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## **Implementing an Interactive Reflection Model in English for Academic Purposes Courses: Optimizing Student and Teacher Learning Through Action Research**

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*Abstract: In this article, the authors, a teacher-researcher and an English Language Teaching (ELT) professor, report on a collaborative action research study which investigated how integrating systematic reflection into academic English courses at the tertiary level fostered both teacher and student learning. Using constructivist theory as a framework, they developed an interactive reflection model in which the students and teacher engage in a two-way process of reflection to improve their performance. Through reflective dialogue and reflective writing tasks, students explored their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the tasks they performed. Reflecting with students and on students' reflections became a journey of discovery for the teacher-researcher and contributed to her professional development. Drawing on data from students' oral and written reflective work, the teacher's reflective journal and students' evaluation of the effectiveness of the reflective tasks, the authors identify how adopting an interactive reflection model contributes to the learning process.*

### **Introduction**

The information age is characterized by the speed information becomes obsolete. What matters is not knowledge itself because it becomes out-dated at a rapid rate but the ability to learn how to learn (Cowan, 1985; Scales 2008). Thus, in order to meet the demands of the age, higher education should focus on the development of higher-level skills that will enable individuals to explore, evaluate and create. Reflection promotes the development of these skills and is at the heart of higher education in the information age (Cowan, 1985; Illeris, 1999; McGill & Brockbank; 2007)

Reflection is closely associated with the growing emphasis higher education puts on lifelong learning (Scales, 2008). As Hullfish and Smith (1961) assert reflective thinking is “man’s sole way of providing for a continuity of learning that will carry beyond the classroom into the continuing affairs of life”, and it must be emphasized at all stages of education (p. 229). By providing students with opportunities to reflect on the quality of the written and oral work they produce and to self-assess their performance, teachers can help students increase their reflective capacities and equip them with tools to become lifelong learners. Teachers should also become lifelong learners. They should be willing to learn and re-learn and be capable of doing so in order that they can adapt to change (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001).

## **Background**

Turkey is attentive to the pressing demands of the information age on higher education. The Council of Higher Education, (CoHe), is involved in international organizations to improve the standard of higher education in Turkey and to attain internationally set standards. The Bologna Process is one of the outcomes of this mission. Together with 47 partner countries, Turkey has taken part in the implementation of the Bologna process since 2001 (CoHE, 2010) and the university where this study was conducted, is also involved in the process. The 2011-16 Strategic Plan has identified the adoption of instructional methods and assessment practices that encourage students to take active roles in their learning as a major strategy. Furthermore, the plan has set the academics engaging in reflection as a goal.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Constructivism**

In this study, the case for reflective learning is based on constructivist and social interactionist principles. von Glasersfeld, a leading constructivist, (1995), criticizes behaviourist approaches and indicates that learning “requires self-regulation and the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction” (p. 14). Teachers should not focus merely on the performance of students but observe and listen to them in order to understand their conceptual structures (beliefs, attitudes and knowledge). Without such an understanding, it is not possible to change these structures. One way to achieve this understanding is to ask students to reflect on their experiences. In this way, teachers can cooperate with students to modify their conceptual structures and improve their performance.

Vygotskian concepts of inner speech and scaffolding are also the foundation of the study. Vygotsky (1986) stresses the importance of inner speech in facilitating reflective thinking. Inner speech is closely linked to thinking; it helps “mental orientation, conscious understanding” and aids problem solving (p. 228). As learners verbalize their inner speech, the teacher has an opportunity to gain an insight into their conceptual structures. The theoretical basis for the use of written reflections is also grounded in Vygotsky’s work. As he states, by translating inner speech into written speech through reflections, it is made comprehensible to others. Furthermore, his views on the role of instruction and others in development are at the heart of this study. As Vygotsky (1978) indicates teachers and peers can contribute to individual learning and with their scaffolding, learners can perform better than they would do if left alone.

Constructivism underlines the importance of teachers becoming aware of their beliefs, attitudes and knowledge and draws attention to the importance of reflection for teachers’ professional development (Williams & Burden, 1997). In congruence, this study does not limit its scope to student reflection and involves the teacher in the reflection process.

### **Schön’s Model of Reflective Learning**

In this study, Schön’s model of reflective learning is used as an overarching model of reflective learning. Schön (1987) states that when confronted with a problem and “unexpected result”, “we think critically about the thinking that got us into this fix or opportunity; and we may, in the process, restructure strategies of action, understandings of

phenomena, or ways of framing problems” (p. 28). In this way, reflection leads to learning and professional development.

Schön (1983) dwells on different kinds of reflection. The first one is reflection-in-action which refers to the practitioner's, in this case, the teacher's spontaneous reflection as he or she is engaged in a teaching related activity.

Schön (1987) distinguishes reflection-in-action from reflection-on-action and states that reflection-on-action is the ability “to produce a good verbal description of” reflection (p. 31). As Burns (2010) puts it reflection-on-action is “meta-thinking about what happened” (p. 14). Reflecting-on-action, is a further dimension of reflection (Schön, 1987).

As Schön (1983) points out practitioner reflection is essential for eliminating the power division between researchers and practitioners. He is critical of the superior position given to researchers and believes that the knowledge of practitioners, which can be disclosed through reflection-on-action, is invaluable for contributing to the development of scientific knowledge. Reflection empowers practitioners not only by creating opportunities for learning from experience but also by preparing the ground for sharing this expertise. In this sense, action research (AR) is an ideal research methodology to promote professional development through reflection.

### **Defining Reflective Thinking, Reflective Learning, Reflection, Self-assessment and Reflective Dialogue**

In literature, the terms reflective thinking, reflective learning and reflection are used to refer to overlapping concepts. Various definitions of reflective thinking and reflection highlight that reflective thinking and reflection consist of careful exploration of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and experience to arrive at conclusions based on evidence and reasoning (Dewey, 1933; Cowan, 1998; McGill & Brockbank, 2007). Drawing mainly on Cowan's explanations, in this study, reflection is defined as the analysis and evaluation of work and personal experiences with an attempt to make generalizations from that thinking so that one becomes more skilful or better informed and more effective in the future. Reflective learning is “the intentional use of reflection on performance and experience as a means to learning” (Rickards et al., 2008, p. 33).

There are very close links between reflection and self-assessment. Boud states that there are so many similarities between self-assessment and reflection that it is not useful to consider them “as entirely separate ideas” (as cited in Rickards et al., p. 34). He indicates that self-assessment is a kind of reflective activity “when well designed” and indicates that self-assessment is a “specific subset of” reflection (p. 34). Citing from Alverno College Faculty web-page, Rickards et al. (2008) note that “both reflection and self-assessment depend on careful observation, but the purpose of self-reflection is *understanding*, in contrast to the *judgment, the evaluation of performance on the basis of criteria*, that is the purpose of assessment” [italics in the original] (as cited in Rickards et al., 2008, p. 33). The same distinction between the terms self-assessment and reflection is made in the present study.

Reflection can be done individually or with others. Reflective dialogue (RD) is a reflective conversation between two or more people in order to promote reflective thinking. It is an invaluable tool to create the conditions for reflective learning (Schön, 1983; McGill & Brockbank, 2007). Especially when students are inexperienced in carrying out reflection, RD can help students learn how to reflect. In RDs, the teacher can scaffold reflection by asking questions that lead students to think reflectively, which is vital to the development of students' reflective thinking skills (Hullfish & Smith, 1961; McGill & Brockbank, 2007). For example, to reflect on a presentation they delivered, students may be asked a set of questions

focusing on the preparation stage including how they prepared for the presentation and how their preparation contributed to or hindered their performance. Another set of questions may focus on the actual performance. They may be asked questions such as what their strengths were and the key to their success. What needed to be improved and reasons behind things that did not go well can also be probed. Future and action-oriented questions such as what they would do differently in their next presentation should be asked. Another way to scaffold reflection is to guide the students to focus on the task expectations and assessment criteria. For a successful RD, the power dynamics need to be observed carefully. Adversarial dialogue should be avoided, and the teacher should encourage students to express their way of thinking before passing on his or her views (McGill & Brockbank, 2007). Schön (1983) indicates that providing concrete evidence and data is important for the success of the dialogue, which is also likely to reduce controversies.

