



How does an Online Writing for Publication Group Promote Reflective Practice? Voices from Two EFL Lecturers

Achmad Kholili^{✉1}, Arif Husein Lubis²

¹ Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong, Probolinggo, Indonesia

² Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

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Abstract

Reflective practice has been a prominent issue on English language teaching since it involves a deliberate action to improve one's professional knowledge, skills, and awareness. One way to encourage reflective practice for EFL teachers is to form an online academic group. The current study examines how the discussion in an online academic writing for publication group promotes reflective thinking. This study involved two EFL teachers who participated and learned academic writing in a weekly online meeting on WhatsApp to reflect on their study. The online group discussion was recorded and coded according to the topics they talked about in the group. The topics served as a measure of critical reflectivity. Findings indicated that the EFL teachers talked over and studied academic writing in terms of how to prepare an eligible manuscript for international publication. They also discussed the problems or issues they encountered during writing a research article for publication. The issues were concerned with the research topics, writing an introduction section, difficulties in reporting the research method and procedure, and the use of academic words in their writing, to mention a few. Those issues have an implication to the difficulty in preparing an eligible manuscript and in publishing their articles. This study calls for further initiations to develop reflective practice of Indonesian EFL lecturers through a series of intensive academic writing for publication purposes workshops. The foci of the workshops can address the issues on developing each section of the research article or selecting academic words suitable for writing the paper so that the process of undergoing the international publication can be less demanding.

[✉]Correspondence Address:

Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong
Jl. Raya Panglima Sudirman No.360, Semampir, Kec.
Kraksaan, Kabupaten Probolinggo, Jawa Timur 67282
E-mail: achmadkholili93@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice has gained prominence in teaching and learning around the world these days (Farrell, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2018a, 2021; Gadbury-Amyot et al., 2019; Gün, 2011; Kurosh, et al., 2020). It has been claimed that teachers in higher education should promote reflection since experience does not guarantee reflection (Kagan, 1992). The authors recognize that it begins with a reflection by looking at the terms. Reflection, in this case, is defined as an essential and formidable concept that can foster teachers' self-reflection, critical thinking, and the development of professional values and skills (Loka et al., 2022).

The ability to reflect is increasingly being identified as the main component in teaching. Some studies have evaluated the reflective practice in teaching to date, such as teachers' professional role identities and their reflective practice (Farrell, 2011), reflective teaching constraints, challenges, and experiences (Wolfensberger et al., 2010), development of an English language teaching reflection inventory (Akbari et al., 2010), case studies in reflective practice in an educational program (Liou, 2001), development of different instruments in reflective practice such as journal writing, peer-videoing, research journal, and action research protocols (Abednia et al., 2013; Harford & MacRuaric, 2008), and awareness-raising activities to be reflective teachers (Kabilan, 2007). Thus, promoting reflection as part of reflective practice is of importance, in which individuals can relook their experience, think about it, mull it over, and evaluate it (Loka et al., 2022).

By definition, reflective practice is initiated by the word "reflection," which means the act of reflecting, the act of thinking, and the state of being remembered. Therefore, when the ones perform reflection or reflective practice, they learn about experiences from themselves, their works, and the way they link to home and work (Bolton, 2010). The reflective practice offers strategies to bring out into the open, and set appropriate questions which are never asked earlier (Bolton, 2010). Reflective practice is also part of learning and teaching. By doing the reflective practice, it means that the ones lead to change and development in their learning organization (Gould, 2004), with responsive mechanism of coach, mentor, or facilitator (Gray, 2007).

As a language teacher, it is of value to do the reflective practice over time, especially for their professional development. There are many ways teachers can reflect on their work for their professional development. Farrell (2018a) has already outlined a number of activities that the teachers can choose to reflect on; they are teaching journals, critical friends, teacher development group, classroom observations, action research, teacher role identity, teacher metaphors, and teacher beliefs. These activities are indeed different from one another. Teaching journals offer the teachers a written record of varied aspects of their practice, such as classroom events (Farrell, 2018a). Critical friends are closely related to collaboration among teachers in a two-way mode that encourages discussion and reflection to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Critical friendship, as the name suggests, is a situation where another person reflects with a teacher and provides advice as a trusted "friend" in order to develop awareness of classroom events (Farrell, 2018b). The purpose of this is to offer critique of a person work as a friend.

