Student Teachers' Use of Language: Discourse Functions in Teaching-Based Reflective Writing

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Abstract: The value of reflective writing in teacher education is widely accepted and research has focused increasingly on investigating the quality of students' reflective texts by assessing their reflective depth or breadth. Studies on student teachers' professional vision have looked at processes of noticing relevant classroom events and reasoning about them, emphasizing that thinking about teaching and learning is a strongly knowledge-guided process. While much empirical attention has been given to *assessing* students' writing, little insight has been gained into how reflective thinking actually unfolds. The aim of this study is to examine student teachers' discursive practices as they engage in reflective writing in the context of a teaching practicum. Data consists of reflective essays which were analysed using linguistically based qualitative coding in order to identify discourse functions in students' texts. Findings allow a detailed description of verbal actions carried out in guided reflective writing. They also indicate that due to the situated nature of their writing, student teachers engage in affective appraisal and reasoning processes which are verbalized by using everyday as well as academic language depending on students' zone of proximal development and their developing pedagogical content knowledge.

Keywords: reflective writing, foreign language teacher education, discourse functions, professional vision, professional language, knowledge-based reasoning

Reflective practice is both a means and an end in foreign language teacher education (FLTE) as programmes aim to develop *reflective competences* by engaging future L2 teachers in *reflective teacher learning scenarios*. The most commonly found objectives of a reflective teacher education are concerned with developing adaptive practitioners who can deal with classroom complexity and make informed decisions, connecting practical experience with theoretical knowledge, fostering conceptual thinking, increasing awareness of tacit knowledge, questioning and (re) considering prior beliefs and developing individual teaching philosophies (Farrell, 2019; Golombek & Johnson, 2019; Klempin & Rehfeldt, 2020).

Approaches in FLTE have recently seen an increase in practice-based, situated learning scenarios (e.g. teaching practicums, service learning, video-clubs, teaching-learning labs, etc.), which form a prominent context for reflective tasks. Practice-based reflections within these learning environments take on various forms. Distinctions have been made between self-reflection and reflecting on other people's practice, reflections based on real or videotaped experiences, oral reflections

(e.g. post-lesson discussions) versus reflective writing (e.g. journal writing), guided or free reflective tasks and monological or dialogical reflection (Abendroth-Timmer, 2017; Legutke & Schart, 2016).

The focus of this study is on student teachers' practice-based *reflective writing* and the verbalization of their reflective thoughts on lessons they taught in a practicum setting. Reflective writing is a well-established form of reflective practice in teacher education, particularly in settings which incorporate field experiences. In these contexts, it is seen as a means of encouraging students to think about practical teaching experiences in a systematic way, linking theory and practice, tapping into more tacit knowledge and promoting reflective thinking. It is sometimes an add-on to oral mentoring and post-lesson discussions or it functions as a substitute if institutional constraints do not allow a direct and immediate feedback from an observer. Burton (2009) argues that writing in itself is a composing process which actually requires reflection (see also Farrell, 2019). Research has, however, also pointed out that reflective writing is complex and tends to be superficial unless it is guided, supervised and practiced (Bain et al., 2002; Orland-Barak, 2005; Ryan, 2011). While much empirical attention has been given to measuring the quality of reflective texts, little insight has been gained so far into how writing academic reflections in a FLTE context actually unfolds and how it can be scaffolded or taught.

1 Reflective writing in teacher education

Central to the development of adequate support for writing reflective texts in higher education is a consideration of different dimensions which constitute reflective writing. Useful distinctions can be made with respect to *context*, *content*, *timing*, *audience*, *purpose, language* and *levels* of reflective writing.

The *context* of reflective writing scenarios in FLTE can range from seminar settings and their theoretical content, working with videotaped or observed lessons to lessons or teaching sequences taught by students themselves in labs, microteaching contexts or in actual schools. The context will naturally have an impact on all the dimensions mentioned above, most notably in relation to *content*. In settings which involve practical teaching experience, students are often asked to reflect upon their lesson plans, achieved aims, teacher and student actions, critical incidents, and possible consequences, solutions as well as implications for their future practices. Reflective writing also aims to focus students' attention on their individual development, the progress they have made and how they plan to develop their teaching competences further. There is, however, very little subject-specific, evidence-based guidance on potential content of reflective writing in practice-based FLTE settings. It has been established that prompts which are used to initiate reflection have a strong impact on the content and type of students' reflections (Bechtel & Mayer, 2019; Hatton & Smith, 1995). Task design in reflective FLTE is therefore central and the question needs to be raised as to what exactly it is that student teachers are

supposed to think about and in what direction their thought processes should be guided. Kaasila & Lauriala's (2012) findings show that a multi-contextual approach is highly beneficial in order to broaden and deepen students' reflections. In their research, they asked students participating in a four-week internship to focus their reflective writing not only on the lesson itself but also explicitly on pupils' learning, on the reading of research literature as well as on autobiographical tasks. Particularly the research reading and the autobiographical context seemed to deepen students' reflections and helped them to engage in identity work linking their past, present, and future teacher identities.

