

Reflective Practice Strategies of English Language Teachers in Education

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Abstract

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Reflective practice has gained recognition as a key component in improving teaching effectiveness and fostering continuous professional growth among educators. This study aimed to explore the reflective practice strategies used by English teachers and examine the role of reflection in uncovering the reality of their teaching experiences. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, the research involved in-depth interviews with eight purposively selected English teachers from the Kathmandu district. The study found that reflective practice strategies, such as sharing experiences, participating in discussions, critical thinking, creative writing, maintaining diaries, peer observation, and team teaching, significantly enhanced teaching skills and improve teaching-learning. These strategies activated and enriched the classroom environment, fostering critical thinking and creativity. Additionally, the study highlighted that reflection contributed to teachers' professional development and learning, suggesting that incorporating reflective practices into teacher training programs could improve teaching effectiveness and overall educational quality. The findings emphasize the value of reflective practices in continuous professional growth and enhancing individual and collective teaching experiences.

Keywords: Reflective practice, English teachers, professional development, teaching strategies, qualitative research

Introduction

The concept of ‘reflective practice’ encompasses a variety of interpretations, ranging from professionals engaging in personal contemplation to engaging in thoughtful discussions with peers (Virtue, 2021). Some practitioners choose to practice reflection in deliberate and structured ways during specific instances, while others may adopt it in a more seamless, ongoing, and unspoken manner (Finlay, 2008). For some individuals, reflective practice signifies a mindset oriented toward thoughtful engagement with one’s professional activities. Others may dismiss it as overly self-focused and unproductive. Still, some view it as a methodical and carefully constructed approach to evaluating their practical experiences (Aryal, 2024).

Teacher education holds a fundamental position in reforming and strengthening a nation's education system, with the overall quality of education being largely influenced by the caliber of its teachers and instructional methods. Teachers can select the reflective method that best aligns with their goals and intentions (Connors, 2024). Through reflective practice, teachers can better understand their instructional approaches, evaluate their professional development, enhance their decision-making capabilities, and grow in confidence and initiative in their roles (Virtue, 2021). While teaching experience alone may not ensure improvement, the combination of quality teacher training and reflective habits has gained increased recognition (Nguyen, 2017). Teachers can significantly impact their students' development of reflective thinking by using teaching methods that highlight the value of this practice (Kim, 2022).

Aryal (2024) notes that reflective practice has gained traction in teacher preparation and development, particularly in pedagogy. The classroom serves as a practical setting where theoretical knowledge is applied, and student reactions are observed. Reflective teaching aligns with Dewey’s (1933) philosophical principle that encourages teachers to engage in thoughtful reflection, involving “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads” (p. 9).

He emphasized three key qualities for reflective individuals that remain crucial for today’s educators: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. Open-mindedness entails being receptive to multiple viewpoints and considering different perspectives. Responsibility requires thoughtful evaluation of the outcomes of one’s

actions. Wholeheartedness suggests the capacity of educators to confront uncertainty and critically assess their practice to implement meaningful changes. Dewey regarded reflection as a distinct form of problem-solving involving systematic thinking and a logical sequence of interconnected ideas.

Reflective practice is recognized in teacher training and professional development as a means for both personal and professional advancement (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Teachers must engage in processes such as thinking, planning, meditating, acting, and evaluating themselves. A reflective teacher develops critical awareness and creative insight (Connors, 2024). Therefore, to be truly reflective is to encompass all these attributes. Many educators lack the habit of engaging in reflective dialogue about their teaching materials during meetings. In our context, teachers often hesitate to openly share and reflect on their feelings with colleagues and superiors (Pandey, 2012).

Achieving success as a teacher is a formidable task (Day, 2004). While definitions of a successful teacher or teacher educator may differ, striving for excellence is essential. As the saying goes, everything seems difficult before it becomes easy. Reflective practice is vital in the journey toward becoming a successful educator (Aryal, 2024). The satisfaction and insights gained from reflective engagement in teaching and learning are unmatched. It allows both educators and their peers to examine teaching and learning situations (Pandey, 2008) and draw lessons from them.

Chaudhary (2008) asserts that reflection serves as a pathway for teacher growth. It is an effective method for internal contemplation, sometimes likened to the 'flashback' approach. Reflection can be instrumental in uncovering the hidden dimensions of a teacher's identity. It supports the discovery of subconscious and untapped potential. Reflection also facilitates the transformation of ingrained knowledge and involves a substantial shift in thought and action. Reflection and teacher development are as intimate as flesh and nail.

