



IMPACT OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING ON THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, language teacher education has shifted its focus toward promoting more effective reflective teaching practices. This study examines how engaging in teaching reflection supports novice language teachers in enhancing their professional performance. According to Gebhard (2009), new teachers build their professional identities and teaching skills most significantly during their initial years in the field. Our research aims to provide fresh insights into how reflective teaching assists teacher educators in achieving their objectives. Over the past few decades, language teacher education has undergone significant transformations by adopting approaches that prioritize student experiences. Worldwide, educators now consider reflective teaching techniques crucial for their professional growth. Reflective teaching enables instructors to evaluate and improve their instructional strategies and classroom practices, thereby enhancing their effectiveness [1].

In recent decades, language teacher education has shifted its focus toward promoting more effective reflective teaching practices. This study examines how engaging in teaching reflection supports novice language teachers in enhancing their professional performance. According to Gebhard (2009), new teachers build their professional identities and teaching skills most significantly during their initial years in the field. Our research aims to provide fresh insights into how reflective teaching assists teacher educators in achieving their objectives. Over the past few decades, language teacher education has undergone significant transformations by adopting approaches that prioritize student experiences. Worldwide, educators now consider reflective teaching techniques crucial for their professional growth. Reflective teaching enables instructors to evaluate and improve their instructional strategies and classroom practices, thereby enhancing their effectiveness [1].

Teachers who engage in reflection not only fulfill their professional responsibilities but also enhance their teaching skills. Researchers have explored how novice language teachers utilize reflection to advance their professional development. According to Gebhard (2009), the early years of teaching are crucial for new educators to develop their skills and professional identities while adapting to diverse student needs. During this time, teachers often face challenges such as maintaining classroom management, meeting the needs of all

students, and refining their instructional methods. Reflection allows teachers to critically assess their practices and explore research-based strategies to improve their teaching. Although research specifically focusing on beginner language teachers is limited, existing evidence supports the strong theoretical importance of reflective teaching. Reflective practices deserve more attention as effective tools for supporting novice teachers' growth, with studies showing improvements in teacher performance, student outcomes, and teaching quality. This study examined how reflective teaching aids educators in making informed decisions and effectively managing their classrooms during their early career stages [2]. Although research on reflective teaching for beginning language teachers is limited, the existing evidence demonstrates its strong theoretical importance. Reflective teaching practices require greater focus as essential components of new teacher development, as studies indicate they enhance teacher performance, student outcomes, and overall teaching quality. Our study examined how reflective teaching supports educators in making more effective instructional decisions and managing their classrooms successfully during their early years in the profession. The study revealed significant findings about reflective teaching practices by examining new English language teachers in Karachi. Our research aims to contribute to professional development literature by highlighting how reflection enhances teaching effectiveness and career growth. The results emphasize that teacher education programs should incorporate reflective frameworks to better equip educators for the demands of today's classrooms. Additionally, our findings underscore the crucial role of educational institutions in promoting and sustaining reflective practices within their teaching communities.

Reflective teaching is a fundamental part of teacher education, as critical reflection helps educators enhance their professional growth. Teachers in public schools particularly need to engage in reflective practice because their work involves managing diverse students and creating tailored teaching strategies that meet everyone's needs (Farrell, 2018). This study reviews recent research to explore how reflection influences professional development in language education, highlighting reflective techniques, challenges in practice, and the impact on teacher growth and effectiveness [3].

The concept of reflective language teaching has evolved significantly since Dewey (1933) introduced reflective thinking as a vital connection between classroom practice and educational theory. Schön (1983) expanded on Dewey's ideas by emphasizing the importance of teachers reflecting both during and after lessons to evaluate what strategies were effective and which needed adjustment. This ongoing process of reflection helps educators become more aware of their teaching practices in real time and make informed decisions to improve student learning outcomes. Reflective teaching methods, as detailed by Richards and Lockhart (1994), encourage language teachers to systematically analyze their instructional approaches, student engagement, and overall educational results. This approach not only supports teachers in identifying their strengths but also fosters critical self-examination and continuous professional development. By engaging in reflection, educators can become more responsive to the needs of their students and more adaptive in their teaching strategies [3].