With respect to the *timing* of reflection, students thought processes will be mostly retrospective (*reflection-on-action*, Schön, 1983) when reflecting upon actual teaching experiences, but can also involve the reporting of *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 1983) or anticipatory thoughts, if other field experiences follow (Rogers, 2001). Reflective writing in an educational context will usually be targeted at an *audience* (a mentor / supervisor or peers), but it can also be personal when students are asked to just write for themselves. Interesting questions are currently being raised by researchers with respect to reflective tasks being obligatory or not and the effect this has on students' writing. Rosenberger (2017) found out that 37% of the students she interviewed perceived reflective tasks as being a mere compulsory exercise, particularly if they did not feel they had any problematic teaching episodes to report on.

With respect to different *functions* of reflective writing at tertiary level, Herman and Furer (2015) distinguish a *documenting function*, an *epistemic function* as well as a *coping function*. Their analysis of guidelines and manuals for reflective writing showed that there is considerable overlap between them and that one often leads to another. The first function which involves documenting and describing teaching events, is seen as a basic skill to be developed in teacher education. On the basis of describing events, reflective writing then mostly adopts an epistemic stance in that the reflective process should lead to some form of knowledge transformation. This might entail activating previous knowledge, raising awareness of tacit knowledge, linking theory with teaching experiences, or hypothesizing about solutions to problematic events. Herman & Furer argue with Bereiter & Scardamalia (2014) that an adequately complex and cognitively challenging situation must be given in order for students to feel a desire or necessity for *knowledge telling* and subsequently for *knowledge transformation* to happen. The coping function of reflective writing is geared towards problem-solving or individual empowerment with respect to difficult and burdensome situations. In the context of teacher education, reflective writing is also often used to demonstrate learning and growth in students' professional knowledge, so it could be argued that a *demonstrating function* could be added. Furthermore, reflective writing in FLTE also serves the purpose of promoting student teachers' reflective abilities. It therefore also has a *metacognitive function*.

This paper argues that reflective writing has yet another function, which could be described as supporting the development of a subject-specific *language* of

a community of practice – in this context the community of (prospective) English language teachers. The verbal expression of teacher knowledge and teacher identity has also been described as teachers' *professional language* or their *professional discourse competence* (Hallet, 2006; Knorr, 2015; Ryan, 2011; Wipperfürth, 2015; Yayli, 2012). Investigating student teachers' professional language use beyond the mere counting of discipline-related terminology can be achieved by adopting a genre-based linguistic approach. Ryan (2011), for example, suggests a close examination of the language used in reflective writing as one particular type of academic genre. She points out that academic, as opposed to personal reflection is complex and has high rhetorical demands. She argues that an awareness of the textual features and linguistic resources of reflective texts can support the teaching and assessment of such writing. According to her analysis, the genre achieves its purpose through discourse functions such as *description*, *recount*, *explanation* and *discussion*, and their respective linguistic realisations:

> For example, it uses first person voice (I) with thinking and sensing processes (verbs/verbal groups), as does any form of reflection, yet it also requires the use of nominalisation (verb turned into noun) and technical participants (nouns/noun groups) of the discipline to allow dense and abstract concepts to be efficiently stated and compared. It also demands the use of evidentiary adjectival (descriptive attributes) and causal adverbial (circumstantial) groups to show reasoning and explanation. (Ryan, 2011, pp. 103–104)

Studies which aim at tracing teachers' theoretical knowledge base often revert to quantifying participants' use of subject-specific technical jargon. In an educational context the question needs to be raised, however, as to how student teachers' *developing abilities* to verbalize their dynamic and emerging professional competences can be described. The focus of this study is therefore placed on exploring how prospective foreign language teachers verbalize their thoughts in their reflective writing and particularly, what kind of discourse functions they use within the genre.

2 Levels of reflective thinking

One of the major goals of reflective writing in teacher education seems to be to achieve higher *levels* of reflective thinking. In order to evaluate the quality of learning environments or to investigate the impact particular measures have, students' *reflective competences* are assessed by analysing students' texts with respect to their *reflective depth* or *breadth*. Reflective breadth refers to the content of reflection and the ability to relate phenomena to various domains of teacher knowledge (Leonhard et al., 2011). This concept is based on the assumption that professional knowledge and reflective skills are strongly interrelated. Klempin (2019), in her study on the development of reflective competence in the context of teaching-learning

labs, operationalized reflective breadth based on Shulman's (1987) definition of *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK). A far greater number of studies have tried to investigate the quality of reflective texts by analysing their *reflective depth*. Most of these studies base their analysis on multi-level models of reflection, which describe different forms of reflection. They are often informed by early frameworks suggested, for example, by van Manen (1977), who used the concepts of *technical rationality, deliberate rationality* and *critical rationality,* or Schön (1983) with his distinction between *technical rationality, reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* (for a systematic review on reflection models see Poldner et al., 2014). Many studies refer to Hatton & Smith's model (1995) either as a theoretical foundation or as a basis for context-specific adaptations (e.g. Abels, 2011; Klempin, 2019). Hatton & Smith (1995) distinguish between four levels of reflective writing: (1) *descriptive writing,* (2) *descriptive reflection,* (3) *dialogic reflection,* and (4) *critical reflection,* which are outlined by the authors in the following way:

