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Critical Incidents: Exploring EFL Prospective Teachers' Teaching Experiences

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Abstract: Investigating critical incidents is one way to assist prospective teachers in expressing any developmental stage when accomplishing the teaching practice program. It is a significant component of reflective teaching in an educational framework related to continuing professional development (CPD), particularly self-directed learning. This study aims at exploring EFL prospective teachers' field experience in cultivating their teaching competence through a critical incident analysis. A qualitative approach was applied. Three participants with different levels of English proficiency took part in this study by sharing their experiences through participating in and answering an interview and an opinionnaire. To analyze the data from the instruments, this study used descriptive analysis and coding techniques respectively. Results indicate that both negative and positive critical incidents contribute to the participants' teaching development. The incidents support the learning process towards becoming a teacher and assist shaping their awareness of teacher identity. Further, the result of this study reveals that English proficiency level seems to take part in the strategy used for identifying critical incidents. This study implies that critical incidents provide a chance for prospective teachers to be more reflective. Thus, teacher education program stakeholders need to support critical incident analysis by giving relevant assignments while they are doing teaching practice, which in turn builds professional development in the context of prospective teachers.

Keywords: *Reflective practice, critical incident, teaching experience, continuing professional development.*

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Introduction

Being a reflective teacher becomes one of the principles of a professional teacher. This practice assists teachers to get meaningful experience from their teaching activities. To know what to be reflected, teachers need to focus on two points, their own learning or "how they learn to learn" and the way to transfer their knowledge in the classroom (Postholm, 2012). Furthermore, in developing professionalism, teachers have to learn to develop the professional capitals, consisting "human, social, and decisional capital" (Patton et al., 2013, p. 441). In respect to these professional capitals, teacher's reflection plays an important role to support teachers in facing the dynamic changes in education and the big challenge in teaching career, which is being able to adapt while being able to enrich their knowledge and teaching ability. Accordingly, reflective practice is one of the effective guides to enable teachers internalize their experiences by thinking and writing every single meaningful event.

To support prospective teachers' hands-on experience in a lifelong learning process called being a teacher, reflective teaching is vital for self-improvement. The true story from prospective teachers' experience is worthy to analyze since it has a lot of meanings (Bolton, 2009). Further, the critical incidents are claimed to assist pre-service service to be alert thinker who can look beyond themselves and immediate situation to larger contextual issues (Garza & Smith, 2015). Acknowledging the importance of teaching experience as a part of continuing professional development (CPD), researchers have treated this issue as multi-faceted, needing scrutiny from different angles. More specifically, to employ reflective teaching approach, critical incidents (CIs) analysis has been widely discussed in the context of English

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learning (Farrell, 2013; Farrell, 2008b; Correa et al., 2014; Trent, 2013). In Indonesian EFL context, Wijaya and Kuswandono (2014) have investigated the need of introducing reflective dialog as an attempt to promote prospective teacher's identity and professionalism in teacher education. For that reason, critical incident analysis holds a powerful role as the appropriate method to accommodate prospective teacher's reflection. Despite such urgency, Indonesian education studies seem to be unfamiliar with critical incident analysis that this has not been implemented systematically to the prospective teachers' teaching practice.

Related to the practice, many ways can be applied to analyze critical incidents. The common techniques are through collecting one's narratives through journal log, diary, video, and so forth, or through online platforms, such as weblog, which can facilitate this reflection as an E-portfolio in fulfilling the reflective assignment (Garza & Smith, 2015). The use of tools depends on the accessibility and the users' need. In respect to the incidents, the emphasis seems to lie on identifying teaching low (negative events) rather than on teaching high, which is also categorized as another classification of critical incidents (positive events). Additionally, teaching high refers to a sudden change in the lesson plan made by teachers during class because of their perceptions of the situation. They then decide to respond to the situation by making modification which results in some positive overall outcomes, such as more student response (Farrell, 2015). Through "commonplace event" critical incident can be interpreted as any event happening in the class that can function as future reference for improvement (Joshi, 2018, p. 83). This indicates that positive critical incidents play a pivotal role to set the prospective teachers' belief on their success and failure in experiencing teaching practice. In line with this, Wijaya & Kuswandono (2018) have attempted to show an empirical evidence of the benefit of applying critical incidents analysis on both positive and negative incidents in the context of Indonesian in-service English teachers.

