

Rewinding to reflect: Unpacking L2 pre-service teachers' growth through video-stimulated recall

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Reflection is a cornerstone of teacher development, shaping instructional effectiveness and professional growth. In language teacher education, structured reflection is particularly vital, as it helps pre-service teachers refine their teaching strategies and bridge the gap between theory and practice. Among various reflective methods, video-stimulated recall (VSR) has emerged as a powerful tool for fostering deeper reflection by allowing teachers to critically analyse their instructional decisions through recorded lessons. This study examines the impact of VSR on the reflective practices of pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language, focusing on their levels of reflectivity, differences between verbal and written reflections and their perceptions of VSR as a reflective tool. Participants recorded their micro-teaching sessions and engaged in semi-structured interviews conducted in three stages: before watching, during viewing and after watching. Findings reveal that pre-service teachers primarily engaged in lower-order reflection, with descriptive reflection dominating both verbal and written reflections. Although written reflections summarised classroom events, VSR facilitated deeper engagement with teaching practices, prompting teachers to recognise instructional patterns and refine pedagogical choices. All participants viewed VSR positively, emphasising its role in enhancing self-awareness and professional development. These findings underscore the potential of VSR as a structured approach to fostering reflective practice in teacher education.

Implications for practice or policy:

- Teacher education programmes could integrate VSR into practicum courses to help pre-service teachers move beyond descriptive reflection.
- Reflective training activities may include structured prompts to support deeper engagement with instructional decisions.
- Practicum supervisors could use VSR to guide discussions on teaching patterns, feedback moves and classroom interaction.
- Written reflection tasks may be enhanced with video-supported analysis to improve self-awareness and pedagogical refinement.

Keywords: second language (L2) teacher education, video-stimulated recall (VSR), teacher reflection, pre-service teachers, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) practicum, qualitative case study

Introduction

Teacher reflection is a cornerstone of professional development, enhancing teaching competence by bridging theory and practice and fostering informed pedagogical decision-making (Beauchamp, 2015). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education, reflection is particularly complex, as language teaching requires managing real-time communication in the target language while attending to linguistic choices and interactional cues and affective responses. Unlike content-area teachers, language teachers must reflect not only on lesson design and classroom management but also on how their language use mediates learning and cultural understanding. However, pre-service teachers (PTs) often struggle to move beyond surface-level or descriptive reflections without structured guidance (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015; Mbato & Triprihatmini, 2022; Tuncer & Özkan, 2018). To address this challenge, structured tools such as video-stimulated recall (VSR) have gained prominence, allowing PTs to revisit recorded lessons, analyse

classroom interactions and engage in deeper reflection on their instructional decisions and teaching practices (Gazdag et al., 2019; Kleinknecht & Schneider, 2013).

Recent research has emphasised the growing effectiveness of VSR tools in PT education. By revisiting their recorded lessons, PTs are able to analyse questioning techniques, feedback moves and student engagement patterns (Sert, 2023, Sert et al., 2024; Sherin & Van Es, 2005; van Es et al., 2017). Despite its well-documented benefits, however, limited empirical research has examined how analysing one's own teaching videos contributes to cognitive engagement and reflective depth, especially within the context of EFL teacher education (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015). More focused investigations are therefore needed to clarify the specific contributions of VSR to language teacher reflection and professional development. Although studies have established that video-based reflection promotes deeper teacher reflection, few have directly compared verbal reflections during VSR sessions with written reflections produced within the same teacher education context. Moreover, research on VSR in EFL practicum settings remains scarce, particularly given the influence of language proficiency and the challenges of articulating pedagogical reasoning in a foreign language. To address these gaps, the present study examined the effectiveness of VSR as a reflective tool in EFL teacher education by exploring PTs' levels of reflectivity, differences between verbal and written reflections and perceptions of VSR as a tool for professional growth. Although VSR has shown substantial promise in supporting reflective practice in general education and science, technology, engineering and mathematics, its role in EFL teacher preparation remains largely underexplored. The language classroom presents distinctive demands, requiring teachers to manage dynamic interaction and discourse in the target language and to attend closely to language use and learner engagement. By investigating these aspects, this study contributes to the expanding body of research on video-based reflection by providing empirical insights into how VSR supports pedagogical awareness, interactional competence and higher-order reflection in language teacher education, where reflective teacher noticing is important for effective teaching, and by examining how VSR and written reflection differ in producing reflective depth and how linguistic expression shapes PTs' reflective processes in the Turkish EFL practicum context.

