

Dilafruz Sarimsakova,
PhD, Associate Professor of Namangan State University
dilafruz89@gmail.com

UDK: 811.111– 25:37.02 (043.3)

THE ROLE OF REFLECTIVE JOURNALS AND PADLET IN DEVELOPING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' RESEARCH COMPETENCE

Abstract: Modern higher education standards place special emphasis on the development of students' professional competencies and highlight the significance of research activities in the training of future English language teachers. From this perspective, the modules included in the "Integrated Course of Foreign Language Teaching," implemented in higher education institutions, contribute to the formation of research competence by guiding students to analyze educational and classroom-related issues. Such research tasks encourage students toward independent inquiry, foster their intellectual potential, and gradually develop their research skills. This article discusses the role of reflective tools, specifically traditional reflective journals and the Padlet interactive platform used during the teaching of the "Classroom Investigation" module in developing the research competence of pre-service English language teachers.

Keywords: reflective journals, Padlet, exploratory action research, digital reflection, pre-service teachers, classroom investigation

Dilafruz Sarimsakova,
Namangan davlat universiteti dotsenti (PhD)

REFLEKTIV KUNDALIKLAR VA PADLET INTERAKTIV PLATFORMASINING BO'LAJAK INGLIZ TILI O'QITUVCHILARINING TADQIQOT KOMPETENSIYASINI RIVOJLANTIRISHDAGI O'RNI

Annotatsiya: Zamonaviy oliy ta'lim standartlari talabalarning kasbiy kompetensiyalarini shakllantirishga alohida e'tibor qaratadi hamda ingliz tili bo'yicha bo'lajak o'qituvchilarni tayyorlash jarayonida tadqiqot faoliyatining muhim o'rin tutishini ta'kidlaydi. Ana shu nuqtai nazardan qaranganda, oliy ta'lim muassasalarida tatbiq etilayotgan "Chet tillar o'qitishning integrallashgan kursi" moduli tarkibiga kirgan modullar talabalarda ta'limiy va auditoriya bilan bog'liq muammolarni tahlil qilishga qaratilgan tadqiqot kompetensiyasining shakllanishiga ko'maklashadi. Bunday tadqiqot topshiriqlari talabalarni mustaqil izlanishga yo'naltiradi, ularning intellektual salohiyatini rivojlantiradi hamda izchil tarzda tadqiqotchilik ko'nikmalarini rivojlantiradi. Mazkur maqolada Sinfni tadqiq qilish modulini o'qitish jarayonida foydalanilgan reflektiv vositalar: an'anaviy reflektiv kundaliklar va Padlet interaktiv platformasining bo'lajak ingliz tili o'qituvchilarining tadqiqot kompetensiyalarini rivojlantirishdagi o'rni muhokama qilinadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: reflektiv kundaliklar, Padlet, amaliy o‘rganish tadqiqoti, raqamli refleksiya, bo‘lajak o‘qituvchilar, sinf tadqiqot

Дилафруз Саримсакова,
PhD, доцент Наманганского государственного университета

РОЛЬ РЕФЛЕКТИВНЫХ ДНЕВНИКОВ И ИНТЕРАКТИВНОЙ ПЛАТФОРМЫ PADLET В РАЗВИТИИ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ БУДУЩИХ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Аннотация: Современные стандарты высшего образования уделяют особое внимание развитию профессиональных компетенций студентов и подчеркивают важность исследовательской деятельности в процессе подготовки будущих учителей английского языка. С этой точки зрения модули, входящие в состав курса «Интегрированное обучение иностранным языкам», реализуемого в высших учебных заведениях, способствуют формированию исследовательской компетентности, направляя студентов на анализ образовательных и аудиторных проблем. Такие исследовательские задания побуждают студентов к самостоятельным изысканиям, развивают их интеллектуальный потенциал и постепенно формируют исследовательские навыки. В данной статье рассматривается роль рефлексивных инструментов — в частности, традиционных рефлексивных дневников и интерактивной платформы Padlet, использованных в ходе преподавания модуля “Classroom Investigation” в развитии исследовательской компетентности будущих учителей английского языка.

Ключевые слова: рефлексивные дневники, Padlet, исследование через практику, цифровая рефлексия, будущие учителя, изучение учебного процесса

Introduction

Reflective practice is a cornerstone of teacher education, enabling future educators to critically analyze their experiences, refine their instructional approaches, and develop professional judgment [3]. Reflective journals, whether analog or digital, provide structured opportunities for such reflect [4]. This case study focuses on the use of both traditional reflective journals and Padlet, a web-based collaborative platform, to support student-teachers as they engaged in Exploratory Action Research (EAR) during the lessons. By integrating reflection into every stage of the EAR process, the initiative sought to enhance teaching

practice, research competence, and collaborative inquiry. The initiative was launched at Namangan state university as part of a faculty-wide effort to reform the pre-service English teacher education curriculum.