### **Design, Implementation and Assessment of Reflective Activities**

Scholars agree that proper introduction of reflective activities is essential to their success. Students need to know why they are carrying out reflective activities, and they need to be guided on how to reflect (Cowan, 1998; Moon, 2004; McGill & Brockbank 2007). Research studies stress the importance of training for the success of reflective activities (Rickards et al., 2008; Lo, 2010).

Research on feedback and assessment in reflective learning highlights the limitations of feedback practices that tell students what is wrong and right. In this way, students remain dependent on teacher feedback. Furthermore, it is very difficult to give clear feedback that students can utilize to improve their work (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick).

Assessment of reflective activities is also a challenge. Bourner (2003) states that reflective learning is personal learning and very subjective, and thus it is difficult to determine criteria to assess it. However, for the successful implementation of reflective tasks, despite the challenges, the expected outcome and the assessment procedures for reflective activities should be identified (Sparks-Langer, et al., 1990; Bourner, 2003; Moon, 2004; Lo, 2010). Students may complete their reflection in the oral or written form, and a holistic rubric specifying the features of effective reflection can be used for assessment purposes. Discussing the rubric with students and analyzing good and weak samples help students identify what characterizes reflective thinking.

There are different findings in relation to the perceptions of practioners' regarding the effectiveness of reflective activities. It is reported that students benefit from reflection, and engaging in reflection helps students develop reflective skills and take responsibility for their own learning (Ayan, 2010; Gün, 2011). However, there are also research findings suggesting that not all students perceive them as useful. Personality factors, level of proficiency and not understanding the rationale behind reflection are listed as the possible reasons for students' resistance to reflection (Kato, 2009; Gunn, 2010). Also, problems in the design and implementation of reflective activities may impede their success.

### **Research Design**

#### **Action Research as a Research Paradigm**

In literature, there are various definitions of AR that include complementary and contradictory views. Based on his comprehensive review of literature, Costello (2003) defines educational AR in the following way:

*From the point of view of teachers and teaching, it involves deciding on a particular focus for research, planning to implement an activity, series of activities, or other interventions, implementing these activities, observing the outcomes, reflecting on what has happened and then planning a further series of activities if necessary. (p. 7)*

Reflective practice and teacher as researcher are concepts fundamental to AR and in AR, teachers explore their own context adopting a systematic approach to deal with a problematic situation or issue (Burns, 2010). Another important feature of AR is its cyclical and action-oriented nature. The first phase is the identification of the problem. In the second phase, the methodology is planned, which is followed by data collection and analysis (phase three). Based on the findings, an action plan is made and put into action (phase four). The next phase is reflecting on the results of the action taken and starting a new cycle, if necessary. This paper reports the first three phases of the AR.

AR can be conducted by an individual teacher or groups of teachers (Richards and Farrell, 2005; Burns 2010). In this study, a collaborative design was implemented, and the teacher-researcher collaborated with an ELT professor. This team work contributed to the quality of the research by combining not only the expertise of the two researchers but also the perspectives of an insider, the class teacher, with an outsider. With this collaboration, the researchers also aimed to address the skepticism regarding the legitimacy of AR as a serious research tradition (Richards, 2003).

AR is contrasted with traditional research paradigms and criticized for its lack of rigour (Richards, 2003). However, a growing number of experts acknowledge the strengths of AR as a research paradigm and its importance for improving education (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2009). AR is context sensitive and does not aim to make general statements (Wallace, 1998; Somekh, 2006); therefore, it needs to be evaluated against a different set of criteria which is discussed in the trustworthiness section. Furthermore, it is a powerful tool in effecting educational change since it is “persuasive and authoritative, since it is done by teachers for teachers” (Mertler, 2012, p. 20). Finally, AR promises a compromise in the ongoing “theory vs. practice” debate, and it enriches educational research and empowers teachers (Costello, 2003).

## Research Questions

The problem that the teacher-researcher identified was students’ limited use of the feedback provided by her leading to limited or no improvement when performing similar further tasks. She collaborated with the second researcher, an ELT professor to remedy the problem. They decided to integrate reflective tasks into the syllabus to encourage students to practice reflective thinking assuming that such an intervention would aid students in utilizing feedback and gradually decrease their dependency on teacher feedback. In addition, the teacher-researcher would reflect on the intervention with a particular focus on her feedback practices. They also decided to inquire the teacher-researcher and students views on engaging in reflection tasks. The research questions were specified as:

1. To what extent does the “reflective dialogue” between the teacher and the student promote reflective learning?
2. To what extent does engaging in reflective writing facilitate reflective learning?
3. To what extent does reflecting with students and reflecting on students’ reflection aid the teacher’s professional development?

### **Context of the Study**

The study was carried out at the Department of Modern Languages (MLD) of a top-ranking international university in Turkey. The language of instruction is English and students are required to take an English proficiency exam recognized by the university before starting their departments. If their proficiency level is below B1+, they study in an intensive language preparation program. Students who pass the exam and start their departments take English for academic purposes (EAP) courses offered by MLD. This study was conducted in ENG 101 Advanced Reading and Writing Skills I, a thematically organized integrated-skills course, which is the first level of the three compulsory EAP courses offered by MLD.

ENG 101 is an introductory level course where the students practice academic writing and speaking skills. A process approach to writing is adopted, and students write expository paragraphs, reaction-response paragraphs and a non-documented expository essay. The speaking component of the course includes two mini-presentations, and due to space limitation, this paper primarily focuses on these presentations and related reflective tasks. However, it is not possible to altogether exclude other reflective work from the picture since reflection was integrated into all course components (See Table 1 for tasks students carried out in the semester).

In the first presentation, students described an online avatar of their own choice and speculated on what it revealed about its owner. In the second one, they presented a cartoon by describing it, identifying its message and reacting to its message. In order to address the issue of public speaking anxiety, the first presentation was set at two minutes, and in the second one, the time was extended to four minutes. In both presentations, performance was evaluated in relation to content, organization, delivery, visual use and language, and the assessment criteria were discussed with students prior to the presentations.

### **Participants of the Study**

The AR was carried out with the participation of the class teacher and 71 freshman students taking the ENG 101 *English for Academic Purposes* course in her three sections. Throughout the paper, the terms teacher-researcher and teacher are used to refer to the class teacher. The students were from the departments of Geological Engineering (GE), Civil Engineering (CE) and Mechanical Engineering (ME). All the students were Turkish and despite having passed an English proficiency exam, there were students particularly struggling in writing and speaking.

### **Sampling**

Multiple sampling procedures were applied for different sets of data. When selecting students for recording the RDs, purposive sampling was used since it “increases the data exposed and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 82). RDs were held with all the students who did mini-presentation 1 (50 in total), and 15 were recorded for obtaining in-depth information on the RDs.

After the RDs, students completed written reflections on their first mini-presentation. The content of these reflections was analyzed to support the analysis of the RDs, when needed; however, they were not used to trace how reflection promoted learning because since they were written after the RDs, they were likely to be highly shaped by teacher feedback. Reflection and self-assessment were new experiences for students, and it was expected that

they would display a tendency to value teacher feedback more than their self-assessment because teachers are perceived to have the expertise and thus power to carry out the evaluation. As discussed earlier, one goal of integrating reflection into the course was to gradually reduce students' dependency on teacher feedback and foster reflective thinking skills that will lead to effective self-assessment. Therefore, RDs were planned as a means for modelling reflective thinking and further reflective writing tasks were assigned before teacher feedback and scaffolded by written reflective questions.

