer used reflective learning journal as the instrument in collecting the data. It was a 'structured reflective learning journal' which consisted of list of questions outlined by the writer. The questions directed the students to reflect, think over the problems they faced along the process of learning and also gives the students ideas on how to overcome these problems.

On her first meeting of this research period, the writer introduced herself, gave motivation, asked students about problems they encountered in order to analyze what the writer needed to do in the next steps. Before this first meeting class dismissed, the writer distributed reflective learning journal to the students and guided them on how to reflect on what they have experienced so far in English teaching and learning class. The findings of this pre-cycle phase used by the writer as the starting point to start her study. The writer prepared and designed lesson plan based on students' responses on that reflective learning journal.

The writer put communicative approach as one of the teaching methods to apply. Besides, the writer also varied the teaching and learning activities by utilizing in focus, playing videos related to chapter discussed, applying online group discussion via WhatsApp and inviting the students to do role-play as one of their oral practices.

The treatments were done in 2 cycles, in which each cycle consisted of two meetings; one meeting for having class activities and one other for online group discussion. Two cycles covered 2 chapters, i.e. "Giving Opinions" and "Invitation". Since this study did not measure the achievement of the students in terms of their understanding of the materials, the cycles applied were needed to give the students more times to experience different atmospheres of the process of teaching and learning of English.

Findings and Discussions

The data of the students' reflective learning journals were analyzed by using the reflective figure of RMIT (2006). This figure was used as the indicator for the writer to do check-lists on students' reflection before the writer focused only on the component of "Reflect", the third cycle of RMIT figure. The students' coding before and after the program covered the components of 'record' (what), 'reflect' (think), 'analyze' (explain and gain insight), and 'new action'. The following table presents the reflection of the students toward one of the questions listed on their reflective journal writing as follows:

- *Think about the classes and studying you have done so far. Are their difficult, difficult, easy or helpful in some ways? Explain your answer.*

Table 1
Students Reflection before and after the Treatments

Student	Pre-treatment Reflection	Post-treatment Reflection
1	Sometimes it made me confused	Easier
2	difficult	Easier
3	It's confusing	Easier
4	It's confusing	Easier
5	It's confusing	Easy
6	Little confusing	It's really helpful
7	Difficult to be understood	Easier
8	It's difficult	It's understandable
9	Confusing	Understood
10	It's confusing	Very easy
11	It's confusing	Helpful
12	It's confusing	More understandable
13	It's confusing	Understood
14	Less fun	More understandable
15	It's confusing	Very helpful
16	-	More understandable
17	Little confusing	It's not confusing
18	I confused ...	A little bit understood
19	It's confusing	Just so so

It can be seen from the table above that after the treatments, the students reflected the processes of teaching and learning English as “easier, understandable, and helpful”. They gave positive reflections. Vice versa, the students’ reflections before the treatments were mostly negatives. Their reflections stated “confused, confusing, difficult to be understood, less of fun”.

This reflective learning journal revealed that the students noticed both processes of teaching and learning English which might affect their motivation and or mood when joining English classes. Their negative reflections before the treatments improved into more positive ones after they experienced different class environments.

Conclusions

Like in other subjects, English achievement is also affected by teaching and learning processes happen in the classroom. Thus, the phases in the classes should be well-assessed so that the teacher will get clear picture what the students need in order to reach maximum

outputs. One of the tool can be used to do an assessment of teaching and learning sessions is reflective journal writing.

In this classroom action research study, the writer provided 19 students of the 11th grade with reflective learning journal before and after the treatments in order to let them free in experiencing the processes of teaching and learning then make reflections out of them.

This structured reflective journal revealed that before the treatments, the students put negative reflections on English teaching and learning process. While after the treatments, their reflections were strongly positives.

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