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## The Power of Reflective Journal Writing for University Students from the EFL Perspective

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### Abstract

*English as a foreign language (EFL) university students use reflective journals as learning logs to express or capture their ideas within a scientific conceptual framework. The objectives of this research are to (1) describe the power of reflective journal writing in communicating ideas, and (2) identify the aspects of reflective journal writing that aid learning in an EFL context. The reflective journals were written by 21 EFL university students. This research takes a qualitative approach, with the primary data coming from several reflective journals (N=124) while the secondary data coming from EFL students' interviews (N=15). The research results showed that reflective journals were useful for students to make critical reflections and self-discovery responses to writing topics. The students learned to focus on writing components such as order, unity, coherence, cohesiveness, content, and organization of ideas through reflective journal writing. The students' perspectives on aspects of reflective journal writing were primarily concerned with macro-and micro-level linguistic issues, as evidenced from the interview results. Writing a reflective journal necessitated their ability to reformulate thoughts, provide details, and solve problems. Furthermore, critical thinking, metacognitive skills, and self-reflections became increasingly important in helping the students to develop their ability to write reflective journals.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In pedagogical practice, reflective journal writing has long been used to improve students' learning attitudes, creativity, and academic awareness. This hands-on demand for reflective journal writing is premised on two fundamental principles. First, English as a foreign language (EFL) university students are encouraged to maintain writing competence, which includes the ability to produce texts (McIntosh et al., 2017), the ability to describe linguistically or culturally enriched writing frameworks, and the ability to recognize thematic topics. Second, reflective journal writing improves students' self-awareness, understanding of issues, and reasoning skills (Abednia et al., 2013), all of which support the power of reflection, imagination, and interpretation (Lindsay, 2011). In this sense, reflective journal writing is becoming more popular as a means of addressing both writing competence and its significant impacts on cognitive domains such as powerful reflections, interpretation, and other self-inquiry issues.

In EFL contexts, every practice of journal writing reflectively necessitates a pedagogical approach used by lecturers to embody teaching attitudes, teaching awareness (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018), and other generally accepted writing norms (McIntosh et al., 2017). Hence, reflective journal writing has a potential cross-cultural context (Bailes et al., 2010). As a multicultural consideration, writing a reflective journal leads to a fundamental advancement of learning by providing insight into higher education contexts (Power, 2017).

Reflective journal writing, from this standpoint, can facilitate reflections and allow students to use background materials relevant to their individual learning experiences (Hashemi & Mirzaei, 2015). Writing reflective journals is thought to have the power to bridge the gap between existing and new knowledge. As a learning tool, writing a reflective journal promotes critical thinking (Ebadi & Rahimi, 2018), cognitive task complexity (Johnson, 2017), metacognition, and self-efficacy (Zhang, 2016; Zhenget et al., 2018), and self-awareness of pursuing knowledge. Besides, both self-exploration and problem-solving skills pave the way for self-sufficient learning to meet students' needs of writing competence in the twenty-first-century learning.

In terms of the EFL students' background knowledge, sufficient understandings of the topics in writing reflective journals may result in producing adequate self-reflection (Yang, 2010) and self-expression (Roesler, 2020) – but a growing concern of writing reflective journals rests on multiple extensive revisions depending on additional comments that the lecturers provide. The EFL students need to back up their ideas with evidence-based data, language awareness, self-editing, or peer correcting steps (Balderaset & Cuamatzi, 2018; Hajimohammadi & Mukundan, 2011) that may require extensive guidance to handle them appropriately.

