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Reflective Practice: A Corpus-based Analysis of In-service ESL Teachers' Reflective Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Reflective practice, in the shape of post-teaching self-evaluations, is a core element of many pre-service English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher training programmes such as CELTA. Most research on reflective practice has been carried out with pre-service teachers, but more evidence is needed to understand the reflective practice of in-service ESL teachers. This study employed a Corpus-Linguistics tool called LancsBox to analyse the nature of reflective discourse found in 44 post-teaching self-evaluations, written by in-service L1-English ESL teachers, in a language school in Colombia. Corpus Linguistics techniques included frequency lists, keywords, ngrams, and concordances. Results suggest that in-service teachers tend to reflect upon the area of Subject Knowledge the most. Other frequent areas of reflection include Lesson Planning and Classroom Management. Areas such as Understanding Learners and Use of Learning Technologies seem far less important. Generally, the most salient reflective discourse type they produce is Factual, followed by Prudential and Evaluative discourse. The pedagogical implications of this study are threefold. First, both pre-service and in-service ESL teachers need to be taught how to reflect and this needs to be supported by teacher trainers. Second, to guide overall reflective practices, tools employed by pre- and in-service ESL teachers to reflect on their lessons could be adapted, so they mirror specific areas of reflection such as the teaching skills and reflective discourse types being evaluated. Third, the current study suggests a self-reflection tool pre- and in-service ESL teachers can use to assess and reflect on their own teaching practices.

Keywords: corpus linguistics; in-service ESL teachers; post-teaching self-evaluations; reflective discourse; reflective practice

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Since its emergence, Dewey's (1933) concept of reflective thinking has been used in educational settings as a way of making positive changes to teaching practices. Reflection in this sense is taken as the identification and checking of accuracy and validity of teaching assumptions in a sustained and intentional manner (Brookfield, 2017). Reflective thinking practices are popular in education because they appeal to most people as something useful for informing teachers' professional development areas (Loughran, 2002). The idea of reflective practice, whereby teachers can identify fallacies in their teaching practices and adopt appropriate techniques in the future, has increasingly become an important model for teacher learning over the years (Watkins, 2014).

It is widely known that most mainstream teacher training programmes in Anglo-American contexts have reflective practice as a core element of their courses. Reflection in the shape of post-teaching self-evaluations is also a widely popular practice in English as a Second Language (ESL) education, which is evidenced by the practices of trainees on initial teacher training courses such as the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), where "one assignment requires reflection on classroom teaching and the identification of action points" (Cambridge English UCLES, 2018, p. 13). Reflecting on one's own and other teachers' practice appears to contribute to the selection, comprehension, reconstruction, and internalization of specific knowledge such as teaching methods (Kabilan, 2007).

Although self-reflection is generally accepted as 'good practice' in most ESL contexts and "[c]lassroom-based evaluation is a tool that teachers can use to hone decision-making skills for the benefit of the students" (Genesee, 2001, p.150), there is also evidence that ESL teachers need to be trained on how to reflect (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2010). Many studies on reflective practice have been done in pre-service ESL teaching contexts (Brandt, 2008; Gün, 2011; Kaasila & Lauriala, 2012; Wallace, 1991), but lesser work has been done on the reflective practices of ESL teachers in in-service contexts, and that is precisely the gap the current study is trying to bridge. Therefore, the present study employed a Corpus-Linguistics software tool called LancsBox to explore the nature of reflective discourse found in 44 self-evaluations written by in-service L1-English (i.e., English as a first language) ESL teachers after classroom observations. The study specifically aimed to explore this small, specialized, monolingual corpus in order to understand the process of reflection, as well as the nature of the reflective discourse of ESL teachers in in-service contexts.

Analysing a corpus of reflective discourse written by in-service L1-English ESL teachers is important because it informs teachers' reflective practices. Learning more about teachers' reflective practices can improve tools employed to reflect. Improving tools employed to reflect can subsequently help teachers make positive changes to their teaching. The current study addressed two research questions:

RQ1. What areas of teaching do in-service L1-English ESL teachers reflect upon the most in their post-teaching written self-evaluations?

RQ2. What discourse types are more salient in their post-teaching written self-evaluations?

Literature Review

Discourse and Reflective Discourse Taxonomies

Defining discourse is somewhat complex and there are many definitions depending on the field of study. Discourse is often defined as "language above the sentence or above the clause" (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1), or as "language in real contexts of use" (Machin & Mayr, 2015, p. 20). Extended

definitions see it as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr, 1995, p.48). Because these definitions are too broad and seem to focus on different aspects, based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), the term discourse in this paper is understood as any piece of authentic language, written or spoken, beyond the sentence level, that is cohesive and coherent, and whose meaning is negotiated through real interactions between people in specific contexts.

There are marked similarities amongst authors in terms of how reflective discourse is defined and classified. Although taxonomies are labelled differently, and they vary in terms of the number of categories included, there seems to be plenty of commonalities amongst them (see Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Valli, 1997; Zeichner & Liston, 1985, for different labels of reflective discourse). The most suitable taxonomy for the present study, and the one that best aligns with its research aims, is Zeichner and Liston's (1985) categorisation. However, a few changes were made to their original concepts to suit the needs of the study. Table 1 summarises these definitions.