All the remaining reflective writing submitted was analysed. However, in this paper, the discussion is narrowed down to written reflections on mini-presentation 2 (63 reflective paragraphs), students' evaluation of reflective tasks (57 forms) and teacher journal.

## Data Collection

### Reflection Tasks

Various reflection tasks related to the tasks specified in the ENG 101 syllabus were developed (See Table 1), and students wrote reflections on all the tasks they completed. To scaffold students in the process, a specific lesson was allocated to discussing what reflective thinking is and how it is relevant to successful learning. In addition, a set of reflective writing tips was shared online with students (See Appendix 1). Prompts to encourage reflection were provided in the reflection tasks together with the features of reflective writing. In addition, the teacher-researcher gave feedback on the reflective writing tasks guiding students to meet the criteria. As a sample, the reflection task for the second mini-presentation is presented in Appendix 2. As stated above, in this paper, the focus was on the mini-presentations and related reflective tasks, which are marked with asterisks in Table 1.

	Week
Expository paragraph (non-graded)	2
Reflective paragraph on expository paragraph (non-graded)	3
Expository paragraph (graded)	4
*Mini-presentation 1 & self-evaluation (graded)	9
*RDs on mini-presentation 1	10-11-12
Reflective paragraph on mini-presentation 1 (graded)	11-12
Essay outline	10
Outline feedback (written & face to face)	11
In-class essay writing	12
Reflective paragraph on the preparation part for the essay	12
Essay feedback (written & face to face)	14
*Mini-presentation 2 (graded)	14
*Reflective paragraph on mini-presentation 2 (graded)	15
Reaction-response paragraph (non-graded)	14
Reflective paragraph on the reaction-response paragraph	15
Reaction-response paragraph (graded)	15
Reflective paragraph on the essay-part II	15
Reaction-response paragraph (graded)	final exam time
*Evaluation of reflective activities	final exam time

**Table 1: Tasks Students Carried Out through the Semester**

When developing the reflective tasks, the literature was reviewed for sample reflective writing prompts and pieces (Moon, 2004; Cowan, 1998; Thorpe, 2002). The reflective writing prompts aimed to help students go beyond the descriptive level; that is, merely describing what they did. Students were prompted to reflect on both the process they went through and the product they created in order to identify the strengths and weak points in



their preparation and performance. However, identifying the strong and weak points was only the first step in this reflective process. Especially, in case of weaknesses, they were asked to trace the possible reasons of the problems identified and brainstorm solutions. For example, in the reflection task for the second presentation, the first prompt asked students to compare their two presentations highlighting the link between the two experiences:

Reflect on your first and second mini-presentations. Can you identify any improvements in the second one? If so, in what areas has there been an improvement?

Another prompt guided students to focus on persistent problems and make an action plan:

Are there any persistent problems? What are they? Please, be specific. How are you planning to deal with these problems? Are they problems that can be solved in the short-term or do you need to make a long-term investment?

By asking students to focus not only on problem setting but also on problem solving, the development of a learning culture in which students became action learners was initiated (See Appendix 2 for the Reflection Task for Mini-presentation 2).

A holistic rubric that describes the qualities of good reflective writing was developed to assess the reflective writing tasks:

A good reflection:

displays numerous evidence of the thinking process and awareness of strengths and weaknesses in relation to the tasks

traces the possible reasons that may have caused problems and/ or that may have contributed to successful performance

links new learning to prior knowledge and experiences

is solution and learning oriented

expresses emotions clearly

is written using correct and clear English.

Spark-Langer et al.'s (1990) framework for reflective thinking was adapted to scale different levels of reflection. A reflective paragraph which met all or almost all the features of a good reflection received full credit (three points). A reflective paragraph that met some of the criteria was described as "emerging" and got two points. Reflections that remained at the descriptive level were classified as "in need of improvement", and their grade was one point. Work that remained at the descriptive level and/ or lacked any evidence of reflective thinking process was regarded unsatisfactory.

With the exception of the first one, reflective writing tasks were graded as quizzes and constituted 10 percent of the students' overall grade. Three reflective paragraphs with the highest scores were taken into account for the final grading and one-point completion grade was given for the final evaluation task. The ELT professor who collaborated in the research and another ELT expert reviewed the reflection tasks and the rubric and revisions were made in light of their feedback. The revised tools were piloted in the previous semester.

For RDs, students came to the teacher's office. During the RDs, they watched the video-recordings of their mini-presentation 1, and the teacher-researcher used the stimulated recall technique to promote self-reflection (Gass & MacKey, 2000). First, she gave students brief information about the technique and how and why they would carry out the RD. She paused the video when needed to encourage them to reflect on their performance and experience. Students could also stop the video to ask questions and make comments. Then the teacher gave the rubric back to the student and asked him or her to complete the mini-presentation reflection task and submit the rubric and reflection within a week. Students revised their initial self-assessment when necessary. Excerpts from RDs are presented in the data analysis part.

### **Students' Evaluation of Reflective Tasks**

At the end of the term, students were given a final reflection task in which they were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of engaging in reflective activities.

### **Teacher's Reflective Journal**

The teacher kept a journal during the pilot study and the actual study, which served both as a data collection and analysis tool (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001; Richards & Farrel, 2005). Following the stream-of-consciousness approach (Richards & Farrel, 2005), the teacher wrote entries in her journal as needed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At times, the entries were very brief and in the form of scribbled notes. Such notes were taken mostly during the lessons when checking student work, or during the RDs. At other times, the entries were extended into reflective paragraphs. These cases emerged especially when the teacher was dealing with a problem she needed to solve. Parts from the teacher journal are provided in the data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The first data source was the RDs. RDs were transcribed using a simplified version of Jeffersonian transcribing conventions. Following the inductive coding process, the teacher closely read the transcribed data and identified the emerging themes (Thomas, 2006). The general categories were derived from the research questions, and specific categories were derived through multiple readings of the transcribed data. When introducing the results of the data analysis, illustrative excerpts from the transcripts were included to discuss the themes.

The second source of data was students' second mini-presentation and their reflections on these paragraphs. For mini-presentation 2, students were not called for RDs. Instead, each student had a copy of the video recording of his or her presentation and the rubric and was asked to re-assess the presentation on his or her own (initial self-assessment was done in the class after the presentation). They completed a written reflection on their second mini-presentation after watching the video. The collected data was analysed through content analysis.

The third source of data, which was the students' evaluations of the reflection tasks, was analysed through coding and clustering the emergent themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For data analysis, a matrix was created by typing the coded research questions in the rows and student names in the columns. The second coding was done two weeks after the initial coding. At this stage, the student evaluations were re-examined and re-entered into a separate matrix. Then, matrix one and two were compared to check for intra-rater reliability. Several inconsistencies were identified, and these were highlighted on the matrix. Following this, a second rater independently analysed the parts where inconsistencies were identified. Then, the codings of the raters were compared. There was one disagreement between the first raters' second coding and the second rater's coding, which occurred when the data was inferential. In this case, the relevant part in the source was read together for negotiation and upon negotiation a new code was created.

Based on the results of the intra and inter reliability check, the matrix and the codes were revised and given its final form. Then the frequency of the codes was counted, and the percentages were calculated. This information was transferred to a new table. Representative quotations that clarify student responses were identified and entered on a separate sheet.

Finally, the content of the journal entries was analysed and extracts were presented with the relevant data.