Literature review

Reflection is central to effective teaching because it allows educators to critically evaluate their pedagogical decisions, deepen their instructional awareness and support ongoing professional growth (Beauchamp, 2015). Dewey (1993, p. 23) described reflection as a process that "converts action that is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligible action", highlighting its role in transforming routine behaviours into purposeful teaching. In a similar vein, Tripp and Rich (2012 p. 678) defined reflection as a "self-critical, investigative process wherein teachers consider the effect of their pedagogical decisions on their situated practice with the aim of improving those practices". The reflective process often begins with recognising a problem or uncertainty in one's teaching, which prompts a deeper evaluation of actions, assumptions and outcomes. This introspective cycle not only helps teachers identify their instructional strengths and weaknesses but also fosters a deeper understanding of their beliefs about teaching and learning (Martinelle, 2020). Structured reflection helps educators connect theoretical knowledge with classroom realities and develop the self-awareness and adaptability needed for long-term professional growth (Maaranen & Stenberg, 2017). However, research consistently shows that PTs often struggle to engage in higher-order reflection, tending instead to produce descriptive or surface-level accounts of their teaching (Farrell, 2016; Tuncer & Özkan, 2018; Ward & McCotter, 2004).

Given these challenges, teacher education programmes must actively train PTs in reflective practice, enabling them to develop deeper insights into their instructional approaches, pedagogical philosophies and underlying learning theories. By developing reflective skills, PTs can become more proactive, critical and self-confident teachers, who systematically analyse their teaching, critically assess classroom situations and engage in continuous professional growth (Coffey, 2014; Parsons & Stephenson, 2005). To support this process, teacher education programmes must adopt structured reflection practices such as written reflections and video-based reflections that guide PTs towards higher-order thinking and analytical reflection (Akbari, (2007). These practices provide scaffolding for teachers to move beyond

surface descriptions towards analytical and critical reflection, aligning with current pedagogical priorities in EFL teacher education.

Written reflection in EFL teacher education

Written reflection refers to the process through which PTs analyse their teaching experiences in written form to make sense of instructional decisions, classroom dynamics and learner outcomes (Westphal et al., 2024). In EFL teacher education, reflective writing, often in the form of journals or self-evaluation reports, serves as a structured tool for developing pedagogical awareness and professional identity (Moradkhani et al., 2013). It enables PTs to articulate their teaching beliefs, recognise challenges and connect theory to practice through sustained introspection. However, research also suggests that written reflections tend to remain at a descriptive level unless guided by prompts, models or feedback (Farrell, 2016; Tuncer & Ozkan, 2018). Studies have shown that when appropriately scaffolded, reflective writing promotes critical thinking, self-regulation and professional growth by helping teachers trace their development and internalise principles of effective instruction (Akbari, 2007). Thus, written reflection continues to play a central role in EFL teacher preparation, offering both a cognitive and affective space for learning from experience.

Although written reflection provides valuable opportunities for PTs to articulate and examine their instructional experiences, it relies heavily on memory and linguistic formulation, and remains descriptive unless scaffolded by prompts or models (Farrell, 2016; Tuncer & Özkan, 2018). As a result, written accounts may overlook critical details of classroom interaction and non-verbal communication that occur in real time (Tripp & Rich, 2012). To address these limitations, recent research in teacher education has increasingly turned to video-based reflection tools, such as VSR, which allow teachers to revisit and analyse their own teaching more objectively and deeply.

Video-based reflection in EFL teacher education

Recent developments in teacher education have emphasised guided and structured reflection to promote higher-order thinking and pedagogical awareness (Farrell, 2019). Among the most effective approaches are technology-enhanced tools such as video-based reflection, which allow PTs to revisit, analyse and evaluate their own teaching performances (Akbari, 2007; Tripp & Rich, 2012). Viewing one's own teaching provides an externalised perspective on classroom behaviour, helping PTs identify moments that may be overlooked during live teaching (Gibbons & Farley 2021). Video-based reflection also enhances teacher noticing, the ability to recognise and interpret critical instructional events (Sherin & van Es, 2005), by allowing teachers to pause, review and reconsider their decisions in light of learner responses.

Within video-based practices, VSR has emerged as a particularly powerful tool for deepening reflection and self-awareness. VSR involves having teachers watch recordings of their own lessons while verbalising their thoughts, decisions and feelings related to specific moments (Tripp & Rich, 2012; Walshe & Driver, 2019). This process encourages PTs to externalise implicit reasoning, revisit their decision-making and articulate pedagogical justifications (Karakas & Yükselir, 2021; Sert, 2023). Studies have demonstrated that VSR fosters self-awareness, confidence and motivation (Ahmed & Montecillo-Leider, 2024) and supports emotional engagement and professional identity development (Payant, 2014; Sert et al., 2024; Westphal et al., 2024).

Central to VSR is the enhancement of teacher noticing, defined as the ability to attend to, interpret and respond to key classroom interactions with analytic precision (Malva et al., 2021; Sherin & van Es, 2005). This process allows teachers to identify patterns in student engagement, evaluate instructional strategies and make informed adjustments through teacher noticing (König et al., 2022). VSR thus helps PTs link reflection to action, transforming awareness into pedagogical improvement and supporting the development of critical thinking and reflective depth.