Table 1
Reflective Discourse in this Study, adapted from Zeichner and Liston (1985)

Discourse Type	Definition	Example of linguistic features
Factual	description of events in a lesson	past simple tense (e.g., was, were, had, etc.)
Prudential	reflection on actions in a lesson with suggestions and advice based on what went on	conditional sentences, structures to express regrets and future intentions (e.g., If I had… I would have…, I wish I had…, Next time I will…, etc.)
Evaluative	assessment and evaluation of effectiveness of actions in a lesson	adjectives and evaluation adverbs (e.g., good participation, relaxing atmosphere, well received, etc.)
Justificatory	justification of and reasons for actions in a lesson	logical relations of extension and enhancement (e.g., because…, even though, therefore, thus, etc.)
Critical	analysis of justifications in reference to the wider syllabus or curricula	expressions including words such as syllabus, syllabi, curriculum, or curricula

Reflection and Studies on Reflective Practice

Reflection is a technique used in education to enhance learning in practice and inform professional development (Moon, 2013). The focus of this study is specifically on reflection-on-action, the type of reflection that retrospectively analyses a contextualised teaching event in order to make positive changes to future teaching practice (Schön, 1983). This type of reflection is done individually, normally in writing, as part of cyclical approach based on steps such as identification and appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, leading to improvements (Bartlett, 1990). This type of reflection can include hot self-evaluations, straight after delivering a lesson, or cold ones, sometime after the lesson has ended. Reflection-on-action differs from other types of reflection that may occur at different times in the reflective process such as reflection-in-action, which may take place while teaching (Scrivener, 2005).

Reflective practice is widely accepted as a good practice in ESL teaching (Ur, 2015). It is claimed to be the most powerful and effective agent for educational change (Sellars, 2012), and there are a number of studies that have demonstrated the efficacy of reflective practice in relation to increased ESL teachers' autonomy (Noormohammadi, 2014), student-teachers' ability to develop

practical theories linked to professional development (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä & Turunen, 2016), changes to ESL teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching approaches (Farrell, 1999), and effectiveness of English Medium Instruction (EMI) teachers (Farrell, 2019).

Findings of research in this field have led to the emergence of conceptual frameworks that outline the process of reflective teaching practice, based on a series of phases representing moments in time and particular experiences teachers find themselves in during their reflective teaching process (Stanley, 1998). Other studies have focused on the types of practices and the usefulness of their contributions (Farrell, 2015; 2017). Further research has been done on the effectiveness of reflective tools such as conversation cards linked to teachers' professional standards (Bradbury, Fitzgerald & O'Connor, 2020), peer mentoring (Mai Nguyen & Hang Ngo, 2018), web-based portfolios and video on demand (Miyata, 2002), video recordings (Zafer, 2015), journal writing (Donyaie & Soodmand Afshar, 2019; Mi Kyong, 2018; Minott, 2008), and seating chart observation records (Farrell, 2011). Evidently, there is a plethora of models used in reflective teacher education (see LaBoskey, 2010, for a detailed discussion).

As seen above, despite the vast wealth of research focusing on the positive aspects of reflective teaching, this practice has also taken some criticism. For instance, there have been calls for innovative written reflective practices on pre-service teacher training programmes to aid the way these teachers learn about how to reflect (Joan, 2005). Studies have also shown that pre-service teachers' reflections on undergraduate teacher training courses are rather infrequent (Juklova, 2015), pre-service teachers should learn how to reflect (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2010; Bahar, 2011), and teacher educators need to support and guide them in the reflection process (Jay & Johnson, 2002).

In a key study based on a multiple case study approach, and statistical analyses of data taken from transcriptions of post-teaching verbal feedback conferences, open written reflections, and tutors' assessment scores, Baines (n.d.) found a seemingly strong correlation between open reflection and high performance. Another important finding in his study was that pre-service teachers tend to reflect on a number of different areas, but predominantly focus on teaching procedures and general classroom management strategies. In terms of reflective discourse, in line with other previous findings (e.g., Zeichner & Liston, 1985), Baines (n.d.) also found that all pre-service teachers produced a variety of *Factual*, *Prudential* and *Justificatory* discourse types without a noticeable pattern, and none of them produced any reflection categorised as critical. It would be interesting to see if these findings also apply to more experienced teachers in in-service contexts.

The above findings also support the idea that in-service teachers can produce reflection that is not purely descriptive (Hatton & Smith, 1995), but also contradict studies where these teachers' practicum-related reflections have been found to be too descriptive in nature (Körkkö et al., 2016). Further studies would be needed to expand on this area, particularly in contexts involving in-service ESL teachers.

Attempts have been made to contrast the reflective practices of pre-service and in-service teachers. For example, employing statistical procedures and a teacher reflection scale, Yaman (2016) found that there was no statistical difference between the rank average reflection scores of in-service ESL teachers and their pre-service counterparts in a Turkish context. Also, employing questionnaires based on Likert scales and a summative content analysis of four teachers' diaries, Sammaknejad and Marzban (2016) found that the two experienced teachers showed a higher range of awareness of self-reflection and classroom management in an Iranian context. However, it is unclear what pattern of areas of reflection emerges when teachers reflect on their classroom management skills. Also, the researchers admit that these results are difficult to generalise due to the nature of the case study approach adopted in their research design. Studies investigating solely

the reflective practices of in-service teachers have found that these teachers tend to reflect more on areas such as self-perception, students' responsiveness to teaching, the school context, and teaching methods (Farrell, 2001, 2013). Once again, more research would be needed to corroborate or contradict such findings in similar contexts (hence the aim of the present study).

Method

Research Aim and Design

The overall aim of this study was to explore the nature of reflective discourse found in 44 self-evaluations written by in-service L1-English ESL teachers after classroom observations, to better understand the process of reflection and the nature of reflective discourse of these teachers and potentially improve tools to reflect. The current study addressed two research questions:

RQ1. What areas of teaching do in-service L1-English ESL teachers reflect upon the most in their post-teaching written self-evaluations?

RQ2. What discourse types are more salient in their post-teaching written self-evaluations?