Reflective teaching helps educators better understand their problems by viewing them from multiple angles, which can lead to alternative solutions. Saylag (2012) studied the emergence of reflective teachers and emphasized the importance of personal beliefs and experiences in fostering meaningful reflection, which distinguishes reflective educators. Therefore, personal belief systems and lived experiences must be

central to the reflection process, ultimately enhancing teaching competence and academic performance.

As language instructors and education professionals, we must nurture students who are honest and deliberate in their actions, choices, and motivations concerning learning. Reflective practice makes this possible. Currently, many English language teachers appear to be working under emotional pressure. They internalize their challenges rather than sharing them with others. This self-isolation can be detrimental. By expressing and sharing their experiences, teachers can exchange valuable knowledge and gain mutual support. Teachers must be transparent about their professional experiences and emotions (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

Although reflective practice is increasingly acknowledged as a critical component of teacher growth and instructional effectiveness, there remains a notable gap in how it is perceived and implemented by English language educators across diverse cultural backgrounds. Additional studies are required to identify the barriers teachers encounter in adopting reflective practices and to determine the strategies that can help mitigate these challenges and promote a more supportive, collaborative, and reflective educational culture. This research aims to illuminate the approaches employed by English language teachers in practicing reflection and how this process enables them to recognize and address their shortcomings, ultimately contributing to their professional development and mutual learning.

Review of Literature

A review of literature on reflective practice strategies of English language teachers is done in the following themes to stand strong conceptually and theoretically:

Reflection-in-Action or Reflection-on-Action

We now revisit our understanding of Schön's (1983) work, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. In this book, he explores the concept of reflection-in-action through three sections. In the first section, he focuses on professional knowledge and reflection-in-action, highlighting a crisis of confidence in professional expertise and proposing a shift from technical rationality to reflective practice. Schön critiques technical rationality for its positivist approach to the social, cultural, and political dimensions of human experience and skills. His criticism is not

aimed at the problem-solving function of technical rationality itself but at its overwhelming influence on all aspects of decision-making. Through our reading of this section, we understood that linear models of scientific methods cannot fully explain professional decision-making. Instead, real-world problem-solving is far more complex, requiring reflective thinking, sound judgment, and deep wisdom to grasp the intricate interplay of multiple influencing factors. As Schön explains, reflection-in-action is a continuous process that occurs during the act itself. It represents a dynamic and evolving form of reflection.

Crisis of Confidence in Professional Knowledge

Schön (1983) observed that society relies heavily on professionals who are specifically trained to handle essential tasks such as national defence, education, healthcare, law enforcement, legal arbitration, business management, architecture, and supporting those in need (p. 3). He emphasized this widespread dependence on professionals while warning of a growing crisis of confidence in these professions. This crisis stems from professionals' inadequate ability to think critically, analyze situations thoroughly, reason effectively, and make sound judgments in the face of complex and multifaceted issues. In my opinion, Schön critiques the shortcomings of the scientific method's linear approach to problem-solving, which seeks straightforward cause-and-effect solutions. Instead, he highlights the importance of reflection-in-action—an evaluative process that takes place during the performance of a task, rather than after it concludes.

In this context, reflection-in-action involves more than simply thinking about one's actions; it demands a heightened awareness where professionals continuously assess their performance against their objectives, the needs of their students or clients, and the broader circumstances influencing their work (Virtue, 2021). This reflection requires shifting from rigid planning toward more adaptable strategies, treating plans as flexible guidelines rather than fixed paths. It also encourages a transition from linear reasoning to systems thinking, where professionals consider the interplay between various factors.

Ultimately, reflection-in-action represents the depth of thought and sound judgment that Schön believes is essential to restore trust in professional expertise.

Embracing this reflective approach enables professionals to navigate complex challenges better, make well-informed decisions, and improve the quality of their work. In a world marked by growing complexity, the capacity for reflective thinking and action is becoming indispensable for professionals in all fields.

Critique of Technical Rationality

Schön (1983) emphasized the significant influence that traditionally accepted professional knowledge holds in guiding one's thinking and acting when it comes to problem-solving. His concept of professional knowledge is multifaceted and far-reaching. It encompasses the specialized knowledge required for a specific field and integrates an understanding of social, ecological, cultural, political, psychological, and philosophical dimensions that shape the profession. He argued that no professional domain functions in complete isolation, untouched by other spheres of life. With this perspective, he offered a critical view of technical rationality as a foundational approach to defining the knowledge bases needed across major and minor professions. Although technical rationality may not be my immediate focus when considering reflective thinking and practice, it stands as a fundamental source of concern that demands careful and deliberate reflection. Schön drew attention to major societal issues, stating that "the failure of technical rationality led to bureaucratization, industrialization, and proletarianization of professions" (Schön, 1983, p. 13). These evolving characteristics of professions might have contributed to the creation of class and racial divisions within society.

