

The Reflective Authorship Model: Voice, emotion, and discursive self-construction in Vietnamese EFL teachers' reflective writing

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ABSTRACT

Reflective writing is widely used in language teacher education, yet it is often treated as evidence of cognition, professional growth, or self-evaluation rather than as a crafted textual act. This study develops the Reflective Authorship Model (RAM) to explain how teachers construct reflective voice through writing. Drawing on 50 English-language reflective texts written by in-service Vietnamese English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, the study adopts an interpretive qualitative design informed by narrative inquiry, discourse-oriented close reading, affect theory, and stylistic analysis. The analysis generated four interrelated dimensions of reflective authorship: narrative construction, affective voice, stylistic agency, and discursive constraint. These dimensions show how teachers sequence experience, manage emotion, use textual form, and negotiate institutional and cultural expectations when composing professional selves. The findings suggest that reflective voice is not simply expressed or discovered, but it is authored through rhetorical, emotional, and ethical labor. RAM extends existing models of reflection by shifting attention from reflection as a developmental cycle or cognitive process to reflection as situated discursive self-construction. The model offers language teacher educators and applied linguistics researchers a lens for reading reflective writing with greater attention to voice, vulnerability, form, and power.

Keywords: Discursive self-construction; EFL teacher identity; reflective authorship; reflective writing; Vietnamese EFL teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Reflection has long been central to teacher education. In language teacher education, reflective journals, post-lesson narratives, portfolios, practicum reports, and professional development reflections are frequently used to encourage teachers to examine experience, connect theory with practice, and articulate professional learning (Farrell, 2007, 2022; Schön, 1983). These practices are pedagogically valuable, but they also create an interpretive problem. Readers often read reflective texts primarily for what teachers have learned, what problems they have identified, or what future actions they propose. Less attention is given to how teachers write themselves into the text: how they arrange events, soften critique,

disclose emotion, manage vulnerability, and compose a professional voice that can be heard as acceptable.

This problem matters especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education, where teachers often write their reflections in English, even as their professional, emotional, and institutional lives are shaped by multilingual and culturally situated norms. In such contexts, reflective writing is not merely a record of thought. It is a site where teachers negotiate how much of the self can be shown, which emotions can be named, which institutional tensions can be voiced, and how professional authority can be maintained. Recent research on language teacher identity, emotion, and agency has shown that teachers' professional lives are

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shaped by complex interactions among cognition, affect, institutional expectations, and context (Amory & Johnson, 2023; Nazari et al., 2023a; Truong et al., 2025; Yazan, 2023). However, the written form of reflection itself remains under-theorized.

This article addresses this gap by proposing the Reflective Authorship Model (RAM), a conceptual-empirical model derived from a close analysis of reflective texts written by Vietnamese EFL teachers. Reflective authorship refers to the process by which teachers compose a professional self in writing by drawing on narrative, affective, stylistic, and discursive resources. The model does not treat voice as a stable possession that the teacher expresses. Instead, voice is an authored effect: a textual achievement shaped by the teacher's intentions, emotions, linguistic repertoire, institutional audience, and imagined standards of professionalism.

Discursive self-construction is central to this argument. It refers to the ways teachers construct versions of themselves through language, including the competent teacher, the vulnerable teacher, the adaptive teacher, the silent teacher, and the teacher who cautiously resists institutional expectations. In this sense, reflective writing is not only about learning from experience, but it is also about constructing a self that can survive being read.

Existing Models of Reflection and the Remaining Gap

Several influential models have shaped how reflection is conceptualized in teacher education. Schön's (1983) distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action framed professional knowledge as situated, improvisational, and responsive to practice. Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle offered a structured sequence of description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan, making reflection teachable as a staged process. Korthagen and Kessels' (1999) ALACT model similarly presented reflection as a developmental cycle moving from action to looking back, awareness of essential aspects, creation of alternatives, and trial. In language teacher education, Farrell's (2007, 2022) framework expanded reflection beyond classroom technique by connecting teachers' philosophy, principles, theory, and practice to critical reflection beyond practice.