Many studies on reflective practice have investigated pre-service contexts, and the ones investigating more experienced teachers have often used case study approaches. Therefore, it was felt that the design of the current research study should be approached from a different perspective. Corpus Linguistics was chosen as the main research method because it is a methodology that enables us to study language based on examples of real-life language usage (McEnery & Wilson, 2005). It allows researchers to collect, store and analyse large amounts of machine-readable data to make observations about language, or study a specific set of research questions fairly rapidly and reliably (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). The Corpus Linguistics techniques used in this study were the analysis of frequency lists, keywords, ngrams and concordances. Definitions of these techniques and their applications to the study are provided in a subsequent section of this paper entitled 'Data Analysis'.

Context and Participants

This study took place in a private ESL language school in Bogota, Colombia. Adult courses offered at this ESL school ranged from A1 to C1 levels according to the Common European Framework for Languages. These courses usually entailed 40 learning hours delivered over a period of eight weeks, and included General English, Business English and exam preparation. The school also offered classes for Young Learners (YL), mainly on Saturdays.

The minimum professional requirements for in-service teachers at this school at the time of the study were a Cambridge CELTA, or its equivalent, and at least one-year post-qualification teaching experience. About 99% of teachers had L1-English and had been brought up and educated in English-speaking countries such as Great Britain, the USA, Australia, Ireland, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, and South Africa.

In-service teachers at this school were observed by experienced line managers twice a year. Observations lasted one hour, and their aim was to support in-service teachers in their professional development. As part of these observations, teachers had to write a cold self-evaluation (i.e., sometime after the lesson had ended) after each classroom observation. Written self-evaluations included aspects that had/had not gone well in a lesson, and action points for subsequent lesson observations (refer to Appendix A for a self-evaluation sample). These post-

teaching written self-evaluations were seen as opportunities for reflection before verbal and written feedback was given by observers. Observers usually referred to these self-evaluations during feedback sessions as a way of eliciting information from teachers and encouraging discussion. Continuous professional development at the institution where this research took place was achieved through the completion of formal qualifications, attendance of in-house training, and assessment of classroom observations. Observers had different duties such as mentoring, coaching and training of in-service teachers during the assessment of classroom observations. Observers were directly involved in teachers' reflective processes through questioning and eliciting techniques used during verbal feedback sessions.

Corpus

The corpus used in this study was the Small Corpus of English Language Teachers' Self-Evaluations (henceforth SCELTSE) (Velasco, 2021). SCELTSE could be classified as a small, specialized, monolingual corpus. It was made up of 44 post-teaching self-evaluations written by in-service L1-English ESL teachers (refer to Appendix A for a self-evaluation sample and prompts that generated teachers' reflections). The corpus comprised 25,423 tokens, 2,456 word types, and 2,128 lemmas in total. The texts in the corpus were written by 22 female and 22 male ESL teachers between the ages of 24 and 39. Out of these 44 teachers who already held a Cambridge CELTA, 6 also held Cambridge DELTA diplomas, 14 held Trinity TYLEC certificates, and 2 held TESL-related MA level qualifications. Most teachers had L1-English and spoke different English varieties. Twenty teachers spoke British English, 10 American English, 4 Australian English, 4 Irish English, 2 Canadian English, and 4 spoke other Englishes (i.e., 2 Trinidadian, 1 South African, and 1 English as an International Language).

The corpus metadata was compiled as a separate Excel spreadsheet[1]. This included information about the number of tokens, word types, lemmas, English varieties, genders, age of participants, TESL qualifications, and dates of collection of self-evaluations, which allow for replicability of studies (McEnery, Xiao & Tono, 2006).

SCELTSE was collected following guidelines such as balance (Evans, 2019) and representativeness (Leech, 2007). Although very small in terms of its tokens when compared to reference corpora such as COCA, BROWN or BNC2014, the corpus was balanced for gender and was designed to represent a small sample of the specialized reflective discourse that cannot be found in bigger corpora.

The size of SCELTSE was determined by using a non-probability sampling technique called purposive sampling, where a sample from the research population is chosen "on the basis of relevance to the issue/theory being investigated [and] privileged knowledge or experience about the topic" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 35). The research population at the time of the study included about 65 in-service L1-English ESL teachers, but not everyone had agreed to participate in the study. Therefore, a cumulative approach was employed to calculate the size of the sample. In cumulative approach, the size of a sample grows to a point "where there is sufficient information and where no benefit is derived from adding any more to the sample" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 40). The aim of this process was to produce a fairly representative specialized corpus that included a balanced number of male and female ESL in-service teachers of different ages, who spoke different varieties of English and had expertise. The expertise of the participants was not linked to their experience as expert reflectors, but rather as having previous knowledge and experience of reflecting on their own teaching after a teaching observation via self-evaluations. Participants had previous experience of reflecting on their teaching through lesson observations done on their CELTA, DELTA and Trinity TYLEC training, and through TESL-related MA level qualifications for some teachers. They also had previous experience of reflecting on their teaching through the

observations done at the interview stage before joining the language school and observations completed after joining the school.

The self-evaluations submitted by participants were authentic written reflections completed by in-service teachers after teaching observations between September 2018 and October 2019. The data gathered from self-evaluations was originally collected as Word documents and then converted into a workable corpus of unannotated plain text files from which participants' personal information was removed. These files were then tagged for part of speech and headwords using a software package called #LancsBox (Brezina, Weill-Tessier & McEnery, 2020), which is used for the analysis of language data and corpora.