This brings to mind Habermas's (1971) perspective on knowledge and human interests. Habermas asserted that the technical interest in knowledge dominated professional thinking at the expense of other forms of knowledge—namely, practical and emancipatory knowledge. In this way, Schön's (1983) critique of technical rationality appears to be informed by Habermas's idea of technical knowledge as a control tool. Based on this, it becomes meaningful to reflect at three levels: technical, practical, and emancipatory. In my experience, reflection tends to remain confined to the technical and practical levels. However, engaging in a more thorough and wide-ranging reflective process involves examining the effectiveness of one's techniques and the nature of interactions with students and colleagues, and considering how one's

practices might either empower or marginalize others. This kind of reflection demands grappling with difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions about whether our teaching contributes to reinforcing systemic inequalities or whether it can serve as a tool for liberation and social justice.

To sum up, Schön's understanding of professional knowledge and criticism of technical rationality—especially when analyzed alongside Habermas's framework of knowledge interests—advocates for a deeper and more critical reflection in professional life. Such reflection recognizes the inherent complexity of professional tasks, the need to integrate different forms of knowledge, and the powerful societal consequences of professional actions. When professionals engage in reflective practices that include technical, practical, and emancipatory dimensions, they are better positioned to help build a fairer and more just society—one that values a diversity of knowledge systems and is better equipped to address the complex challenges of today's world (Connors, 2024).

From Technical Rationality to Reflection-in-Action

Following this, Schön (1983) explored the theme of 'from technical rationality to reflection-in-action,' where he examined the prevailing epistemology of professional practice, the roots of technical rationality, the growing recognition of its limitations, and the emergence of reflection-in-action. Through this discussion, Schön encouraged a deeper understanding of how technical rationality fell short in achieving social cohesion, peace, and meaningful connections among laypeople, experts, and professionals across different domains. It is also essential to consider the potential implications of this failure for teaching and learning both language and mathematics. Although English language teaching and mathematics instruction differ substantially in their subject matter, they encounter parallel challenges, problems, and dilemmas. Thus, our reflection-on-action takes into account historical shortcomings. The inadequacy of technical rationality became evident in its inability to adapt or diminish its dominance within the evolving fabric of society. Specialized knowledge within individual disciplines proved insufficient for addressing complex issues when based solely on linear scientific frameworks and straightforward cause-and-effect logic, as the increasingly intricate nature of social realities demands deeper analysis. In this scenario,

continued reliance on technical rationality, even when reflecting on existing practices, often fails to grasp the nuanced interrelations inherent in professional life and broader social contexts.

Dewey (1933) had long warned about the constraints of technical knowledge and stressed the necessity for a more expansive perspective when addressing societal issues. He championed experiential learning and democratic engagement in education, promoting pedagogical approaches beyond mechanical instruction to include dialogue, critical thinking, and active participation. Dewey's educational philosophy resonates strongly with Schön's notion of reflection-in-action, emphasizing the role of inquiry, experimentation, and collaborative communication as foundational to meaningful learning experiences. This shared vision suggests teaching should encourage curiosity, problem-solving, and engagement with real-world complexities rather than memorization or standardized instruction.

To conclude, Schön's analysis of the movement from technical rationality to reflection-in-action offers significant insights into reimagining the way English language and mathematics are taught. Through the adoption of reflective methodologies, educators can move past the limitations imposed by technical rationality and instead nurture an educational philosophy that is more holistic and responsive to today's societal complexities (Kim, 2022). This shift in perspective deepens students' learning experiences and equips them with the critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills necessary to face the diverse and layered challenges of contemporary life (Isidori et al., 2023).

The Necessity of Reflection-in-Action

Brookfield (2017) emphasizes that reflective practices enable educators to recognize when certain societal expectations or cultural norms extend beyond their immediate control. For instance, it is unreasonable to expect educators alone to resolve systemic issues like racism, sexism, or ableism. These broader challenges require institutional support, such as creating student support systems for individuals marginalized due to their race or ethnicity and implementing evidence-based strategies to inform both institutional and pedagogical practices. Through engaging in reflective thinking, educators can advocate for using data analytics and evaluation tools that offer both statistical and narrative insights into the effectiveness of their teaching methods

and the overall learning environment. These tools can highlight discrepancies in student achievement across lines of race, gender, or ability, which can then drive focused actions and systemic changes. As a result, reflection can help educators steer clear of internalizing guilt or inadequacy when the obstacles they face are inherently complex and multilayered.