These models remain valuable because they help teachers organize experience and move from description toward professional learning. However, they were not designed to analyze reflective writing as authored discourse. They tend to ask what stage of reflection is visible, what professional learning has occurred, or how practice might improve. They pay less systematic attention to the textual means through which reflective voice is composed. For example, a teacher's hesitation, repetition, passive construction,

Table 1

How RAM Extends Existing Models of Reflection

metaphor, code-switching, or silence may be treated as stylistic detail rather than evidence of identity negotiation.

Narrative and identity-oriented approaches have moved the field closer to this concern. Barkhuizen (2011, 2016, 2022) and Golombek and Johnson (2021) have shown that language teacher narratives are not transparent reports but acts of positioning and restorying. Recent work has also emphasized that teacher emotions are socially and discursively shaped rather than private psychological states (Barcelos et al., 2022; Benesch, 2013; Song, 2025; Zembylas, 2005). Studies of reflective writing have further shown that teachers and student teachers may write strategically under assessment or institutional expectations, using language to manage desirable professional identities (Kosmanou & Vassilaki, 2023; McGarr & Ó Gallchóir, 2020). These developments suggest the need for a model that brings narrative, emotion, style, and constraint into a single analytic lens.

RAM responds to that need. It does not replace models of reflective practice. Instead, it complements them by shifting the analytic focus from reflection as a cycle of professional learning to reflection as a written act of voice-making. The model asks not only whether a teacher reflects, but how the teacher becomes audible, credible, vulnerable, cautious, or constrained through textual choices (See Table 1).

The study aims to develop a model for understanding reflective writing as authored professional voice in Vietnamese EFL teacher education. It addresses the following questions:

1. How do Vietnamese EFL teachers construct reflective voice through narrative, affective, stylistic, and discursive resources in English-language reflective writing?
2. How does the RAM clarify the relationship between reflective writing, teacher identity, emotion, and discursive self-construction?
3. How does RAM extend existing models of reflective practice in language teacher education?

METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted an interpretive qualitative design. It did not measure levels of reflection or statistically compare demographic groups; instead, it aimed to understand how reflective voice was constructed in written texts. The analysis was informed by narrative inquiry, discourse-oriented close reading, affect theory, and stylistic analysis. Narrative inquiry supported attention to sequencing.

Model or Approach	Primary Contribution	Main Analytic Focus	How RAM Extends It
Schön (1983): reflective practitioner	Professional knowing is situated in action and reflection on action.	Professional judgment and learning from practice.	Adds attention to how professional judgment is written, voiced, softened, or constrained in reflective texts.
Gibbs (1988): reflective cycle	Reflection can be structured through stages including feeling, evaluation, analysis, and action planning.	Sequential movement through reflective stages.	Treats emotion and evaluation as distributed across discourse, not only as separate stages.
Korthagen and Kessels (1999): ALACT model	Reflection is a cyclical process of action, looking back, awareness, alternatives, and trial.	Developmental learning cycle.	Examines how teachers narratively and stylistically construct movement, delay, closure, or unresolved tension.
Farrell (2007, 2022): framework for reflecting on practice	Language teacher reflection is holistic, connecting philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond-practice concerns.	Teacher beliefs, principles, classroom practice, and critical reflection.	Adds a textual lens for analyzing the voice through which these reflective domains are authored.
Narrative and identity approaches	Teacher identity is constructed through stories, positioning, and restoring.	Narrative identity and professional becoming.	Integrates narrative positioning with affective voice, stylistic agency, and discursive constraint.

positioning, and restoring (Barkhuizen, 2016; Golombek & Johnson, 2021). Discourse-oriented close reading supported attention to how language choice shapes identity construction (Ivanič, 1998; Kosmanou & Vassilaki, 2023; Varghese et al., 2005). Affect theory supports the view that emotion is socially and politically mediated, not merely private (Benesch, 2013; Zembylas, 2005). Stylistic analysis highlighted repetition, rhythm, punctuation, spacing, metaphor, and code-switching as meaningful features of reflective authorship.