Ethics

The teachers who submitted their post-teaching self-evaluations voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. In line with research ethics (Bell, 2010), all the participants signed consent forms before data were collected. It was made clear that no personal information would be disclosed, and they were entitled to withdraw from the study at any point if they wished to do so. Participants did not withdraw after they had committed to taking part in the study. They also gave permission to make the corpus available to third parties. Therefore, personal data and information that could reveal their true identities were removed.

Data Analysis

The Corpus Linguistics techniques used in this study were the analysis of frequency lists, keywords, ngrams and concordances. A frequency list is "a list of all the items of a given type in a corpus […] together with a count of how often each occurs" (CASS, 2018, p. 6), while a keyword is a statistically outstanding word in terms of its frequency when compared to a larger corpus, usually a reference corpus (Scott, 2007) – see more information on the reference corpus employed in the current study below. A concordance is a display of instances of a search term in a corpus, which gives context and allows for closer qualitative analysis and examination of patterns (Baker, 2006).

Data were analysed by using #LancsBox (Brezina, Weill-Tessier & McEnery, 2020). This tool was chosen based on factors such as free availability, software compatibility, versatility of languages supported, availability of ready-to-use reference corpora, provision of automatic corpus annotation at various levels, and wide scope of analysis tools.

In order to answer RQ1, two corpora were uploaded to the software #LancsBox. These included SCELTSE, and the larger reference corpus British English 2006 (Baker, 2009) (henceforth BE06) - a reference corpus of modern written British English, comprising 500 files, 996,913 tokens, 58,627 types, and 53,772 lemmas.

Two separate word lists were produced using the *Words* tool in #LancsBox. Both frequency lists from BE06 (Baker, 2009) and SCELTSE originally included word types sorted by their absolute frequencies, from the most to least frequent, employing the coefficient of variation (CV) as the dispersion measure. Then, the word types were sorted by lemma in #LancsBox by applying a filter to both frequency lists.

Both lemma frequency lists were then contrasted with each other in #LancsBox to generate a keywords list displaying positive keywords, lock words, and negative keywords, based on the keywords statistic simple maths. Simple Maths is a ratio of the two frequency lists with a constant added towards each before the ratio is computed (Kilgarriff, 2009).

The list of positive keywords, i.e., those words statistically more frequent in a corpus when compared to another corpus (Brezina, 2018), showed all lemmas, so only the lemmas followed by the character *_n* were selected to compile a list of positive key nouns. This procedure was applied because a keywords list of nouns could easily highlight the aboutness of SCELTSE. KWIC, the concordance tool in #LancsBox, was used to edit the list of positive key nouns. This was done by exploring individual key nouns in context to ensure that potential coding and other types of errors were deleted. For instance, words such as 'lot' and 'bit' were categorised by the tool as nouns. However, concordances of these tokens showed that these words worked as quantifiers instead of nouns when seen in context, as in: "…tasks which, as mentioned above, created a **lot** of discussion amongst the group." (index 7, Self-Evaluation 16.txt), or as in: "…a lesson into an hour was a **bit** of a struggle. Also, I think that…" (index 21, Self-Evaluation 39.txt). Therefore, such tokens were not included in the final positive key nouns list.

Lastly, the final positive key nouns list was then categorised according to topoi or loci, a common discourse analysis technique (Wodak & Meyer, 2006). In discourse analysis, and Corpus Linguistics, topoi or loci are groups or taxonomies used to classify linguistic items. These broad topoi or loci were based on a list of five main teaching skills, including *Course & Lesson Planning*, *Understanding Learners*, *Classroom Management*, *Subject Knowledge*, and *Learning Technologies* (British Council, 2011), commonly employed by observers during teaching observations (refer to Appendix B for a breakdown of each teaching skill). Due to lack of space and matters of conciseness, only the first 100 positive key nouns were taken into account in the categorisation. Once again, KWIC, the concordance tool in #LancsBox, was used to look at these nouns in context and decide under which topos each noun should be categorised.

In order to answer RQ2, ngram lists from BE06 (Baker, 2009) and SCELTSE were produced using the *Ngrams* tool in #LancsBox. "The Ngram tool allows in-depth analysis of frequencies of ngrams (bigrams, trigrams, etc.), which could be defined as contiguous combination types, lemmas and POS" (Brezina, Weill-Tessier & McEnery, 2020, p. 34).

The two lists originally included ngram types sorted by their absolute frequencies, employing the coefficient of variation (CV) as the dispersion measure. Two filters were applied to the lists. First, the ngram types were sorted by their relative frequency per 10,000 words. Second, the ngram ranges were increased from 2 (the default setting) to 10 in both lists. This would allow the researcher to analyse larger multi-word expressions representing larger lexico-grammatical patterns.

Both ngram lists were then contrasted with each other in #LancsBox to produce a key ngrams list displaying positive, lock, and negative key ngrams. This procedure was based on the statistic Simple Maths, which is a ratio of the two lists with a constant added towards each before the ratio is computed (Kilgarriff, 2009). Finally, the multi-word expressions shown in the positive key ngrams list were then categorised according to topoi or loci in relation to the adapted version of Zeichner and Liston's (1985) reflective discourse taxonomy presented earlier (see Table 1). Once again, for practical reasons, only the first 100 positive key ngrams were taken into account in the categorisation. The *Whelk* tool in #LancsBox (shown when right-clicking on individual ngrams) was also used to see these ngrams in context and aid their categorization [2].

Results

Teaching Skills

The categorization of the top 100 key nouns in SCELTSE (as seen in Figure 1) revealed that experienced ESL teachers tended to reflect more on their *Subject Knowledge*. Other important areas of reflection were *Course and Lesson Planning* and *Classroom Management*. The least important areas of reflection were *Understanding Learners* and *Learning Technologies*.