Despite its promise, most studies on VSR have been conducted in general education or science, technology, engineering or mathematics, leaving its role in EFL teacher education underexplored. The

unique linguistic and interactional demands of language teaching, where teachers must manage discourse, feedback and meaning-making in the target language, require more nuanced forms of reflection. Investigating how VSR supports EFL PTs' awareness and reflection can therefore provide valuable insights into how multimodal, language-sensitive reflection enhances teacher learning.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted Hatton and Smith's (1995) four-level framework of reflection – descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogical reflection and critical reflection – to analyse PTs' reflective depth (see Table 1). These levels range from simple description to complex, contextually situated analysis (Husu et al. 2008; l'Anson et al., 2003). Descriptive writing recounts events; descriptive reflection includes limited reasoning; dialogical reflection explores alternatives through self-questioning; and critical reflection situates decisions within social or ethical contexts, requiring higher-order thinking (Coffey, 2014).

Although Hatton and Smith's (1995) model offers a structured analytic lens, recent work has reconceptualised reflection as a dynamic process of noticing, cognition and emotion (van Es & Sherin, 2021). This broader view recognises that reflection also encompasses affective awareness and identity negotiation (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Zembylas, 2014). By integrating these perspectives, this study examined not only the levels of reflective thinking evident in PTs' verbal and written outputs but also how these reflections demonstrate cognitive, emotional and professional growth.

In sum, despite extensive research on reflective practice and emerging use of video-based tools in teacher education, limited attention has been given to how VSR supports reflection in EFL contexts and how it compares with traditional written reflection. To address this gap, this study investigated the effectiveness of VSR as a reflective tool in an EFL teacher education programme. Specifically, it examined (a) the level of reflectivity demonstrated by EFL PTs during their practicum, (b) how reflection through VSR differs from written reflection and (c) their perceptions of using VSR as a reflective tool in language teacher education. By exploring these questions, the study aims to provide insights into the role of VSR in promoting reflective practice and enhancing professional growth in EFL teacher education.

Methodology

A qualitative case study design was employed to provide an in-depth understanding of EFL PTs' reflective practices through VSR and written reflections. This approach allowed for a detailed exploration of their levels of reflectivity, differences between verbal and written reflections, and perceptions of VSR as a reflective tool. All procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines and approved by the Yeditepe University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The participants and setting

Three PTs enrolled in the final year of an English language teaching programme at a state university in Türkiye participated in this study. They were selected through purposive sampling, as they met specific criteria relevant to the study's aims: (a) active enrolment in the practicum course, (b) completion of at least one micro-teaching session and (c) willingness to participate in both written reflections and VSR interviews.

The small number of participants was a deliberate choice consistent with the qualitative multiple case study design, which prioritises depth of insight over breadth of generalisation (Stake, 1995). Examining a small number of cases enabled a detailed exploration of each PT's reflective development across multiple data sources, written reflections, VSR interviews and classroom recordings, allowing for within- and cross-case analysis. The findings are therefore intended to generate context-specific, transferable insights rather than statistically generalisable conclusions.

The data were collected during the practicum in which PTs spent one full day per week in assigned practicum schools. These placements were arranged by university supervisors, and cooperating teachers provided ongoing mentorship and feedback.

Data collection tools

The data for this study were collected through two complementary sources: written reflections and VSR interviews on micro-teaching video recordings. These tools were designed to capture PTs' reflective thinking across different modalities and allow for comparison between unassisted and video-supported reflection.

Written reflections

The written data consisted of PTs' self-evaluation reports, weekly observation reports and final reflective reports, which together provided a longitudinal view of their reflective development throughout the practicum. These written reflections were produced as part of the regular practicum cycle and served as the primary source of participants' self-reported teaching insights prior to and alongside the VSR sessions.

The weekly observation reports, written over 12 weeks (12 per participant, 36 in total), documented PTs' initial, memory-based reflections on their classroom experiences. Composed before the VSR interviews, these reports captured early, unassisted reflections that were grounded in their personal recollection rather than video evidence. The self-evaluation reports were written after each micro-teaching session (16 in total) and encouraged participants to critically assess their instructional decisions and performance without the use of guiding prompts, offering insight into their spontaneous reflective tendencies. The final reflective reports (3 in total) differed in that they included guiding questions designed to support structured reflection on the practicum experience as a whole. These reports prompted participants to evaluate their overall professional growth, challenges and readiness for future teaching.

In total, 55 written reports were analysed (36 weekly, 16 self-evaluations and 3 final reflections). This written data set provided an essential point of comparison with verbal reflections elicited during VSR interviews, allowing the study to examine how reflection depth and focus evolved from unguided, memory-based writing to video-supported, dialogic reflection. Integrating both written and verbal data thus enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how VSR enhanced PTs' reflective awareness and professional learning.