Literature Review

Understanding Reflective Practice

Reflective Practice (RP) refers to systematic examination on someone's belief and practices. Since, in this context, the scope is limited to teaching, the beliefs and practices revolve around talking about teaching and learning throughout a teacher's career. Dealing with teachers' belief, RP is useful for helping an effective teacher identify the macro-skill (Mante-Estacio et al., 2018). Furthermore, in shaping teacher identity, RP can be used to explore prospective teachers' theoretical understanding of identity, which then overcomes antagonistic relations (Trent, 2013). In line with this, RP helps trainees to identify prospective teacher's identity construction from possible-selves theory, namely expected and feared teacher-selves (Salli & Osam, 2018). From the teaching practice program, the prospective teachers learn to identify the characteristic of an ideal teacher. Studying other trainee teachers by comparing and contrasting their teaching and interaction with people in the school forms a certain perception on the qualities of an ideal teacher. Ates and Kadioglu (2018) found in their research participants' view that personal and professional characteristics are the dominant aspects of an ideal teacher.

Reflective Practice can be conducted before (reflection-for-action), during (reflection-in-action), and after class (reflection-on-action). Looking at the essence of experience, the appropriate period for prospective teachers to do RP is during the time they do teaching practice program. In the program, teachers use their knowledge in practical situations. In other words, they combine action and learning in a more effective way. They also encounter the real school setting and meet with the main representatives of school, such as school students, teachers, principle, etc. Ultimately, in teaching practice program, they get involved in CPD (self-directed learning) leading to self-improvement. While seemingly productive, this reflection-in-action is considered more difficult to capture and provide a sequence of moments where the practitioner attempts to solve a problem (Farrell, 2013b).

In relation to the form of reflective practice, narratives are considered appropriate to be used as the media for analysis. Through stories, the participants give rich information about their experiences. They can tell the experiences more naturally. They can be used to identify human understanding more deeply than the intellect. In other words, stories involve feelings, emotion, and cognitive engagement (Bolton, 2009). Besides, self-reflected stories can reflect how teachers gives instruction, the thinking, and the problem-solving they apply during classroom activities, and how they express their underlying assumption, values, and beliefs that have ruled their previous and current practices. Although the use of narratives is very popular in reflection, some experts agree that combining narratives and questionnaire for investigating reflective practice is more accurate (Insuasty & Castillo, 2010).

What are critical incidents?

Identifying a critical incident, particularly in teaching context, is an activity of observing the occurrence taken place during a lesson. The teacher candidates' experiences are closely related to the efforts in achieving their expectation (Dursun, 2017). Teachers consider their experiences be categorized as critical because they learn something very meaningful from them. They think experiences are crucial and want their future students to implement this idea as well. However, "all incidents are not critical" (Joshi, 2018, p. 87). Interpreting a specific incident as being critical requires researchers to observe the condition first. Critical incidents are both positive and negative classroom events;

however, studies have found more negative incidents (Bruster & Peterson, 2013; Farrell, 2008; Farrell, 2013a; Farrell, 2013b; Permatasari, 2018; Yan & He, 2015). The examples of issues which frequently arise in critical incidents are course delivery problems, students' participation, language proficiency problems, and course preparation. From the negative events, it is believed that teachers are encouraged more to improve their teaching. Due to its function for reflective inquiry and a sense of professional awareness, investigating a critical incident is pivotal for the learning of good practices on teacher's instruction and for highlighting practices which do not work well. In other words, critical incident analysis seeks to describe incidents (what) and to explain their meanings.

There are some benefits of critical incident analysis for prospective teachers. First, it builds higher level of teacher's self-awareness, which is crucial for improvement. Second, it prompts an evaluation of established routines. Third, it supports teachers to be more critical through their critical questions. Fourth, it helps bring positive beliefs. Fifth, it creates the opportunities for conducting action research. Sixth, it helps build a community of critical practitioners. Finally, it provides a resource for continuous professional development for teacher or prospective teachers. To build more effective RP through critical incident analysis, prospective teachers can invite critical peers to observe their teaching. Farrell (2013a p. 82) states that a critical peer plays an important role in RP and promotes McCabe's (2002) narrative framework consisting of "1) Orientation: This part answers questions like: Who? When? What? and Where? ; 2) Complication: This part outlines what happened and the problem that occurred along with any turning point in the story; 3) Evaluation: This part answers the question: So what?; and 4) Result: This part outlines and explains the resolutions to the problem."