### **Trustworthiness**

The present AR falls under the naturalistic paradigm and therefore, to establish the trustworthiness of the study, instead of using the conventional criteria which is mostly associated with quantitative research, alternative criteria were taken as a point of reference (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Among the procedures Lincoln and Guba suggest for achieving credibility, prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing and referential adequacy were used. First, having spent sufficient time in the context to familiarize themselves with the culture of the institution, both researchers met the prolonged engagement criterion spent. The teacher-researcher was the class teacher and had been teaching the course for four years. Second, triangulation was achieved through different data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Suter, 2006; Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2008). Student reflections on various tasks were collected and a teacher journal was kept.

Another credibility procedure was peer debriefing. A colleague who had a PhD in ELT read the study and commented on the trustworthiness of the conclusions. In the peer debriefing, there was one conclusion that was questioned by the peer-debriefer. She pointed out that different from the researchers, she thought that the presence of other students in the room during the RDs was not always positive. These students who were called critical friends participated in the RDs as a third party. The researchers reanalyzed the data, agreed with the comment and revised their initial conclusion. Finally, referential adequacy was achieved by archiving all the raw data for later recall.

The second criterion for trustworthiness is transferability, which is concerned with how outcomes discovered in one context can be transferred to another context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To this end, a thick description of the context and the participants was provided for the readers so that they can compare the context of the present study with their local contexts and decide how applicable the findings are to them.

To achieve dependability, the third criterion, a number of procedures were carried out. RDs were conducted in Turkish, in students' mother tongue and translated into English. The translations were made by the teacher-researcher and checked by the second researcher for translation reliability, and special attention was paid to preserve students' voice. Information about non-verbal language was included in the transcripts. Second, as explained above, in the analysis of the data collected through students' evaluations of the reflective activities, two raters were involved. Furthermore, direct quotations were provided to support the conclusions arrived. Finally, as discussed, an ELT expert was asked to read the analysis and results parts to give feedback on the reliability of the conclusions.

The fourth criterion met for trustworthiness was confirmability. Among the procedures, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe for dealing with values and achieving confirmability, data triangulation and reflective journal were used.

### **Findings**

#### **Contribution of Reflective Dialogue to Learning**

The main aim of RDs was to model reflective thinking and help students to self-assess their performance by prompting reflection. Through RD, the teacher challenged students' assumptions regarding their strengths and weaknesses as presenters and encouraged them to reconsider their initial self-assessment. However, the process did not always flow as

smoothly as expected. In the first place, there was the effect of both the teacher's and students' inexperience with RD. Also, years of acculturation in a teacher-centered education was an obstacle for students, and they still expected feedback from the teacher who was viewed as the power-holder. However, there were also successful episodes where both the teacher and students unfolded their practice through RD. At times, students' questions, answers and comments helped the teacher to gain insights into why they behaved in a particular way. Moreover, as she transcribed the data, she had the opportunity to reflect on the way she held the dialogues and the way she gave feedback. As a result, she made action plans to improve her practice. This process of self-discovery is revealed in the analysis of the transcriptions below and in the section titled shortcomings of teacher feedback.

RDs created opportunities to discover problematic areas that called for remedial work. In the data analysis, general categories were specified as student behaviour that leads to problems in presentations, obstacles to self-assessment, students' inner thoughts regarding developing ineffective action plans, previous communication problems with students, the role of critical friends in RDs, teacher errors in assessment and shortcomings of teacher feedback. Under the general categories, specific categories were identified. In the next part, the data collected through the analysis of the RDs are presented with illustrative extracts from student's reflective writings and teacher's journal.

#### *Discovering Student Behaviour That Leads to Problems in Presentations*

The RDs highlighted certain student behaviours that led to problems in their presentations.

**Failing to Understand Task Expectations:** A common problem students had with the content of their presentations was not understanding task expectations. In the task sheet for mini-presentation 1, it was stated that the students were required first to describe the avatar they had chosen and then discuss what the avatar revealed about the personality of its owner. Some students elaborated only on the first part. When the teacher redirected them to the explanations on the task sheet, students were usually able to spot the problem.

The dialogue between the teacher and S1 about the content of his presentation provided in extract 1 illustrates how this problem was discussed in RDs. When the teacher wanted S1 to re-assess the content of his presentation, S1 first wanted her to clarify what was meant by content (line 1). She first tried to explain what content was and then referred him to the task sheet to remember the questions to be addressed in the presentation. When S1 reflected on the questions, he realized that the second part of the task was incomplete and expressed this discovery (lines 4). The teacher continued the dialogue by reminding what he did while presenting and highlighted his success in doing so, but he was interrupted by S1 (line 5). As seen in lines 7 and 8, the teacher and S1 started to speak simultaneously and both used a transition signaling that a contrast was to follow (but and however). The teacher stopped speaking and left the floor to S1 to complete the reflection and he clearly indicated the specific problem. Before they moved on to discuss another aspect of the presentation, the teacher wrapped up the problem; that is; task was not fulfilled (line 10).

Extract 1: S1

- 1 S1: Content? What do you mean with content?
- 2 T: Content is what is included ((translates the word into Turkish)). Did you answer the
- 3 questions? How did you answer them? ((shows the questions on the task sheet))  
((S1 reads the questions))
- 4 S1: I mean overall I tried to explain but I mean for the user ((of the avatar) I did not
- 5 say he is not like this ((or)) he is like this.

- 6 T: You successfully informed us about ying-yeng.=  
7 S1: =[But the user's]  
8 T: [However]  
9 S1: Did not explain why he ((uses)) that.  
10 T: Yes. Therefore, indeed... half of your presentation is indeed missing.

This dialogue also demonstrates the challenge of conducting a reflective dialogue when both the teacher and students were novice in the experience. Teacher's initial plan of going over the rubric with the student to promote reflection was instantly impeded by S1's apparent lack of understanding of the key terms in the rubric. However, she still made effort to model reflection by asking reflective questions, but the gaps in the reflection process was filled in by teacher feedback.

The RD with S2 followed a similar pattern. When the teacher prompted S2 to reflect on his presentation by asking if he had talked about the personality of the owner of the avatar, he stated that he did not and added that it was a problem. Another problem in S2's presentation was time. Since S2 did not reflect on the time issue which was an important problem in his presentation, the teacher resorted to feedback. She pointed out that if he had completed the second part of the presentation, the timing problem would have been solved.

Failing to Choose an Avatar Suitable for the Mini-Presentation: Another problem that emerged in the RDs was the students' having chosen somehow a problematic picture or topic for their presentation. In S3's case, the avatar she presented did not allow her to make conclusions about the owner's personality. She stated that because of this, she was not able to elaborate on the second part of the task. She explained that she tried to find an avatar that reflected her personality. However, in her opinion, the picture she found did not allow her to make inferences. S4 also had problems because of the avatar he had chosen and in his written reflection, he wrote that for his next mini-presentation, he would pay attention to choosing a topic that was more appealing to his audience.

Failing to Eliminate Information that Crowds the Content: Another content-related problem was students' failing to sift through the information to be included in the content. Especially in the description part, some students attempted to present more information than feasible and desirable. When they did so, they were not able to address the second part of the task effectively due to time constraints. S1 was one of the students who experienced this problem. When the teacher told him the importance of eliminating information that crowds the content, S1 did not understand the comment and asked if there were irrelevant parts in his presentation. At this point, the teacher preferred to give feedback rather than using reflective questions and explained that it was not a problem of relevance. S1 extended the background information beyond the time limit allowed. She warned him about the importance of being selective when preparing his presentation. In her journal she wrote when she thought that the dialogue was going on for longer than desired and becoming confusing for the student, she stated the problem and sometimes the solution herself. However, she also wrote "sometimes I seem to lose my patience. I need to wait more before providing answers. I need to be more tolerant of silence. We all need some silence to think".