Among various ways to promote reflective practice, this study focuses on the context of a teacher development group. It is a kind of reflective practice in which the teachers come together in a teacher development group to reflect on complementing each other's strengths and compensating for each other's limitations (Farrell, 2014). Classroom observation can be carried out in pairs or small groups. The teachers, in this case, can develop more of an awareness of what is happening, what decisions the teachers make, and why they make them (Farrell, 2018a). In the action research, the teachers investigate the problems the teachers may be experiencing with a specific class, student, curriculum, or teaching method (Farrell, 2018a). In the teacher role identity, the teachers construct and reconstruct their identities regarding *who* they are (their self-image) and this is manifested through *what* they do (their professional role identity). Teacher role identity incorporates teachers' beliefs, values, and emotions about many aspects of teaching and being a teacher (Farrell, 2018a). Teachers' metaphors are about the way the teachers think about their teaching, and guide the way they act in the classroom (Farrell, 2018a). Last but not least, teachers' beliefs are about the beliefs the teacher hold about their teaching and learning because these are usually held tacitly and develop over a teacher career (Farrell, 2018a).

The teacher development group in the present study addresses various topics, including writing for publication purposes. Hence, this study particularly seeks to investigate the reflective practice in a writing group as part of the concerns in the teacher development group. Writing groups have been considered beneficial for the members to enrich their knowledge, develop their skills, and

reflect on their knowledge and skills. Hanjani and Li (2014) has proved that collaborative writing in the form of collaborative revision, for instance, can be employed as a means of improving students' writing and revision skills since it involves interactions, negotiation, and scaffolding. Writing groups are also found to be a beneficial medium for faculty member to develop scholarship (e.g., Houfek et al., 2010 in the nursing context). They argue that writing groups have merits on providing collegial support via reflective discussion of the purposes, goals, barriers, and other various topics about writing so that its members can increase motivation and self-confidence in scholarly writing. With the ever-growing advancement of educational technology, reflective practice can be nurtured through online writing groups such as Wikis. Li and Zhu (2013) not only lend support the merits of collaborative writing, but also extend the literature regarding how computer-mediated learning environment can facilitate students' interactions, which enable the most learning opportunities.

Hence, the authors intend to explore the reflective practice of teachers in such a group on their academic writing experiences. Simply saying, academic writing can be defined as any forms of writing activities for academic purposes or within academic contexts. Hence, academic writing is different from writing for daily purposes or interactions (Fang, 2021) where the target audiences of the latter form are friends, relatives, and family members. It is further explained that what differentiates academic writing from other types of writing is its characteristics: formal, logical, structured, rigorous, objective, and tightly coherent between ideas. Academic writing has four criteria: the writing process, elements of writing, accuracy in writing, and writing models (Bailey, 2011). The process of producing a piece of academic paper is dynamic and complex where the author at least needs to apply some strategies to accomplish the pre-, whilst-, and post-writing.

One of the examples of academic writing is writing for scholarly publication, such as writing a research article. Teachers or researchers are encouraged to write a scientific article. It is not only for their parts of the job but also for their professional development and careers (Singh & Mayer, 2014). It is justified by the pivotal role of academic writing as "a means of producing, codifying, transmitting, evaluating, renovating, teaching, and learning knowledge and ideology in academic disciplines" (Fang, 2021, p. 3). Hence, it is not only for students and scholars but also for teachers since the prime goal of academic writing highlights knowledge building, disciplinary practices, and career advancement, to mention a few.

Writing a research paper is part of academic writing. Most of all, it is regarded as a demanding task for both EFL students and EFL teachers. In writing a research paper, the writers must know the rules, specificity, originality, novelty, and general relevance to a broad scientific community (Perneger & Hudelson, 2004). It can be clarified that writing a research article has a paper structure such as introduction, methods, results, and discussion (abbreviated as IMRAD) (Perneger & Hudelson, 2004). Typically, the abstract in a research paper is expected to state the background of the study, the research objective, the research method, the main results of the study, and the conclusion from the results. Regarding the introduction section, the writers must state why the problem they address is important, what is lacking in the current knowledge, and the objective of your study. In the method section, the writers need to describe the context and setting of the study, determine the study design, describe the population, sampling strategy, and intervention. In addition, the writers need to identify the main study variables. Aside from it, the writers need to account for the data collection procedures and the data analysis used. Regarding the results section, the writers need to mention how the results section is organized, the specific results from data analysis, and interpretation of the specific results. Then, to convey the discussion and conclusion, the writers must recap the main findings, explain the significance of the findings, how they contribute to the overall state of knowledge, or how they advance knowledge. Lastly, the writers need to state the strength and limitations of the study and offer perspectives for future work. The writers should also mention the implications for future research or practice. Last but not least, the writers must list all sources employed as a basis for their works, based on a particular referencing style.