The methodological stance was abductive rather than purely inductive or deductive. The analysis began with open, text-centered reading of the reflective corpus. As patterns became visible, they were interpreted through relevant theoretical traditions on teacher identity, narrative, emotion, writing, and discursive constraint. RAM was therefore not imposed in advance as a coding framework. It emerged through sustained engagement with the texts and was subsequently refined through theoretical comparison with existing models of reflection.

Research Context and Participants

The dataset was drawn from a broader reflective writing initiative embedded in professional development workshops and reflective practice contests for Vietnamese EFL teachers conducted between 2023 and 2025. Participants were in-service Vietnamese English teachers working at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels across different regions of Vietnam. All reflective texts were written in English.

For this study, we purposefully selected 50 reflective texts, each written by a different teacher. A maximum variation sampling logic was used to include diversity in teaching level, institutional type, gender, regional background, text length, emotional tone, and narrative complexity. The sample included a total of 50 teachers: (1) 15 primary teachers, 30 secondary teachers, and 5 tertiary teachers; (2) 35

teachers worked in public institutions, and 15 in private institutions; (3) 38 participants were female, and 12 were male; and (4) 28 worked in urban areas and 22 in rural or semi-rural areas.

These differences were not treated as variables for subgroup comparison. The corpus was not intended to be demographically representative of Vietnamese EFL teachers as a whole. Rather, the variation was used to increase the range of textual and contextual possibilities available for analysis. The demographic information informed the reading of the texts, especially when interpreting institutional expectations, gendered professionalism, and regional constraints, but the study's analytic claims concern patterns of reflective authorship across the corpus rather than differences between demographic groups.

Data Sources and Ethical Considerations

The reflective texts analyzed in this study were drawn from a broader research project on Vietnamese EFL teachers' reflective and professional writing. The broader project generated several subsets of teacher-authored texts. Related publications examined metapragmatic awareness (Thuy & Thao, 2026), biographical learning (Thao & Thuy, 2026a), meta-reflective orientations (Thao & Thuy, 2025), and pedagogical display discourse (Thao & Thuy, 2026b). To ensure transparency and avoid concerns about overlapping or fragmented publication, we clarify that this article uses a distinct subset of 50 English-language reflective texts and addresses a different analytic problem: how teachers author reflective voice through narrative construction, affective voice, stylistic agency, and discursive constraint. The present study does not reproduce the analyses or findings of those related publications. Instead, it develops the RAM as a separate contribution within the broader project.

The reflective texts came from two main sources. The first consisted of written reflections voluntarily submitted after professional development workshops. The second consisted of entries in a

reflective writing competition in which teachers described classroom dilemmas, professional learning, teaching philosophies, or transformative experiences. The prompts were intentionally broad, such as “*Describe a recent teaching experience that made you reflect.*” Teachers were not required to follow a fixed template or format. This openness mattered because the study examined how teachers shaped reflective voice through their narrative, affective, stylistic, and discursive choices. The texts ranged from approximately 300 to 1500 words, with most between one and three typed pages.

The use of data from a broader project was handled through clear analytic separation. Related studies from the same project examined different subsets of data and addressed different research questions. For example, some focused on teachers’ metapragmatic awareness in accounts of pragmatic misalignment, some examined reflective writing as biographical learning, some explored teachers’ meta-reflective orientations, and some analyzed teacher innovation texts as institutional display discourse. By contrast, the present study focuses specifically on reflective authorship: the textual construction of professional voice in reflective writing. This distinction was maintained throughout sampling, analysis, and reporting. Excerpts selected for the present article were used to illustrate RAM’s four dimensions and were not presented as evidence for the same claims made in related publications.

All identifying details were removed before analysis. Participants provided informed consent for the research use of their reflective texts. Because the analysis focuses on textual construction rather than personal diagnosis, teacher evaluation, or institutional comparison, excerpts are presented anonymously and without institutional identifiers. Where necessary, minor contextual details were generalized to protect confidentiality while

preserving the analytic meaning of the excerpt. The study therefore treats the reflective texts not as evidence of individual teacher competence or deficiency, but as authored professional writing shaped by language, emotion, institutional expectation, and audience.