This research seeks to answer two questions within this conceptual framework: (1) the power of reflective journals to encourage EFL students' writing, and (2) the aspects of reflective journal writing that support the EFL context of learning. A reflective journal is indispensable because the feedback in it is extremely crucial for nurturing reflections (Capps, 2014) over weeks and months. This medium-length

process of learning to write a reflective journal helps students gain self-confidence and trust so that they can begin to reflect on and write about their genuine concerns and interests. The goal is reflection, as each student is rewarded with feedback from the lecturers. Reflection allows students to reflect upon their actions and perform with the utmost skill, knowledge, and confidence that they have written their reflective journals (Abednia et al., 2013; Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020) in the best possible way.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Reflective Journal Writing

Reflective journal writing, ranging from open and free to structured formats, assumes that different types of journals influence critical reflection skills (Carter & Kurtt, 2019). Hence, various ways to enhance reflective writing require a flexible process, enabling students to choose topics, test new ideas, comment on personal behaviors, and describe feelings. An instructional demonstrative dialogue through journal writing, for example, aims to show how students write about particular events and examine them in their journals (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018), herald perspective changes and make a positive personal transformation (Carter & Kurtt, 2019). That is why, critical reflection skills as such pave the way for transformative learning, self-confidence, engagement, and self-discovery.

Reflective journal writing is a good way to express critical and reflective thinking (Cogni, 2019) rooted in regular processes, and optional topics that may encourage self-awareness of events or issues to write about. A considerable advantage of writing like this is that students put things into words to work out exactly what they mean, whereas writing is thinking, but thinking must be disciplined and productive (Ur, 1996). The reason, still in Ur's point of view, is that reflective journal writing is even more productive. Entries are made in a separate notebook at regular intervals, recording things that have happened, wish to be remembered, or will be acted upon. Such journals can be reread later to contribute to further reflection and learning logs.

Other advantages of reflective writing through reflective journals include improving the outcomes of learning, promoting students' learning atmosphere, and providing opportunities for professional development (Allan & Driscoll, 2014). As a learning tool, reflective journals can be a source of information that records certain events in the form of written dialogues through which the students share thoughts, ideas, and reactions, and the teacher reads and responds with comments, have been in use for some time (Brown, 2001). Journal keeping is another term for reflective journal writing that enables students to have extensive writing practices. Some of its advantages are that (1) it can be enjoyable since it gives the students free rein to write on any topic at the spur of the moment, and (2) it offers students the privacy, freedom, and safety to experiment and develop ideas as a writer (Peñaflorida, 2002) using writing strategies: (a) defining, (b) serializing, (c) classifying, (d) summarizing, (e) comparing, and (f) analyzing (Kiniry & Rose, 1990).

In the digital era, reflective journal writing contributes to a web-based portfolio assessment system that reflects on learning processes and reflective writing mechanisms (Liang et al., 2016) involving topics-based prompts, revisions, learning logs, and grading systems. Reflective writing can improve EFL students' writing

achievement, vocabulary achievement, and critical thinking achievement (Laqaei, 2015). Besides, it is a technique to manage learning processes through which reflections (Black et al., 2019) can enrich academic experiences, pacing strategies, and learning strategies. In contrast, high-achievers tend to accomplish their online learning journals earlier than low-achievers who considerably concentrate on evaluation (Schwendimann et al., 2018). EFL students' competence in writing reflective journals deals with the frequency and accuracy of using cohesive devices, generic meanings, cohesion, and textual environment (Alfalagg, 2020). Thus, reflective journal writing has some potential benefits for EFL students' writing competence as it represents their thoughts, empirical evidence, and arguments.

Journal writing re-articulates the importance of knowledge, learning conditions, self-reflection, and independent thoughts (Kerka, 2002). Its reflective power encourages the development of the students' higher-order cognitive skills, such as monitoring, inference, and perspective-taking (Kim & Park, 2019), and students' reflective skills (So et al., 2018) that demonstrate expressions of ideas, deep learning, and feelings. Reflective journal writing also promotes self-discovery and metacognitive competencies essential for students (Gibson et al., 2016). The focal point is that reflective journal writing not only emphasizes reflection and professional development (Chretien et al., 2008), but also reflective thinking (Chittooran, 2015), and critical thinking skills (Laqaei, 2015). Therefore, reflective journal writing can enhance students' critical insights into real solving problems, and enrich learning experiences.