Essentially, Brookfield's view of reflection encourages educators to practice ongoing, critical self-evaluation while also urging institutions to take responsibility for dismantling systemic barriers to equitable learning. By using reflection to examine personal teaching practices and institutional structures, educators are better equipped to respond to educational inequalities with a collaborative, evidence-informed, and holistic strategy. This process reduces the tendency to assign personal blame or feel overwhelmed and builds a shared commitment to nurturing a learning environment that is inclusive and fair for all students.

Drawing on the literature referenced, it is evident that reflective educators frequently apply their past teaching experiences to strengthen their future instructional capabilities, steering clear of repetitive and unexamined habits. Various strategies can be used to cultivate reflective practices among teachers (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017a; Richards & Farrell, 2005). These include maintaining reflective journals or diaries, engaging in peer teaching observations, receiving feedback from teacher educators, participating in lesson study, conducting action research, and utilizing collaborative learning and digital tools for reflection. Educators can effectively train pre-service teachers in reflective methods by drawing upon students' personal narratives, employing dialogue journals, and organizing group discussions—both small and large—focused on their classroom experiences to help them enhance and refine their practices. An effective initial step in fostering reflection is gathering information about reflective practices' types and effectiveness. Therefore, it becomes crucial that educators intentionally cultivate their reflective abilities, as they are expected to engage in lifelong learning both during their academic preparation and throughout their professional careers.

Methods of the Study

This study adopted a qualitative method with a phenomenological research design, grounded in the philosophical tradition of Husserl (1931). Phenomenology seeks to explore and understand the essence of individuals' lived experiences, recognizing that such experiences are inherently subjective and vary across individuals (Peoples, 2021).

Specifically, this research employed an interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenological approach, as influenced by Heidegger (1962), which emphasizes not only describing experiences but also interpreting the meanings participants assign to them within their specific contexts. The aim was to reveal the underlying structures of meaning embedded in participants' teaching and reflective practices. To develop the study's credibility and trustworthiness, we employed qualitative validation strategies such as data triangulation, thick data, rich descriptions, and member checking, following the guidelines of Creswell and Poth (2017).

Data collection involved both secondary and primary sources. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to frame the study, while primary data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight English language teachers based in the Kathmandu district. These interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences, perspectives, and emotional responses in their own words, offering rich phenomenological insights (Ary et al., 2010). Participants were purposefully selected to ensure relevance to the research focus and to gain diverse yet meaningful perspectives. Data analysis was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data rather than being imposed through predetermined categories (Creswell, 2015). The phenomenological design thus provided a rigorous and reflective framework for capturing and interpreting the lived experiences of language teachers in relation to their reflective practices.

This qualitative research aimed to explore teachers' strategies and practices in their reflective teaching. To enhance dependability, trustworthiness and credibility, the researchers employed thick, rich descriptions and utilized data triangulation, aligning with the methodological principles outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017). These strategies supported a nuanced and authentic representation of participants' lived experiences, allowing for meaningful insights into reflective teaching practices within their natural settings.

Analysis and Interpretation

The process of data analysis entails an ongoing interaction among the researcher, the participants, the data itself, and the related literature, allowing meanings and insights to surface and take shape over time (Peoples, 2021). In qualitative research, data

analysis encompasses the tasks of organizing, interpreting, and clarifying the collected data; essentially, it involves making sense of the data based on how participants define and understand their experiences. This includes identifying patterns, themes, categories, and consistent trends (Cohen et al., 2010). Researchers think critically when they sort, classify, generalize, and differentiate elements (Willis, 2001). At other moments, researchers may find themselves emotionally and intellectually impacted by specific ideas that resonate deeply. In such instances, they become vessels for ideas that stir particular emotions or reactions. The former involves a deliberate, active mental process, while the latter reflects a more intuitive, emotional engagement. Both modes of thought are integral to human cognition. According to Husserl (1931), increased awareness and contemplation of one's thinking enhance clarity of understanding. This reflective process enables individuals to transition from simply naming their experiences to structuring them into broader conceptual categories, shaped by their linguistic frameworks and worldview (van Manen, 2012).

In our study, we analyzed and interpreted the data gathered from eight participants. Beginning with the unprocessed data, we organized the information into categories and derived recurring themes. Through this thematic interpretation, we sought to uncover and articulate meaningful insights. In terms of the strategies that teachers utilize in their reflective practices, we have outlined the emerging themes that were drawn from our systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of the participants' responses.