> In essence, the first is not reflective at all, but merely reports events or literature. The second, descriptive, does attempt to provide reasons based often on personal judgement or on students' reading of literature. The third form, dialogic, is a form of discourse with one's self, an exploration of possible reasons. The fourth, critical, is defined as involving reason giving for decisions or events which takes account of the broader historical, social, and/or political contexts. (Hatton & Smith, 1995, 40–41)

The categorisation of reflection into various levels used in many studies is mostly hierarchical: from descriptive being not at all reflective, and therefore less desirable, to multi-perspective, dialogic or critical reflection, being most desirable. Several authors have criticized such a hierarchical description of various levels as they imply a linearity and the idea that the highest level of reflection is most desirable (Aeppli & Lötscher, 2016; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Poldner et al., 2014). Given that reflective thinking takes place in a variety of contexts as well as in different developmental phases student teachers go through, it can be argued that it is better to use the idea of different *types* or *categories* of reflection rather than specific levels in order to emphasise that all of them are relevant and necessary (Aeppli & Lötscher, 2016).

Aeppli & Lötscher's (2016) framework of reflection (EDAMA) uses the idea of categories or domains instead of levels (e.g. *describing a situation, interpreting, using appropriate terminology*) in order to describe moments of reflective thinking during different phases of reflection (1 – *experiencing,* 2 – *presenting,* 3 – *analysing,* 4 – *developing measures* and 5 – *applying*). The 15 domains of reflection outlined in the EDAMA framework are not presented in a hierarchical order, and they are not meant to be followed one after the other. EDAMA was designed to describe the nature of reflective processes comprehensively and establish a basis for analysing them. A more accurate understanding of reflection can support educators in fostering student teachers' reflective thinking skills, but more research on how to actually operationalize reflective moments is still necessary.

Another body of research which attempts to evaluate (student) teachers' reflective competences is rooted in the concept of *professional vision* as described by Goodwin (1994) and transferred to the context of teacher training by Sherin (2001; 2007). As video-based reflection in teacher education has strongly increased over the last few decades, professional vision has gained much theoretical and empirical attention, particularly in the field of mathematics or physics but also more recently in the field of foreign language teacher education (Dawidowicz, 2019; Janík & Janíková, 2019; Minaříková et al., 2015; Uličná, 2017; Weger, 2019; Wipperfürth, 2015; 2019). It has been described as the ability to notice (*selective attention*) and interpret (*knowledge-based reasoning*) important features of classroom interaction (Sherin & van Es, 2009, p. 20), and as an indicator of (student) teachers' abilities to apply professional knowledge to authentic classroom situations (Sherin & van Es, 2009; Stürmer et al., 2013). Compared with other models of reflection, the concept of professional vision places a stronger focus on (student) teachers' conceptual knowledge as a basis for noticing and interpreting relevant classroom events, as Stürmer et al. (2013) point out when defining the process of knowledge-based reasoning:

> Knowledge-based reasoning describes their [teachers'] cognitive processing of instructional events, based on their knowledge about teaching and learning (Borko, 2004; Sherin, 2007; van Es & Sherin, 2002). The ability to reason about noticed classroom events provides insights into the quality of teachers' mental representations of knowledge and the transfer of those representations to the classroom context. (Stürmer et al., 2013, p. 469)

Although the perception of professional vision as a solely cognitive ability and its investigation on the basis of academic standards has been criticized for being deficiency-oriented (cf. Lefstein & Snell 2011; Wipperfürth, 2015; Weger, 2019), it draws attention to teachers' professional understanding of teaching and learning processes and its development in higher education. Similar to research on reflective competence, studies on professional vision have also investigated depth and breadth in reflection as they focus on *content* on the one hand as well as *stances* or levels of reflection on the other (e.g. Uličná, 2017; Stürmer et al., 2013). The majority of these studies explore (student) teachers' knowledge-based reasoning skills by analysing different kinds of reflective discourse. They have also identified and deployed various levels of reflection, which are illustrated in Table 1.

As the overview illustrates, terms and levels vary according to the context and focus of the studies. They are used in coding schemes to analyse reflective data and as such are usually not elaborated on in detail. A closer look at these levels of reflective thought might, however, contribute to a better understanding of the discursive practices student teachers engage in when reflecting upon teaching experiences.

Table 1 Different levels of knowledge-based reasoning

Authors & Research Context	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Sherin & van Es (2009) Mathematics teachers in video-clubs	Description	Evaluation	Interpretation			
Stürmer et al. (2013) Student teachers in the context of their general education studies	Describing	Explaining	Predicting			
Blomberg et al. (2014) Student teachers in the context of their general education studies	Description	Evaluation	Integration			
Seidel & Prezel (2007) Expert physics teachers, school inspectors and student teachers	Describing	Explaining	Evaluating			
Uličná (2017) EFL student teachers	Description	Explanation	Theorizing	Evaluation	Alteration	Prediction

3 Verbal representations of reflective thinking

Studies on professional vision or reflective competence frequently operate with categories like describing, explaining, comparing etc., but rarely put an emphasis on these verbal actions. Some insight into the nature of reflective thinking can be gained by looking at the information studies provide on how the quality of reflective writing was operationally defined, but usually these methodological exemplifications are kept fairly short. In some cases, utilized categories are only named (Sherin & van Es, 2009), in other studies they are outlined in a bit more detail (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Manouchehri, 2002; Stürmer et al. 2013). This is usually done, however, without providing definitions on how units of reflective thought were coded.