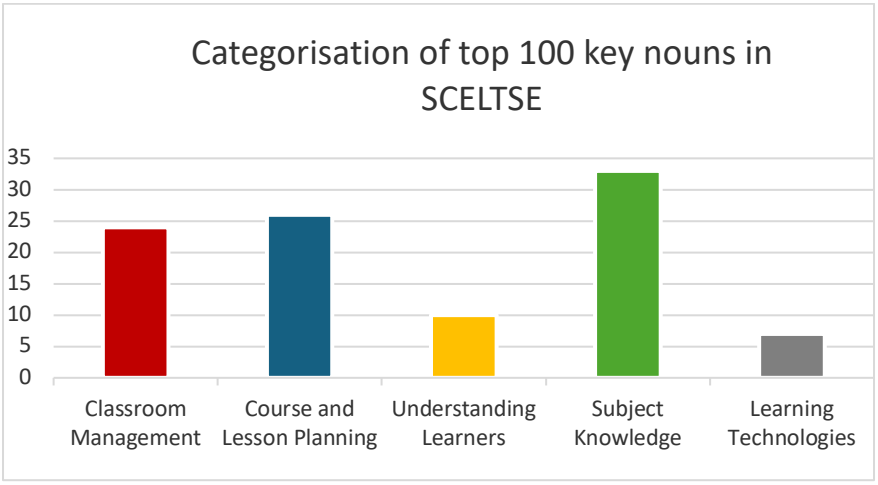


Figure 1. Areas of Reflection based on Categorisation of Top 100 Key Nouns in SCELTSE

Subject Knowledge represented about 33 out of 100 key nouns. Teachers seemed to be concerned not only with technical areas of their teaching such as the language presented to students, but also with how they dealt with its meaning, form, and pronunciation (MFP), as seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Concordance Lines of Some Reflection Areas within Subject Knowledge

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 35.txt	to do activities I should use functional	language	eg. Sorry what did you say, or
Self-Evaluation 43.txt	Students were using the techniques and target	language,	and it was amazing to see what
Self-Evaluation 3.txt	I could have also covered a few	grammar	points from the handout (smartly, diving); again
Self-Evaluation 44.txt	marker. I didn't go back to the	vocabulary	that I wrote on the whiteboard, although
Self-Evaluation 23.txt	some language errors for delayed error correction.	MFP	was presented and clarified in a student-centred
Self-Evaluation 31.txt	cover too much, I feel that the	MFP	section was cut short because the students

This area of reflection also included language skills developed by students, and some teaching skills and techniques employed by teachers, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Concordance Lines of Other Reflection Areas within Subject Knowledge

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 38.txt	and scrambling activities involving. In the final	speaking	activity most of them produced a variety
Self-Evaluation 1.txt	outside the time allotted) Students practiced productive	skills	using TL successfully in the freer practice.
Self-Evaluation 17.txt	I want to focus on my instruction-giving	skills.	I want to give instructions with as
Self-Evaluation 43.txt	going to continue working on my teaching	skills	specially on YL classes, because as mentioned
Self-Evaluation 11.txt	future observations, I'll include more practice, more	drilling,	more active activities, more ICQs. I will
Self-Evaluation 13.txt	they understood. Students were very responsive to	drilling	pronunciation for 'going to with the schwa'

Course and Lesson Planning represented about 26 out of 100 key nouns, while *Classroom Management* represented about 24 out of 100 key nouns. Within the former area of reflection, teachers seemed to be concerned mainly with their lesson aims, staging, timing, topics, and materials. Other areas here included the formats or ways used to present the language to students, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Concordance Lines of Some Reflection Areas within Course and Lesson Planning

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 19.txt	set up all activities. I think this	aim	was achieved through exemplifying the tasks with
Self-Evaluation 13.txt	the intention. Overall I think my lesson	aims	were achieved and by the end of
Self-Evaluation 18.txt	hunt' and so did they. The production	stage	went ok; they needed a little push
Self-Evaluation 28.txt	a group and individually. The warm up	stages	worked well as a primer to the
Self-Evaluation 43.txt	them interested in the tasks ahead. The	timing	was also quite good. They had enough
Self-Evaluation 33.txt	deduction and link it with the other	topic	that was covered by the other teacher
Self-Evaluation 29.txt	work together, and I felt having a	worksheet	helped structure my class and gave the
Self-Evaluation 10.txt	with few errors. Not having all the	handouts	printed before hand led to a problem
Self-Evaluation 41.txt	will use the resources provided in the	coursebook	better and exploit them to the fullest,
Self-Evaluation 23.txt	Time management and task choice. The guided	discovery	stage took longer than expected. More Ss
Self-Evaluation 12.txt	I see'. I believe this form of	discovery	is very productive for students' learning experience.

Within *Classroom Management*, teachers tended to focus on activities and exercises given to students, students' interaction, and classroom atmosphere. Teachers also focused on students' answers, students' errors and mistakes, teacher feedback and error correction given to students. An important aspect in this area of reflection was the way teachers dealt with the clarity of their instructions via questioning (ICQs), questions related to linguistic concepts (CCQs), and amount of teacher talking time (TTT), as seen in Table 5.