Analytic Procedure

The analysis followed five recursive phases. First, both researchers independently read the 50 texts several times to become familiar with their narrative shape, tone, rhythm, and recurring tensions. During this phase, analytic notes focused on striking textual features such as shifts in pronoun use, hesitation, metaphor, repetition, silence, code-switching, hedging, and sudden changes in sentence length.

Second, text-level memos were written for each reflection. These memos described how the teacher organized experience, positioned the self, managed emotion, and used language to create or withhold voice. The memos did not reduce the text to thematic categories. Instead, they preserved interpretive observations about how the text worked rhetorically and affectively.

Third, the researchers held collaborative interpretation sessions. In these sessions, selected excerpts and memos were compared. Disagreements were treated as analytic resources rather than as errors to be eliminated. For example, one researcher might read an excerpt as emotional restraint, while another read it as institutional caution. Such differences helped clarify the overlap between affective voice and discursive constraint.

Fourth, recurrent dimensions were formulated. Across the memos and dialogue, four dimensions repeatedly appeared as central to how reflective voice was authored: narrative construction, affective voice, stylistic agency, and discursive constraint (See Table 2).

Table 2
Analytic Dimensions of RAM and Their Defining Features

RAM dimension	Guiding analytic question	Defining features	Indicative textual evidence
Narrative construction	How is the teaching experience storied?	Sequencing, opening and closure, temporal framing, turning points, omissions, unresolved endings.	Challenge-success arcs, delayed confession, open-ended doubt, shifts from I to we.
Affective voice	How is emotion made visible, concealed, or calibrated?	Tone, metaphor, bodily imagery, emotional pacing, vulnerability, restraint.	Indirect feeling, repetition, tonal shift, metaphors of collapse or relief.
Stylistic agency	How does form carry meaning?	Sentence rhythm, punctuation, paragraphing, spacing, lists, repetition, code-switching, visual pacing.	Fragments, run-on sentences, line breaks, Vietnamese phrases, patterned repetition.
Discursive constraint	What pressures shape what can be said?	Institutional gaze, cultural expectations, face-saving, professional norms, linguistic authority, assessed writing.	Hedging, passive voice, euphemism, softened critique, silenced conflict, generalized description.

These dimensions were not mutually exclusive codes. They were overlapping analytic lenses that often operated together in the same passage. Fifth, the emerging model was compared with existing models

of reflection and current studies on teacher identity, emotion, and reflective writing. This comparison refined RAM’s contribution and clarified its status as a model of reflective authorship rather than a

replacement for developmental models of reflective practice.

Trustworthiness, Positionality, and Bias Management

Qualitative rigor was addressed through transparency of analytic process, researcher reflexivity, and negotiated interpretation. The study did not aim for interrater reliability because the analysis was interpretive, constructionist, and text-centered. Instead, trustworthiness was supported through independent reading, analytic memoing, collaborative discussion, documentation of interpretive decisions, and returning to earlier texts as the model evolved. These procedures are consistent with qualitative approaches that treat reflexivity and analytic transparency as central to rigor (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

Both authors are involved in language teacher education and have experience reading and supporting reflective writing. This background created interpretive sensitivity to subtle markers of voice, emotion, and silence, but it also created possible bias. To manage this, the researchers explicitly discussed how their disciplinary

orientations might shape what they noticed in the texts. Interpretations were not treated as direct access to teacher intention. Instead, the analysis focused on textual evidence: what the writing made available through form, tone, sequence, and rhetorical positioning.

The study did not use member checking as a validation test because it did not seek to verify participants' inner states or reconstruct a single authentic intention behind each text. The analysis examined how reflective voice was textually composed. However, researcher triangulation was used through independent reading and dialogic comparison between the two authors. An audit trail of memos, selected excerpts, model revisions, and decisions about dimension naming was maintained throughout the analysis.