From studies that outline coding processes in more detail we can gather to some extent what kind of (mental) actions students perform when engaging in a reflective task. The starting point in all of the frameworks is a process of *describing* what has been noticed. Students provide an account of what happened in order to establish a context and to determine what it is that will become the focus of reflection. This process "reflects teachers' ability to identify and differentiate between relevant classroom events" (Stürmer et al. 2013: 469). Processes that follow are analytical in nature and categories used to describe these activities are manifold. They range from *explaining, interpreting, generalizing, theorizing* and *evaluating* (see Table 1) in the context of professional vision to *comparative reflection, analysing, confronting* or *justification* in studies on reflective practice (Aeppli & Lötscher, 2016; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Poldner et al., 2014). Establishing clear boundaries between them is difficult as different terminology is used for similar actions and definitions of categories are often brief or non-existent. What seems central in this second comprehensive category is the idea of *explaining* an action or event by:

- decoding significance and clarifying meaning;
- analysing how things are related and identifying causal factors;
- classifying it by relating it to theoretical knowledge;
- applying appropriate subject-related terminology;
- referring to research, theory, coursework;
- looking at it from various perspectives;
- comparing actions with personal experiences.

One central element of reflective texts in teacher education is establishing links between theory and practice, which is sometimes subsumed under *explaining* or *reasoning* or labelled as *theorizing*. Uličná (2017, p. 44) defined it as the "interpretation and generalisation of what was seen using an underlying theory" and Stockero (2008, p. 377) coded units of reflective texts as *theorizing* when student teachers "referred to research or course readings in a way that added support to an analysis, or provided substantial evidence to justify the analysis".

Evaluating as another central stance towards reflection, is sometimes subsumed under the concept of explaining, but more often it is listed separately (see Table 1). It refers to making "judgments about the quality of the interactions" (Sherin & van Es, 2009).

Most frameworks then establish categories that describe a change of perspective. From looking at what happened and how and why it happened, the focus shifts towards a more anticipatory reflection, *hypothesizing* and thinking about effects, implications of actions taken as well as possible alterations or transformations to enable alternative action. In the studies of a group of Czech researchers (cf. Uličná, 2017), the discourse pattern of *alteration* was added, which describes students "suggesting an alternative to what was seen" (Uličná, 2017, p. 44). Poldner et al. use the term *transfer* to describe thoughts that are "concerned with how the next action becomes different or better than what was previously done" (2014, p. 10). *Predicting,* a concept used in many studies on professional vision, describes "the

ability to predict the consequences of observed events for student learning processes by drawing on broader pedagogical knowledge and transferring this to classroom practice" (Stürmer et al., 2013). *Critical* stances towards reflection question underlying moral and ethical dimensions with respect to social, political, and economic forces that influence classroom events.

Reflective actions that are rarely made explicit in the form of categories, however, are the verbalizing of emotions as well as processes of self-reflection, although they form an integral part of reflective practice (Aeppli & Lötscher, 2016; Bechtel & Mayer, 2019; Farrel, 2019; Golombek & Johnson, 2019; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Weger, 2019). Interestingly, Aeppli and Lötscher (2016) incorporate two perspectives into their model: an inward and an outward-looking direction of thought. While the outward perspective looks at the setting, the participants and their actions, adopting an inward perspective involves aspects like emotions, beliefs, individual competences, professional identity or mission. According to their model, all types of reflection can result from one of these two perspectives. The emotional side of an experience should therefore be seen as an integrative part of reflection, which should not be neglected but rather given a lot more empirical attention.

In research to date, a strong focus has been placed on the quantitative and qualitative study of knowledge-based reasoning processes by assessing the depth and breadth of students' reflection. Investigations tend to adopt an evaluative approach. Little is known however about how knowledge-based reflection actually unfolds as students engage in written reflective tasks. Professional vision has mostly been investigated in video-based learning or assessment scenarios, but not in the context of an internship. This is why the study wants to explore discursive practices of pre-service teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) who reflect on lessons they taught themselves during their teaching practicums. The aim of the study is to investigate how EFL student teachers write about their experiences in a practicum setting, and to analyse how student teachers verbalise their reflections.

4 Context of the study

The study focuses on reflective writing of EFL student teachers in the context of their subject-related teaching practicum. In the course of one semester, students observe and teach EFL lessons at German secondary schools on a weekly basis. A group of 5–6 students and a mentor first observe a lesson taught by the subject teacher. After that, students plan and teach one single or double lesson per week. These lessons are planned by two students (planner and co-planner), but they are usually taught individually. After a first draft of the lesson plan is handed in, the two students and the mentor meet up for a consultation. The lesson grid is then redrafted in final preparation for the lesson. The group, the mentor and the subject teacher observe and then discuss the lesson after it has been taught. Students are asked to write a reflective essay based on one of the two lessons they conducted. The writing

process is supported by a list of guiding questions (see appendix). The essay is part of a seminar which accompanies the teaching practicum. Students receive feedback from their instructors, and it is assessed on a pass or fail basis. Students attending this course and the practicum are usually in their third year of their EFL teacher degree at a German university.