Table 5
Concordance Lines of Some Areas Linked to Classroom Management

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 12.txt	the free practice activity before giving the	instructions	for the task as mentioned in the
Self-Evaluation 13.txt	getting lost. Take my time to explain	instructions	and demo activity, and give students a
Self-Evaluation 19.txt	them, however I could have utilized more	ICQs	to double check the students understood what
Self-Evaluation 22.txt	on the second task. I had planned	ICQs	to use for the first task, but
Self-Evaluation 35.txt	what did you say, or mirroring. My	CCQs	could be narrower, maybe have two simpler
Self-Evaluation 7.txt	I strongly ICQ'd and did almost no	CCQs.	The students seemed to understand the instructions,
Self-Evaluation 17.txt	want to give instructions with as little	TTT	as possible, and ensure I follow up
Self-Evaluation 36.txt	My personal/professional aim was to reduce	TTT.	I think I didn't achieve this aim

Understanding Learners represented about 10 out of 100 key nouns, while *Learning Technologies* represented about 7 out of 100 key nouns. Within the former area of reflection, teachers appeared to be concerned mainly with teacher-student rapport, students' opinions, students' abilities, proficiency levels, and how learning could be differentiated. Within the latter area of reflection, teachers concentrated on the aids used to present material to students such as slides in presentations and interactive white boards, projectors and audio recordings.

Reflective Discourse Types

The categorization of the top 100 key ngrams in SCELTSE, as seen in Figure 2, revealed that the most salient reflective discourse type was *Factual*. Other salient reflective discourse types included *Prudential* and *Evaluative*. The least salient discourse type was *Justificatory*, and teachers did not produce any *Critical Discourse* in their reflections.

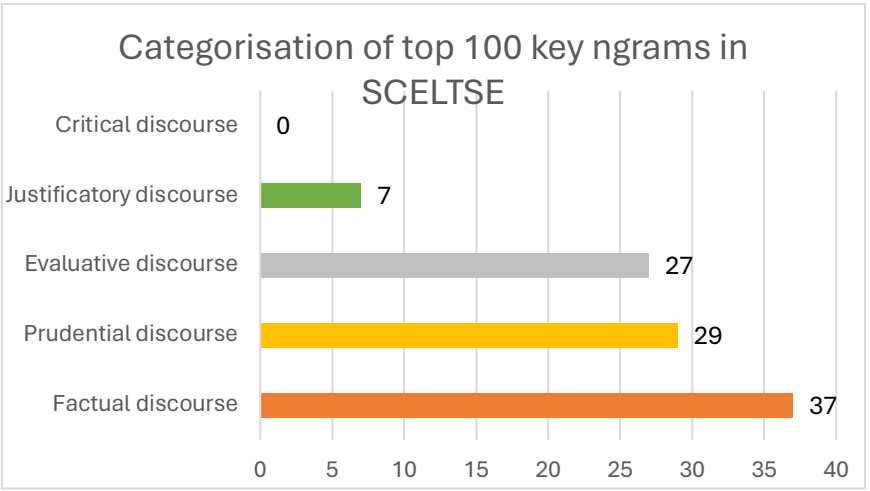


Figure 2. Discourse Types based on Categorisation of Top 100 Key Ngrams in SCELTSE

Factual Discourse represented about 37 out of 100 key ngrams. This type of discourse focused on what went on at various stages in lessons; it was descriptive in nature and did not include any type of reflection. Description of facts was mainly done through verbs such as 'was', 'were', and 'had', as seen in Table 6.

Table 6
Some Ngrams within Factual Discourse

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 26.txt	the freer speaking practice	earlier in the class and had an extra practice at	the end of the
Self-Evaluation 12.txt	present perfect structure as	I noticed a student was unfamiliar with this. The aim	of the lesson was
Self-Evaluation 2.txt	engage with their partner	and predict the actions that were in the photo, they	were able to relate
Self-Evaluation 15.txt	plan, but I thought	the students were up to it, and they were in	general. I think the

Prudential Discourse represented about 29 out of 100 key ngrams. This discourse type showed evidence of reflection on what went on in lessons linked to suggestions for future improvements, often done via conditional sentences, and structures to express regrets and future intentions, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7
Some Ngrams within Prudential Discourse

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 31.txt	ahead of the lesson.	If I was to teach this lesson again, I would	cut down my marker
Self-Evaluation 37.txt	this aspect of teaching.	If I were to teach this lesson again, I would	skip the listening activity
Self-Evaluation 24.txt	happy with how they	were producing the language, but I wish I had given	them more time to
Self-Evaluation 28.txt	each stage is doing	its job. I will have extra material/exercises on hand, so	that if it seems

Evaluative Discourse represented about 27 out of 100 key ngrams. This discourse type was characterized by the use of adjectives, adverbs and modality devices used to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of different actions and events in lessons, as seen in Table 8.

Table 8
Some Ngrams within Evaluative Discourse

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 5.txt	read the dialogue. The	corrections made (e.g. of the 'ed' pronunciation) were well received	and other students were
Self-Evaluation 26.txt	all the students felt	free to produce answers, this was shown through good participation	from all the students.
Self-Evaluation 27.txt	class. Students seemed relaxed	and appeared to enjoy themselves. In terms of the target	language (quantifiers) I believe
Self-Evaluation 13.txt	good rapport with the	students and I felt that there was a good teacher-student	dynamic. The quiz to

Justificatory Discourse represented about 7 out of 100 key ngrams. This discourse type provided insight into how teachers employed logical relations such as 'because', 'therefore', and 'however' to justify and provide a rationale for their actions in lessons, as seen in Table 9.

Table 9
Some Ngrams within Justificatory Discourse

File	Left	Node	Right
Self-Evaluation 44.txt	thought it'd be better	for time purposes. Even though I did the questions to	check if they knew
Self-Evaluation 12.txt	the target language, however	because they needed a lot more time for the controlled	practice, they only had
Self-Evaluation 20.txt	used to teaching for	longer than a hour, and therefore I let the introduction	and the reading go
Self-Evaluation 23.txt	movement and interaction aspect,	but also because it would have allowed them to truly	talk about their own

Discussion

In regard to the first research question, findings in this study suggest that the areas upon which in-service ESL teachers reflect the most are *Subject Knowledge*, followed by *Lesson Planning*, and *Classroom Management*. This finding corroborates previous research where experienced teachers have been found to show a higher range of awareness of self-reflection and classroom management skills (Sammaknejad & Marzban, 2016), and where trainee teachers have been found to reflect on a number of different areas, but largely on teaching procedures and general classroom management strategies (Baines, n.d.).