There was a similar problem in S5's mini-presentation. S5 had used the photograph of a heroic leader for his avatar presentation. In her notes, the teacher had written that he gave too much biographical information and little information on what using such an avatar revealed about the user. In the RD, she wanted to discuss this issue with him. S5 said that although he accepted that there was a need for the use of more transitions, he did not think the information was too much or irrelevant. Similar to S1, he associated eliminating information with taking out the irrelevant parts rather than selecting the essential information. Unfortunately, the teacher failed to focus on this issue and in her journal, she recorded this session as a weak RD. She wrote that she should have provided explicit feedback clarifying

the issue because S5 was not clear about what the problem was, and the dialogue was not helping him to spot it. In the RD, S5 stated that he understood the teacher's comments on the content and time-limitation link; however, in the written reflection he completed afterwards, he did not mention the selection and elimination of the content material as a weak point of his presentation, confirming the teacher's opinion that the RD was not successful.

**Not Knowing How to Prepare and Use Notes:** Students' lack of training in preparing and using notes was another prevalent problem. Students' notes usually hindered their delivery. Two students, S2 and S6, complained about their notes indicating that if they had not had notes, they would have performed better. They discussed why writing down the whole text instead of preparing notes hindered their performance. Then, referring to a part on the video, S6 explained at that moment how he suffered because he was trying to remember the exact word he had written down.

S7 did not prepare any notes, which caused some problems while she was presenting. She stated that she deducted points for the organization because she jumped from one topic to another while presenting. She explained how she forgot what she was supposed to say in the first place and how saying these things as she remembered them along the way hindered her performance. The teacher suggested preparing short notes that she could use as reminders. S8 did not use any notes either. The fact that he constantly avoided eye contact and looked in front of him during his presentation had grabbed the teacher's attention. When she asked S8 why he had done so, S9, another student in the room, said that the avatar on the screen in front of S8 helped him to make links and remember. S8 confirmed this observation. To the teacher's surprise, the picture was used as a memory tool. When she suggested using notes, S8 shared a traumatic presentation experience he had in the past, for which he blamed the notes.

#### *Discovering Certain Obstacles to Self-Assessment*

Through the analysis of the transcripts of the RDs, five major obstacles in front of accurate self-assessment were identified.

**Students' Misunderstandings Regarding the Rubric:** Despite the introduction in the lesson, it was seen that some students had problems in self-assessment because they had difficulties in understanding the rubric. S7 was one of these students. During the RD, the teacher wanted S7 to reassess the content of her presentation. According to the teacher, S1's content was better than she believed. As they discussed, it turned out that S7 deducted points for the content for frequent use of fillers while speaking, which was indeed a delivery problem. When the teacher referred S7 to the rubric and questions on the task sheet, she reassessed the content and changed her initial assessment.

As S7's case exemplifies, RD provided students with the opportunity to go over the rubric and understand unclear parts. This clarification aided the negotiation process because to be able to negotiate, the parties involved need to be speaking the same language (Marzano, 2011). In this case, the rubric was the language for mediation.

**Students' Concern about Overrating their Performance:** The RDs revealed that one reason students had problems with self-assessment was their concern about overrating their performance. For instance, when the teacher asked S7 why she gave a very low grade for her language, she first said that she had no idea. After some reflection, she explained that she assumed to have made grammar mistakes because if she made grammar mistakes when writing, she certainly made mistakes when speaking. However, in her notes, the teacher had not noted down any language mistakes.

In the RD with S10, the teacher wanted to question why he gave 2 points for the content since she had found the content of his presentation quite successful. S10 thought for a while before he answered the question, and first he could not present a reason. Then he said it did not deserve three points. This explanation did not satisfy the teacher. She challenged S10 by stating if she had been a student, and S10 had been her teacher, she would have demanded a clear explanation so as to what was lacking in the content. Reflecting on the content again, S10 could not specify anything missing. He added that he indeed answered all the questions effectively. Therefore, like the teacher, he would also go with three points for the content.

**Students' Focus on "Sticking to the Plan":** Some students downgraded their presentation because they diverted from the plan they had made. For instance, S6 stated that he did not like the organization because he could not say the things he had planned to say. The teacher told him that parts he left out or changed did not spoil the flow of the presentation, and he should not feel forced to follow his plan word for word.

**Students' Comparing themselves with Other Students:** Students' comparing themselves with other students rather than the standards set in the rubric also affected their self-assessment. To illustrate, S7 told that she deducted points in her self-assessment because she compared her presentation with S10's and concluded that hers was not as good as his. Therefore, she believed that if S10 got full points for the content, then she needed to get a lower grade. The teacher told her that she should not compare her performance with her friends' and that she had to refer to the rubric instead. However, in her journal, she noted that "even teachers have a tendency to compare students with each other when grading; therefore, it is only natural that students do the same thing. However, they should be encouraged to avoid doing this". The students should be reminded to compare their performance against the set achievement criteria rather than their friends' performance.

**Difficulty of Self-monitoring while Presenting:** An obvious challenge when self-assessing a presentation was the difficulty of performing and monitoring performance simultaneously. S5 raised this issue and said he deducted points for language since he did not have the opportunity to monitor his presentation while presenting, he thought that he probably had made a lot of mistakes.

S11 thought that during her presentation, she was able to maintain eye contact, and when the teacher told her that her eye contact was limited, she was rather surprised. However, she also recognized the problem as she watched her video. In her written reflection, S11 reflected on the issue and wrote "The eyes looking at me made me nervous I guess" and added that she "would like to have more eye contact with the audience".

### *Discovering Students' Inner Thoughts Regarding Developing Ineffective Action Plans*

The RDs enabled the teacher to eavesdrop to students "inner thoughts" (Vygotsky, 1986). As the teacher and students reflected on the presentations, the teacher had the opportunity to interfere with cases where the students attributed the problems they experienced to wrong causes. She focused on these problems because she believed that if the students did not identify the root of the problem accurately, they were very likely to develop ineffective or even risky action plans. For example, when S4 attributed the problems in his presentation to not having read from the text he prepared, the teacher told him that reading would have caused bigger problems. Similarly, through RD, as discussed above, the teacher learned about S8's concerns about using notes when presenting. In such cases where the students did not seem to have the resources to identify and fix a problem, the teacher integrated explicit feedback in the RDs.

*Discovering Previous Communication Problems with Students*

The analysis revealed that RDs helped to surface certain communication problems that could have gone unnoticed otherwise. For example, during the RD, it was discovered that S6 misunderstood a comment made by the teacher. This misunderstanding, unfortunately, shaped the way he assessed his performance. S6's dissatisfaction with his presentation was evident at the very beginning of the dialogue. He believed that the only good thing about his presentation was remembering to greet his friends (Extract 2, line 2). The teacher told him that she did not remember if his presentation was as bad as he thought (line 5). Then S6 told that she had asked him if he had not prepared at all (lines 6, 7). However, she did not remember having made such a comment (line 8, 10). Indeed, she was rather surprised for having said something of that sort and thought making such a comment was insulting (line 12, 14). The teacher's disbelief was evident in the way she repeated asking if she had really made such a discouraging comment. When the teacher expressed her sadness, S6 said that he understood why the teacher behaved like that and probably in an effort to comfort her teacher, added that he would have behaved the same way (line 13). The teacher suggested checking what actually went on in S6's presentation as they watched his video.