Purpose of the study

Pertaining to the tendency that most teachers seem to remember what went wrong during their teaching and give less attention on what has been done very well, the dilemmas give teachers more ideas for identification and finding solution (Bruster & Peterson, 2013). From the instruments of reflection, it has not been confirmed whether teaching high also contributes a lot in giving values in teaching practice. Regarding the limited discussion in exploring the two sides of critical incidents as contributing factors to foster CPD in teacher education, this study seeks to investigate the views of prospective teachers on their teaching low and teaching high during teaching practice program, and find out whether inserting positive events give potential benefits for improving their professional development. Accordingly, the current study dwells on the in-depth investigation of critical incident analysis practices. The significance outlines how two sides of critical incidents assist prospective teachers to unlock an aspect of professional development from their teaching experience. To be more specific, this present study is conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do prospective teachers perceive critical incidents as the process of reflection?

2. Is there any potential value prospective teachers obtain from negative and positive critical incidents?

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were three EFL pre-service teachers. All of them enrolled in the final year of a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program, majoring in English language teaching at one of the private Indonesian universities. The practice teachers who took part in this research had completed the eight-week practicum and were willing to share their understanding and experience for this study. Each participant in this case represented three different levels of proficiency as indicated by their proficiency test (Test of English Proficiency or TOEP developed by the institution) scores and their participation in the learning process. In this case, prospective teacher 1 (PT1) had TOEP score of above 500 and was considered a high proficient learner. The second prospective teacher (PT2) was a moderate learner since the score was within the range of 400 and 500. The last participant (PT3) was classified as a low proficient learner who scored below 400. The diverse proficiency levels in this study provide information to answer the question of whether teachers have different methods to express their perception in their reflection.

In term of school setting, the participants undertook their teaching practice program in the secondary level of three different institutions located in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java, Indonesia. PT1 and PT3 taught 7th grade students, while PT2 trained to teach to the tenth graders of a vocational high school. As of teaching experience before conducting teaching practice, PT1 used to teach English in a private course, while PT2 taught in an English club in a junior high school.

Instrument and Data Collection

Interviews, lasting between fifty and sixty minutes in three days, were carried out to obtain an in-depth understanding of the prospective teachers' experiences during teaching practice. The questions given to the participants dealt with their perception on the events showing success and failure in teaching English and were derived from the questions from Farrell (2008b) and McCabe (2002). Then those aspects were elaborated into eight interview questions as

depicted in Table 1. The response was analyzed to find out the critical incident categories covering language proficiency, class participation, behavior, gender, classroom space, lesson objective, classroom activities, attention span, and additional class assistance.

Table 1. The eight interview questions for participants

Interview Questions
1. In general, do you think your teaching practicum is successful? Why?
2. Tell us your best and the worst unexpected experiences during teaching practice?
3. Why do you think that it is unexpected moment?
4. How do you respond the unexpected experience happening to you?
5. Do you discuss your unexpected experience with others?
6. What do you think about being an English teacher? Would you say that you still have the same idea after you conducted teaching practice?
7. Tell us about your student(s) in teaching practice.
8. What is the crucial lesson you got from teaching practice?

Additionally, in order to prevent missing details in the participants' answers, the researchers confirm the response in a more comprehensible way through opinionnaire focusing on 'evaluation' as the dimension and elaborate the responses into twenty questions. Due to the different context, concerning the use of reflection prompt, researchers and reflective practitioners can create or adapt as well as adopt it for critical incidents analysis. Either closed-ended or open-ended questionnaires have been promoted as an easy method to help elaborate experiences. The criteria depend on the theoretical framework of narrative perspective adapted. For instance, there are 13 questions by Bartlett (1990), five questions by Brookfield (1990) cited in Joshi (2018), 5 questions by Farrell (2013b), and 9 items by Bruster and Peterson (2013). Mostly, the form is open-ended questions used for English teachers, and they do not completely fit to prospective teacher context. Thus, this study employs a set of questions for in-depth investigation, which is limited to Evaluation phase as the dimension, in the form of opinionnaire items as proposed by McCabe's (2002) framework, and with an elaboration of Farrell's (2013b) question "why do I do it"? accompanied by 9 indicators explained in the content specification. (see Table 2).

