



THE ROLE OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING IN ENHANCING PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF EFL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

English is now taught as the main foreign language across all levels of education, and teachers play an essential role in this process. To maintain and further their professional growth, educators must consistently reflect on their teaching methods and critically evaluate their own practices [1]. Reflection serves as a key strategy that helps teachers improve their skills and fulfill their professional responsibilities more effectively revealed that EFL teachers who incorporated reflective practices into their routines observed notable improvements in both teaching effectiveness and student learning.

English is now taught as the main foreign language across all levels of education, and teachers play an essential role in this process. To maintain and further their professional growth, educators must consistently reflect on their teaching methods and critically evaluate their own practices [1]. Reflection serves as a key strategy that helps teachers improve their skills and fulfill their professional responsibilities more effectively revealed that EFL teachers who incorporated reflective practices into their routines observed notable improvements in both teaching effectiveness and student learning. This supports the idea that reflective teaching is a practical approach that can positively impact educational outcomes. Bartlett (1990) describes reflective teaching as a form of professional development where educators analyze their teaching experiences. It encourages teachers to evaluate their classroom practices to better understand teaching and learning. Similarly, Salih and Omar (2022) define reflective teaching as the process of thinking critically about classroom activities and exploring alternative strategies to achieve instructional goals. Through this process, educators assess and adapt their teaching based on students' needs and learning styles. Reflective teaching techniques provide opportunities for teachers to observe and make informed decisions about their instructional methods. Numerous studies have investigated its effectiveness in different educational environments, concluding that reflective teaching enhances teachers' awareness, improves instructional quality, and contributes to student progress.

This highlights a clear need for more detailed investigations into how EFL teachers use reflective teaching. Gaining a deeper understanding of these practices would enable teachers to more accurately identify areas in need of improvement and develop effective strategies to support their professional growth. Such studies could offer critical insights into how teachers assess their strengths and weaknesses and apply reflective thinking to improve

their teaching techniques. Furthermore, this knowledge could inform the design of targeted professional development programs, allowing educational institutions and policymakers to better support EFL teachers in their ongoing growth [2].

There is still a limited body of research on how EFL teachers in Indonesia apply reflective teaching strategies in their classrooms. Globally, reflective teaching among EFL educators has become a central topic in enhancing adaptive and context-sensitive pedagogical approaches. Reflective practice is increasingly recognized as a fundamental component of effective teaching and continues to generate extensive academic interest. However, its application within the Indonesian context may involve unique dynamics, including cultural norms, variations in the national education system, and language-specific challenges that differ from other regions. Importantly, EFL teachers' perceptions and uses of reflective teaching are often shaped by their local environments. This underlines the need to consider contextual factors when promoting reflective teaching, to ensure its relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability. Exploring these contextual variations is crucial for designing reflective practices that are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable in diverse classroom settings. By examining reflective teaching through a local lens, researchers and educators can identify culturally appropriate strategies, align professional development with teachers' real needs, and support the creation of more student-centered learning environments. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering valuable insights and practical guidance for EFL teachers seeking to implement reflective strategies effectively in their teaching practice—both in Indonesia and in broader global contexts [3].

To gather the necessary data and insights, the researchers employed a mixed-method approach that involved both quantitative and qualitative tools. Primarily, a survey method was utilized, incorporating a Likert scale to measure respondents' levels of agreement with various statements regarding reflective teaching practices. The Likert scale allowed participants to express their opinions across a spectrum—ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement—thus providing measurable data for analysis. The survey was distributed electronically through a Google Forms link, making it accessible and easy to complete. The anticipated sample size for the study consisted of approximately 10 participants, all of whom were EFL teachers. The questionnaire was designed to capture essential information, including participants' names and a series of items related to their reflective teaching practices. The research process commenced with a thorough needs analysis. This stage involved a detailed review of relevant literature, formulation of the research problem, and selection of the sample population. In the subsequent phase, the researchers developed and refined the research instruments, focusing on various key areas such as digital literacy, innovation in teaching, interpersonal communication, and teacher performance evaluation. A pilot test of the research scale was also conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument before its full implementation. Following the scale validation, the survey was formally administered to the participants. The collected data was then analyzed to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions relevant to the research objectives. In addition to the questionnaire, the study also employed semi-structured in-depth interviews. These interviews provided a qualitative complement to the quantitative

data, allowing researchers to gain richer and more nuanced perspectives. The interviews were designed to explore EFL teachers' experiences, perceptions, and practices concerning reflective teaching in a more open-ended format. This method allowed respondents to elaborate on their answers freely, making the data more comprehensive, transparent, and contextually grounded.