Sharing Experiences

The strength of reflection lies in the act of sharing experiences. From this, we understand that every event holds valuable lessons to be learned. Reflection helps us acknowledge both our weaknesses and strengths as humans. This concept can be applied to teaching and learning situations. At first, we struggled to express our experiences in front of colleagues and superiors. However, we received positive feedback from them. We accepted these comments with great appreciation and gratitude, considering them as compliments. These remarks were encouraging to us. As a result, we began to put more effort into preparing each lesson we taught and refining each idea we shared in class. We soon realized that the outcome of hard work and

self-awareness is always rewarding. Nowadays, we are more confident and capable in communicating and presenting our experiences, skills, insights, and materials more assertively and impactfully than before. In this context, Teacher A shares:

I share my past experiences with students, colleagues, and peers. I aim to relate their knowledge or skills to their experiences by engaging them in discussions, elaborations, or interpreting ideas whenever relevant contexts arise. I blend their ideas, experiences, and attitudes based on the context. We create distinct dialogues and engage in pair work, group activities, critical thinking, and creative writing.

I believe an excellent English language teacher cares, shares, and dares. A teacher who genuinely cares about their students and strives to bring them new and effective ways of learning English, someone who shares their English Language Teaching (ELT) experiences with colleagues and stays updated with the latest developments in the ELT field, and someone who is bold enough to teach the English language efficiently and effectively. I believe sharing experiences is an essential tool in reflective practice. Through sharing, we gain new knowledge. As a language teacher, it is crucial to find solutions to problems. After all, every place in the world faces challenges. The culture of sharing is critical among English language teachers. Similarly, Teacher B states, “Using technology enhances learning. I occasionally share my experiences with colleagues, which helps them professionally develop and helps us find solutions to challenges. I believe that a problem shared is half solved.”

I believe sharing can happen informally through conversations with supportive colleagues or friends, or through fostering professional discussions within teacher groups. By sharing our teaching experiences, we communicate our challenges and work together to find solutions.

The integration of technology maximizes learning and professionalism. Prodromou and Clandfield (2008) advocate for using technology to accelerate reflective processes, helping educators overcome challenges like time and location constraints. The findings emphasize the crucial role of reflective teaching in improving student outcomes and boosting professionalism. By addressing challenges and employing evidence-based strategies, educators can fully harness reflective teaching to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement within educational settings.

Participation and Discussion

Participation and discussion are essential components of reflective practice. Context plays a key role, and when the context is well understood, there is a greater demand for effective practice (Pandey, 2012). Early in my teaching career, I would react negatively when someone criticized my teaching. I couldn't tolerate feedback and often felt angry about it. I believed that I was a good teacher and didn't see the need for improvement. However, engaging in reflection on my practices and participating in discussions helped me recognize my weaknesses. These critiques allowed me to grow and improve as a teacher. Over time, I've built the strength to focus on the positive aspects, even in negative situations. It is widely recognized that a positive attitude shapes our success. Teaching and learning are inherently challenging, but once a language teacher acknowledges this, it creates space for further preparation and improvement in classroom practices. Participation in discussions holds great power. For example, if we, as language teachers, actively engage in discussions, our reflective capacity is strengthened in meetings. In this regard, Teacher C shares, "As a teacher, I must stay updated in my subject. It's truly valuable to have discussions and interactions in meetings and workshops, as they become a special opportunity for reflection."

Through discussion and interaction, language teachers construct new knowledge. Through this exchange process, new teaching methods and strategies emerge. Teacher D states that discussions inject energy into the teaching and learning process. He adds,

"I engage in group discussions. Through this, I can learn from others' ideas and encourage them to think creatively and analytically."

Based on my personal and professional experiences, I believe participating in professional development programs is an excellent way to incorporate reflection into practice. These programs do not always have to focus solely on specific teaching methods; they can also address teacher attitudes that influence our teaching practices.

Interaction and Presentation

Through interaction and presentation, language teachers can expand the scope of knowledge and enhance their reflective practices. This approach offers an opportunity for greater reflection. Indeed, there are numerous ways to engage in reflective practice in teaching. A language teacher must involve, engage, and motivate students to actively

participate in the interaction and presentation process (Pandey, 2008; Rai et al., 2022). Teacher E also emphasizes the importance of interaction and presentation in improving the reflective practices of English language teachers. He further adds:

There should be interactive teaching, where interaction occurs between teacher and student, student and student, student and the book, and student and materials. While I believe that maintaining a diary is effective, I have not personally implemented it. Instead, I typically gather student feedback, seek colleagues' suggestions, and prepare notes for better reflective practice.

Bartlett (1990) proposes a cycle that moves from observation to interpretation, introspection, and questioning, followed by considering alternatives, and then adapting instruction.