Apart from its importance and its main elements, academic writing has remained one of the daunting tasks for some students to date, including writing scientific articles (Singh & Mayer, 2014). Even, many teachers and researchers also encounter difficulties in writing a scientific article, for instance, writing an eligible abstract for international publication among non-native English writers (Kurniawan et al., 2019). Less experience in attending to a formal training in scientific writing can be one of the contributing factors. As a result, the teachers or researchers often make the mistake of understanding the preparation of scientific articles (Singh & Mayer, 2014). Another contributing factor of such difficulties is lack of repertoire regarding the rhetorical patterns and typical linguistic features to convey the information in the article effectively (Fang, 2021). Such lack of repertoire might be associated to the absence of experience in a discussion with the discourse community in the field, for instance, a writing group or forum.

Additionally, although reflective practice has been widely investigated, there is a paucity of the study on reflective practice that focuses on teachers' reflective practice on academic writing for international publication in an online environment. The current study attempts to inspect this less-explored notion since publication is one of the central to the work of academics in higher education (MacLeod et al., 2012). As argued previously, the teachers can relook their experience, consider it, mull it over, and evaluate it (Loka et al., 2022). They can improve several attributes such as evidence-based decisions in their circumstances and professionalism. Hence, this study particularly aims to address the following research questions.

1. How do the EFL teachers reflect on the typical structure of a research article for international publication?
2. How do they reflect on the issues in preparing a research article for international publication?

METHODS

Drawing on the poststructuralist look, the current study focused on two EFL teachers to reflect on their studies of academic writing. This study employed a qualitative research, promoting the descriptive and narrative lens. Hence, this study focused on exploring the variety of the participants' perspectives; not attempting to make generalizations of ideas to all teachers in Indonesia. The results may lend support the importance of reflective practices, mediated by an online academic group.

Participants

Two EFL teachers were taken out as the sample of this study. They were selected purposively because they are eligible enough in terms of understanding the research topic being investigated (Mills & Gay, 2016). While the first participant is teaching English at a public university, the second participant is working at an Islamic university; both in West Java Province. These two EFL teachers, coming from a non-Anglicized background, come together to participate in a weekly online discussion on academic writing. Using WhatsApp, these two EFL teachers have been actively involved in this online discussion. The purpose of creating an academic writing group is to promote academic writing skills through discussions among the member nationally and internationally regarding a wide range of topics on academic writing such as problems in academic writing, writing a research-based article, and other academic writing problems. Therefore, it is of value to reflect on their studies on online academic writing

Data collection procedures

A written reflection and in-depth interview were utilized in the current study to reflect on what they studied in the online academic writing group. A written reflection is used as a tool to reflect upon what they had learned during the online academic writing group. First, the participants were asked to report on several points: what they have learnt from that group, what problems are commonly encountered in writing a research article for publication purposes, and what their perspectives are on the essential elements in a research article. The written reflection guide was written using English. At the same time, the in-depth interview was carried out to receive detailed information regarding what they had learned in the group in which the interview protocol was also formulated in English. A written reflection is labelled as (WR), and an in-depth interview is named (IDI). The interview aimed at digging the information about the participants' feelings in learning academic writing, their views on the importance of each section of the research article, and the typical challenges in writing the research article. The participants were allowed to use Indonesian or English so that they had a

flexibility in expressing their ideas without being worried about the language barrier. To this end, the participants returned the reflection sheet in English and used English during the interview session.

Data analysis

A thematic analysis was employed in this existing study, involving familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final reports. First, the researcher conducted iterative reading, which includes reading the transcripts repeatedly to be familiar with the transcripts. After reading the transcripts, the researcher then carried out initial codes. Table 1 below exhibits the sample of the coding result.

Table 1. A Sample of Coding Result

Utterance	Code	Theme
"As one of the novice writers in the academic worlds, I need to consider the sections of the paper like introduction section, literature review, research methods used, discussion and conclusion". (Farid, in WR)	The importance of considering all sections	Recognizing research article structure for international publication

In this case, the researcher codes the transcript. It was followed by searching for themes. The researcher looked for themes that displayed the codes. Then, it is subsequently done by reviewing the themes: Recognizing research article structure for international publication and issues concerning writing a standard manuscript for international publication. After finding out the themes, the researcher reviewed the themes and checked whether the themes were suitable with the codes provided. Afterwards, the researcher had a chance to refine themes. Finally, the researcher defined and named themes and continued producing the final report.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this case, the researchers clarify the EFL teachers' reflection upon learning online academic writing through WhatsApp. The findings showcased that the EFL teachers talked about their learning trajectories, especially how to write a research article for international publication. Second, they discussed the issues concerning writing a standard manuscript for international publication. These findings are presented in the following themes: Recognizing the typical structure of a research article for international publication and issues concerning writing a standard manuscript for international publication.