Opinionnaire Content Specification

The main objective of reflective practice is to know prospective teachers' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses when teaching English in the real context during teaching practice. Thus, the measurement is addressed to the principles of critical incidents through answering opinionnaire that is developed.

In this case, the type of question is Retrospective since it deals with reflecting on what has happened in the past (both positive and negative) and then deciding on what to do in the future to improve. This is in line with Loughran (1996), who mentions that reflective practice is connected to retrospective reflection. The key to retrospective reflection might be well in the question: "Why was the lesson good or bad?." Answering such kind of question encourages pre-service teachers to be reflective practitioners, so they can perform better teaching in the future.

In 2013, Farrell (2013b) mentions five important retrospective questions in the section "Evidence-Based Reflective Practice" which indicates that during the classroom activities teacher collects evidence about their work and then reflect on this evidence to make informed decision about their practice. The questions are:

- What do I do?
- How do I do?
- Why do I do it?
- What is the result?
- Will I change anything based on the answers to the above questions?

Considering the delimitation of this study that highlights Evaluation as the dimension, this paper selects the question "why do I do it"? as the appropriate variable in making a blue print. Adapting Farrell's (2008) critical incidents classification, this instrument lists the nine areas to be developed as question items, namely language proficiency, class participation, behavior, gender, classroom space, lesson objective, classroom activities, attention spans, and additional class assistance. Those aspects are believed to be the center of discussion about field experience, regardless the positive and negative episodes.

Table 2. Opinionnaire Content Specification

Dimension	Variable	Sub Variable	Sub sub Variable	Indicators
Evaluation (Mc Cabe, 2002)	Why do I do it? (Farrell, 2013b)	Evaluating teaching	Language proficiency	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving the four language skills faced by school students occurring during teaching practice.
			Class participation	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' classroom participation in English instruction.
			Behavior	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' academic behavior in English instruction.
			Gender	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' response toward different gender in class.
			Classroom space	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving classroom setting and seating arrangement.
			Lesson objective	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' progress in achieving learning objective.
			Classroom activities	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' contribution in learning activities.
			Attention spans	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' concentration.
			Additional class assistance	Pre-service teachers are able to evaluate the critical incidents involving students' need for remedial or enrichment.

In this case, each prospective teacher has to explain their experience of critical incidents differently and each is required to have a flash back to identify the independent and critical responses that are highly significant. Also, it is informed to the prospective teachers that the strongly agree and strongly disagree options are the representatives of unplanned incidents that give more values to their continuing professional development (CPD), while *agree* and *disagree* refer to common events. In addition to this, the participants are asked to not leave any statement unanswered.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researchers used two types of instrument. In interpreting opinionnaire result, descriptive analysis technique was applied to know how they define critical incident by showing certain item as the *strongly (agree or disagree)* options. Selecting *strongly* options indicates that it gives more impression than other experiences. For interview result, multiple review and coding technique were used to get relevant information from the interview transcript. Reading several times was needed since determining the key words to specify it into positive and negative critical incidents needed careful interpretation. Some clarification were conducted to ensure the coding process. In determining salient themes, more theoretical categories were constructed using the data and relevant literature. Similar to opinionnaire, 9 categories of critical incidents were used as the themes. During the process, participants were confirmed for the interpretations and further refinement made.

Results

Interpreting the opinionnaire within the context of classroom experience

To know the global response of students in the prospective teachers' class through reflection, especially to know whether the specific critical incidents influence the prospective teachers' final perception regarding their teaching performance during the teaching practice program, opinionnaire items reflecting the eight critical incident categories promoted by Farrell were distributed. Each item has four options to answer: SD: strongly disagree, D: disagree, A: agree, SA: strongly agree.