## **2.2 Writing Performance**

Writing performance is a new approach to academic writing that encompasses textual documents intended for distribution, publication, or teaching. Students practice writing in academic settings to record events, embody performance-making, and aid them in recalling their memories. Writing, as a form of performance, necessarily requires more opportunities to collaborate and create a diverse range of performance texts (Harris & Jones, 2016). Collaborative writing, in this sense, is an important part of expanding challenging tasks in the twenty-first century's learning sphere.

Instructors use some components to assess EFL students' writing performance, including six metacognitive parameters (declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring, and evaluating) that explain the writing proficiency coverage (Teng, 2019). Another qualitative study highlights the importance of metacognitive skills in enhancing writing performance in academic, professional, and personal contexts (Pacello, 2014). A metacognitive strategy seeks to develop writing skills acquisition through training and self-monitoring strategies in order to increase students' academic writing proficiency (Wischgoll, 2016). Academic writing, on the other hand, necessarily involves more coordinated efforts to present shared experiences, effective communication, cogent expositions, and compelling arguments (Hennessy, 1997). For this reason, students can hone these skills by writing creative essays and a variety of academic papers.

Academic writers are thinkers who can work both inside and outside of the cultural and contextual realms of working performances, multiple identity constructions, engagement, and academic writing authenticity (Thomas & Reinertsen, 2019). Exploratory responses to academic writing performances reflect a wide range

of writing contributions to background knowledge, as well as growing concerns about global issues, such as diversity reconciliation, climate change education, and other diverse perspectives. In these circumstances, the motivation of EFL students to write determines their academic writing performances. The more students focus on the performativity of writing (Thomas & Reinertsen, 2019), the better they become in improvement strategies namely feedback condition, reflection assignments, self-efficacy, revisions (Duijnhouwer et al., 2012), and writing assignments (Rosyada & Sundari, 2021). From this point of view, EFL students learn to write independently under the instructor's positive guidance, mentoring roles, and writing tutorials (Munje et al., 2018) resulting in academic writing products or outcomes.

The use of critical language assists students in thinking critically, developing conceptual frameworks, and comprehending the structures and genres of texts. Literary mentors are essential in utilizing these texts while advancing writings (Muhammad, 2015). Mentorship also addresses reading literacy in order to improve writing performance, communicative competence, engagement, and critical inquiry (Ugboja et al., 2018). The process approach is also important for improving students' writing abilities in a bilingual setting. Its powerful influences maintain writing integrity and originality through measurement processes that include pre-writing and peer-editing stages, re-writing, content, idea organization, grammaticality, and mechanics (Kolade, 2012). Writing performances are directly related to the information about students' language proficiency using self-assessments by providing domain-related scores (Powers & Powers, 2015). In other words, the language proficiency scores of academic writing have made significant contributions to students' writing performances.

This accumulated knowledge has an effect on students' writing self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and writing performance. Students investigate themes with formulaic genre writing that re-articulates their stories (Alberth, 2019). Through this creative process of writing, they gain insights into intentional themes that offer breakthroughs. The possibility of literary appreciation and various title choices transform performative tasks into powerful writing performances. However, novice writers and EFL students require academic writing models that help them see the ordinary and practical world through critical eyes (Macbeth, 2010), even if the models generalize reasonably well across prompts (Deane & Zhang, 2015). This lack of independence can provide EFL students with previously unnoticed opportunities for writing duplicity and originality. Consequently, the complexity, explicitness, and elaboration of their work will be jeopardized. These academic writing stereotypes (Biber & Gray, 2010) challenge students to recognize their own lack of creativity and writing ability.

### 2.3 Writing as a Productive Skill

Writing, as a productive skill, generally requires some multifaceted competencies. The only reason for this is that writing entails creating ideas based on specific criteria. For example, writers should emphasize the conceptual underpinnings that complexity, accuracy, fluency, organization of ideas, grammar, and vocabulary are reflective componential parts (Kathpalia & Heah, 2008) of writing assessment (Roquet & Pérez-Vidal, 2015). Because writing is often perceived as the most difficult skill for students to master, it is challenging for EFL students to brilliantly strengthen all of these components. They must be able to plan and organize ideas at a higher level

(Richards & Renandya, 2002). Writing, regardless of its difficulty level, entails a set of rules to maintain the content, organization, appropriate transition signals or mechanics, and diction.