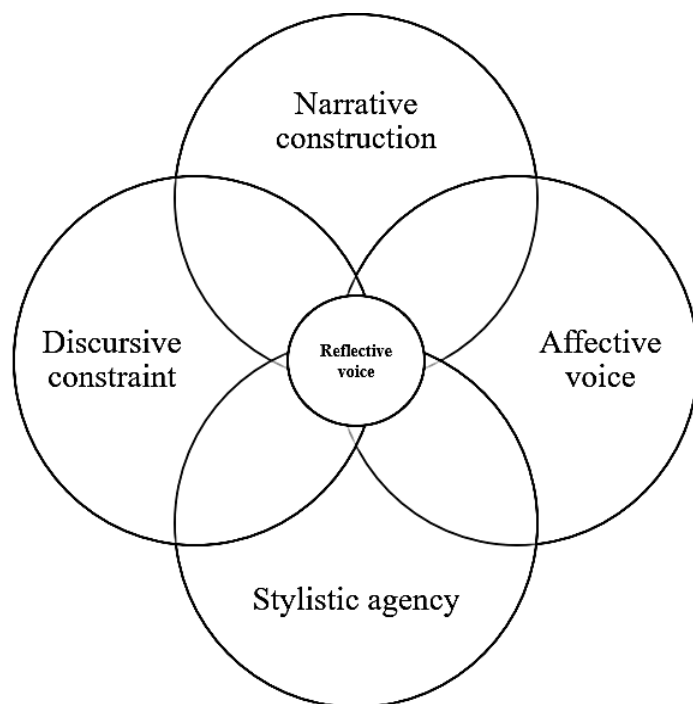
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the RAM

The analysis generated the RAM as a way to explain how teachers compose reflective voice through writing (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Reflective Authorship Model



As seen in Figure 1, RAM contains four overlapping dimensions: narrative construction, affective voice, stylistic agency, and discursive constraint. At their intersection lies reflective voice, understood as the authored presence of the teacher on the page. This voice is neither wholly free nor wholly determined. It is formed through negotiation among what the teacher wants to say, what the teacher feels

able to say, how English makes expression possible or difficult, and how the imagined reader may judge the reflection.

The model therefore reframes reflective writing as rhetorical and ethical labor. It shows that teachers do not simply report classroom events. They choose beginnings, endings, emphases, silences, pronouns, rhythms, metaphors, and degrees of emotional

exposure. These choices matter because they construct a professional self. In this sense, the findings support narrative and identity-oriented scholarship that treats teacher identity as discursively produced (Barkhuizen, 2016; Golombek & Johnson, 2021; Varghese et al., 2005), while extending it by foregrounding the stylistic and affective micro-features of reflective writing.

Narrative Construction: How Teachers Story Professional Becoming

The first dimension of RAM is narrative construction. Teachers did not simply list classroom events. They selected and arranged events to make a particular professional self intelligible. Some reflections followed a familiar developmental arc: a problem appeared, a pedagogical response was attempted, students changed, and the teacher concluded with learning. Other reflections were less resolved. They began amid uncertainty, returned to earlier doubt, or ended with open questions.

One secondary teacher began her reflection as follows:

"It was supposed to be a simple listening task, but halfway through, I realized they did not understand anything. I smiled and kept going, but inside, I panicked."

The narrative begins with an ordinary classroom plan but quickly turns toward a moment of rupture. The teacher constructs a contrast between visible composure and internal anxiety. The phrase *"I smiled and kept going"* performs professionalism, while *"inside, I panicked"* allows vulnerability to appear without overwhelming the teacher's authority. This is not merely a report of classroom difficulty. It is a carefully arranged scene in which the teacher authors herself as both fallible and professionally controlled.

This pattern extends previous work on narrative positioning. Barkhuizen (2011, 2016) argued that teacher narratives position speakers in relation to time, power, and identity. In the present corpus, positioning occurred not only through what was narrated, but also through how vulnerability was narratively contained. Teachers often made room for difficulty, but the difficulty was framed within a professional storyline of endurance, care, or growth.

A different narrative logic appeared in reflections organized around what could not be said or done. One tertiary teacher wrote:

"I wanted to tell them it was okay to speak in Vietnamese first and translate later. But I did not. I kept quiet. Maybe I was afraid they would think I was lazy."