Materials and Methods

The “Classroom Investigation” course was redesigned to include practical EAR activities and reflective components.

The course followed a scaffolded structure:

1. Identifying a classroom puzzle or challenge
2. Formulating research questions
3. Collecting classroom data
4. Reflecting on findings
5. Planning informed pedagogical actions

Reflection was used throughout this process using two complementary formats: individual reflective journals and digital reflections on Padlet.

Reflective journals served as a private, ongoing space for critical self-reflection [5]. Each student was asked to maintain a dedicated journal (digital or handwritten) throughout the semester, particularly during the teaching practicum. These journals allowed student-teachers to document classroom experiences, track changes in their thinking, and articulate their evolving understanding of teaching and learning. To support meaningful reflection, we provided a scaffolded journal writing framework, structured around the five stages of EAR:

Stage 1 – Identifying a Puzzle

Students were prompted to describe classroom moments that puzzled, concerned, or intrigued them. Prompts included:

What surprised or challenged you in today's lesson? What classroom behaviors caught your attention?

Stage 2 – Formulating Research Questions

Journals were used to record how initial observations were translated into inquiry questions.

What questions arise from this puzzle? What do I want to understand more deeply?

Stage 3 – Collecting Data

Student-teachers reflected on their use of data collection methods (e.g., observation, audio recordings, student work) and how these informed their understanding.

What patterns am I noticing? What does the evidence suggest?

Stage 4 – Reflection on Findings

This stage involved synthesizing insights and drawing interpretations from their data.

How have my assumptions changed? What new perspectives am I gaining?

Stage 5 – Planning Action

Finally, students used journals to propose changes or next steps.

What can I do differently? How can I address the puzzle more effectively next time?

Students submitted selected entries at mid- and end-of-term checkpoints for formative feedback. We encouraged the use of dialogic reflection, where entries not only described events but also explored causes, personal responses, and implications for future practice. Over time, students began to demonstrate deeper levels of reflection, moving from narrative descriptions toward critical and analytical entries that connected theory to practice.

While journals offered a private space for introspective reflection, Padlet served as a collaborative, real-time platform for sharing insights and engaging in community dialogue [6]. Padlet was introduced during the first practical session, with a tutorial on how to post text, images, links, and comments. A unique board was created for each group, and weekly themes guided the reflection process.

We designed Padlet activities with the following goals in mind:

Students were encouraged to post brief, immediate reflections after each lesson. Example prompt: *Post one success and one challenge from today's lesson.*

Students were asked to read and respond to at least two peer posts per week, offering constructive feedback or sharing similar experiences. Example: *"I faced a similar issue with timing. What helped me was..."*

Students often uploaded classroom sketches, whiteboard images, student work samples (with consent), or quotes that represented their teaching day. This added a visual and emotional dimension to reflection and helped others connect with their experiences.

Teacher educators regularly posted reflective prompts, encouraged deeper questioning, and provided formative comments. We intentionally avoided evaluative language, creating a safe and supportive space for sharing emerging thoughts.

Padlet became a live archive of shared learning, enabling both instructors and students to track progress, identify recurring themes, and co-construct meaning. For example, one week's board might reveal widespread challenges with time management, prompting a group discussion in the next seminar. In another case, a student's reflection on learner silence sparked a thread of inquiry across five classmates dealing with similar puzzles.

Sample Padlet prompts included:

- *Share a key insight or puzzle from today's lesson.*
- *What's one thing you'd like to improve in your next class?*
- *Post an image or quote that represents your teaching today.*

The integration of reflective journals and Padlet into the *Classroom Investigation* course embedded within the EAR cycle, produced several significant pedagogical and developmental outcomes. These outcomes were observed through journal entries, Padlet posts, seminar discussions, and final project reports. The data suggest that reflection when scaffolded and multimodal can be a powerful driver of professional growth, classroom insight, and teacher identity development.

Results and Discussions

The most notable outcome was a measurable improvement in the quality and depth of reflection. At the beginning of the course, many student-teachers tended to write descriptive or emotionally reactive entries, focusing on what happened without probing into the *why*. Over time, with the help of guided prompts and peer

models, their reflections became more analytical, evaluative, and evidence-informed.

For instance, students began to:

- Recognize patterns in their own teaching (e.g., overuse of teacher talk, lack of wait time)
- Analyze the effectiveness of teaching strategies by referencing specific classroom moments or student reactions
- Articulate how theoretical principles (e.g., scaffolding, student-centered learning) played out in their practice

A clear progression was evident across their journal entries from narrating events to exploring causes, making connections to pedagogy, and considering alternatives.