Taking Feedback and Comments

Feedback and comments are crucial in enhancing the teaching and learning process. At one point, I believed my classes were going well. Occasionally, if I was fortunate, colleagues would inform me that some students had difficulty understanding my lessons. As a reflective teacher, I took these comments as valuable feedback for improvement. In my pursuit of better teaching, I dedicated time to reading at home, in the library, and sometimes in the garden, aiming to improve both my content knowledge and teaching methods. This effort allowed me to recognize my weaknesses. Over time, I stopped receiving complaints about my teaching. I now believe that success is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. I encourage my friends and colleagues to take risks in their teaching careers in order to succeed. One must endure challenges to experience growth and achievement in learning. In this regard, Teacher F states, “We can’t be a successful teacher until we take student feedback. Teaching has certain objectives.”

Comments from colleagues are always appreciated, and feedback from students is essential for enhancing teachers' academic standards. In my view, feedback and comments are vital for making a language teacher competent and confident in teaching and learning. Only those who are competent and confident can truly be considered professionals. A professional teacher must value the feedback from students to guide and improve their teaching practices. Students, being the direct recipients of the

teaching, are the best sources of feedback. We can gather their opinions by having discussions either as a class or individually, asking them to share what they like and dislike about our teaching methods and suggesting new approaches. I believe that comments empower both teachers and learners, as they provide constructive criticism and useful ideas for improvement. A language teacher can learn a great deal from feedback and comments.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I recall being extremely shy as a student in school. I struggled to speak in front of seniors or engage with teachers in class. Even presenting with PowerPoint was a daunting task when I started my Master of Philosophy program at a university in Nepal. Initially, I felt uncomfortable using the computer and preparing presentations. However, I persevered and presented my assignments, despite the discomfort of using the technology in front of me. The experience was nerve-wracking, and my hands shook as I worked on the presentation. Still, I managed to complete the task as best as I could. Eventually, I received positive feedback and encouragement from my colleagues and faculty members (Pandey, 2012). This experience taught me to "do what you are afraid to do," which has since become the guiding philosophy in both the academic and professional life.

Maintaining the Diary and the Journal

Schon (1983) suggested that practitioners move from identifying a problem to reframing the theory that explains it, ultimately leading to new actions. In this context, keeping professional diaries proves to be highly beneficial. As Bailey (1997) described, a journal is a teacher's written reflection on teaching events. The purpose of keeping a journal is to serve two main functions: recording events and ideas for future reflection. The act of writing itself often sparks new insights about teaching, making journal writing a valuable tool for discovery. A variety of classroom topics can be explored through journaling, such as personal reactions to events in the classroom, questions or observations about teaching challenges, descriptions of significant aspects of lessons or events, ideas for future analysis, or reminders of actions to take. This process encourages deeper reflection among language teachers (Belbase, 2007). In this regard, Teacher G mentions:

To achieve the set goals, teachers need to be reflective. Teaching is goal-oriented, and reflection helps in achieving success. I keep a diary. When something interesting happens, I record it in the diary, thinking it should not be forgotten. I also practice peer teaching, believing it makes my teaching more meaningful.

I believe that maintaining a daily diary of important incidents allows for better reflection. Richards and Farrell (2005) describe a teaching journal as a notebook where teachers regularly write about their teaching experiences and other related events. They argue that journaling helps teachers critically question and analyze their actions both inside and outside the classroom, enabling them to consciously reflect on and assess their teaching practices.

Remembering the Momentous Teaching Moment

Each moment holds significance for a reflective teacher. As such, I strive to be a reflective practitioner in teaching English. I connect past experiences with my current learning and reflection. On one hand, I am learning to be reflective, while on the other, I am continually improving my practice. Being reflective has contributed to my growth, boosting my confidence in who I am, what I do, how I do it, and why I approach teaching and learning the way I do. I have adopted the reflective cycle, which takes me from action to critical reflection on that action. I assess the steps I took, identify strengths and weaknesses, consider alternative approaches, plan new strategies, and evaluate their outcomes. This cycle repeats itself, leading to improvements in my teaching and personal development as an educator. Once this cycle becomes habitual, I advance to the next stage: reflexive practice. In this regard, Teacher H explains:

I reflect on past events, engage in interactions, form groups, and write important words and sentences on the board. I attend workshops organized by NELTA, browse the internet, and read magazines, articles, and journals. Meetings with other English language teachers help me enhance my reflective capacity.