Table 3. The result of the opinionnaire

Questions	Prospective Teacher (PT) #1				Prospective Teacher (PT) #2				Prospective Teacher (PT) #3			
	SD	**D**	**A**	**SA**	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
Language Proficiency												
In the previous classes, when I taught the four skills in teaching practice, each student in my class …												
1.had no difficulties in learning Listening skill		✓						✓			✓	
2.had no difficulties in learning Speaking skill		✓						✓			✓	
3.had no difficulties in learning Reading skill		✓						✓			✓	
4.had no difficulties in learning Writing skill		✓						✓			✓	
Class Participation												
In the previous classes, when I explained the materials, each student …												
5. gave active participation			✓					✓			✓	
6. responded questions actively				✓				✓			✓	
7. worked on individual assignment independently			✓					✓				✓
8. performed well with other students during group discussion		✓						✓			✓	
Behavior												
Generally, during English instruction, each student …												
9. communicates in English using formal and informal expression appropriately		✓						✓			✓	
10. completes the task cooperatively			✓					✓			✓	
11. respects the teacher when the materials are explained.				✓				✓			✓	
Gender												
Generally, in relation to different gender, the student …												
12. feels comfortable with male and female friends				✓				✓			✓	
13. feels comfortable with the seating arrangement				✓				✓			✓	
Classroom Space												
Generally, when the students learn in my class, each of them …												
14. feels comfortable with the setting of the classroom			✓				✓				✓	
15. feels comfortable with the seating arrangement			✓					✓			✓	
Learning Objectives												
From lesson objectives in my lesson plan, each student …												
16. achieves all learning objectives set in lesson plan			✓					✓			✓	
Classroom Activities												
In general, from classroom activities set in my lesson plan, each student …												
17. feels enthusiastic during the learning process				✓				✓			✓	
18. stays in the place until the lesson is finished			✓					✓			✓	
Attention Spans												
In general, from the beginning until the last session of my class, each student …												
19. always focuses on the materials		✓						✓			✓	
Additional Class Assistance												
In the previous classes, after I finished explaining the topic, each student …												
20. needed more time for consultation outside classroom period			✓				✓				✓	

Table 3 summarizes the various responses of Prospective Teacher#1, Prospective Teacher#2, and Prospective Teacher#3 for their reflective practice at post-program. The column shows strongly options have been blocked in gray. They refer to global incidents. In a different point of view, analyzing critical incidents after experiencing the program provides richer information from the subjects. They can also express the general view of students' learning activities since, in this case, the opinionnaire was distributed after the program was concluded with several critical incidents, not weekly nor daily. In other words, critical incidents can refer to not only one student's case, but also the lesson learned from the whole class reaction. For some context, this view can be related to the previous discussion about their particular critical incidents, and of course, it is hard to be used for generalization. To draw the critical incident from opinionnaire, the word "strongly" can best represent the value of students. Strongly agree indicates positive incident (teaching high), while strongly disagree indicates negative incident (teaching low).

In PT#1 reflection, it is identified that although the students had difficulties in mastering four language skills, doing group work discussion, communicating in English in daily conversation, and maintaining attention spans, PT#1 did not think they are dilemmas. The reaction is normal for her, so she selected option disagree. Comparing this result with the previous specific student, as the one who understands more about the concept of English, Elena or PT#1 noticed more positive incidents happened to all learners in her class. She put strongly agree to several aspects covering quick questions response, active participation, respect to teacher, ease of mind being in a class consisting different gender, and contentment with the seating arrangement.

On the other hand, PT#2 reflected the critical incidents in a different way. She put almost all positive events happening in the program at the highest category, strongly agree. This indicates that she considered most events as lessons from the overall experiences. In this case, Dina or PT#2 tended to highlight the final results of events in which the problems have been successfully handled. Finally, regarding the last part of the reflection from PT#3, it shows that one positive critical incident occurred in her class. She pointed out student' independence during accomplishing the assignment. The other items were answered agree. Similar to PT#2, she emphasized the final impact of her teaching and treatment to the classroom problems.

Critical Incidents based on various teaching practice program stakeholders

From the Interview, it is revealed that there are eleven critical incidents experienced by the prospective teachers. Six incidents were identified as the teaching high, and five incidents were considered the teaching low. All of the three prospective teachers reported their incidents as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. The categories of critical incidents

	Critical incidents								
Prospective teacher (PT)	**Language Proficiency**	**Class Participation**	**Behavior**	**Gender**	**Classroom Space**	**Lesson Objectives**	**Classroom Activities**	**Attention Spans**	**Additional Class Assistance**
PT#1		+ -	-				+		
PT#2			+ -	-					+
PT#3			+			+		-	

Table 4 describes categories based on how each prospective teacher presented the incidents in the interview. Some reports about the incidents that were included in details on their reflections and interpretation are outlined in the following themes. It include elaborating the experience with certain student. The names provided in the instances are pseudonyms. PT#1 is Elena, PT#2 is Dina, and PT#3 is Safira, while the students being involved in narrative are Rony, Tony, and Richard. In terms of educational setting, Elena and Safira had the opportunity to teach seventh grade of a junior high school, while Dina was assigned to teach tenth grade students at a vocational high school. In general, there was no critical incident (negative and positive) reporting language proficiency and classroom space from the three prospective teachers. In addition, there were approximately three aspects from their responses which reflect the two types of critical incidents –positive and negative—.