However, results also provide new information about patterns of areas of reflection that emerge when in-service teachers reflect on their lessons. By analysing individual areas of reflection in context through concordances, it becomes apparent that in-service teachers seem concerned primarily with specialized areas of their teaching such as the language presented to students, students' language skills, and teaching skills and techniques used by teachers themselves. This corroborates findings in similar contexts where reflective practices of experienced teachers have also been shown to focus on teaching methods (Farrell, 2001, 2013).

Findings in the current study expand findings from previous studies regarding areas of reflection of experienced teachers. For instance, Farrell (2001) had found that in-service teachers tend to reflect more on areas such as self-perception, students' responsiveness to teaching, and the school context. The current study does not shed any light on those areas, but it suggests that *Understanding Learners* and use of *Learning Technologies* are far less important areas of reflection amongst in-service teachers. The low frequency of the former reflection area could be explained by the type of lesson delivered by teachers linked to how much they knew about their class profiles. That is, a teacher who had been teaching the same group of students for a long period of time perhaps was bound to understand his/her students better than a teacher who had only taught his/her group for a short time. The low frequency of the latter reflection area might be adhered to aspects such as reliability of technological equipment and teachers' collective knowledge of use of Information Technology (IT) tools. In other words, perhaps technology was reliable during lesson delivery, so the area of *Learning Technologies* would be less likely to be mentioned in teachers' reflections. Similarly, perhaps the higher teachers' IT skills were, the less likely IT would be mentioned as an issue in their reflections.

In regard to the second research question, findings in this study partly contradict previous research in pre-service contexts where trainee teachers seem to produce a variety of *Factual*, *Prudential* and *Justificatory* discourse types without a noticeable pattern (Baines, n.d.; Zeichner & Liston, 1985). Although the original categories employed to classify discourse types were slightly modified to suit the needs of the current study, there is evidence to suggest that there is a noticeable pattern in the discourse types that in-service teachers produce in their reflections. The most salient discourse type is *Factual*, followed by *Prudential*, and *Evaluative Discourse*. *Justificatory Discourse*, on the other hand, is not frequently used in teachers' reflections. This finding implies that more experienced teachers are interested in describing facts, making suggestions for future changes to practice, and assessing effectiveness of practice, but not so much in explaining or giving reasons for actions in their lessons.

Data also provided insight into similarities to previous findings. It became apparent that, likewise the pre-service teachers in Baines's (n.d.) study, in-service teachers also fail to produce any *Critical Discourse* or reflection categorised as critical. Perhaps, this could simply be an indication of the role some teachers play in institutions where there are limited powers to make changes to curricula, particularly if curriculum content in institutions is determined by higher ranked members and teachers are simply detached from the decision-making process. Also, connected to Hatton and

Smith's (1995) study with pre-service teachers, the results in this study suggest that in-service L1-English ESL teachers also seem capable of producing reflection that is not purely descriptive.

Pedagogical Implications of the Current Study

The findings of the current study have three main pedagogical implications. First, in order to produce a well-balanced type of reflection, both pre- and in-service teachers need to be familiarized with the areas of reflection and discourse types involved in any reflective process. It seems that after all, as pointed out by Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2010), Bahar (2011), and Jay and Johnson (2002), pre- and in-service teachers need to be taught how to reflect and this needs to be supported by teacher trainers and educators. Perhaps teacher trainers and educators should find a wider range of strategies to support pre- and in-service teachers in their reflective practices.

Second, in order to guide the overall reflective process, the tools employed by teachers to reflect on their lessons, such as the one employed in the current study (see Appendix A), could be adapted, so they mirror specific areas of reflection such as teaching skills and reflective discourse types. As Stanley (1998) puts it:

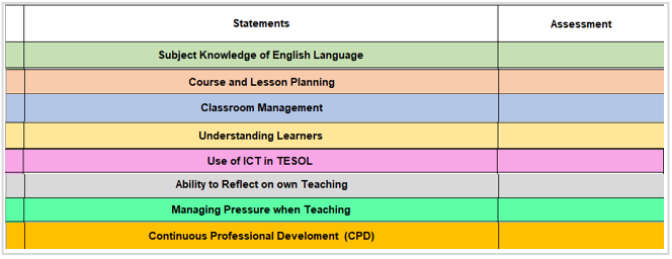
> *[w]hen teachers have understood what reflection is and how to think reflectively, they can use it as a tool. Just as in learning any new skill, there is a phase of experimentation and joy in seeing how many different shapes reflection can take and when, how, and with whom it can be done. (p. 587).*

Third, although interesting, the pedagogical implications in the current study do not really offer ESL teachers and teacher educators any practical ideas on how to improve reflective practices. Therefore, the last part of the discussion section of this paper suggests a self-reflection tool designed for pre- and in-service ESL teachers to assess and reflect on their own teaching practices.

A Self-Reflection Tool for ESL Teachers

Many contemporary ESL teachers are still unsure how they can become better reflective practitioners. That issue led the researcher to design a simple self-reflection tool (Velasco, 2023) ESL teachers can use to reflect on their own teaching skills and identify their most relevant professional development strategy.