I believe that while we cannot remember every day, we can recall important moments. Thus, every moment is valuable. There are various sources from which knowledge can be gained. A professional teacher must be open to these sources, reflecting on and preparing to learn from them (Adhikari, 2010). Past teaching

experiences offer insights into how successful teaching can be achieved in the present and are essential in envisioning a successful future. It is widely accepted that history plays a crucial role in shaping new endeavors (Pandey, 2016).

Through reflection on our stories, we enhance our learning. We constantly interact with our environment and ourselves as we navigate life. Polkinghorne (1988) suggested that everyone has a story to tell. Teachers use these narratives in various ways, either individually or collaboratively, to address challenges in their work. The ability to reflect, apply insights, and foster a culture of continuous learning are key elements of reflective practices in education.

Critical Thinking and Creative Writing

I believe that being critical is a form of creativity. A creative English language teacher teaches content effectively and employs effective pedagogy. Throughout my journey as a teacher and educator, I have developed the habit of questioning as part of my reflective practice, which has enabled me to observe phenomena closely and critically. I think that good writing stems from good reading, meaning that a strong reader can become a strong writer in language learning (Pandey, 2012). Creative thinking enhances problem-solving skills in English language teaching. Therefore, reflective practice encourages a language teacher to be both reflective and creative.

Consider Teacher E's experience before reflection:

In one of my classes, I noticed a girl speaking loudly and seemingly directing angry words toward me, causing a disturbance. I asked her to sit alone, and she became quiet, focusing on writing an interesting story. However, when I checked her notebook, I found a poorly written story with a negative comment about me.

Critical thinking and careful planning of lessons undoubtedly lead to more effective teaching, as they foster creativity and encourage critical thinking. Developing a new perspective is essential for professional teachers. Success depends on reflective and creative thinking (Finlay, 2008). Early in my teaching career, I considered myself successful simply because I could deliver lessons fluently. I believed that if students were silent, did their homework on time, and did not ask questions, I was succeeding as a teacher (Pandey, 2012). Critical thinkers embrace questioning and recognize that knowledge is subjective. There is no final interpretation. I believe a language teacher

must be critical, developing multiple perspectives to understand the world better. We should remember that good writing follows good reading. Critical thinking nurtures creative writing, and it's fascinating to see how frustration can sometimes lead to creation.

Now, let's look at Teacher D's case after reflection:

Although I initially felt upset, this experience made me reflect on how to use the situation to help the girl improve. I was ultimately pleased with her creative output. I realized that even in frustration and anger, there is room for beautiful creation. I decided to take her notebook to the head teacher and read her story aloud to the class, praising her creativity. From then on, she became more focused, worked diligently on her English tasks, and showed patience and perseverance in class. I was truly pleased with her progress.

I believe that the attitude of creative individuals shapes their academic success. Actions speak louder than words, and creative people are action-oriented. They create new knowledge and innovations. Creative learning brings freshness, variety, and new ways of navigating life (Bhandari, 2009). I also believe that success requires hard work and dedication. Learning is more about perspiration than inspiration, and success follows from devotion, discipline, and commitment. Creative writing plays a crucial role in making life meaningful and fulfilling.

Peer Observation and Team Teaching

A shared culture in teaching develops when we engage in peer observation and team teaching. By sharing ideas, we establish a principle of mutual culture and values. In this context, Teacher F mentions: "I engage in peer observation, receive feedback from my colleagues, and address my weaknesses. Sharing different ideas helps me learn new things." Richardson (1997) highlights that when colleagues gather to reflect on their work, four key factors contribute to the group's success: participants must feel safe, connected, passionate about their shared goals, and appreciative of the group's existence.

Collaboration and cooperation are vital for enhancing the teaching and learning process. Listening to more experienced colleagues can significantly strengthen teaching

practices (Bhandari, 2009). Teacher H further adds, “I believe peer observation offers teachers the chance to observe different teaching styles, which leads to critical reflection on their own methods.”

Similarly, Teacher B explains:

Keeping a teaching diary, using effective teaching techniques, and observing peers’ classes are all reflective practices that support teachers’ professional development. For example, if I made a mistake in my teaching, watching another teacher’s class helps me correct myself and improve my approach.

Fanselow (1988) argues that teachers can better understand their teaching by observing others. By observing and reflecting on others’ teaching, we can reconstruct our own knowledge. He states, “I came to your class not just with a magnifying glass to scrutinize what was happening, but with a mirror to see that what you’re doing is a reflection of much of what I do” (p. 2).

Audio-Video Recording

Audio and video recordings greatly enhance the reflective practice of English teachers (Bhandari, 2009). These recordings allow teachers to assess their actual performance and provide an accurate reflection of their teaching. In this regard, Teacher C states, “As an English teacher, I use audio and video recordings to improve my pronunciation. They help me identify my strengths and weaknesses. However, I find that this practice is quite rare in my case.”