Interviews in VSR sessions

VSR is a reflective process in which teachers watch recordings of their own lessons to recall and analyse their instructional decisions. In this study, each PT participated in an individual VSR interview in which they reviewed the full video of their micro-teaching session. This process enabled a holistic reflection on both teacher talk and student engagement, providing insight into how PTs make in-the-moment instructional choices and how they evaluate those choices retrospectively.

Following the completion of the weekly observation reports, the VSR interviews were conducted. This sequencing ensured that PTs first reflected independently in writing based on memory before engaging in deeper, video-supported verbal reflections. This method provided rich data on PTs' reflective engagement and professional development.

Data collection procedure

A qualitative case study research design was employed to examine the effectiveness of VSR as a reflective tool in language teacher education. The study followed a structured procedure in which PTs recorded their own micro-teaching sessions and subsequently engaged in VSR interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was recorded and transcribed for analysis. The VSR process was carried out in three stages.

Before watching the video

In the initial interview, PTs were asked open-ended questions about their lesson, students, classroom environment and overall teaching experience. We refrained from asking specific questions unless clarification was needed, allowing participants to share their initial impressions freely. The goal was to capture their spontaneous reflections on the lesson, their students, and their own teaching performance.

While watching the video

We viewed the recorded lesson together with the PTs, pausing at selected moments to discuss observed events and situations. We, as well as the participant, could pause the video at any time to provide comments. During this stage, PTs described their instructional choices, student reactions and classroom interactions while explaining their reasoning behind particular decisions. To maintain the authenticity of participants' reflections during the VSR interviews, we avoided leading or evaluative questions that might influence responses. Instead, open-ended neutral prompts were used to encourage elaboration without directing participants toward specific interpretations, for instance, rather than asking "Do you think your explanation was unclear here?", we asked, "What were you thinking at this point?" or "Can you tell me more about what was happening here?". These strategies ensured that reflections remained participant-driven and analytically rich.

After watching the video

The final interview focused on PTs' perceptions of the VSR process. We asked them to reflect on their experience of watching and analysing their own teaching and on the effectiveness of VSR as a reflective tool in teacher education. This structured approach enabled an in-depth examination of how VSR influenced their reflections, the differences between verbal and written reflections and their overall perceptions of the technique as a means of professional development.

Data analysis

The data analysis process in this study was conducted in two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis (Stake, 1995). In the within-case analysis, each PT's reflections were examined in-depth to understand their individual reflective processes. In the cross-case analysis, similarities and differences in reflectivity levels among the three PTs were identified.

All collected data were analysed using a coding chart specifically developed for this study, to operationalise Hatton and Smith's (1995) four levels of reflection. The chart provided coders with definitions, analytical prompts, and representative examples drawn from both written and verbal data to ensure consistency across data sources (see Table 1).

Table 1
Coding chart developed for the study

| Reflection level | Definition and indicators | Example from data |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Descriptive writing | Simple description of events or actions without interpretation or reasoning. | "I taught the colours today and students enjoyed the activity." |
| Descriptive reflection | Some reasoning or justification provided, often based on personal judgement rather than analysis. | "I used flashcards because students like visual materials." |
| Dialogical reflection | A process of self-questioning and exploring alternative explanations or perspectives. | "Maybe I should have given clearer instructions; that could have helped students stay focused." |
| Critical reflection | Reflection that situates teaching within broader contexts (ethical, social or institutional), showing awareness of multiple perspectives. | "I realised my approach reflected a teacher-centred mindset, which limits student autonomy." |

Each unit was categorised under one of the four reflection levels, requiring a detailed understanding of the coding criteria. A total of 2,561 units of analysis were identified, with each unit consisting of approximately five sentences on average. This comprehensive process allowed for a nuanced evaluation of PTs' reflective thinking across both verbal (VSR) and written modalities.

To ensure reliability, 149 units of analysis were coded by a second rater for piloting purposes. The highest-scoring category was descriptive writing (69.8%), followed by descriptive reflection (20.1%). Dialogical reflection accounted for 6.1%, while critical reflection was the least frequent, at 2.7%.

After piloting the coding scheme, all data were first read to identify emerging themes in both verbal and written reflections. This initial reading provided a holistic understanding of how PTs engaged in reflection through VSR and written reports. A second, more focused reading was then conducted to refine the analysis and ensure consistency. During this stage, it was observed that individual sentences in the verbal data often gained meaning within a broader context; therefore, related sentences referring to the same event or issue were grouped and analysed as a single unit of reflection.