Extract 2: S6 & S2

- 1 T: This is good. You greeted ((your friends))
- 2 S6: That is all I did.
- 3 S6, S2, T: ((laugh)).
- 4 S6: We were talking with ((S2' name)) as well. I greeted people. And then=
- 5 T: =Is it really that bad? I do not remember.
- 6 S6: I mean you had said that... I mean... ((you said)) did you come without having
- 7 practiced at all?
- 8 T: Did I say that?
- 9 S6: I ... Indeed, I came without having practiced at all.
- 10 T: Did I say anything of that sort?
- 11 S6: Yes.
- 12 T: That is shameful. How could I say anything like that? ((surprised))
- 13 S6: No, teacher. You are right. If I were you, I could have said ((something worse)).
- 14 T: I should not have said anything like that. It is insulting.
- 15 S6: It is not insulting.
- 16 T: I... Did I really say that?
- 17 S6: ( )
- 18 S6, S2, T: ((laugh))

As they watched the video, it was discovered that S6 misheard the teacher's comment, and she did not say anything suggesting that he was not prepared. As the dialogue went on how much S6 was shattered by the misunderstood comment came to the surface. He told the teacher that he could not get over his distress for a week. She told S6 and S2 treating a student like that did not suit her personality and apologized for the misunderstanding.

The RD with S3 is another example showing how previous misunderstandings were disclosed in RDs. When the teacher advised her to point the picture on the acetate on the OHP, S3 was surprised by the teacher's comment and told her that in class she had told them to keep away from the OHP when presenting. The teacher clarified herself that they were not supposed to stand in front of the light, but they could stand near the OHP since it eased both pointing at the picture and placing the notes.

As seen in the cases above, the RDs were opportunities to discover and fix misunderstandings. The communication problems probably would have never been revealed without dialogue.



*Discerning the Role of Critical Friends in Reflective Dialogue*

The RDs enabled the teacher to reflect on the role of critical friends in assessment. Critical friend refers to a student who was present during the RDs in addition to the student whose work was being discussed and who was also engaged in the reflection process. As a principle, one student was allowed in the room during the RDs to prevent stress that might be caused by the presence of peers. However, at times, on students' request, she allowed their friends to stay in the room. As the teacher and peer debriefer agreed, in S12's case, the guest student did not contribute to the RD. On the contrary, because of the guest student, S12 became more defensive. However, in other RDs, guest students were involved in the dialogue and contributed to it. For example, when S13 told that she memorized the text she presented, the teacher said that it was not like memorization. Then, S13 told that in the final part, she had to talk because she could not remember what she had planned to say. The teacher stated that she found that final part successful. At this point, S14 joined the conversation and expressed her agreement with the teacher saying that S13 "got stuck more often at the parts she had memorized". This comment was welcomed by S13. Furthermore, the additional support coming from a second assessor and a peer increased the credibility of the judgment passed by the teacher.

The RD with S15 displays another example of the contribution of a critical friend in reflection. S3 suggested him holding his cards in his hands so that he stopped playing with his button. Later on, when the teacher and S15 were reflecting on the organization of the mini-presentation, S3 interrupted the video to ask S15 how the presentation was organized in his notes and prompted him to reflect on the nature of his notes.

As seen in the examples above, involving a third person, a critical friend in the RD benefited the students and the teacher in a number of ways. In her journal, the teacher reflected on critical friends:

I think the presence of a critical friend creates a less threatening environment. I feel less stressed because I do not feel alone. The power issue is always a challenge to deal with when giving feedback. When there is another student who helps me, I feel as if I am sharing the power with somebody else and I think I feel less dangerous. Also, the students may feel safer when they have a friend whom they like and trust.

*Discovering Teacher Errors in Assessment*

The RDs increased the reliability of teacher assessment. As the students reflected on their presentation and explained their self-assessment, they also operated as a second rater who evaluated the performance. The discussion over the performance and grades allowed the teacher to go over her assessment creating an opportunity to check for intra-rater reliability as well. The RDs created opportunities to disclose the shortcomings in the teacher's initial assessment.

The RD with S8 illustrates how the teacher felt the need to change the initial grade she had given for the content upon reflecting on the presentation with the student. There was a disagreement between the teacher and S8 about the content. The teacher told S8 that the part where he was supposed to talk about his inferences regarding the personality of the avatar owner was missing. S8 was not convinced and wanted her to explain what was missing. When the teacher hesitated, he listed what he included in his presentation to refresh the teacher's mind. The teacher realized that S8 was right and admitted that probably because of the organization problems, she failed to make an accurate evaluation. The content grade was revised.

### *Teacher's Discovery of the Shortcomings of her Feedback Delivery*

As the teacher reflected on the transcribed data of the RDs, she discovered certain things that she would like to change about the way she managed the RDs. First, the amount of teacher talk was a problem. She was critical of herself for not listening attentively and patiently. There were times the teacher found the feedback she gave unclear and even misleading. As she transcribed the RDs, she highlighted these parts. For example, she told some students that they were capable of talking “*hızlı*” (fast) to praise their speaking skills, which could be misleading. However, reflecting on it, she decided that the right word should be “*akıcı*” (fluent) since speaking fast can indeed be a problem when presenting. Moreover, certain statements she made while conferencing seemed to be incorrect. To illustrate, she had told S4 that “stammering is not very important”, which is not true.

The teacher also discovered that she repeated certain words or phrases frequently and decided that not using them would increase the quality of her feedback. Only in the RD with S1, he used the phrase “*aklında bulunsun*” (keep this in mind) four times. Similarly, she decided to avoid using “*bilmem ne*” (whatsoever), “*di mi*” (is not it?) and “*falan filan*” (etc., etc.) when giving oral feedback. Moreover, she found out that she used terms like “*mekanik linkers*” (mechanical linkers) and “*net gramer*” (clear grammar)” which did not make sense. About these phrases, in her journal, she wrote “sometimes even I do not understand what I am talking about”.

### **Contributions of Reflective Writing to Learning**

In this part, the results of the analysis of written reflections on the second mini-presentation are discussed in order to inquire how they contributed to both students' and teacher's reflective learning. These findings are presented with illustrative examples from student work. In the extracts from student work, to preserve the originality of the work, the language mistakes were left unedited most of the time. If there were any changes made to the original to clarify the meaning, these changes were indicated in square brackets.

### *Improvement in Self-Assessment Skills*

RDs and reflective paragraphs on mini-presentations contributed to students' self-assessment skills. Each mini-presentation was worth 10 points. Six bands were formed based on the discrepancy between the student and teacher grades. Table 2 shows the distribution of students over the discrepancy score bands in the two mini-presentations. When the discrepancy scores of the first and second mini-presentations were compared, it was seen that overall the discrepancy between the teacher and student grades decreased. For example, in the first mini-presentation, 22 (44%) students were in band 1 (0-0.75) whereas in the second, this number increased to 32 students (70%). On the other hand, four students were in band 4 (3-3.75) and one student was in band 6 (5). In the second mini-presentation, there were no students in bands 4 and 6, and there was one student in band 5 (4-4.75). The results revealed that the students had a better understanding of the assessment criteria in the rubric and needed less scaffolding. This improvement can be attributed to reflective activities.

Discrepancy in grades (points)	0	0.2	0.5	0.7	1	1.2	1.5	2	2.2	2.5	2.7	3	3.7	4.2	5
	and 1				and 2			and 3				and 4		and 5	and 6
Frequency of students Mini-presentation 1															
Frequency of students Mini-presentation 2	9		0												

**Table 2: Five Discrepancy Score Bands and the Distribution of Students over the Bands in Mini-presentation 1 and Mini-presentation 2**

*Developing a Systematic Way to Include Students’ Self-Grades in Formal Assessment*

Reflecting on the written reflections enabled the teacher to gain insight into the reflection process behind the grades given by the students. This aided her when finalizing the students’ presentation grades. In their second mini-presentations, most of the students were quite accurate with their self-assessment and most of the time, they justified their grades in their written reflections. Therefore, in the grading of the second mini-presentation, the teacher regarded the students as the primary raters.