The assumption is that quality writing takes into account not only such rules but also lexico-grammatical and discourse organization using productive language skills, in addition to grammatical accuracy and fluency (Galloway & Uccelli, 2015). Writing, according to other prominent experts, is both a process and a product. The former indicates that the writer envisions, organizes, drafts, edits, reads and rereads feedback, and revises. This writing process is frequently cyclical and, at times, disorderly. The latter indicates that writing results in a finished product (Ransdell & Levy, 1994). As an intellectual activity, writing is a combination of mental efforts and writing processes (de Smet et al., 2014) to communicate ideas to wider audiences.

This evidence delineates that writing is a very complicated activity. To produce an acceptable piece of writing, writers must adhere to a number of rules. Furthermore, writing requires a significant amount of time, effort, and dedication to generate and develop rhetorical skills (Pelger & Sigrell, 2016; Williams, 2013), inference analysis, syllogistic reasoning, and argument analysis, particularly within argumentative essays (Preiss et al., 2013). The provision of an instructor's feedback facilitates the process of revisions that justifies arguments, reasoning, illustrations, and exemplifications. EFL students' writing can be typically refined and acceptable in the sense of its quality (Taguchi et al., 2013) and preferable style (Mack, 2016). Most of all, editing or revising is the most onerous part of writing processes because "major error categories" (Ferris, 2002) in students' essays can be indicators of writing weaknesses.

### **3. METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative method (Fletcher, 2015) for two purposes. First, the researchers were an integral part of the researched world and the data were presented in terms of participants (Cohen et al., 2000). Second, the interpretation and description of the data seek to develop both conceptual categories and supported assumptions (McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

#### **3.1 Research Setting**

This research was conducted at the English Education Department of Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The implementation of interviews with 15 participants took place online using learning media.

#### **3.2 Data Classification**

This research has two types of data. First, the primary data set consists of 124 original reflective journals written by 21 students enrolled in the Writing for Professional Context 1 course (essay-based writing) during the academic year 2020/2021. The researchers chose these documents because (1) they have become highly effective in supporting arguments, narrations, or reviews on course topics and subtopics, written assignments, and daily life experiences, and (2) reflective journals

provided a format for students to synthesize their knowledge, skills, and experiences and allow them to find meanings and make connections.

The students were chosen using a purposive sampling technique because they provided in-depth and comprehensive information about the phenomenon under research. The following criteria were used in the selection process: (a) active students who were enrolled in the intended course, and (b) they were willing to participate in writing reflective journals as an important part of their writing assignments.

Second, the secondary data were primarily concerned with interviews with 15 third-semester university students. Within a semester, they became informants in conveying perspectives on data or information, as well as experiences with writing reflective journals. The interview data supported the primary data, and vice versa.

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedures**

The research data were collected using two procedures: preparation and implementation. The preparation phase included two major steps: selecting students' reflective journals and contacting the reflective journal writers to ask if they are willing to participate in the research.

The implementation phase included five major points: (1) taking the reflective journals to be corrected (as a means of providing feedback), (2) determining when to return them to the student writers, (3) conducting interviews relevant to their experiences writing reflective journals, (4) collecting the reflective journals and interview data, and (5) analyzing them one by one.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

There were two types of data collection instruments: (1) reflective journals as documents, and (2) interview results with 15 participants as part of a purposive sampling strategy (Ante, 2016). The researchers used interviews to obtain a variety of responses on issues of reflective journal writing in order to gain opinions, ideas, descriptions, and explanations from participants.

Validity in qualitative research data is concerned with the accuracy of the findings from the participants', researchers', and final account readers' perspectives. Questions, timing, triangulation, member checking, and detailed descriptions are some of the ways to ensure accuracy. Meanwhile, reliability denotes a consistent and well-documented research approach, both before and during the analysis process (Bolderston, 2012).