Reflective teaching enables language educators to unlock their potential for professional growth. Farrell (2013) argues that through reflection, teachers can make more

informed decisions about their teaching methods and develop a clearer sense of their professional identity. Reflection helps educators identify areas in their practice that require improvement and inspires the creation of innovative strategies to enhance classroom performance. Research consistently shows that reflective practices contribute positively to the career development of language teachers. For instance, Farrell and Ives (2015) found that ESL teachers who engaged in reflective teaching became more conscious of their instructional approaches and shifted their focus toward student-centered learning. Furthermore, Akbari (2007) highlights that reflective teaching fosters teacher autonomy by encouraging educators to take responsibility for their professional growth without depending solely on external feedback [4].

In his 2018 study, Farrell explored how novice language teachers engaged with reflective teaching by using teaching journals. These early-career teachers recorded their thoughts and classroom challenges in reflective diaries, which helped them gain deeper insights into their teaching practices and discover new strategies for managing students. This self-analysis enabled teachers to better understand and evaluate their instructional approaches. However, the research also highlighted both the advantages and the limitations of practicing reflection individually. Akbari (2007) emphasizes that for reflection to lead to genuine improvement, teachers need feedback from peers or mentors. Without such input, educators may continue to rely on ineffective teaching methods and miss opportunities for growth. Ultimately, the study suggests that collaborative reflection—sharing experiences and insights with colleagues—yields more significant benefits in teachers' professional development than solitary reflection alone. This collective approach fosters richer learning, encourages openness to new ideas, and supports continuous improvement in teaching quality. The research indicates that reflective teaching plays a crucial role in helping language instructors enhance their professional growth and gain deeper self-awareness. Through reflection, teachers are able to critically evaluate and adapt their teaching approaches and methods to better meet the needs of their students. However, the successful implementation of reflective practices largely depends on the support provided by educational institutions, including allocating sufficient time and creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share experiences. Despite the challenges associated with reflective teaching—such as time constraints and the need for a supportive environment—studies reveal that engaging in reflection ultimately empowers teachers with greater autonomy in their instructional decisions and fosters continuous professional development. This process not only improves teaching effectiveness but also contributes to teachers' confidence and motivation, promoting a more dynamic and responsive learning environment[3].

Farrell's Five-Stage Reflective Practice Model guides teachers to carefully plan their lessons, implement them, observe the outcomes, and make necessary adjustments. Our study design aligns with how participants structured their work, beginning with a feedback loop, followed by self-assessment and collaborative reflection to enhance their teaching. This research emphasizes reflection as a continuous, cyclical process, as outlined in Farrell's framework. For data analysis, we applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method, which provided a clear and organized way to examine the collected information. This approach enabled us to identify key themes related to the impact of reflection on teacher development

and classroom management. By combining qualitative methods, our analysis highlights different forms of reflection and demonstrates how they contribute to the personal and professional growth of novice language teachers.

Through engaging in reflective practices, participants deepened their awareness of their roles as teachers and refined their instructional methods to better meet student needs. They expressed that reflection was a key driver for their professional growth and self-understanding. One public university professor highlighted how reflection helped him recognize both effective teaching strategies and areas requiring improvement. He explained that this process of self-evaluation allowed him to identify his strengths and weaknesses clearly. For example, a 29-year-old university instructor shared, "Reflecting on my lessons made me realize the changes I need to support students struggling with grammar." This realization motivated him to create innovative teaching techniques to enhance student comprehension. The participant emphasized that through ongoing cycles of planning, reflecting, and adjusting, he gained a deeper understanding of his students' needs and continuously improved his teaching.