The coding process was collaboratively conducted by us together with an independent second rater who had expertise in English language teacher education and qualitative analysis. Both coders received training in applying Hatton and Smith's (1995) reflection framework and jointly practiced on a randomly selected subset of the data to establish coding consistency. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = .87$), indicating strong agreement between coders. Any discrepancies were discussed until full consensus was reached before proceeding with the complete data set.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study, organised in two main parts. The first part provides a within-case analysis of each PT's reflective development and perceptions of VSR, highlighting individual patterns of reflection across verbal and written modalities. The second part offers a cross-case analysis, comparing participants' reflective practices to identify common themes and variations in how VSR influenced their awareness, pedagogical reasoning, and professional growth. The analyses draw on data from VSR interview transcripts, written reflections, and field notes, interpreted through Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework of reflective levels.

Within-case analysis of PTs' reflectivity and perceptions of VSR

This section presents the results for each PT, focusing on their levels of reflection, the differences between verbal and written reflections, and their perceptions of VSR as a reflective tool. Each case is analysed individually to provide a detailed understanding of participants' reflective engagement and professional growth.

Case 1: Ceyda

Ceyda, a 23-year-old PT, was born and raised in Istanbul in a higher-middle-class family. She had never studied abroad in an English-speaking country. Through the VSR process, we observed that Ceyda was outgoing, self-confident and talkative. She also demonstrated a strong sense of optimism about her future career as an English teacher.

Ceyda's reflection levels: Ceyda conducted four micro-teaching sessions during her practicum, three in preschool classrooms (ages 4–6) and one in a second-grade primary classroom. All sessions were video-recorded and followed by VSR interviews. The transcripts yielded 649 reflection units, analysed using Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework. Her verbal reflections revealed a predominance of descriptive writing (71.8%), followed by descriptive reflection (18.6%), dialogical reflection (5.8%) and critical reflection (3.0%). Only 0.8% of responses were categorised as different. These results indicate that Ceyda primarily recalled classroom events without deeper analysis, showing limited engagement in higher-order reflection. Her written reflections displayed similar patterns. Of the written reflection units, 79.4% were

categorised as descriptive writing, 11.0% as descriptive reflection, 7.0% as dialogical reflection, and just 2.6% as critical reflection. In total, only 18.5% of her written reflections showed any reflective depth. Like her verbal responses, her written reflections were largely surface level, suggesting a tendency to summarise teaching experiences rather than critically analyse them.

Comparing verbal and written reflection: A comparison between Ceyda's verbal and written reflection levels revealed differences in how she engaged with reflection in each format:

- Ceyda engaged in 7.3% more descriptive writing in written reflections compared to verbal reflections.
- She demonstrated 7.6% more descriptive reflection in VSR interviews than in her written assignments.
- Interestingly, dialogical reflection was slightly more frequent in written assignments (7.0%) than in VSR interviews (5.8%), suggesting that written tasks allowed for slightly deeper self-questioning.
- Critical reflection was more prevalent in VSR interviews than in written assignments, indicating that the video analysis process encouraged deeper engagement with teaching decisions.

These findings suggest that although written reflections remained largely descriptive, VSR interviews facilitated a slightly higher level of engagement in critical reflection, likely due to the ability to visually revisit and analyse teaching moments.

Ceyda's perception of VSR as a reflective tool: Ceyda expressed positive perceptions regarding VSR, describing it as a valuable tool for reflection. She particularly appreciated how VSR helped her identify mistakes and areas for improvement, which she might not have noticed otherwise. She believed that video-based reflection was useful not only as a PT but also for future in-service teaching, stating that she intended to continue using video recordings to evaluate her classroom practices throughout her career:

When I saw myself repeating the same instructions twice, I realised students looked confused because I wasn't clear the first time. I thought I was explaining well, but watching the video showed me how rushed I sounded. Next time, I plan to pause and check understanding instead of moving on quickly.

These findings highlight that while Ceyda's reflection remained mostly descriptive, VSR encouraged her to engage more critically with her teaching and reinforced her belief in the benefits of video-based reflection for professional growth.

Case 2: Hatice

Hatice, a 23-year-old PT, learned English through formal instruction in Turkish state schools. Unlike the other participants, she did not complete all four VSR sessions, as her double major in Psychological Counselling demanded significant time and effort, ultimately leading her to withdraw from the study after two recorded micro-teaching sessions. Although she was talkative, her reflections were scattered and lacked clear cause-and-effect reasoning. Compared to Ceyda, she exhibited lower confidence in her teaching abilities, despite maintaining a fair level of self-esteem.

Hatice's reflection levels: Hatice recorded two micro-teaching sessions in preschool classrooms (ages 4–6), both of which were followed by VSR interviews. Although she participated in only two interviews, her talkative nature led to the generation of 432 reflection units, analysed using Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework. The analysis showed that 70.5% of her verbal reflections were categorised as descriptive writing, 15.8% as descriptive reflection, 10.4% as dialogical reflection and only 1.3% as critical reflection, with 1.8% labelled as divergent. Like Ceyda, Hatice primarily summarised classroom events without deeper analysis. However, her slightly higher proportion of dialogical reflection suggests a greater degree of self-questioning and exploration of alternative perspectives during the VSR sessions. Her written reflections, including self-evaluation reports, weekly observation logs, peer evaluations and the final

reflective report, revealed a lower level of reflectivity compared to her verbal responses. Of the written reflection units, 90.1% were categorised as descriptive writing, 7.1% as descriptive reflection, 2.2% as dialogical reflection and only 0.6% as critical reflection. These results indicate that Hatice mostly focused on recalling and documenting events in her written work, often without providing justification or deeper analysis. Overall, her written reflections remained largely descriptive and lacked critical self-evaluation.