Both reflective journals and Padlet posts served as tools for informed decision-making in the classroom. As student-teachers documented their puzzles and collected classroom data (via observation, field notes, or student feedback), their reflection processes helped clarify the implications of their findings and guided action planning.

Examples of changes made based on reflective insights include:

- Adapting group configurations after noticing limited interaction in larger groups
- Reducing teacher explanation time and increasing student-led questioning after reflecting on lesson engagement
- Re-sequencing a reading lesson based on reflections on student confusion during vocabulary tasks

Several students explicitly wrote about how journaling helped them make better choices and feel more intentional in their planning:

“Before, I was guessing. Now I feel like I’m teaching with a purpose, because I can see what’s not working and reflect on it.”

Through reflection, many student-teachers developed greater empathy and responsiveness toward their students. Reflective journals encouraged them to consider not just their own performance, but how learners were experiencing the

lesson. This shift in focus—often triggered by Padlet prompts or peer posts—helped them view teaching as a dialogic and relational process.

Reflections frequently included:

- Consideration of learner silence, frustration, or confusion
- Realization that classroom routines or instructions were unclear
- Curiosity about individual learner motivation and participation

As one student shared:

“Writing in my journal helped me see that my students’ behavior is feedback—it shows me what they understand and what they need from me.”

This sensitivity to learner needs led to more adaptive and student-centered teaching approaches, particularly in areas like feedback strategies, pacing, and questioning techniques.

The reflective process especially when used alongside EAR deepened students’ understanding of research as a practical, grounded activity. Reflection helped demystify research, shifting it from an abstract academic task to a meaningful process of classroom inquiry.

Students reported increased confidence in:

- Framing focused, relevant research questions
- Gathering and interpreting classroom data
- Using reflection to link findings to action

Several final project reports explicitly described the role of journals and Padlet in helping them stay organized, track their thinking, and justify their action plans. As one student noted:

“My reflections were like a roadmap—they showed me how my thinking developed and helped me explain why I changed my lesson.”

This outcome supports the broader aim of building a culture of teacher-researchers, where inquiry is embedded in everyday teaching practice.

Reflective journaling, particularly when combined with peer support through Padlet contributed to the emergence of a professional identity rooted in inquiry, reflection, and responsiveness. Student-teachers increasingly began to see

themselves as decision-makers, problem-solvers, and reflective practitioners. Many expressed a growing sense of empowerment:

- to critically examine established teaching practices;
- to trust their observations and interpretations;
- to act on classroom evidence rather than assumptions;

This empowerment was especially evident in journal entries describing “aha” moments, instances where students noticed a shift in learner behavior or engagement as a result of their changed teaching practice.

“I used to think I just had to follow the textbook. Now I know I can adapt and reflect and improve.”

These changes in self-perception mark a crucial step in professional development, moving beyond passive implementation toward autonomous, informed practice.

The public, interactive nature of Padlet created a community of reflective practice among student-teachers. As students read each other’s posts, they were exposed to diverse classroom contexts, alternative interpretations, and new strategies. This peer interaction often sparked new reflection and deepened their understanding of shared challenges.

Examples of collaborative outcomes include:

- Discovering common puzzles (e.g., lack of participation, discipline issues)
- Co-developing classroom strategies through comment threads
- Offering emotional support and normalizing the challenges of teaching

“Reading my peers’ Padlet posts helped me feel like I wasn’t alone. We all had ups and downs—it made me more open to reflecting honestly.”

Such social learning processes helped students move from individual reflection to collective inquiry, reinforcing the idea that reflective teaching is both personal and dialogic.

Some challenges were encountered during implementation. Initially, students posted descriptions without critical analysis. This was addressed by modeling reflective entries and offering feedback. A few students faced connectivity issues in practicum schools. Offline journaling remained a reliable

backup. Students needed guidance on when to use each tool (e.g., Padlet for short, social reflection; journals for deeper analysis).

Conclusion

The integration of reflective journals and Padlet into a course grounded in Exploratory Action Research significantly enriched the professional development of pre-service English teachers. The tools complemented each other, journals encouraged private, in-depth reflection while Padlet promoted peer interaction and immediate feedback. Together, they supported student-teachers in becoming more aware, analytical, and adaptive practitioners. This case highlights the potential of combining traditional and digital reflective tools to scaffold teacher learning in meaningful and collaborative ways. As we continue to refine this approach, we aim to deepen students' engagement with reflective inquiry and further strengthen the link between research and practice.

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