When there was a discrepancy between the teacher and student grades, the written reflections helped the teacher negotiate the grades. She developed a set of principles for this negotiation. To illustrate, some students identified a problem in their presentation and reflected-on it in their writing without deducting any points for it. When the problem was a minor issue, the teacher did not change the grade given by the student. For example, S16 spotted that at one point, he put his hand in his pocket and wrote about this in his reflection. However, he did not lose points for this. The teacher also thought this mistake was tolerable. However, there were cases in which the student was unable to identify a major issue in the presentation. In such cases, the teacher changed the grade given by the student and gave written or oral feedback depending on the complexity of the required explanation. For example, in his mini-presentation, S17 only described the cartoon and did not respond to its message. Therefore, an important part of the content was missing. However, he still gave himself 2.5 out of 3 for the content. In this case, the teacher explained why the content of the presentation could not get 2.5 points and deducted points for the content.

### *Promoting Assessment for Learning*

Assessment has a powerful effect on students' learning, and it "directs attention to what is important" and creates motivation for learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2007, p. 3). Asking students to reflect on their work and assessing their reflections led to positive impact. One of the benefits of having students write reflections was helping them to see the interconnectedness of learning experiences. The traditional assessment procedures reinforce the tendency to focus on the final grade received in a test rather than how the test results can be used to further improve learning. On the other hand, requiring the students to complete a written reflection on their mini-presentation encouraged them to think about the completed task. They needed to revisit the way they prepared, gave and evaluated their presentation in order to be able to write a reflection on them. In the reflection task, they were asked to compare their final presentation with the one(s) they had given previously. Thus, in a way, they were given an opportunity to view a test as a link in a chain rather than an end itself.

S18's written reflection shows how she compared her first and second mini-presentation, and how she reflected on the improvements and problems she observed.

*My last presentation was better and more successful than the first one in terms of content and delivery. Since I had prepared an outline before the presentation I knew what [I] would say. Therefore, I had more relevant and clear examples and explanations for my major ideas... Moreover, although there are still some problems, my speech became more natural at second time with the help of one or two rehearsals I had made individually before the presentation. Also, these preparations made me more relaxed. However, there are still two persistent problems: my body language and voice tone. I know something about them, but I could not apply, and I do not have any idea [sic] to correct this situation except paying more attention to them.*

### *Encouraging Students to Make Action Plans*

When the students were comparing their first and second mini-presentations, some of them made references to the development plans they had made as well. For example, in his written reflection S12 went over his development plan and reflected on to what extent he was able to stick to it.

*I [was] able to stick to the development plan a lot. After my first presentation, I planned to develop the topic more effectively, to keep eye-contact, to use transitions effectively, to keep eye-contact with the audience, to not smile [sic] needlessly, to talk loudly and to remember to thank the audience. I tried to carry out all and I achieved to do most, but I repeated to smile needlessly and somewhere to not [sic] keep eye contact with audience [in] the second presentation.*

However, not all the students believed that they made progress. There were students who stated that there was no or little improvement in their second mini-presentation and some other students stated that their second mini-presentation was worse. To complete the written reflection, they traced the reasons for the failure they observed in their presentation (s).

Reading the written reflections also enabled the teacher to identify ineffective action plans of the students. In these cases, she made suggestions to the students. To illustrate, although the teacher warned S19 about the risks of memorizing in the RD on mini-presentation 1, S19 wrote that memorizing the speech was a solution to losing concentration. As feedback, the teacher wrote that memorizing was likely to create problems

especially in longer presentations, and her speech might sound unnatural if she recited a memorized text. She advised S19 to try using an outline.

### *Maintaining Motivation*

Some of the students set realistic expectations to achieve observable progress, which plays an important role in the development and maintenance of motivation. For example, S20 did not feel that he was making any progress, which would probably have demotivated him. He believed that his first presentation was better than his second and explained the reason for this saying that if he had prepared as good as he had done for the first mini-presentation, he would have been more successful. Having found the reason of the problem and its solution, he was positive that he would do better next time.

In their written reflections, the students had the opportunity to express their feelings, and the teacher had a chance to respond to them. For example, S21 shared how the presentations made him feel happy and increased her ambition, and S14 expressed how her audience increased her motivation and self-confidence. S6 reflected on his fear that his dread of talking in front of public would never cease.

### **Students' Evaluation of Reflective Activities**

Out of 57 students who evaluated the reflective activities, 53 (93%) stated that they thought engaging in reflective activities helped them monitor and manage their own learning and these tasks helped them improve their performance. Five students indicated that first they did not think that the reflection tasks were useful, but then they realized their benefits. Their explanations included: improving their ability to see their strengths and weaknesses and helping them to correct their mistakes (n= 43), encouraging them to revisit their work and think carefully about it (n=7), helping them not to repeat their mistakes (n=6) and supporting self-evaluation and criticism (n=6). For example, S20 wrote that writing reflection is more effective than reading teacher feedback because he had to think more when writing. Other stated benefits included improving language skills (n=3); improving problem-solving skills (n=1); improving writing skills (n=1) and showing the importance of asking the right questions for reflection (n=1).

Forty students answered the question which reflection task was the most useful. Twenty-two students (55%) indicated that they favoured mini-presentation reflections. Some of these students pointed out that mini-presentation reflections increased their self-evaluation skills and self-confidence. Six students stated that they were all useful. Five students thought that essay reflections were more effective, and five students thought that reaction-response reflections were more effective. However, two students did not think that reflective activities were useful. S22 and S23 expressed their dissatisfaction with them. S22 thought that reflections wasted his time because teacher feedback would be enough while S23 stated that they should be voluntary.

Thirty-seven students (65%) students stated that reflective activities had a positive impact on their attitude towards the lesson and increased their motivation. Eleven students expressed that they sometimes increased their motivation and at other times, the activities decreased their motivation. Increasing their attention (n=6) and confidence (n=4) were two of the ways reflection motivated students. S12 stated that seeing that he improved his work through reflecting on it increased his motivation.

Six students found the reflective activities demotivating. Eight students noted that there were too many reflective activities, and they were time-consuming. S24 was critical of the amount of feedback teacher provided. He wrote “to be honest, reflective activities took all of my enthusiasm for English lesson. I think that my teacher make [*sic*] more corrections than necessary on the reflections”.

Fifty students (87%) were satisfied with the feedback teacher gave for reflective writings tasks. Helping students to see their own strengths and mistakes, objectivity, encouraging students to make a plan to improve their work, positivity and thoroughness were specified as the strengths of the given feedback. On the other hand, two students thought that teacher feedback was average, and three students did not find it helpful. S23 and S24 stated that reflections were not necessary, and the teacher should only provide feedback rather than asking the students to reflect.

## Discussion and Action Plan

The study revealed that reflection is a tool for hearing students' inner voice (Vygotsky, 1986). For example, RDs and written reflections, enabled the teacher to have insights into how students prepared for tasks, what they attributed their success and failure to and what their action plans were. Reflecting with the students and on their reflections created an opportunity for discovering students' conceptual structures and thus supported effective learning (von Glaserfeld, 1995). Furthermore, engaging in reflective activities strengthened the communication between the teacher and students. Although it is not always possible to claim that students changed their misconceptions, or they improved their performance as a result of engaging in reflective tasks, it can be said that such misconceptions were at least brought to light and viewed from a different perspective (McGill & Brockbank, 2007).

In line with previous research, it was seen that students needed to be scaffolded effectively before asking them to use rubrics for self-assessment (Leahy et al., 2005; Arter & Chappuis, 2006; Airasian & Russell, 2008). Talking about the rubric and how it should be used during the RDs helped the students understand the rubric. The decrease in grade discrepancy between teacher assessment and students' self-assessment of the mini-presentations suggested that reflective tasks aided the development of self-assessment skills.