This passage narrates an omission rather than an action. The central event is not what the teacher did, but what she chose not to voice. The reflection therefore constructs identity through restraint. The teacher appears as someone who recognizes a potentially inclusive pedagogical move but withholds

it because of the perceived authority of English-only expectations. Narrative construction here overlaps with discursive constraint. The teacher's story is shaped by institutional and linguistic norms that make some pedagogical choices feel risky.

Several reflections followed more linear success narratives. For example:

"At first, I did not know how to deal with the silent class. Then I tried group work. It changed everything. Now they speak more, and I feel more like a facilitator than a lecturer."

This narrative is recognizably developmental. It aligns with conventional expectations of reflective writing by moving from problem to intervention to professional growth. Such narratives are not weak or artificial, but they are constructed. Their coherence depends on excluding possible complications, setbacks, or unresolved emotions. RAM therefore does not treat success narratives as transparent evidence of learning. It reads them as authored forms through which teachers produce a competent and evolving professional self.

The contribution of this finding is that reflection models centered on cycles or stages explain movement through experience, whereas RAM explains how that movement is written. A teacher may move from description to evaluation and action planning, but the text also performs a professional identity through sequence, closure, omission, and narrative pace.

Affective Voice: How Emotion Is Calibrated rather than Expressed

The second dimension is affective voice. Emotion appears throughout the corpus, but it is rarely presented as direct confession. Teachers more often expressed emotion through metaphor, bodily imagery, pacing, repetition, and tonal contrast. This supports recent scholarship that treats emotion in language teaching as socially mediated and identity-forming rather than merely private (Amory & Johnson, 2023; Barcelos et al., 2022; Nazari et al., 2023b; Song, 2025).

One teacher described a difficult classroom silence in this way:

"I asked the question again. Silence. I smiled, waited, still silence. Something inside me sank, but I kept my posture straight."

The emotional force of the passage comes from contrast. The teacher's inner state is described through the bodily metaphor *"something inside me sank,"* while the outer professional body remains disciplined: *"I kept my posture straight."* The reflection therefore does not merely express disappointment. It stages the labor of containing disappointment. In Benesch's (2013) terms, emotion is shaped by professional discourse and power. In RAM terms, affective voice emerges from the tension between felt vulnerability and the need to remain professionally legible.

Another teacher wrote:

"I thought they understood. I really did. But their eyes were blank. I had failed. Or maybe I had just assumed too much. I do not know."

The affective intensity here lies in fragmentation and revision. The teacher first claims certainty, then confronts evidence that unsettles it, then moves from self-blame to uncertainty. The short sentences create a rhythm of emotional hesitation. This supports the argument that emotion in reflective writing is not limited to emotional vocabulary. It can be carried by syntax, pacing, and the willingness to leave uncertainty unresolved.

Positive emotions were also conveyed indirectly. One teacher wrote:

"They laughed. They played with the words. For the first time, it felt like we were learning together. Not just me teaching. Us, building."

The passage does not simply say that the teacher felt happy. Instead, affective transformation is created through a shift in pronoun and relation: from *"me teaching"* to *"us, building."* Emotional meaning is produced by a reconfiguration of classroom identity. This matters because it shows that affective voice is also relational voice. Teachers write emotion through how they position themselves in relation to students, institutional expectations, and imagined pedagogical ideals.

This finding extends models that include feeling as one stage of reflection, such as Gibbs' (1988) cycle. In RAM, emotion is not a discrete step between description and evaluation. Emotion is distributed across the whole text and may appear in metaphor, rhythm, omission, stance, and relational framing.

Stylistic Agency: How Form Becomes a Resource for Voice and Safety

The third dimension is stylistic agency. In the corpus, teachers used form to manage the degree of exposure their reflections allowed. Sentence length, repetition, line breaks, lists, punctuation, and code-switching were not ornamental features. They were resources for meaning-making and self-protection. This finding aligns with work on authorial voice, which treats voice as socially and dialogically constructed in writing rather than as purely individual expression (Mhilli, 2023). It also connects with studies showing that reflective writing can be an institutional performance shaped by assessment and audience expectations (Kosmanou & Vassilaki, 2023; McGarr & Ó Gallchóir, 2020).