Comparing verbal and written reflection: A comparison of Hatice's verbal and written reflections revealed the following patterns:

- Her descriptive writing score was higher in written reflections compared to verbal reflections, indicating that her written assignments lacked deeper reflection.
- She demonstrated 8.1% more descriptive reflection in VSR interviews than in written assignments.
- Dialogical reflection was 8.2% higher in VSR interviews than in written reflections, suggesting that watching her recorded lessons encouraged her to question her instructional decisions more than written reflections did.
- Critical reflection was also higher in VSR interviews, though still minimal, suggesting that video analysis allowed her to recognise more teaching-related challenges and areas for improvement.

Overall, Hatice exhibited greater reflectivity in verbal reflections than in written ones, reinforcing the idea that VSR encouraged a deeper engagement with her teaching practices.

Hatice's perception of VSR as a reflective tool: Despite her limited participation in the study, Hatice developed positive perceptions about VSR as a reflective tool. She reported that watching her own teaching videos helped her identify mistakes she was unaware of during her lessons. More importantly, she stated that she would actively avoid repeating those mistakes in future lessons thanks to the insights gained through VSR:

When I watched the video, I realised how many small things I missed during the lesson. For example, I thought I was giving clear instructions, but in the video I saw that some students were still looking around, waiting for me to explain again. At that moment, I understood that my pace was too fast. I also noticed that I rarely checked whether they understood me before moving on. These were things I never paid attention to while teaching. Seeing myself from the outside was a bit uncomfortable, but it helped me understand what I actually do in the classroom. If I had not watched the video, I don't think I would have recognised these issues. Now I feel more aware of my habits, and I know what I should change next time.

Although she was unable to fully commit to the study, Hatice's experience suggests that VSR can be an effective tool even for time-constrained PTs, as it provides immediate and visually supported feedback, making it easier to identify and address areas for improvement.

Case 3: Nida

Nida, a 23-year-old PT, had never studied abroad in an English-speaking country. Compared to Ceyda and Hatice, Nida was noticeably less talkative, making it challenging for us to elicit detailed responses. She tended to provide short and clear answers, speaking only when asked. Among the three participants, she was the most introverted, which influenced the depth and expansiveness of her reflections.

Nida's reflection levels: Nida completed all practicum requirements and recorded three micro-teaching sessions, all conducted in preschool classrooms (ages 4–6). One session could not be videotaped due to a parent's presence, a common restriction in private school settings. Each of the three recorded lessons was followed by a VSR interview, yielding 387 reflection units. Analysis based on Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework revealed that 63.3% of her verbal reflections were categorised as descriptive writing, 26.9% as descriptive reflection, 6.2% as dialogical reflection and 3.1% as critical reflection, with 0.5% labelled as divergent. Although descriptive writing remained the most frequent category, Nida

demonstrated a comparatively higher level of descriptive reflection than the other participants, suggesting more effort to explain teaching decisions. Nonetheless, her engagement in dialogical and critical reflection remained low, reflecting limited self-questioning or in-depth pedagogical analysis. Nida's written reflections, which included self-evaluations, weekly observation reports and a final reflective report, were notably shorter and more concise than those of the other participants. Her writing style was formal and direct, often resembling summaries rather than reflective narratives. The analysis showed that 82.4% of her written reflections were categorised as descriptive writing, 13.2% as descriptive reflection, 4.4% as dialogical reflection and 0.0% as critical reflection. Consistent with her verbal reflections, Nida primarily focused on recalling classroom events, offering minimal interpretation or analysis. The complete absence of critical reflection in her written assignments further underscored the challenge of engaging in higher-order reflective thinking.

Comparing verbal and written reflection: A comparison of Nida's verbal and written reflections revealed key differences in her level of engagement:

- Her non-reflective category was higher in written reflections (82.4%) than in VSR interviews (63.3%).
- She engaged in 12.7% more descriptive reflection during VSR interviews than in her written reflections.
- Dialogical reflection was 2.8% higher in VSR interviews than in written reflections.
- Critical reflection was absent in written reflections but accounted for 3.1% in VSR interviews, suggesting that VSR was more effective in eliciting deeper reflection.

Overall, these findings indicate that Nida was more reflective in VSR interviews than in written assignments, reinforcing the idea that video analysis helped her engage in more meaningful reflection than traditional written exercises.