An interview protocol often describes primary and secondary research issues. Detailed descriptions also deal with the research personnel involved, the interview process, information for a preamble that discusses issues of confidentiality and consent, issues that are being asked, follow-up probes that encourage participants to prepare responses, and final statement (Bolderston, 2012). The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedures**

Following data collection, the researchers analyzed data from instruments, such as reflective journal documents and interviews. The components of reflective journals

were examined, namely (a) aspects that support the EFL context of learning, such as reflection, critical thinking (Plack et al., 2005), self-discovery (Gibson et al., 2016), and reflective thinking (Chittooran, 2015). Most importantly, a reflective journal analysis includes writing strategies, such as defining, serializing, classifying, summarizing, comparing, and analyzing (Kiniry & Rose, 1990), as well as prompts based on topics.

An in-depth appreciation of the participants' perspectives is included in the interview data analysis (Hitchings & Latham, 2020), which involves categorizing the data into themes or categories (coding). The researchers investigated the data as a whole, attempting to become intimately acquainted with the participants' voices. This stage should not be rushed; as important information may be overlooked (Bolderston, 2012).

The researchers used a triangulation procedure to analyze the data, which is a process of strengthening the findings of a qualitative investigation by cross-checking information. Potter (1996) argues that research findings are derived from people in many different situations, and the researchers were more persuaded to conclude such instruments. Therefore, triangulation is used to bring together disparate sources of information in order for them to converge or conform to a single interpretation. The researchers can make a great argument that the interpretation is more credible by combining information from various sources (documents and interviews).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 The Use of Reflective Journal Writing for EFL Students

Table 1 shows the power of reflective journal writing for EFL students based on the data analysis of this study.

**Table 1.** The power of reflective journal writing for EFL students.

No	The power of reflective journal writing	The number of journals	Students' achievement (%)
1	Classifying topics and subtopics	14	11
2	Summarizing activities	15	12
3	Comparing things	15	12
4	Building critical thinking	9	7
5	Sequencing topics	8	7
6	Analyzing problems	16	13
7	Reviewing the topics	18	15
8	Interpreting the topics	16	13
9	Communicating ideas	8	6
10	Exploring ideas	5	4
	Total		100

The data in Table 1 show that the most common reason for using reflective journal writing is to review topics (15%), implying that the majority of students review the topics of the course's learning materials. This is followed by analyzing problems (13%) and interpreting the topics (13%). This implies that despite that the students simply re-formulated the materials learned in previous sessions, they also tried to develop their critical thinking skills (Laqaei, 2015) by summarizing (12%), comparing



(12%), and classifying topics and subtopics (11%) in their writing. About 7% were able to build critical thinking, 7% to sequence topics, and 6% to communicate ideas. Meanwhile, only a small percentage of students (4%) had difficulty in exploring ideas in their reflective journals.

Accordingly, reflective journal writing is related to critically reflective practices (Jaiswal et al., 2021; Thompson & Pascal, 2012) and activities of reviewing and interpreting the topic of discussion. Comparing, classifying, sequencing, and summarizing discussions (Kiniry & Rose, 1990) are categorized into logical, transparent, and straightforward sections as essential parts of writing activities. The analysis of the problem, on the other hand, is entirely dependent on how students explore ideas and communicate them more clearly and straightforwardly, as well as to what extent they structure rhetoric around a single hypothesis or even more, and analyze a specific problem in detail.

The goal of reflective journal writing is to organize topics and subtopics based on how objects, people, and animals are classified. For example, in this study, the students focused on the color, brand, type, shape, and price when describing a row of cars in a parking lot. Another example is when they were divided into groups based on their academic abilities, interests, and talents, as well as the social life background of their families. As a result, categorization aids the students in formulating definitions, summarizing, comparing, analyzing, and refuting arguments (Kiniry & Rose, 1990).

When writing reflective journals, students summarized their learning materials. Summarizing activities is an important part of the academic experience for students. They had been dealing with summarizing learning materials since they began their studies in higher education. This activity helped students sharpen their understandings, critical thinking skills, as well as their creativity and interpretative skills (Mehta & Al-Mahrooqi, 2015). Reflective journal writing was further used when they wrote scientific papers. Here, they were to make comparisons between people, objects, experiences, circumstances, current and previous situations, as well as the vision and mission of an educational institution.