Participants actively employed reflective practices to make informed decisions about their lesson planning and delivery. By carefully reviewing their teaching sessions, they were able to identify challenges and shortcomings in their instructional methods. This process allowed them to develop and implement more effective strategies, which ultimately led to improved student outcomes. For instance, one teacher shared how she utilized reflection to address the issue of student disengagement in her classroom. Drawing on data gathered from her own teaching observations, she designed a series of student-centered activities that successfully captured students' interest and involvement. By shifting her focus towards learner-driven approaches, she was able to transform the classroom environment, fostering greater participation and a more positive learning atmosphere. This example highlights how reflective teaching not only helps educators recognize problems but also empowers them to innovate and adapt their practices for the benefit of their students. A university instructor described how reflection has transformed his lesson planning process. He shared, "Based on my observations, I continuously revise my teaching plans to ensure every student can succeed." By consistently adapting his methods, he developed lessons that catered more effectively to diverse student needs, enhancing overall classroom inclusivity. All participants emphasized that reflection is an ongoing tool they use to guide their teaching decisions. After reviewing their teaching outcomes, they could anticipate potential challenges and implement targeted improvements. This continuous cycle of reflection demonstrated how it supports their professional growth and helps them respond more flexibly to evolving classroom dynamics.

Despite facing various challenges, participants devised innovative strategies to sustain their reflective practices. They established self-directed study routines that blended collaborative discussion groups with daily journal writing and thorough analysis of lesson plans. For example, one university lecturer adopted the habit of maintaining a weekend journal, allowing him to reflect on his teaching without weekday distractions. While he admitted that this method was not entirely foolproof, he acknowledged its effectiveness in helping him stay focused. Another educator from the same institution highlighted the crucial

role of collaboration, sharing how they formed a small peer group that meets outside of class hours to exchange constructive feedback and share ideas. This group-based reflection proved to be a vital resource for deep self-examination and professional growth. These examples demonstrate how early-career teachers showcase their creativity and commitment by developing personalized and collective approaches to overcome institutional and personal barriers to reflective teaching. Moreover, by organizing workshops and forums dedicated to reflective teaching techniques, educators create valuable opportunities for continuous learning, which ultimately benefits students by enhancing teachers' reflective capacities and improving overall instructional quality [1].

The findings of our research highlight that reflective teaching significantly contributes to the professional development of novice teachers by enhancing their ability to adapt lessons and manage their classrooms more effectively. Engaging in reflective practices enables educators to gain deeper insights into their teaching methods, which in turn fosters greater confidence and clarity in fulfilling their professional roles. Various reflective strategies—such as journaling and collaborative discussions with colleagues—provide valuable opportunities for teachers to critically assess and refine their instructional approaches. Moreover, integrating feedback from students into this reflective process allows teachers to make well-informed adjustments that improve learning outcomes. Overall, reflective teaching serves as a vital mechanism for continuous growth, empowering new teachers to respond more flexibly to classroom challenges and to nurture a more student-centered learning environment. Despite facing numerous challenges, many organizations still failed to allocate sufficient time, professional support, or resources to enable teachers to effectively engage in reflective practice. Nevertheless, participants consistently demonstrated remarkable resilience and creativity. Each day, they developed innovative solutions, collaborated harmoniously with colleagues, and found ways to address emerging obstacles in their teaching contexts. The findings of the study emphasize that institutions should provide comprehensive coaching and structured mentorship programs to facilitate the integration of reflection-based approaches into teachers' professional routines. For reflection to be meaningful, educators require dedicated training hours, continuous peer collaboration, and specialized workshops focused on professional growth and self-assessment. When these elements are in place, reflection becomes a powerful mechanism for teacher development and classroom transformation. Through participation in reflective training, teachers not only enhanced their pedagogical skills but also achieved deeper self-awareness regarding their professional identities. They acknowledged that the act of reflection allowed them to critically evaluate their teaching strategies, identify their unique strengths, and recognize the areas where further improvement was necessary. This introspective process fostered personal and professional growth, resulting in more purposeful and effective teaching practices. Many educators noted that upon reflecting on their lessons, they realized that the examples used during instruction were often too abstract for students to fully comprehend. As a result of this realization, they began incorporating more concrete and relatable classroom examples, leading to a noticeable improvement in student engagement, participation, and conceptual understanding. Among the reflective strategies employed, journaling, peer discussions, and self-assessment emerged as the most dominant and beneficial techniques. Journaling