The use of both closed-ended questionnaires and open-ended interviews allowed for data triangulation, enhancing the credibility and depth of the study. While the questionnaire offered a fast and efficient way to collect structured responses from a broader group, the interviews enabled researchers to probe deeper into individual experiences and interpretations. Together, these tools provided a balanced and holistic view of how EFL teachers perceive and implement reflective teaching practices, offering valuable data for academic analysis and practical application [4].

The questionnaire used in this research was divided into two main parts and was adapted from established instruments found in relevant scholarly literature. The first part included demographic questions designed to collect basic information such as the participants' names and their teaching experience. The second section comprised 10 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." These items aimed to gather the teachers' perceptions of the advantages and significance of reflective teaching (RT) in their professional practice. The third section of the questionnaire included another set of 10 items but was presented in a 5-point frequency scale, ranging from "always" to "rarely." This part focused on identifying how often participants engaged in reflective teaching, particularly in terms of specific types and strategies used in their classroom practice. The questionnaire was distributed to English teachers working at a private school in Medan. Alongside the survey, in-depth interviews were also conducted, although with a smaller selection of participants. The purpose of the interviews was to gain deeper insights and explore the participants' survey responses in more detail. These interviews were conducted through WhatsApp, with prior consent obtained from each participant to ensure ethical and voluntary participation.

For the data analysis, the researcher applied triangulation methods to enhance the validity and reliability of the results. This process involved three main stages: data reduction (organizing and summarizing the data), data presentation (structuring the information for analysis), and finally, drawing conclusions and verifying the findings. This combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods not only enriched the findings but also allowed for a more holistic understanding of EFL teachers' engagement with reflective teaching practices. It ensured that both the measurable trends and the personal, context-driven insights were captured effectively.

The findings of the study reveal that EFL teachers frequently implement various reflective teaching strategies in their professional practice. One widely used method is analyzing video recordings of their own teaching, which has proven to be highly effective for self-evaluation. This technique allows teachers to engage in deeper reflection and critically assess their teaching performance. Videos serve not only as a tool for observation but also as a means to identify areas for growth and improvement. In addition, collaborative discussions within peer study groups have shown to be beneficial in fostering reflective practices. These

group interactions offer opportunities for exchanging feedback, constructive critique, and shared reflections on evidence-based strategies. Such discussions enhance professional understanding and encourage continuous development. Another key element in reflective teaching is student feedback, which helps teachers better understand the effectiveness of their teaching from the learner's perspective. This type of feedback empowers teachers to adjust their approaches, aligning classroom practices with students' needs and expectations. It also strengthens lifelong learning skills by promoting adaptability and self-awareness.

Moreover, self-evaluation through reflection is essential for professional growth. Teachers gain insights into their strengths and areas needing improvement, ultimately striving to enhance their teaching quality. This reflective habit demonstrates their conscious commitment to professional responsibility. Peer observations and classroom walk-throughs by supervisors also serve as useful reflective tools, provided they are conducted meaningfully and with clear, constructive feedback. When peer observers understand how to deliver supportive and actionable insights, the process becomes a valuable part of professional learning. Numerous studies have highlighted teachers' positive attitudes and perceptions toward peer observation as a reflective teaching strategy. Reflective educators often demonstrate strong self-efficacy, which includes effectively planning lessons, remaining persistent when students encounter difficulties, and actively seeking out suitable strategies and resources to enhance learning outcomes. Tools such as journals and video recordings are particularly beneficial, as they support the development of reflective thinking and assist teachers in making informed decisions on instructional matters. In particular, video recordings serve as a powerful method for facilitating teacher reflection and professional growth.

Throughout history, various methods for training teachers have emerged, each aiming to equip educators with the necessary tools for their profession. Zeichner (1983) identifies four key paradigms in teacher education: behavioristic, traditional craft, personalistic, and inquiry-oriented. The behavioristic and traditional craft paradigms adopt a technical, skills-based perspective. They emphasize that teacher trainers—considered “experts”—prescribe specific competencies that novice teachers must master. These models have been especially dominant in pre-service teacher education, because they reflect the belief that beginner teachers should first receive guided instruction from experienced educators.

The personalistic paradigm shifts the focus inward. It considers how individual teachers' personal traits, motivations, and mental states influence their teaching. This approach allows teacher preparation to address personal growth, self-understanding, and emotional readiness. While richer than purely technical models, it still centers heavily on the teacher's individual inner life. The inquiry-oriented paradigm expands the scope further by emphasizing the importance of contextual awareness and critical reflection. It encourages teachers to view their work as problem-solving within a social environment. Student teachers engage with their actual communities and classrooms, analyze their teaching contexts, and use that understanding to guide decisions and practices. This approach merges the inner with the outer: teachers not only develop themselves but also learn to relate their decisions to the sociocultural realities around them. At the Universidad Nacional's Philology and Languages

program, the Teaching Practicum illustrates a blend of these paradigms in action. Some supervisors instruct novice teachers by handing down “golden rules” for handling typical classroom issues. Others encourage diagnostic assessments or reflective sessions for prospective teachers to identify specific areas needing improvement in their own practice. This mixture demonstrates how teacher education can draw from multiple paradigms—technical instruction, self-reflection, and context-based inquiry—to develop well-rounded educators.