Accordingly, making a comparison is fundamental to building critical thinking (Mehta & Al-Mahrooqi, 2015), especially concerning comparative studies of literature, religion, and the structure of scientific writing (Lindsay, 2011). Comparing is also an important process because to compare does not only present information from a wide variety of views, but there are also the steps of re-structuring and re-evaluating interconnected insights.

## 4.2 The Benefits of Reflective Journal Writing

The interviews with fifteen students showed that writing a reflective journal is one of the important academic activities. Its contributions to real-world scholarly activities have benefited intellectual abilities, reflections, and imaginations. This is due to the fact that reflective journal writing necessitates academic efforts to discover a good method for accessing information sources, expressing critical thinking (Mehta & Al-Mahrooqi, 2015), and developing cognitive prowess. The most distinctive part of the journal writing as such is a reflective component (Kathpalia & Heah, 2008), a term that refers to an exploratory likelihood of initiating an instructional demonstrative dialogue (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018) and enhancing disciplined and productive processes of thinking (Ur, 1996). Furthermore, reflective journal writing is linked to a

number of academic activities such as defining, creating a story sequence, classifying, summarizing, comparing, and analyzing each componential part of a topic (Kiniry & Rose, 1990).

Reflective journal writing had the potential to help the students in this study to understand the topics being discussed better while advancing their professional development at the same time (Jarvis & Baloyi, 2020). This can be seen in how they used sequential parts of a story, particularly for expository writing, and uses formulaic expressions like *first, then, next, after that, and finally* to represent the details of events, as shown in Excerpt 1:

E1 *There are five compelling reasons to write in English. First, you will notice that your writing is more powerful as a result of this definition of power. When writing assigns a value to each sentence, it accomplishes a strength and influence. Strength refers to an exploration of the main idea, or topic sentence. Influence shows important details that clarify the main idea and discloses minor details that expand on or clarify major points.*

*Then, if we plan to write articles or other scientific papers in English, we will undoubtedly read a lot of news, articles, papers, and other readings in English, further enriching our knowledge. A good reader is undoubtedly a good writer. A good reader must be well-versed in a wide range of topics. Articles, news, and paper aren't the only sources of information. However, more references for other novels and comics are required for novels and comics.*

*Next, it keeps us going in order for us to be remembered. If we write articles, papers, novels, comics, manga, and more papers, we will be successful. Others will benefit from our story and experience. Perhaps from our novel or manga story. This story will be created by them (readers) for their own motivation. That is, if we write our paper in Indonesian or in our own language. Consider what we could accomplish if we were to write some papers in English. Of course, we can assist or motivate a large number of people.*

*After that, you have the power to make the world a better place with your hands. With your papers or posters, you can criticize people's deviant behavior, such as racism, logging, environmental pollution, war, and conflict. If the singer is trying to persuade people to change the world, he should write a song about it. As a result, we can create posters or papers to persuade the world to change.*

*Finally, as college students, this can help us become more familiar with scientific work. So, if we want to make some paper, we can't run out of ideas. For the sake of the argument, we all know that writing in English has numerous advantages. You can amass a fortune in books, comics, or paper. You can be wealthy, but if you want to become even wealthier, you should write these in English.*

(A reflective journal sample. For a complete version of this journal, see Appendix 01)

Based on E1, it shows that the students were able to assert procedural steps, clues, sequences of events, or the causal relationships between ideas and problems when they highlighted logical sequences of arguments. This effort is based on word accuracy, clarity, and precision, as well as the ability to think logically and critically (Lin, 2018). The results from the interviews that presented the aspects of reflective journal writing that support EFL learning contexts is displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The aspects of reflective journal writing.