To know the detailed example and information from each participant, this study presents four themes derived from the interview. Behavior, additional class assistance, and class participation described more specifically on critical incident with example taken from specific students in each participant's class. The student's name presented in this study were pseudonyms, Rony, Tony, and Richard. In contrast, gender, lesson objective, classroom activities, and attention spans were explored on different stakeholders (not exclusively on students) in teaching practice.

Behavior

All of the prospective teachers reported the incidents related with their student's behavior. For example, Elena, the high proficient prospective teacher, concluded that punishment does not always give effect to the students when they make mistakes. PT#1 reported a negative incident or teaching low happened to a student, Rony, who PT#1 claimed different from other students:

PT#1 Rony

> *Rony was one of my students. In my English class, he participated actively. He liked to attract his friend's attention. One day, I had to give punishment (singing a song) because he did not concentrate when doing my instruction. Back then, I thought my punishment would make him embarrassed, but I was wrong. He was happy, and he could bring happiness to the whole class.*
>
> *Rony is a cheerful student. During the class, he used to ask questions and would respond my instructions. However, he is not careful enough when executing the instruction; as a result, the outcome was not satisfying than the other students.*

Since then, Elena has realized that she needs to give effective feedback instead of penalty for certain 'standing out students' in order to ensure that they are more careful when finishing their assignment. Providing feedback is more meaningful to strengthen the skill. Thus, asking students who are very confident in the class to sing a song is like giving them a chance to show their talent rather than educating them to be aware of their inappropriate behaviors.

Additional Class Assistance

Closely related to positive incidents, Dina, a moderately proficient PT, noticed that her student gave a very positive response after joining her English class. In her reflection, she was excited to share one moment with a student she knew very well, Tony:

PT#2 Tony

> *I felt lucky that I met Tony last year. Tony was one of my students in the school where I am teaching currently. He still remembers me even after he studies in different level of school. He also intensively consults me about his English lesson. Sometimes, he would invite some friends to see me to proofread their homework. This experience makes me realize that students are our motivation to teach. If we treat them well, they will keep remembering us and our lesson.*

This incident teaches Dina to keep facilitating her learners to always review their lessons after class. The experience reminds her that teaching the materials in the classroom is not sufficient for learners. For some students, there should be additional guidance outside the learning period. Thus, she needs to think about providing supplementary materials and sources to support the learning activity outside the class. This is crucial for the students as their English subject enrichment.

Class participation

An issue that was significant for Safira, the low proficient prospective teacher, concerned with class participation. She claimed she was a 'not nice teacher', and she did not want to look 'weak' when teaching in her class; thus, students would not underestimate her as trainee teacher. In her reflection, she highlighted her experience as a positive incident with one student, called Richard. In one occasion, Richard showed an unusual response when learning English in the classroom. Although most students considered Safira as a strict teacher, Richard thought this case differently. His enthusiasm stood out that Safira recorded the situation as a part of critical incidents occurring in the teaching practice:

PT#3 Richard

> *I met a student who always paid attention to my instruction from the beginning until the end of class. He even sat down on the floor to listen to my explanation. If he sat in the back row he would be distracted by his friends and talked each other. He tried hard to understand the materials. His vocabulary knowledge also was better than his friends. He was not shy to ask if there was some unclear information.*

Dealing with such positive response, Safira appreciated what Richard did and wondered why the other students could not be like him. She thought that it would be much of a help for her when all of her students are attentive during the lesson.