It was observed in their written reflections following the RDs that students could express opinions that they did not discuss in the dialogue. One of the possible reasons for this can be that they did not want to confront the teacher in face-to-face conversation. As discussed earlier, the power dynamics in the RDs need to be carefully observed since in most contexts, the teacher is perceived to be the authority figure. This belief shapes both the teacher's and students' behavior in the RDs. For successful RDs, teachers should create spaces for students to get more active and equal roles in the dialogue. Active and effective listening, sufficient wait time, probing through reflective questions are some means to open such dialogic spaces. Another reason may be that having a chance to reflect on the presentation and the dialogue individually, they may have made new discoveries or arrived at new conclusions. Therefore, it can be said that the RDs and reflective writing tasks complemented each other.

Engaging in reflection contributed to the teacher's professional development in a number of ways. Although the majority of the students stated that the teacher's feedback was satisfactory, the teacher discovered that there are problems with the way she gave feedback and realized that she needs to continue to monitor her oral and written feedback.

Including the students in self-assessment enabled the teacher to fix some parts of her grading. Therefore, the findings in this study confirm Taras' (2003, 2008) research studies

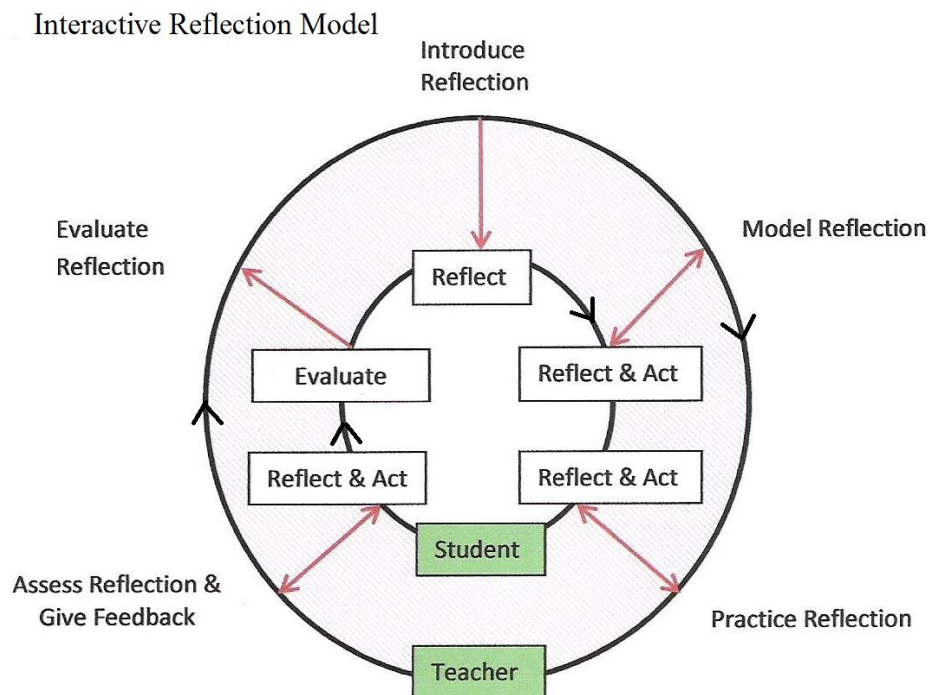
that highlight the importance of training students as the second raters. Furthermore, as Taras (2008) points out, ways to use students' self-grades for official grading were explored.

The RDs in which critical friends were present showed the potential value of critical friends in assessment. The involvement of a critical friend in the RDs made certain contributions to the process. First, the atmosphere created by the position of the teacher as the sole holder of the power changed (Taras, 2008). Second, when they confirmed the teacher's feedback, the credibility of the judgment passed by the teacher increased. Sometimes critical friends helped the teacher by drawing her attention to an issue she had overlooked. It was observed that at times, critical friends supported their friends and helped them clarify themselves. They also contributed to their friends' learning by making suggestions, sharing their own experience and prompting reflection. It was also seen that critical friends should be selected carefully.

Confirming Ayan's study (2010), the majority of the students reported that reflective tasks were effective in helping them monitor and manage their own learning. The students listed benefits of reflection tasks for them as increasing their confidence, requiring them to think carefully about their work; helping them monitor themselves and look at their work with a critical eye; encouraging them to revisit their work and become aware of their mistakes; and improved their performance. However, three students were particularly negative about reflection. Unfortunately, since the evaluation was carried out at the end of the semester, the teacher did not have a chance to talk to these students about their negativity. Despite the limitations in the implementation, reflective activities were successful, but certain modifications should be made in the implementation to ensure that students do not lose their motivation. Since the majority of the students noted that there were too many reflective activities, and they were time-consuming, decreasing the number of written reflection tasks and adding some variety can help increase student motivation.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As the present AR evolved, the authors developed an interactive reflection model which draws on the constructivist principles and contributes to the field of ELT by presenting a framework which outlines a process in which the students and teacher engage in reflection both as an individual and social activity in order to improve. Figure 1 demonstrates the cyclical process of reflection and how the students and teacher interact in the process.



**Figure 1: Interactive Reflection Model**

Through reflection students' inner voice is vocalized and their conceptual structures are disclosed. In the process, learners are scaffolded, and this scaffolding is gradually decreased. Moreover, at every stage, the teacher reflects with students on their action and reflects-on his or her own action. In this way, the teacher not only pursues professional development but also as a researcher of his or her own context, gains important information with which he or she can contribute to the body of the educational research (Mertler, 2012).

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## Appendix 1: Tips for Reflective Writing

1. Go through your work thoroughly and check if there are any persistent problems. If there are such problems, identify them clearly in your reflection. Then brainstorm the possible causes of the problem together with how you are planning to handle the problem in your future work.
2. Remember to focus on your strengths as well. If you think that you are particularly good at something, you can trace your background knowledge, previous experience, planning prior to the task and performance to find out the key to your success. Then this information can be shared with your friends who may benefit from it.
3. It is important to be specific in your reflections. For instance, a statement like “my grammar is weak, and I have to improve it” is not of much use. Similarly, “my topic sentence is weak” is not satisfactory. Instead, focus on a point that seems to recur and/or that seems to puzzle you and try to explain the problem. For example, “*Each time I used the expression ‘such that’, my teacher underlined it and put an (!) exclamation mark. There must be something wrong with the expression, but I am not sure. I will talk to her and ask for clarification*” is much more beneficial than saying “*I need to practice grammar*”. Similarly, the explanation “*my topic sentence is misleading because it does not clarify that I will talk about the reasons why people create online identities. I should have written ‘people create online identities for mainly two reasons’ rather than saying ‘more and more people prefer to create online identities’*” is a better example of reflection than the statement “*my topic sentence is weak*”.
4. Especially when you are reflecting on a particular kind of task for the second time you may feel that you have already covered everything. In those cases, you can focus on a single issue like a logical fallacy and build your reflection on it.
5. Remember that the aim of these reflections is to help you cope with the problems that haunt you and develop good habits of thinking. Give yourself a chance to bring out the best in you 😊

## Appendix 2: The Reflection Task for Mini-presentation 2

Name:

Date:

Grade: 3/ 2/ 1/ US

Reflect on your second mini-presentation.

Reflect on your first and second mini-presentations. Can you notice any improvements in the second one? If so, in what areas has there been an improvement? Please, be specific. How do you explain the change?

How far were you able to stick to the development plan you made after your presentation? Explain.

Are there any persistent problems? What are they? Please, be specific. How are you planning to deal with these problems? Are they problems that can be solved in the short-term or do you need to make a long-term investment?

Is there anything you could have more paid attention to or do differently to improve your final performance?

What did you learn from the two experiences about your presentation skills/ study skills/ personality traits? Have the experiences made any positive or negative emotional changes in you? Explain.

A good reflection has the features listed below.

- displays numerous evidence of the thinking process and your awareness of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the task.
- traces the possible reasons that may have caused problems and/or that may have contributed to success of the presentation
- links new learning to prior knowledge and experiences.
- is solution and learning oriented.
- expresses emotions clearly.
- is written using correct and clear English.