One teacher placed the following lines in the middle of a longer reflection: *"I tried. I really tried. But nothing changed."* The line breaks slow the reading. The repetition of *"tried"* emphasizes effort, while the final sentence closes the sequence with exhaustion. The teacher does not need to describe frustration directly because the form enacts it. White space becomes part of reflective meaning. In this

sense, stylistic agency allows the teacher to make emotion visible without fully naming it.

Another teacher wrote a list of compressed judgments after a failed activity:

"Too long. Too boring. Too complicated. Too teacher-centered. Too late to fix."

The repeated *"too"* builds cumulative pressure. The movement from activity design to teacher-centeredness and then to *"too late to fix"* creates a downward rhythm of regret. This is not a conventional analytic paragraph, yet it is highly reflective. It shows the teacher using style to condense judgment, disappointment, and self-critique.

Stylistic agency also appeared through run-on structures. One teacher wrote:

"They kept asking, and I kept answering, and I thought we were getting somewhere, but then the observer came in and everything felt wrong, and I wanted to disappear, but I smiled and said thank you for the feedback and then kept teaching."

The absence of punctuation creates a breathless movement that mirrors cognitive and emotional overload. At the same time, the sentence remains controlled enough to preserve professional restraint. The teacher writes overwhelm while also containing it. This is precisely the kind of textual feature that stage-based models of reflection may overlook, because it is not a content category but a formal enactment of experience.

A smaller number of texts included Vietnamese phrases within English reflections. For example:

"I told myself, 'thôi kệ đi', and continued the lesson as nothing happened."

The Vietnamese phrase roughly means *"let it be"* or *"never mind."* Its inclusion interrupts the English reflective frame and briefly gives access to an internal voice that may not be equally available in English. This supports Pavlenko's (2005) argument that emotion is shaped by linguistic repertoire. In RAM, such moments are read as stylistic and affective acts: the teacher temporarily shifts language to access a more precise emotional stance.

Stylistic agency therefore refers to more than expressive skill. It is the teacher's capacity to use form as a resource for negotiating risk. Through style, teachers can reveal, soften, delay, intensify, or protect aspects of the professional self.

Discursive Constraint: How Institutional and Cultural Pressures Shape What Can Be Said

The fourth dimension is discursive constraint. The reflective texts showed that voice is shaped not only by agency but also by pressure. Teachers wrote under real or imagined institutional gaze, professional norms of composure, culturally situated expectations of face-saving, and English-medium standards of legitimacy. These constraints did not silence teachers

completely. Rather, they shaped the forms through which teachers could speak.

One teacher reflected on a failed classroom observation as follows:

"It was not the best lesson. Some parts could have gone more smoothly. I realized I had overlooked a few things, and I will keep that in mind for next time."

The passage is polite, general, and professionally acceptable. Yet its vagueness is analytically important. *"Some parts," "a few things,"* and *"keep that in mind"* soften the failure and avoid naming institutional conditions, observer expectations, or specific conflict. The teacher performs improvement while keeping criticism safely indirect. This is not a lack of reflection. It is a constrained form of reflection.

A similar pattern appeared in the following excerpt:

"I almost said something. But I chose not to. Maybe it was not the right time. Maybe I did not want to sound ungrateful."

The repetition of *"maybe"* indexes hesitation and self-monitoring. The phrase *"sound ungrateful"* makes the perceived social risk explicit. The teacher narrates silence as a decision, but the decision is structured by relational and institutional expectations. Discursive constraint therefore appears through hedging, self-correction, and the careful management of tone.

In another reflection, a teacher wrote:

"We are encouraged to be creative, but it is important to follow the syllabus closely. I try to find a balance."

The sentence appears balanced and reasonable, but its grammatical structure reveals constraint. The passive construction *"we are encouraged"* diffuses agency. The phrase *"it is important to"* invokes institutional authority without naming who imposes it. The teacher's final position, *"I try to find a balance,"* constructs a compliant and adaptive self. The passage is thus an example of professional survival through discursive caution.