The self-reflection tool for ESL teachers (Velasco, 2023) can be found at https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/djynbxvm6d. In the tool, teachers find 64 statements on a tab entitled 'Assessment of statements' to help them reflect on their teaching skills after a teaching observation (or in general) and identify other professional development areas. The 64 statements are grouped into 8 different categories, as shown in Figure 3.



	Statements	Assessment
	Subject Knowledge of English Language	
	Course and Lesson Planning	
	Classroom Management	
	Understanding Learners	
	Use of ICT in TESOL	
	Ability to Reflect on own Teaching	
	Managing Pressure when Teaching	
	Continuous Professional Develoment (CPD)	

Figure 3. Categories of Statements in Velasco's (2023) Self-reflection Tool for ESL Teachers

Teachers need to grade each statement according to how they feel about their teaching skills and other professional development areas. They must enter the number that corresponds to their assessment in the column entitled 'Assessment' according to a Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). They also enter their name and date when they carry out the assessment in the boxes on the right-hand side. Once they have assessed the 64 statements, they can refer to the tab entitled 'Results - DON'T MODIFY CELLS' to check their results and see a visual representation of teaching skills and professional development strengths and weaknesses, as seen in Figure 4.

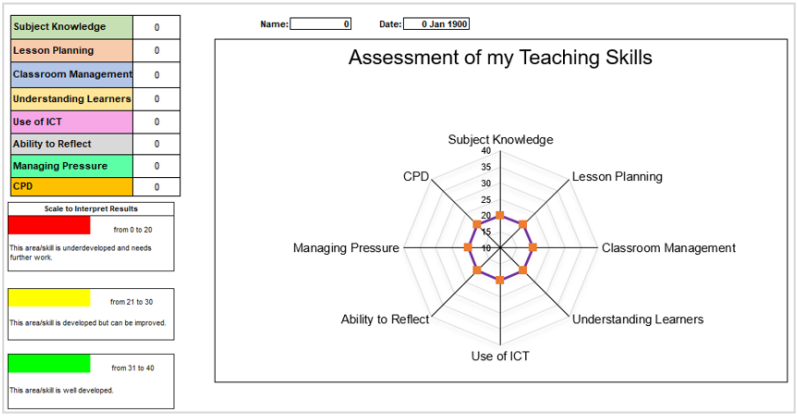


Figure 4. Visual Representation of Teaching Skills Assessment in Velasco's (2023) Self-reflection Tool for ESL Teachers

Conclusion

The current study set out to explore the reflective discourse in a small, specialized monolingual corpus, in order to understand the nature of discourse of in-service teachers found in written self-evaluations done after classroom observations. The aim of the corpus exploration was to find out how in-service teachers reflect on their own lessons and add to the knowledge of what has been done in pre-service contexts. The ultimate goal in the study was to better understand the reflective practices of in-service teachers and perhaps suggest ways to improve tools employed by pre- and in-service teachers to reflect.

Overall, based on Corpus Linguistics techniques, this study found that in-service ESL teachers tend to reflect upon the area of *Subject Knowledge* the most. Other frequent areas of reflection include *Lesson Planning* and *Classroom Management*. Areas of reflection such as *Understanding Learners* and use of *Learning Technologies* are far less important amongst in-service teachers. Generally, the most salient discourse type is *Factual*, followed by *Prudential* and *Evaluative Discourse*. *Justificatory Discourse* is not frequently used by these teachers who also fail to produce any type of *Critical Discourse* in their reflections.

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the reflective practices of in-service L1-English ESL teachers, and there are three main pedagogical implications deriving from this study. First, in order to produce a well-balanced type of reflection, both pre-service and in-service ESL teachers need to be taught how to reflect and this needs to be supported by teacher trainers and educators. Second, in order to guide overall reflective practices, tools employed by pre- and in-service ESL teachers to reflect on their lessons could be adapted, so they mirror specific areas

of reflection such as the teaching skills and reflective discourse types being evaluated. Third, the current study also suggests a self-reflection tool (Velasco, 2023) pre- and in-service ESL teachers can use to assess and reflect on their own teaching practices.

Finally, some limitations need to be noted regarding the present study. Although Corpus Linguistics is generally seen as a reliable research method, as Baker (2009) points out, text selection and corpus design decisions can influence the extent to which a corpus truly represents a sample of a language or a language in its entirety. Therefore, one must be cautious not to over-interpret the results of the present study. The current research was limited by the size of the corpus and potential overlaps in some of the categorisation of key nouns and key ngrams in relation to the loci used. Future research studies may want to conduct replication studies to see if findings are similar in other contexts, or researchers may want to use Corpus Linguistic techniques to explore other reflective tools employed by teachers.

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Appendix A

Self-evaluation filled in by in-service ESL teachers after a teaching observation.

[logo has been removed] **Self-Evaluation of Teaching Observation**

FILL THIS IN AFTER TEACHING AND BEFORE FEEDBACK

Name: ..... Date: .....

1. Do you feel you achieved your stated objectives for this lesson?
2. What aspects of the lesson are you happy with?
3. What aspects are you unhappy with?
4. What would you do differently next time?
5. In view of your learning experience in this lesson, and your observation of your students, what are your action points for the next observed lesson?

Appendix B

Topoi/Loci used in RQ1, based on British Council's (2011) Teaching Skills.

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[1] SCELTSE metadata is available at: Velasco, E. (2021). *SCELTSE: the Small Corpus of English Language Teachers' Self-Evaluations*, Mendeley Data, V1, doi: 10.17632/f7wwg384rp.1.

[2] The spreadsheets with statistical data and categorisation of positive key nouns and positive key ngrams are available at: Velasco, E. (2021). *SCELTSE: the Small Corpus of English Language Teachers' Self-Evaluations*, Mendeley Data, V1, doi: 10.17632/f7wwg384rp.1.