No	Interviewees by initials	Aspects of reflective journal writing that support EFL learning contexts	Interest
1	DM	Promoting intellectual abilities	Linguistics
2	EJR	Initiating self-reflections	Teaching
3	FNS	Developing critical thinking	Teaching
4	FA	Sharpening writing skills	Teaching

*Table 2 continued...*

5	KA	Developing macro-level and micro-level linguistic improvements	Literature
6	RAN	Reformulating ideas	Linguistics
7	SH	Providing more details	Linguistics
8	WHM	Re-conceptualizing ideas	Teaching
9	N	Perceiving the problem formulation	Teaching
10	MR	Enhancing freedom to write	Teaching
11	AFL	Following a flexible process	Linguistics
12	LR	Demonstrating contradictions	Literature
13	DAR	Upskilling a linguistic dimension	Teaching
14	ARP	Improving communication skills	Teaching
15	AA	Adjusting to metacognitive skills	Literature

The results in Table 2 reveal that reflective journal writing seeks to chronicle the EFL students' self-reflection components that tend to evaluate writing activities, demonstrate in-depth thoughts, and develop them (Peñaflorida, 2002). In this study, they explained that by using reflective journals, they were able to select techniques for communicating ideas correctly, critically, and systematically through the journals. As a result, each of their reflective journal's arguments emphasized problem analysis, data support evidence, and logical reasoning connections. Argumentation, in this sense, is an intellectual activity that includes efforts to improve writing skills and concentrates on inductive and deductive thought processes, or a combination of both.

Another benefit of the reflective journals was that students could record (i.e., write) words and definitions from a dictionary, thus by this documentation, they could remember them. Writing essays or scientific papers in a reflective journal necessitates a thorough definition of words in order for the written messages to be clear, accurate, and simple to comprehend. This act in writing reflective journals is known as reflective journaling and is a recommended learning tool (Rhodes & Brook, 2021).

The students also said that writing in reflective journals sharpened their writing skills especially in using and understanding certain terms. For example, when the definition of a word is changed from a general to a specific category. This process emphasized their linguistic improvements at both the macro and micro levels. Writing contexts, rhetorical structure, textual or clause relations, cohesion and coherence, composing stages, and strategies are among the macro-level considerations. Hence, grammar, vocabulary, referencing, transitional devices, writing styles, and metacognitive skills are all technically covered at this level (Kathpalia & Heah, 2008).

Towards the end, writing a reflective journal is a constant process of expressing ideas using supporting evidence (e.g., data from reference books), consistency in restructuring arguments, and communication skills. Writing literary essays, for example, this had assisted students in summarizing key events from a novel and interpreting or analyzing the novel's intrinsic and extrinsic aspects in the context of the protagonists' roles. Therefore, writing a reflective journal allowed the students for more flexibility than simply re-conceptualizing issues under discussion in academic activities based on their utility, urgency, and complexity.

### 4.3 Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study present some pedagogical implications. First of all, by using reflective journals or diaries, students can provide a special time to practice

writing every day to support pedagogical activities. These media can assist students to express general or specific experiences, ideas, and things, such as actual information from a variety of sources. The effectiveness of writing reflective journals is dependent on the accuracy with which content or other issues surrounding academic issues are interpreted.

Other elements in a reflective journal address an important aspect of evaluation activities, particularly when students provide comments or improvements to their own writing (self-editing) and the writings of others (Ferris, 2002). The content and organization of ideas (macro aspects), rather than grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, are highlighted in journal writing, for example, of a commentary (micro aspects). Students use processes, such as (a) focusing on forms, such as words, sentences, and punctuation, and (b) paying attention to major mistakes, such as content, idea linking, logical thinking, and word or sentence arrangement, when correcting and editing their own or other students' writings.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Reflective journal writing is important in learning writing because it supports EFL students to rethink a wide range of learning activities and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of subsequent learning processes. Reflective journal writing is a type of diary in which students express their honesty, self-discovery, and self-improvement in order to improve their learning practice quality. It is a tool for interpreting topics, communicating, and experimenting with new ideas. The results showed that reflection took place during or after learning activities (a reflection in action). Moreover, students' critical responses to learning phenomena were documented in reflective journals. Then, learning logs for various learning events were also kept in the journal. They included critical reflections on categorizing topics and subtopics, summarizing activities, comparing things, and developing critical thinking skills as well. This process aided students in the organization of topics, the analysis of problems, and the review of the subject.