Recognizing research article structure for international publication

It is essential to know several research structures that are responsible for writing a research article. The participants revealed that the introduction, literature review, research method, discussion and conclusion must be considered since this is the body of the paper.

"As one of the novice writers in the academic worlds, I need to consider the sections of the paper like introduction section, literature review, research methods used, discussion and conclusion". (Farid, in WR)

"I think learning academic writing is rigor and rigid. It indeed requires several things that should be considered, including Introduction section, presenting a literature review, stating a methodological approach, showcasing the results, discussing the results, and displaying the conclusion of the study." (Sony, in IDI).

The excerpts showed that the writers had a similar view on the importance of preparing an eligible manuscript by looking at the main sections such as introduction, literature review, method, results, discussion and conclusion. They already had an understanding that academic writing, in this context, requires rigor and rigidity. Furthermore, Farid demonstrated that academic writing is different from writing an essay or diary. It indeed needs carefulness, extensive reading, and much effort; as informed in the following excerpt:

"When I come to writing a manuscript, I feel that it not the same as writing an essay or diare. Choosing appropriate vocabulary, reading other published works extensively, and using advanced English grammar become much consideration. I think it is more complicated than other types of writing". (Farid, in WR).

Issues concerning writing a standard manuscript for international publication

The problems some EFL teachers often face in writing research articles for publication are difficulties in deciding the research topic. They perceived that determining the research topic is a long-term process of thinking, resulting in a waste of time. In addition, they need to search for the novelty of the research.

"I need to spend much time to find a good research topic. Sometimes, I am not sure that it will be accepted in an international journal." (Farid, in WR).

"I find it difficult to find the research topic. That's what I felt when I started writing a research article for international publication." (Sony, in IDI).

The excerpts showed that the writers still encountered a difficulty in deciding the research topic. However, they were aware of such difficulty from the online academic writing group discussion. It can be a good starting point because the reflection results can trigger them to develop their skills in solving such difficulty.

The next problem often grappled by the EFL teachers in writing a research article for publication is writing an introduction section. Both argued that writing an introduction is an arduous task, requiring knowledge of the topic and a gap.

"Some EFL writers have difficulties writing the introduction sections, especially when regarding how to start writing the stage, and they also often do not indicate the gap." (Sony, WR).

"Most of the time, the EFL writers often have a hard time starting to write an introduction section. They write and even no gaps there." (Farid, in IDI).

The EFL writers found that it was challenging to start composing the introduction section for some people. One notable issue in writing an introduction section was that the writers did not indicate or mention any gaps as the basis for claiming the novelty of their research.

In addition to the introduction section, the EFL teachers suppose that writing a methodological section is extremely hard. The primary concerns are clear explanations of research methods like research design, participants, data gathering, and data analysis. Aside from this, they also need to encounter active and passive voices.

"What makes research writers often hard is that they often write unclear methodological approach, such as unclear research design, no triangulation or using one data gathering, and unclear data analysis. Besides, we also think about the active and passive sentences normally used in the method section" (Sony, in WR).

"Some research writers often run into difficulties writing a standard manuscript for international publication, for example, methodological approach, which should include research design, population/sample, data collection, and data analysis." (Farid, in WR).

The excerpts of the writers' reflection results above clearly showed that there were two major issues being concerned in writing an eligible manuscript for publication in international journals: a methodological issue and a language issue. Regarding the former issue, the participants admitted that it was challenging to inform the research design and data triangulation in data collection process. Regarding the latter issue, the participants viewed that sentence voice, whether active or passive sentence, was still a major concern.

Finding suitable references is possibly tricky for novice writers as well. Let alone; they want it to publish in a reputable international journal. That will be much consideration. The EFL teachers think that finding modern references is in trouble for them.

"In addition to methodological approach in writing, looking for suitable and current references is quite important for the researchers. Some researchers often report their studies with old references. Writing for international publication requires several modern and suitable references to be accepted" (Sony, in WR).
"Another problem related to writing for international publication is concerning the use of modern references. Some researchers often use old references, for example, the use of references under the year 2000." (Farid, in IDI).