provided a structured platform for teachers to document their teaching experiences, analyze classroom interactions, and monitor recurring patterns of success or difficulty. Peer discussions, on the other hand, created valuable opportunities for educators to exchange ideas, receive constructive feedback, and gain fresh perspectives on pedagogical challenges. Often, colleagues were able to identify issues that an individual teacher might have overlooked, thereby enriching the overall reflective process. Furthermore, engaging in self-assessment enabled teachers to systematically evaluate their performance, refine instructional choices, and remain attentive to the dynamic needs of their students. Reflection thus became not only a personal learning tool but also a collective professional practice that encouraged adaptability, critical thinking, and continuous improvement.

Our research revealed that reflective teaching methodologies play a crucial role in assisting novice language teachers to navigate the complex realities of modern classrooms. By engaging in reflection, teachers develop the ability to critically evaluate their own instructional practices, identify areas of improvement, and adapt their pedagogical methods in alignment with the diverse learning needs of their students. This ongoing process enables them to strengthen their professional identity, cultivate confidence in decision-making, and demonstrate more effective leadership within the educational environment (Akram, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022). The results of the study clearly indicate that reflection serves as a catalyst for professional growth and organizational learning. Teachers who actively engage in reflective activities demonstrate a higher level of adaptability, creativity, and collaboration. Reflection encourages them to view teaching not as a fixed routine but as an evolving practice that requires constant adjustment to new challenges, technologies, and student expectations. Consequently, reflection contributes not only to individual professional development but also to the collective advancement of the teaching community. However, despite its proven benefits, the research also highlights significant barriers that hinder the effective implementation of reflective teaching practices. Among these are time constraints, insufficient institutional support, and a lack of structured opportunities for collaborative reflection. Many educators reported that their workload and administrative responsibilities limited the amount of time they could dedicate to reflective activities. Additionally, schools often lack formal mechanisms or incentives to encourage and sustain reflective practices at an institutional level. Therefore, it is essential that educational institutions develop systematic programs and official frameworks that integrate reflection into teachers' professional development plans. Schools should design comprehensive initiatives that provide both social and technological support—such as professional learning communities, peer mentoring networks, and digital platforms where teachers can record, share, and analyze their reflections. According to Ali et al. (2023), incorporating technology into reflective teaching enhances accessibility, facilitates collaboration, and ensures that reflection becomes a continuous and measurable part of the professional learning process [2].

Moreover, fostering a supportive school culture that values reflection as a legitimate and essential form of teacher development is vital. Administrators should recognize reflective work in performance evaluations, allocate specific time for reflective sessions, and promote workshops or seminars that emphasize reflective thinking. Such initiatives not only empower teachers but also create a more dynamic and innovative educational environment. Through

sustained engagement in reflective teaching, educators can achieve greater clarity in their instructional goals, improve classroom management strategies, and contribute to higher-quality learning outcomes for students. Reflection, when institutionalized and supported properly, leads to enhanced career progression for teachers and overall improvement in the delivery of education across diverse learning contexts. Future research should aim to evaluate and compare structured reflection-based programs in different educational settings. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how reflective practices influence both teacher performance and student achievement over extended periods. Additionally, researchers might explore the potential of digital tools, such as e-portfolios or AI-assisted reflection platforms, to further enhance the quality and sustainability of reflective teaching practices in the evolving landscape of education.

In conclusion, reflection played a pivotal role in transforming the way educators approached their teaching. It enhanced their ability to adapt lesson plans, fostered deeper understanding of student learning behaviors, and cultivated a mindset of lifelong learning. To sustain these outcomes, educational institutions must prioritize reflective practice as an integral component of teacher education and professional development programs.

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