In a concise exploration of the historical development of reflective thinking, Barlett (1990) emphasizes that the idea of reflection initially stemmed from fundamental psychological processes related to thinking. He suggests a close link between our thoughts, intentions, and subsequent actions. Reflection, therefore, begins with deep contemplation, particularly when student teachers critically analyze their own beliefs and ideas. However, this mental process is just one component—reflection encompasses more than mere thinking.

Beck and Kosnik (2001) expand on this by asserting that action is a vital part of reflection. They argue that teachers not only reflect while teaching, but that such in-the-moment reflection is crucial to make timely and responsive adjustments during instruction. Furthermore, adopting attitudes such as openness, honesty, and persistence strengthens a teacher’s ability to constantly evaluate their teaching practices and underlying ideas. When educators embrace a reflective mindset, their practice becomes connected not just to self-awareness, but also to their broader social environment, aligning with the inquiry-oriented approach., inquiry involves a teacher’s continuous exploration of their beliefs and actions, critically examining their work and seeking opportunities for growth and transformation through reflection.

Effectively utilizing reflection as a learning tool in teaching requires a clear understanding of its meaning and the creation of appropriate conditions for students to truly benefit from it. The previously discussed ideas about reflection help clarify its nature. In my own teaching environment, I’ve observed confusion and a lack of clarity surrounding reflective practice. While many teacher educators claim they have long used reflection, they often lack specific strategies or dedicated space to engage students in meaningful reflective experiences. In this context, reflection should be seen as a planned experience—its success depends on how well we prepare for it and create the environment for it to happen. Reflective practice and inquiry now serve as foundational elements in many teacher education programs, helping future educators build professional knowledge. In our country, Guerrero (2002) described how student teachers engaged in reflective practices during their practicum while learning about Whole Language principles. Similarly, Cárdenas and Faustino (2003) documented the integration of classroom research into the Licenciatura Program at Universidad del Valle. Their findings suggest that reflection enabled student teachers to explore their identities as learners and to critically assess what they know, leading them to shape their own learning process based on individual needs. Another notable example comes from Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002), whose quasi-experimental study examined the impact of integrating reflection, discussion, and goal-setting into an undergraduate teacher preparation program. Their results indicated that these reflective elements contributed to improved teaching effectiveness.

Student teachers begin forming their pedagogical understanding from their own experiences as learners during their school years. These courses are designed to build and deepen the knowledge base of future teachers by incorporating theoretical frameworks, insights from experienced educators, and opportunities for simulated teaching experiences. Eventually, the teaching practicum enables student teachers to apply and expand this knowledge in real-world classroom settings. Both the didactics courses and the practicum are intended to promote the development of pedagogical knowledge through reflective practice. Various scholars, including Barlett (1990), Wallace (1991), Pollard and Tann (1993), and Rodgers (2002), have introduced reflective cycles aimed at supporting the professional learning process of teachers.

Conclusion

This study concludes that reflective practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching significantly enhance teachers' pedagogical awareness and instructional abilities. The key findings reveal diverse applications of reflection among educators, including strategies such as maintaining teaching journals, collecting student feedback, engaging in collaborative discussions, and conducting self-observations. These outcomes highlight the value of promoting reflective teaching as a core element of teachers' ongoing professional growth. However, the research has certain limitations, notably a small sample size and its focus on a specific group of EFL educators, which may limit the generalizability of the results. For future studies, it is advised to include a broader and more varied sample of teachers across different educational settings. Additionally, combining qualitative insights with quantitative methods could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how reflective practices impact English language teaching effectiveness.

The study aims to examine the multifaceted integration and impact of reflective practice in teacher education. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, the study unveils that reflective activities, including journaling, structured feedback sessions, and coursework integration, are prevalent in teacher preparation programs, fostering self-awareness and professional growth among teacher candidates. Perceptions of the positive influence of reflective practice on teaching skills, notably in classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement, are strongly affirmed by respondents. While challenges such as time constraints and resistance persist, the study recommends standardized integration, professional development initiatives, and long-term impact assessments to maximize the transformative potential of reflective practice in shaping the educators of the future and elevating the quality of education it provides..

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