I believe that audio-video recordings are instrumental in developing language skills. Audio recordings focus on hearing, while visual recordings provide an additional perspective. Audio-visual recordings serve as powerful tools in enhancing a teacher’s self-reflection (Bhandari, 2009). They offer an objective, mirror-like view of classroom interactions. Additionally, recordings made during class can offer valuable insights into a teacher’s progress over time. One benefit is that these recordings can be revisited and analyzed multiple times, capturing many details that other methods may miss. While using audio and video in teaching and learning can be challenging, it is also a rewarding experience. Feedback from experienced colleagues is invaluable for improving one’s teaching (Pandey, 2012).

Collaboration and Co-operation

Ahmad et al. (2013) suggest that reflective teachers are naturally more collaborative, cooperative, and effective because they systematically review past experiences and extract insights to enhance students' learning outcomes. Teachers who adopt a reflective mindset develop a deeper understanding of their teaching content and create engaging classrooms that foster student participation and inquiry.

We now embrace the idea that helping others is more valuable than winning. Through cooperation and collaboration, language teachers can achieve successful teaching. For this, we need support from others. For example, when colleagues are available, I can share my ideas, emotions, teaching methods, and techniques. If I cannot find anyone to listen and provide feedback, I may reflect alone, even if it feels isolating. In a collaborative and cooperative culture, dynamism flourishes. I follow this approach in the language learning process. My identity, role, influence, and status are shaped within a collaborative culture (Pandey, 2016). However, collaboration is a tool, not a goal in itself. I take responsibility for our actions, methods, and reasons behind how we approach teaching and learning, but I do not hold the same responsibility for those who collaborate with me. Teacher A elaborates on this idea saying “I collaborate with other teachers and seek their cooperation. This culture of collaboration helps me foster uniformity and harmony among them. It also boosts teachers’ confidence. The likelihood of conflict is reduced when teachers have a mutual understanding.”

From my experience, the professional growth of language teachers is facilitated through collaboration and cooperation. Harris (1998) notes that collaborative journal writing with peers can benefit teachers, as peers can challenge and support their thinking. Effective teaching practices are linked to inquiry, reflection, and ongoing professional development. Sharing with colleagues and friends is crucial to becoming a more reflective practitioner (Pandey, 2008). Feedback, comments, and discussions about reflections may come from mentors, supervisors, university coordinators, or peers in the program.

Reflection can also be a collaborative method of inquiry into teaching (Adler, 1991). For example, questions from a friend can help clarify a concern, while a comment from a supervisor can prompt deeper reflection. Collaboration in portfolio development involves requesting feedback from mentors, supervisors, colleagues, and peers. It may also include discussions with colleagues who can help identify relevant

artifacts to clarify our beliefs and dispositions. The feedback feature in an Electronic Portfolio provides opportunities for peer evaluation and editing as part of the collaborative process.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing discourse on reflective teaching by highlighting the multifaceted nature of reflection in language education. Through thematic analysis of teachers' narratives, it reveals that reflection is not merely an individual act but a dynamic, dialogic process that involves sharing, discussion, interaction, critical thinking, and collaboration. The study adds to the scholarly understanding of how reflective practices such as journaling, feedback incorporation, peer observation, and audio-video documentation influence teaching efficacy and personal growth. By documenting real-life teaching moments, this work deepens the discourse around experiential learning, reflexive teaching, and professional identity development in the context of English language teaching.

Practitioners can draw several key insights from this study. First, they can adopt reflective tools—such as maintaining a journal, engaging in feedback-based refinement, or using peer observation—to become more aware of their teaching practices. Second, the narratives show how critical thinking, creativity, and classroom interaction can be integrated into reflective practice to make teaching more engaging and effective. Third, the study encourages teachers to value discomfort and critique as catalysts for growth, ultimately leading to more confident, thoughtful, and student-centered instruction. These findings reaffirm the importance of reflective practice not only for personal improvement but also for fostering a collaborative and innovative teaching culture.

However, this study has certain limitations. Its qualitative and context-specific nature limits the generalizability of the findings. The reflective narratives are drawn from a relatively small and self-selected group of English language teachers, which may not capture the full diversity of experiences across different educational settings. Additionally, while the study presents rich, descriptive accounts, it does not employ longitudinal or comparative methods that could provide deeper insight into changes over time or differences across institutions. Future research could explore reflective practice in broader contexts or investigate the long-term impact of specific reflective strategies on student learning outcomes and teacher development.

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