Gender, lesson objective, classroom activities, and attention spans

Gender, lesson objective, classroom activities, and attention spans were considered as critical incidents, but the participants did not give information on a specific student. In this case, PT#2 dealt with gender since all of the students in her class were male; thus, it needed a different strategy compared to a co-ed classroom. Participant considered this situation a challenge to overcome. Next, lesson objective was critical for PT#3 since during lesson plan construction, school mentor gave optimal assistance to the trainee teacher so that what had been stated as learning objective in lesson plan can be achieved. This critical incident was derived from a different main character in the teaching practice, namely school mentor.

Focusing on classroom activities, PT#1 reflected positively on it. Outdoor class activities as well as games performed in the learning process which were not prepared in the lesson plan ran quite well. Lastly, attention spans was emphasized by PT#3 as a critical incident due to the characteristics of the students. Based on her report, most of the PT#3's junior high school students were difficult to be asked to concentrate. During English class activities, only few students could focus and complete the tasks as expected.

Discussion

Investigating critical incidents from prospective teachers' experience is very challenging. To classify the type of incidents and whether those events fit the criteria of critical incidents need hard work. In fact, the researchers' careful analysis is vital since subjectivity to any respondent is not allowed and objectivity in analyzing the data must be maintained. To categorize critical incidents from teaching routine, the phrase 'surprise response' may best describe its definition (Farrell, 2013). Although the use of narratives is very popular in reflection, it is undeniable that combining narratives and other instruments as presented in this current study for investigating reflective practice gives more accurate outcomes (Insuasty & Castillo, 2010). However, the available questionnaire from previous research shows weaknesses and fails to show clear indicators of reflective teaching, especially for prospective teachers. Thus, the possibility of reconstructing the questions for that reason is widely open. This present qualitative study has tried to come up with a new construct in the form of opinionnaire.

The results obtained from the two instruments show a different perspective given by the prospective teachers. In the interview, the prospective teachers focused more on evaluating their general experience in English class. The ways of how the prospective teachers perceived the critical incidents were also various, and the responses of the school students helped enormously in recalling their reflection. When interview session was conducted, the prospective teachers were more expressive in telling their teaching dilemmas as well as teaching success. The critical incidents presented were also deeper in certain incidents. The stories obtained through interview and opinionnaire show two points for analysis, namely confirming and supporting data. Thus, it is in line with Brookfield (2017) who suggests that in order to know how the teacher reflect critically, multiple perspectives can be implemented.

In addition, related to the implementation of two different instruments for data collection, the responses from the interview are appropriate to express "surprise condition" since prospective teachers found the unplanned incidents from their interactions with the students. The prospective teachers observed that students think and do certain actions quickly when instructions are given. The results also show that both positive and negative incidents need to be explored further. Those incidents give very important information that contributes to their belief on what makes a teacher. Regardless positive and negative experiences, PTs state they learned invaluable lessons which strengthen their motivation to be an English teacher.

In interview result, from each proficiency level, PT agreed that behavior was the most challenging aspect in teaching practice. Similarly, Farrell (2008) finds that behavior comes second in the list of problematic issues for teacher trainee after the aspects of language proficiency and class participation. In line with this, Kilgour et al. (2015) identified that in participants' reflection, the worst lesson experience covers management issues. The issue includes students' behavior, which appears to be the first theme in the findings of this study.

Regarding the opinionnaire responses, the researchers view this as a representative of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action (Farrell, 2013b). Opinionnaire was used to enrich the data unstated by the prospective teachers in the interview. As the evidence, no participant expressed critical incidents related to language proficiency and classroom space during the interview. Conversely, in opinionnaire, those aspects were selected by the participants. To be more specific, the answers of the items dealt with global reflection after class or program. In addition, the instrument signifies critical incidents in a wider definition; "any unplanned and unanticipated" yet "vividly remembered" event that occurs during class, outside class, or during a teacher's career. The results supported each other by adding new information that was missing in interview.

In this study, each subject was able to identify their critical incidents through responding the opinionnaire. For PT#1, she performed more reflection–in–action which is more difficult than the others. She looked very carefully at (the work in the moment) surprising events for teacher and then took quick actions. In contrast, PT#2 and PT#3 proceeded with more reflection-on-action (i.e. looking at the work in retrospect) in order to examine the reasons and beliefs underlying the actions and generate alternative actions for the future. This indicates that the high proficient PT is predisposed to be more careful in selecting the level of experience. Meanwhile, the moderate gave orientation on the solved problems in order to improve the outcome of learning. Low proficient PT preferred to put her response in positive response agree or strongly agree.