This finding resonates with Vietnamese EFL scholarship showing that teacher identity, emotion, and agency are shaped by institutional demands, policy discourse, and cultural-professional expectations (Nguyen & Ngo, 2025; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Truong & Nguyen, 2024). RAM adds that these pressures can be traced at the level of reflective form itself. Constraint is visible not only in what teachers say about institutions, but also in what they do not say, how they soften critique, and how they maintain face while still registering tension.

Discursive constraint is therefore not the opposite of voice. It is one of the conditions through which voice is produced. Teachers author themselves within limits, and those limits become part of the reflective text.

The Center of RAM: Reflective Voice as Discursive Self-Construction

At the center of RAM is reflective voice. The findings suggest that reflective voice is an assembled textual presence produced through the interaction of story, emotion, style, and constraint. The teacher's voice is not simply the expression of an inner self. It is a discursive self-construction shaped by audience, language, institution, cultural norms, and professional desire.

This point clarifies the article's contribution. Existing models of reflection help explain how teachers learn from experience. RAM explains how teachers write themselves as learners from experience. The difference is important. A teacher's reflection may show awareness, evaluation, and future planning, but it may also show fear of appearing incompetent, desire to sound professional, uncertainty about emotion, and strategic use of English to manage audience expectations. These features do not distract from reflection. They are part of reflection as a socially situated practice.

RAM therefore offers a lens for research and teacher education. For researchers, it supports closer analysis of reflective texts as authored data rather than transparent reports. For teacher educators, it suggests that reflective writing pedagogy should include attention to voice, tone, emotional risk, audience, and stylistic choice. Teachers can be invited not only to reflect more deeply, but also to notice how they write reflection and what versions of the self their writing makes possible.

CONCLUSION

This study developed the RAM to address a gap in research on reflective writing in language teacher education. While established models of reflection have explained how teachers learn from experience, fewer models have explained how teachers compose reflective voice in writing. Drawing on 50 reflective texts by Vietnamese EFL teachers, the analysis identified four overlapping dimensions of reflective authorship: narrative construction, affective voice, stylistic agency, and discursive constraint.

The findings show that teachers' reflective writing is not simply a mirror of cognition or a record of professional development. It is an authored act of discursive self-construction: (1) Teachers sequence events to make professional becoming intelligible, (2) they calibrate emotion through metaphor, rhythm, and restraint, (3) they use style to manage exposure and meaning, and (4) they negotiate institutional, cultural, and linguistic constraints that shape what can be said. At the intersection of these processes, reflective voice emerges as a crafted professional presence.

The study contributes to applied linguistics and language teacher education in three ways. First, it offers RAM as a model for analyzing reflective

writing beyond content and level of reflection. Second, it connects teacher reflection with current research on teacher identity, emotion, agency, and discourse. Third, it foregrounds the Vietnamese EFL context, where English-medium reflection involves not only professional learning but also multilingual affective negotiation and culturally situated expectations of voice and professionalism.

The study has limitations. The corpus was limited to 50 English-language reflective texts written by Vietnamese EFL teachers, and the analysis focused on written texts rather than interviews, classroom observations, or longitudinal development. The sample was diverse but not statistically representative. Because the study examined textual construction rather than participant intention, the claims concern patterns of reflective authorship visible in the writing rather than definitive accounts of teachers' inner experiences.

Future research can extend RAM in several directions. Studies could (1) examine reflective authorship in other national, institutional, or language contexts, (2) compare reflective writing in English and teachers' first languages, (3) investigate how RAM operates in assessed and non-assessed reflection, and/or (4) combine text analysis with interviews to explore how teachers understand their own stylistic and emotional choices. Longitudinal studies could also examine whether reflective authorship changes across teacher education programs or professional development interventions. Such research would further test, refine, and contextualize RAM as a lens for understanding how teachers write themselves into professional life.

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CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUTHORS

The first and second authors contributed to the study design, data analysis and interpretation, development of RAM, and drafting and revision of the manuscript. Both authors take responsibility for the article's content.

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