Nida's perception of VSR as a reflective tool: Despite her reserved nature, Nida expressed positive views of VSR, explaining that watching her own teaching allowed her to analyse her performance more objectively. She noted that seeing herself on video helped her notice mistakes and missed opportunities for clearer instruction or stronger student engagement – issues she had not recognised during the lesson itself. The visual feedback also prompted her to think more carefully about her teaching decisions and habitual behaviours.

I usually have difficulty expressing my thoughts in detail, but when I watched the video, it became easier to see what actually happened in the lesson. For example, I noticed that I often repeated the same instructions without checking if the students understood me. In the moment, I thought I was being clear, but the video showed that some students were confused and waiting. I also realised that my voice was softer than I expected, which probably affected student participation. These were things I did not recognise while teaching. Watching myself helped me understand why some activities did not work the way I planned, and it made me think more carefully about how I communicate with students. Even though I am not very comfortable speaking at length, VSR helped me reflect more deeply because I could see the evidence right in front of me.

Overall, Nida felt that VSR made her reflections more focused and meaningful, offering insights that were difficult to achieve through written reflection alone.

In sum, findings across all three cases indicated that PTs rarely engaged in higher-order reflection, dialogical or critical, in either VSR interviews or written assignments. Instead, their reflections tended to be descriptive, focusing on summarising classroom events rather than critically analysing them. However, a comparison of verbal and written reflections revealed that reflectivity levels were generally higher during VSR sessions, with all participants showing greater engagement in descriptive, dialogical and even some critical reflection compared to their written work. Notably, all PTs perceived VSR positively,

emphasising its usefulness in identifying teaching strengths and areas for improvement. These results suggest that VSR may be more effective than traditional written reflections in supporting reflective thinking and professional growth in PT education.

Cross-case analysis of PTs' reflective practices

After completing the within-case analysis, which provided an in-depth examination of each participant's reflective practices, the next stage involved a cross-case analysis to identify patterns, similarities and differences across cases. This comparative approach allowed for a broader understanding of how PTs engaged in reflection through both written assignments and VSR interviews, offering insights into the overall effectiveness of VSR as a reflective tool. Several key themes emerged from the participants' reflections, both in their written assignments and VSR interviews.

Reflectivity levels

The findings suggest that all three participants were predominantly non-reflective in both their VSR interviews and written assignments. Descriptive reflection was the most common category, while higher-order reflections (dialogical and critical) were rare.

- Descriptive reflection was the most frequently occurring type of reflection. This suggests that PTs tended to describe classroom events rather than analyse them.
- Dialogical reflection was expected to be higher in VSR interviews due to the interactive nature of the method. However, the findings revealed that dialogical reflection remained relatively low in both verbal and written formats.
- Critical reflection was the least frequent type of reflection. This indicates that participants rarely analysed classroom events from multiple perspectives or connected them to broader educational theories.

Verbal versus written reflection

Interestingly, written reflections contained more dialogical reflection (7%) than VSR interviews (5.8%). This was unexpected, as interviews inherently encourage dialogue. However, possible explanations are:

- Written assignments were conducted in English, whereas VSR interviews were in Turkish.
- Participants struggled with English academic writing, leading to simpler, more structured responses in writing.
- During VSR interviews, we asked for clarifications, reducing ambiguity and vagueness in verbal reflections.

Overall, these findings highlight the role of language proficiency in shaping reflective depth and suggest that writing in a second language may affect the quality of reflection.

Perceptions of VSR as a reflective tool

Despite their low reflectivity levels, all three participants expressed positive perceptions of VSR. They reported that:

- VSR helped them recognise their mistakes and gain insights into their teaching.
- They found video analysis beneficial and would consider using it in their future teaching practice.
- They felt that VSR was a more effective reflection tool than written assignments because it provided a visual and concrete means of self-evaluation.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the reflection levels of three EFL PTs in both written reflective assignments and VSR interviews (verbal reflection). It also explored whether the use of VSR enhanced their reflectivity and examined their perceptions of VSR as a reflective tool. The findings of this study reveal that EFL PTs

predominantly engage in lower-order reflection, primarily descriptive reflection, in both VSR interviews and written reflections. Although VSR interviews encouraged slightly higher levels of reflection, dialogical and critical reflection remained rare. This suggests that PTs tend to focus on recalling and summarising classroom events rather than engaging in deeper analytical processes. This aligns with Mbato and Triprihatmini (2022), who found that EFL PTs' reflections were largely descriptive and showed limited critical analysis, underscoring the need for explicit training in reflective practices. Similarly, Shoffner (2009) noted that EFL PTs' reflective journaling often remained at a surface level, reinforcing the importance of structured guidance to promote deeper reflection. These findings emphasise the importance of incorporating structured reflective practices in teacher education programmes to help PTs move beyond descriptive reflection toward deeper pedagogical analysis.