The research is in line with Ali et al. (2016) who have conducted a critical incident analysis in qualitative approach. Although the study and this present study have the same purpose, namely course valuation, the results presented are different due to the different theoretical framework and perspective used. As a result, the themes appearing as the results on both studies are also different. Using framework from Brookfield (1998), Ali et al. (2016) found that the categories to analyze the critical incidents emerged were engaged, distanced, affirmed, confused, and surprised. The focus of the response was that students considered themselves as students. In this study, however, those categories were not applicable to be implemented. The course was designed for students so that they learn how to teach in a real school. Furthermore, during the process, the people involved in the program were not only teacher and students, but also school mentor, institutional advisor, headmaster and other employees in the school. Therefore, determining the framework and perspective is important for critical incident analysis. Reconstructing or modifying the instruments is a promising activity to match the appropriate context.

Eventually, from the whole results, this study provides evidence of positive critical incidents that give value to experiences through reflective practice. By giving understanding and opportunity to recall and describe good experiences during involvement in the teaching practice program, the prospective teachers learn to not focus on dilemmas only in their reflection. Feedback can be obtained equally from both negative and positive events. In addition, this result gives more insights on the findings of the previous studies, specifically on the fact that recalling negative incidents is perceived as being a much easier topic for reflection. As a result, the emotions resulting from the incidents occurred are also varied. As stated by Alhebaishi (2019), from teaching practicum, prospective teachers express their emotion of both happiness (e.g. happy) and unhappiness (e.g. angry, stressed, lost, influential, and shamed).

Conclusion

To sum up, this study has presented an investigation on critical incident analysis through two different tools, interview and opinionnaire. Those tools were effective to explore how prospective teachers perceive critical incidents from different perspectives. The findings inform that from both instruments, prospective teachers' experience could help identify their negative and positive critical incidents. Looking at the partners the prospective teachers communicating with, the results show us insights that students are not the only main subject in the teaching practicum. School mentor also can contribute to the experience. Besides, the experience with certain students in the class helps assist the participants of this study to get important lessons in their teaching practice journey. Furthermore, prospective teachers' different English proficiency in this critical incident analysis reveals that the higher the level of proficiency of the prospective teachers is, the more careful they are in recalling and expressing the incidents.

Teaching practice program provides chances for prospective teachers to cultivate their competencies and readiness to groom themselves for teaching profession. To realize the expectation is very challenging (Shumba et al., 2012). This challenge can be overcome if the students of teaching program have the skills to do reflective practice on what they have actually experienced. The reflective reports are beneficial for the prospective teachers and the people involved in the program to provide improvement. To encourage PTs to become reflective practitioners, critical incident analysis is an approach that makes them understand their soon-to-be-profession better and how they should teach in the classroom. Inserting positive critical incidents could be used as strategy for teaching practice preparation or future career development.

Suggestions

It is recommended for other researchers that if they want to conduct research in this area of study, the opinionnaire can be applied as a weekly or daily reflection assignment to get rich data about what actually happen in the teaching and highlight the effective learning activities. There should be a follow up interview to justify the responses to the opinionnaire in order to support the data. Alternatively, recording the teaching practice events is also pivotal since it potentially gives an exhaustive view of the real teaching. Since the prospective teachers do many things during the English lessons, consequently it is possible for them to miss some events dealing with the students activities which perhaps potentially give them significant lesson for improvement.

In reflective teaching practice, one of the programs to investigate authentic language input is through collaborative projects between language learners and pre-service language teachers (Williams, 2008). In addition, Farrell (2013) states that inviting critical peers (or a group of teachers) to discuss about unexpected experiences during the practice

can be a good example of the old adage of "two heads are better than one." This area is interesting to be explored for the future research.

Limitations

Some limitations are found in this study. The construct of the opinionnaire is still limited to only one dimension, namely, Evaluation. Further research needs to be more all-round so that it can cover the other dimensions of reflective practice—orientation, complication, and resolution—. Another weakness is the fact that the opinionnaire was delivered once, particularly after the program had finished. As a result, it was challenging to fully control the uncovered incidents. Whether the incidents came from one single student, some students, or the whole students could not be identified by a general conception of critical incidents. A careful identification during member check process is strongly needed to manage the tendency that each information provided by the participants are focused on good experiences as the whole process.

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