Writing a reflective journal further encouraged the students to develop their critical thinking skills and intellectual abilities. Reflective writing aspects aim to communicate ideas and messages through journals that encourage self-reflection, improve writing skills, and improve macro- and micro-linguistic improvements. Other reflective writing strategies include rewriting ideas and adding details to the discussion topics. Hence, reflective journals in this study were used to address new needs and desires, such as to what extent the students can re-conceptualized ideas, perceived problem formulation, increased writing freedom, all in a flexible process.

This present study collected data from documents of reflective journals from 21 EFL university students. Data were further supported from interviews with 15 of them. The results have shown the provision of reflective journals in learning English writing to these EFL students. Hence, future related research is recommended to employ more subjects to participate in the study with more documents to analyze. A quantitative approach through questionnaires or surveys can also be used to gain more data on the students' views of this approach. Experimental studies to compare its implementation before and after reflective journal writings should also be considered.

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## APPENDIX A

### A Reflective Journal Sample

Type : Reflective Journal

Author : M R

#### The Power of Writing in English

Writing has numerous advantages and benefits, including the ability to be more innovative, imaginative, and skilled as a speech author, as well as the potential to earn money from a novel or short story. Writing is useful in the educational world; you can write your own book, but you can't write your book if you can't convey your message in the right words.

Before you start writing your book, you should practice your writing skills. Writers must be able to communicate their thoughts to a specific audience in a clear and concise manner. Writers need three powers to be able to handle most of their school, college, and adult writing assignments, whether they are persuading, informing, educating, or entertaining. For example, if you want to compete with an international author, you can't write your novel in your native language; you'll need English language skills, not just any English word, but a more innovative English word.

There are five compelling reasons to write in English. *First*, you will notice that your writing is more powerful as a result of this definition of power. *Efficacy*: When writing assigns a value to each sentence, it accomplishes a strength and influence. *Strength* refers to an exploration of the main idea, or topic sentence. *Influence* shows important details that clarify the main idea and discloses minor details that expand on or clarify major points.

*Then*, if we plan to write articles or other scientific papers in English, we will undoubtedly read a lot of news, articles, papers, and other readings in English, further enriching our knowledge. A good reader is undoubtedly a good writer. A good reader must be well-versed in a wide range of topics. Articles, news, and paper aren't the only sources of information. However, more references for other novels and comics are required for novels and comics.

*Next*, it keeps us going in order for us to be remembered. If we write articles, papers, novels, comics, manga, and more papers, we will be successful. Others will benefit from our story and experience. Perhaps from our novel or manga story. This story will be created by them (readers) for their own motivation. That is, if we write our paper in Indonesian or in our own language. Consider what we could accomplish if we were to write some papers in English. Of course, we can assist or motivate a large number of people.

*After that*, you have the power to make the world a better place with your hands. With your papers or posters, you can criticize people's deviant behavior, such as racism, logging, environmental pollution, war, and conflict. If the singer is trying to persuade people to change the world, he should write a song about it. As a result, we can create posters or papers to persuade the world to change.

*Finally*, as college students, this can help us become more familiar with scientific work. So, if we want to make some paper, we can't run out of ideas. For the sake of the argument, we all know that writing in English has numerous advantages. You can amass a fortune in books, comics, or paper. You can be wealthy, but if you want to become even wealthier, you should write these in English. You will be remembered for the rest of your life because of your writing. People will remember your masterpiece not for who you are, but for what you are doing for them. You can change the world with your ideas, and you can gain knowledge because, as I previously stated, if you want to write papers or novels, you should get references from other news, novels, and other sources.

Why is it necessary to write? Unity, clarity, and coherence will all improve as a result of writing for a powerful purpose. You'll stay on track if you have enough power. Because each sentence must explain some preceding power, I persuade you to improve your writing skills first, and then you can improve your writing skills with the English language. If you fail, don't be afraid to get back up and try again, this time better.