Despite their low engagement in higher-order reflection, all three participants expressed positive perceptions of VSR as a valuable tool for reflection and professional growth. They found video-based reflection beneficial for identifying mistakes, analysing their teaching practices and refining instructional strategies. The findings suggest that VSR supports PTs in developing a more student-centred and evidence-based reflective approach, aligning with research that has highlighted the effectiveness of video-based reflection in fostering deeper pedagogical awareness (Gazdag et al., 2019; Kleinknecht & Schneider, 2013).

However, written reflections were found to be less reflective than VSR interviews, possibly due to language proficiency challenges. Since the written assignments were required to be in English, while VSR interviews were conducted in Turkish, participants may have struggled with expressing their reflections in foreign language. This suggests that language competency may influence the depth of reflection and should be further investigated in future research.

Given these findings, teacher education programmes should incorporate structured training in reflective practice to help PTs develop deeper analytical skills and engage in higher-order reflection. As discussed in research, VSR should be systematically integrated into teacher education programmes, as it has been shown to foster a more detailed, evidence-based, and student-centred approach to reflection (Williams, 2020; Yuan et. al, 2022).

The findings of this study carry important implications for PTs, teacher educators and policymakers regarding the use of VSR as a reflective tool in EFL teacher education. The results extend research by illustrating how language proficiency and reflection modality interact to shape reflective depth. Specifically, PTs demonstrated greater reflective sophistication in their native language during VSR interviews than in written English reflections, emphasising that reflection depth is both linguistic and contextual. These findings underscore the importance of providing structured training in reflective practice within teacher education programmes, as descriptive reflection remained the dominant form observed. Teacher educators should scaffold higher-order reflection through guided prompts, rubrics and bilingual reflection opportunities. Moreover, given the growing role of technology in teacher development, integrating VSR into teacher education curricula can help PTs systematically record, analyse and evaluate their instructional practices, thereby fostering deeper pedagogical awareness and ongoing professional growth.

This study has also some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The study's limited sample size inevitably constrains generalisability; however, this is consistent with the exploratory purpose and interpretive nature of qualitative case study research. The inclusion of three participants allowed for in-depth, contextualised analysis of reflection processes while still enabling meaningful cross-case comparison. The partial dropout of one participant reduced the volume of written data but did not compromise the reliability of the findings, as triangulation across data types (VSR transcripts, written reflections and observation notes) supported interpretive consistency and internal validity. Future research with larger and more diverse samples could build on these findings to test their transferability.

Although VSR encouraged PTs to revisit and articulate their classroom experiences more consciously, most reflections remained at the descriptive or descriptive–reflective level. The low proportion of dialogical and critical reflections suggests that while VSR promoted greater awareness of classroom events, it did not consistently lead to higher-order reflective thinking. This limitation may stem from the participants' limited teaching experience and the absence of explicit scaffolding during the reflection process. These findings highlight the need for more structured support, such as guided prompts, mentor feedback, or collaborative debriefing, to help PTs move beyond descriptive accounts towards deeper, critical engagement with their instructional practices.

Another factor that may have influenced the level of reflection is language use. The VSR sessions were conducted in Turkish, whereas written reflections were produced in English. This linguistic difference may have affected the depth and fluency of reflection. Using their native language likely allowed participants to express emotions and pedagogical reasoning more spontaneously during the interviews, while writing in English may have constrained their ability to elaborate due to linguistic limitations and focus on accuracy. Future research could systematically examine how the language of reflection influences reflective depth and emotional expression across modalities.

Conclusion

This study highlights the role of VSR in encouraging reflective practices among EFL PTs, revealing that while VSR encouraged slightly higher levels of reflection than written assignments, most reflections remained at the descriptive level, with minimal engagement in dialogical and critical reflection. Despite this, participants viewed VSR positively, recognising its benefits in increasing self-awareness and improving instructional strategies. These findings align with previous research emphasising the challenges PTs face in developing higher-order reflection without structured guidance. Given the potential of VSR to enhance teacher reflection, integrating systematic training and scaffolding strategies within teacher education programmes could further support PTs in deepening their analytical skills. Future research should explore additional ways to promote critical reflection through VSR and investigate factors that may influence the depth of PTs' reflections, ultimately contributing to more effective and self-aware educators.

To translate these findings into practice, teacher education programmes could integrate VSR as a structured reflection activity supported by explicit training and reflection rubrics. Providing guided prompts during or after video viewing could help PTs move from descriptive to critical reflection. Additionally, offering bilingual reflection opportunities, allowing PTs to alternate between their L1 and English, may help balance fluency and depth in reflective expression. Finally, mentors could model critical questioning and provide feedback that targets deeper analysis of pedagogical decisions.

Author contributions

Hilal Çolak: Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing; **Zeynep Banu Kocoglu:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Supervision, Formal analysis, Writing – review and editing.

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