5 Research methodology

The study is based on the in-depth analysis of six reflective essays. The texts were selected by means of a purposive sampling. In order to ensure the presence of maximum variability within the data, the researcher and the course instructor chose essays that covered a spectrum including two essays each that were of a basic, an average and an advanced level with respect to reflective depth.

A linguistically-based analysis of the reflective texts focused on investigating *discourse functions* used by students in their writing. Discourse functions, a concept frequently used in studies on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and based on the fundamental notion of speech acts, are linguistic realisations of cognitive processes (Vollmer & Thürmann, 2013; Dalton-Puffer, 2013; Morton, 2020). They have also been described as thinking skills following a hierarchical order (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, 1956). Used as operators in educational contexts, they provide a set of verbs (e.g. describe, explain) which clarify what students are expected to do with a particular content (Morton, 2020). In a CLIL-context, cognitive discourse functions are seen as a link between cognition and verbalisation and as a bridge between content and subject literacy.

In this study, the research focus was on describing typical discourse functions in teaching-based reflective writing by investigating students' verbal actions. Texts were coded using MAXQDA software and first codes aimed to describe basic communicative intentions. After the first round of inductive coding, categories were refined by comparing them to types and levels of reflective thought established in other studies (cf. Table 1). This process led to a coding scheme that described the discourse functions students in this study used when engaging in reflective writing (see Table 2). The analysis was not meant to reconstruct *levels* of reflective thought in a hierarchical order; the focus was placed more on a description of verbal actions the students performed within the process of writing a reflective essay based on a lesson they had taught themselves. After the development and subsequent refinement of the coding scheme, all texts were coded using the code system provided in Table 2.

A more fine-grained analytical focus was then placed on investigating particular units of reflective thought in more detail, using techniques borrowed from discourse analysis. Here the aim was to trace how student teachers verbalize reflections which had turned out to be characteristic of this type of text in the context of the present study: analytical attention was directed towards *knowledge-related processes of reflection* and the expression of *emotions*.

6 Results

The focus of the investigation was on producing a comprehensive description of discursive practices student teachers engage in when reflecting on lessons they taught themselves in a practicum setting.

6.1 Discourse functions in reflective writing

Table 2 outlines the results of the investigation by listing discourse functions that could be found in the data. Definitions of the different types of reflective writing are provided alongside exemplary linguistic realisations which, in turn, are illustrated by examples from the data.

Table 2 Discourse functions in student teachers' reflective writing

Function	Description	Linguistic realisations	Examples
DF1 *Describing*	Providing a descriptive account of an experience, noticing relevant events	I did …, then I … The students did … / were …	I started off with a reactivation of the students' pre-knowledge on British culture. (Lena_15)
DF2 *Evaluating*	Assessing if actions / events / plans were effective / successful or not, if aims were achieved	… worked out well … went according to plan … was a good decision … was problematic / challenging The students were able to / eager to / motivated …	I could see that my instructions worked well and I think letting them rephrase the last and most difficult one in German was a good decision. (Rieke_28)
DF3 *Identifying indicators*	Identifying indicators for evaluating plans / events / actions / aims	They seemed to … They did … / didn't … / They could … / couldn't They were able to … … which I gathered from their …	When I walked through the rows, they did not seem to have any difficulties; neither in finding nor in recording their answers to the text's guiding questions. (Lena_20)
DF4 *Explaining / Reasoning*	Explaining how various events are connected, what caused certain events / actions, giving reasons for evaluations, justifying	A reason for that might be … This was due to the fact that … I attribute that to … They were able to … because …	Towards the end of the lesson, I noticed a decrease in concentration. I attribute that partly to the fact that the last task was the hardest and that the subject gave the biggest room for a chat with a neighbour. (Rieke_32)

Function	Description	Linguistic realisations	Examples
DF5 *Noticing effects*	Realizing consequences / effects certain actions / events had	I felt that … I realized that … I noticed … After I did … the pupils … This led to … It made …	Those elements were a key feature of each sequence during my lesson and I felt as if it really helped all the students, without the need for time-consuming differentiation. (Iris_29)
DF6 *Theorizing*	Substantiating / justifying plans / actions / explanations / evaluations by referring to academic concepts / theory / literature	According to … … as suggested / recommended by … I made use of …	Fortunately, I did not have to deal with many disturbances, but, when someone did not listen or a little chatting began, I used wordless interventions recommended by Scrivener (2012, p. 237–238). (Jenny_23)
DF7 *Suggesting alternatives*	Presenting or speculating about alternative teacher actions	I should / could have … I did (not) … instead of … If I were to teach the same lesson again, I would … It might have been … Perhaps it might have helped if …	I should have put more emphasis on the correct pronunciation of the new words by letting the pupils repeat them in plenary. (Lena_21)
DF8 *Hypothesizing*	Predicting student responses / effects if different actions had been taken	Students might have … if I … I should have … in order to …	Still, by investing more time in the exercise, they could have started to incorporate the words properly into their mental lexicon or even to use them actively. (Lena_21)
DF9 *Self-reflection (retrospective & prospective)*	Stating personal aims and where they derive from; stating strengths and weaknesses; summing up what has been learnt; referring to own teacher identity / beliefs about TEFL; recounting experiences as a language learner; outlining implications for	My personal aim for the lesson was … I had the goal to … It was important for me to … I wanted to … I learned that … I managed to … I noticed / realized / found that … I think I know better now … I wish I had … I need to get / have / remind myself …	I still have to focus on being brief and to really make sure I have the class's full attention. (Anna_6)