The excerpts showed that there was an increased understanding of the expectation for the writers from international journals to use current references. They still found some references in the articles that were too old so that it hindered the articles to be accepted for publication.

Apart from those problems above, the EFL teachers discuss using academic vocabulary in writing for international publication is essential. The EFL teachers, especially novice writers, often have trouble employing appropriate academic vocabulary. In the meantime, they also have to think about proofreading, like grammar, punctuation, and collocation.

"Grammar and using academic words are also the main concern in academic writing. Some writers regard that these often become problematic when writing for international publication." (Sony, in WR).
"When writing a manuscript for publication, the researchers often commit errors in terms of grammar and the use of academic words. In fact, for novice writers like me, I still have many difficulties using English grammar and employing academic words." (Farid, in WR).

The excerpts above exhibited that the writers were already aware of the problems in language errors. Those language errors were mostly concerned with grammar, sentence structure, and the use of academic words. Although they were still novice writers, they had been able to reflect on their experiences through the online academic writing group discussion. This can become a good modal for them to improve their proofreading skills.

Discussion

The current study has attempted to examine the reflective practice in an online academic writing group. The findings indicated that the EFL teachers reflected upon how to write a research article for international publication and the issues in writing it for international publication, such as difficulties in deciding the research topics, issues in using academic words, issues in composing an introduction section, issues in writing a methodological approach, and inability for finding modern and suitable references. The findings generally show that although the participants are already aware of the importance of considering main elements of research article writing for international publication, the process of preparing the manuscript seems still challenging.

This reflection is included in the critical reflection within this study. Some studies have previously showcased that learning academic writing, including how to write research articles for international publication, is ambitious, for instance, Cargill & O'connor (2009) have argued that those who are relatively new to the task of writing or those who have been scientists are faced with pressure and challenges to writing a research article for international publication. A problem found by the researcher above is that the EFL writers often have difficulties deciding the research topics. It can be understood that prior to writing the paper, choosing the suitable and relevant research topic has been a particularly challenging task.

One of the issues the EFL writers confront is having complexities in finding and deciding the research topics (Alderman, 2014). Apart from this, the introduction section becomes problematic for some EFL Writers when reporting their research in the form of an article. Previous studies have proven that the main concerns when composing research articles can be seen in introduction sections (Cheung, 2012; Fudhla et al., 2014; Samraj, 2002, 2005; Shehzad, 2008). Another issue that has also become problematic is writing a methodological approach. Writing a methodological section indeed becomes one of the main concerns. Grogan (2020) argues that writing a manuscript is problematic because, most of the time, no one has ever before been where you are in the realm of knowledge. In fact, the methodological approach requires the statements of research design used, participant's description, data collection, and data analysis (Swales, 1990; Perneger & Hudelson, 2004; Ecarnot, et al., 2015). Finding suitable and modern references is also essential in writing a research article. Bavdekar (2016) has asserted that finding accurate and complete references is

strongly promoted. If the references are not suitable and not modern enough, it will be problematic later if the authors submit their manuscripts for international publication.

The findings of the present study implied that writing a research article requires a lot of practice. As researcher writers, we should be knowledgeable about writing a research article correctly and adequately, resulting in acceptance in a refereed journal. The currents were only conducted within the EFL context, focusing on the reflective practice of an online academic writing group. Therefore, future studies could be performed with other similar topics, such as reflective practice on choosing the right journal for publication and so forth.

CONCLUSION

The current study has attempted to investigate the reflective practice by EFL teachers in an online academic writing group. Using a WhatsApp-assisted discussion, the EFL teachers revealed that they studied how to write a research article for international publication and issues concerning writing a research article for international publication. In particular, the EFL teachers talked about the ways to write a research article for publication, including writing an introduction section, literature review, research method, discussion, and conclusion. In addition, they also stated that the difficulties found in writing for international publication consist of complexities in deciding the research topic, complexities in composing the introduction section, challenges in writing the methodological approach, inability for finding the modern references, as well as issues concerning the use of academic vocabulary. The results of this study can be a reference or a notice for Indonesian EFL teachers, in particular, who wants to write a research article for international publication by considering reflective practice as a means of contemplating strengths and areas of improvement in writing the article. Additionally, the results can be used as a supporting evidence for initiating a collaborative action such as a series of academic writing workshops or coaching in developing university teachers' capacity in writing research articles for international publication purposes. This calls for future research to examine the extent to which such action is beneficial and helpful for the participants. Future research can also investigate the role of the workshops or coaching in developing their reflective thinking and reflection skills.

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