Function	Description	Linguistic realisations	Examples
	further professional development	It is necessary that I / I would want to improve … I still have to focus on … In order to … I will … I hope I can … I will try to … I want to learn more about …	
DF10 *Expressing emotions*	Recalling and reflecting on emotions – during the planning stage – before conducting the lesson – during the lesson – after the lesson	I really enjoyed … I felt / was … … relieved / delighted / happy /nervous / stressed / anxious / … It was … … rewarding / …	I was a bit irritated when I noticed that I had missed out on that. (Rieke_33)

The discourse functions described in Table 2 are reiterated throughout the reflection and occur in cyclical processes. They are responsive to the context (reflecting on a lesson they taught themselves), and the questions suggested in the guidelines for writing a reflective essay (see appendix), but could not be exclusively assigned to certain prompts only. With respect to thematic foci of attention, it could be observed that students discussed the questions that were posed in the reflective task (e.g. the planning process, personal aims, their lesson plan and their aims, teacher and learner actions) as well as genre-specific content (e.g. explaining the contextual background to an imagined reader). A special focus was placed on questions of classroom management as well as critical incidents. A thematic content analysis would provide more insight here, but shall not be the focus of this paper.

Within these texts, sequences of reflective thought could be discerned which centre around a particular teaching event. A reflective sequence often begins with a description (DF1), which is followed by an evaluation (DF2), or both coincide when, for example, a problematic situation is described:

> For the next task, however, I was not able to write the task on the board and just told the students what to do. They were able to complete the task but I think not all of the students understood it and just did what their neighbour did. Jenny_25

Evaluations are sometimes supported by indicators when students outline what they base their evaluation on (DF3). This is closely related to students noticing what

consequences an action had (DF5). Students engage in *reasoning* processes (DF4) when they explain and justify plans or actions (Why did I act this way?), evaluations (Why do I think it went well/not so well?), or alternative actions (Why should I have reacted differently?). When students *explain or justify* a plan or action (DF4) or when they think about *alternatives* (DF7, DF8), they often base their reasoning on *theory* they studied (DF6). *Theorizing* (DF6) as a category is closely connected to other discourse functions. It is mostly realized by using technical jargon and academic language or by quoting from TEFL-related literature. However, a closer examination of verbal actions when theorizing revealed considerable variation among students regarding their use of professional language. Results of a more fine-grained analysis of students' professional language across all categories shall be presented in the following subchapter.

6.2 Students' use of professional language

Verbalizations representing students' PCK range from their use of *everyday language* in order to express their understanding of subject-specific concepts to arguing in a highly elaborate and profound manner using professional language. Some units of analysed text show that students' PCK is only just emerging and conceptual thinking is in a process of development within each participant's zone of proximal development (ZPD). This can be illustrated by the following example:

> The subject teacher gave us the *basic construct* for our lesson, a text about Becky Falls Woodland Park and the *idea* to let the pupils write a dialogue. Therefore, we already had the *scaffold* for our lesson. (Anna_3) [emphasis added]

The student's wording displays her understanding that she had received support through the English teacher's specification of the lesson's *content* ("basic construct") and its overall lesson aim ("the idea to ..."). In other words, she had started to realize that lesson content and aims are central dimensions of lesson planning which need to be negotiated, but she could not yet word her understanding in a conceptually precise way. It can be argued that it is not only through the use of appropriate TEFL-terminology that students display a (still developing) understanding of teaching conceptions.

Data analysis also showed that in some cases students' *understanding* of TEFL-related concepts is only just developing. Technical terms and concepts are used in a way that still need restructuring, refinement or elaboration. Against the backdrop of a sociocultural notion of learning, it seems essential to allow for some form of dialogue with "expert others" (Vygotsky, cf. Golombek & Johnson, 2019) in order to mediate student teachers' learning processes.

Students' use of professional language is particularly evident when students *explain, evaluate* or *justify* decisions or actions. But data analysis also revealed that knowledge is frequently expressed during phases of *describing,* although descriptions

are positioned at the lowest level of reflection in most frameworks (see Table 1). The following example illustrates a student's use of professional language when describing what she had planned:

> The following *study phase* allowed me to cover *useful phrases* and put the emphasis on *indirect/ direct speech*, which they had learned in the previous part of the lesson by my co-planner. The *activation* consisted of writing a letter of complaint in which the students had to *use all of the language they know* including the *new grammar structures*. Iris_15 [emphasis added when professional language was used]

Although descriptions are often regarded as less desirable because they are considered to be non-reflective, it can be argued that they are an essential step in a reflective cycle. Not only because they provide the context for further reflections, but also because they provide the opportunity for student teachers to practice their PCK-related language skills. Only if texts are coherent and terminology is used appropriately are they comprehensible to the reader. Descriptions also ask the student teacher to stop and think, to postpone judgements and interpretations, to carefully (re)consider what actually happened without jumping to conclusions too early (Aeppli & Lötscher, 2016; Rodgers, 2002; Rosenberger, 2017).

When analysing lessons, students' use of professional language is on the one hand closely linked to the actual situation students experienced. This is reflected through language use that is directed towards pupils' or student teachers' *actions* (Pupils could …, I had to …, I should have …). Such reflections can also be retrospective (I managed to …), hypothetical (I should have …) or prospective (Next time I would …). On the other hand, professional language sometimes becomes more abstract and goes beyond thinking about what could best be done in a certain situation. Reflections are then geared towards a more general understanding of underlying concepts. Reflective thoughts seem to move back and forth between context-bound (re)lived experiences and decontextualized generalizations (cf. Golombek & Johnson, 2019; Macnaught, 2020). This process also describes what Korthagen (2011) calls a shift from *personal practical knowledge,* which is "very much coloured by the desire to know how to act in particular situations" (2011, p. 37) towards "the level of formal theory". Similar to Korthagen's observations, the last level "at which a logical ordering is constructed in the personal practical theory formed before" (2011, p. 37) is rarely demonstrated in students' reflective writings. However, data analysis in this study also indicates that students' verbalizations can be placed along a *continuum* somewhere between displaying an everyday and an academic understanding of concepts; and between thinking about the here-and-now and generalizing from their experience. There are units of text in students' essays which are not distinctly geared towards a theoretical understanding of underlying concepts but which show that students begin to step back from the situation and adopt a slightly more general perspective. This is particularly evident when students reason about something and try to justify it with theory ("A reason for that might be…") or when they write about their conclusions ("I learnt …," "… is a decisive component", "It is essential to…").

Another way of demonstrating knowledge (*knowledge telling*) is students' reference to *literature*. This is realized by quoting either directly or indirectly from a text and stating the source. Students mainly cite TEFL-publications which are used in TEFL-seminars. A closer examination of the data revealed various purposes for quoting literature: fulfilling a task (see Q2.7 in the appendix), acknowledging a source with respect to ideas, key concepts or teaching strategies they used, justifying plans and instant decisions, corroborating their reasoning, and relating theory to practice. In most cases, processes of *knowledge telling* could be found in the data. Only sometimes *knowledge transformation* could be assumed (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987) when, for example, students engaged in a critical analysis of their actions against the backdrop of the theory they studied, thereby aiming to generate an alignment of practice with theory.

6.3 Emotions in teaching-based reflective writing

A dimension of reflective thinking and writing which is often neglected or downplayed in teacher education (cf. Golombek & Doran, 2014) is the verbalizing of *emotions* (DF10). Compared with video-based learning scenarios that focus on the study of lessons taught by other (student) teachers, the context of a teaching practicum and the reflection of self-conducted lessons naturally leads to more emotional as well as self-reflective responses. When verbalizing emotions students in this study express both positive and negative feelings in similar quantities. Positive emotions are reported when students feel *confident, excited, enthusiastic* and *motivated* before actually teaching, *proud* or *happy* in response to pupils' reactions in the classroom, or *relieved* and *happy* after completing the lesson. Negative feelings are mostly related to *nervousness, anxiety, insecurities* and *stress* before or during certain parts of the lesson. When negative feelings are verbalized with respect to events in the classroom, it is mostly in connection with challenging situations or critical incidents.

> The idea to let two students hand out all of the material for the individual groups was not properly thought through on my part. For that reason, I started to get insecure for a moment, which the students echoed immediately, especially by becoming talkative. Due to this problematic classroom management, I had to adjust my original schedule. (Lena_18)

It could be argued that a focus on positive or negative emotions when reflecting on teaching experiences could help students notice relevant teaching events. Golombek & Doran (2014) argue for an explicit inclusion of feelings in FLTE-related journal writing as they are "intertwined with cognition and activity as part of the developmental process of beginning teachers" (2014, p. 110). They can serve as starting points to reflect upon instructional practices engendered by an emotion and they can be addressed in mediation with a view to becoming "growth points" for the individual student teacher (ibid).

7 Discussion

The investigation of discourse functions in prospective EFL teachers' reflective writing gave an insight into how students verbalize their thoughts while reflecting on lessons taught in their teaching practicum (see Table 2). They can form a basis for further investigations tracing, for instance, how reflective acts are mutually dependent, how they typically unfold or what they are influenced by. Following calls to explicitly teach reflective writing in higher-education courses (e.g. Ryan, 2011), the outlined *discourse functions* and their *linguistic realisations* (Table 2) could be addressed in FLTE-courses when, for example, exemplary reflective texts are studied or scaffolding is provided in order to develop a shared language of reflection assisting students in demonstrating discourse competence.

Compared with video-based settings which are normally the focus of investigations on professional vision, it could be shown that guided reflection in teaching-based learning scenarios initiates processes of *self-reflection* (DF9), the reporting of *emotions* (DF10) as well as knowledge-based reasoning processes according to students' ZPD. The unity of cognition, emotion and activity proposed by Golombek and Doran (2014) is therefore particularly evident in students' reflections on situated teaching activity in actual language classrooms. Reflective processes in students' writing are based on their developing understanding of teaching conceptions and instructional practices. Research informed by sociocultural theory highlights the creation of *structured mediational spaces* (Golombek & Johnson, 2019), in which students can verbalize their everyday understandings, engage with academic concepts, and receive support from expert others. Students' implicit or explicit references to the co-construction of knowledge amongst students participating in the practicum, subject teachers as well as teacher educators indicate that the situated nature of the teaching practicum within a context that integrates school-based and academically reflected experience, creates the mediational space conducive to student learning.

Findings also suggest that emotive content emergent in the data is worthwhile looking at, as it is often related to descriptions of critical incidents. Emotions, for example as an expression of emotional or cognitive dissonance, might indicate areas in which further conceptual development may be needed (cf. Golombek & Doran, 2014). For teacher educators, emotive content could help to understand student teachers' individual ZPD and to scaffold their teaching experience respectively. It can be argued that an explicit focus on students' emotions might support them in their *selective attention* to critical incidents and their potential to function as individual growth points (cf. Farrell, 2019). Asking students to reflect on their feelings might even be extended to explicitly encourage them to describe moments during teaching which they found puzzling, troubling or exciting (cf. Rodgers, 2002).

The concept of professional vision, which has been predominantly used in video-based settings, has shown to be applicable also in the context of teaching-based learning scenarios. Data analysis has revealed that discourse functions like

78   *explaining, noticing effects, theorizing or hypothesizing* are particularly frequent when students reflect upon critical moments. The noticing-stage, as part of the idea of professional vision, is therefore central not only when analysing video material of lessons taught by others, but also when reflecting upon own lessons taught. More (empirical) attention should be given to the question as to how these noticing processes can be supported. Becoming aware of one's emotions can be one way of directing students' reflective processes in order to initiate a meaningful knowledge-based engagement with a particular teaching experience. Reflective writing would then be more than just a task that needs to be accomplished.

Limitations of the study are concerned with the small size of the sample. As the study only shares preliminary findings of a larger project, further analytical steps will be taken and the description of discourse functions will be tested against other researchers as well as compared with reflective texts from various learning contexts.

There has been much argument about the actual transformative power of reflection, questioning to what extent student teachers (re-)construct knowledge by engaging in reflective writing tasks. More research seems to be necessary in order to investigate how task design effects their writing, how *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transformation* can be distinguished and how transformative processes beyond the mere fulfilment of task requirements can be supported. Following more holistic approaches towards reflection (cf. Farrell, 2018; Gerlach, 2021; Korthagen, 2011) which call for an integration of student teachers' inner lives, their emotions and tacitly held assumptions, it seems a promising way to ask students even more explicitly to recall *emotions* (F6) and their source, to then *describe critical incidents* (F9), or to outline *personal aims* (F11) in their reflective writing in order to tap into their more implicit orientations

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Reflecting on your SPS-lessons: some guiding questions

1 Observation

1. How did you go about planning the lesson? How did that feel?
2. What sequence did you use and why?
3. Outline briefly the main phases of your lesson (didactic steps, materials, activities, etc.).

4. What personal aims did you have for your lesson?
5. How did you feel when teaching the lesson and standing in front of the class?
6. How did your pupils respond to your teaching (Were they all on task, what problems did they have, what did they seem to enjoy most/least)?

2 Analysis

1. What did the pupils learn or practice in the lesson? Was there a clear outcome for them?
2. Were the aims of your lesson actually achieved?
3. Was the lesson too easy or too difficult for the pupils?
4. What worked out well and why? (pupil participation, interest, materials, pair work, etc.)
5. What problems occurred during the lesson? (media, time management, instructions, etc.)
6. What were the reasons for particular problems?
7. What did you learn in the lecture and the seminar about …? How does that relate to what you experienced? How does that explain why something went well / not so well? Please make reference to at least four sources of TEFL literature.

3 Reflection in the narrower sense / Evaluation / Conclusion

1. What did you learn from planning the lesson (work with textbook & extra material, preparing content, co-planning, consultation, etc.)?
2. What did you learn from teaching the lesson?
3. What did you take from the advice / feedback you received (fellow students, the pupils, the teacher, the instructor/mentor)?
4. If you taught the same lesson again, what exactly would you do differently?
5. What are the aspects on which you'd like to focus special attention in future lessons (e.g. clearer instructions, more thorough content analysis, better time management, smoother transitions, address more pupils, increase student-talking-time, etc.)?
6. If this was your second SPS-lesson: What went well this time? Did you make progress in your effort to plan & teach a lesson? If not, what steps do you wish to take in order to seriously improve on your weaknesses?
7. What are you looking forward to in the next lessons you will teach?

The list of guiding questions was compiled and continually adapted by teacher educators of a FLTE programme at the University of Leipzig (most notably Fiona Hynes and the author).