Exploring the Impact of Reflective Teaching Practices on the Professional Development of Language Teachers
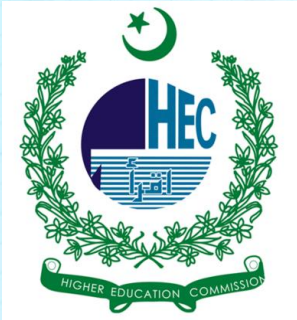
[1]Saiyida Shahbano Jabeen
[2]Dr. Syeda Aliya Fatima
[3]Dr. Muhammad Akram Mankash

[1]PhD Scholar, Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hamdard University, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: shahbano.jabeen786@gmail.com

[2]Assistant Professor Department of Education, Fatimiyah Higher Education System, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: aliyafatima@fhes.fen.edu.pk

[3]Principal Hazrat Shahjahangir Academy, Faculty of English Language & Literature, Karachi Email: a.mankash59@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the role of reflective teaching in language teacher education, highlighting how critical reflection and self-evaluation facilitate the professional development of early-career English language teachers in Karachi. Twelve undergraduate instructors participated in semi-structured interviews as a component of the study's qualitative research methodology which also encompassed classroom observations to capture reflective behaviors in real time. The data was analyzed using the six-step theme analysis approach established by Braun and Clarke. It disclosed significant issues, including the impact of reflection on educational strategies, the challenges of implementing reflective practices, and methods to overcome these barriers. Despite institutional constraints sometimes hindering its comprehensive execution, the findings indicate that reflective teaching enhances classroom management, professional identity, and instructional flexibility. This study is significant as it underscores the imperative of enhancing teacher education programs.

Keywords: Reflective Teaching Practices, Professional Development, Language Teacher Education, Language Teaching Practices, Self-evaluation

Introduction

Over the last several decades language teacher education has changed focus to emphasize better reflective teaching methods (Farrell, 2018). Our research looks at how teaching reflection helps new language teachers improve their career performance. New teachers develop their professional identities and teaching skills most strongly in their early teaching years according to Gebhard (2009). Our research will provide new evidence about how reflective teaching helps teacher educators fulfill their goals.

The last few decades have brought major changes to language teacher education through the adoption of teaching methods that focus on student experiences. Teachers across the world now recognize reflective teaching methods as essential for their career development according to Farrell (2018). Through reflective teaching instructors can review their teaching methods and classroom performance to become better at their job (Richards & Lockhart 1994). Teachers who reflect on their work

master both their career duties and improve their teaching abilities.

Researchers studied how early-career language teachers use reflection to develop their professional skills. According to Gebhard in 2009 teaching during the beginning years helps new teachers develop their skills and identities while learning to work with different students in the classroom. During these period educators face unique difficulties maintaining class control and serving all students plus improving their teaching approaches. Through reflection teachers examine their work and study research-based ways to improve their education methods.

Even with limited research especially for beginning language teachers the available data proves reflective teaching holds strong theoretical value. Reflective teaching processes need better attention as proven elements for new educator development even though research shows improved teacher performance and student results and their teaching quality (Akram, Sewani, & Ahmad, 2024). Our research analyzed how reflective teaching helps teachers make better decisions about teaching while running their classrooms very well during their initial education years.

The investigation gave important results on reflective teaching practice in education by studying new English language teachers in Karachi. Our research seeks to enrich professional studies by showing how reflection boosts teacher instruction and professional progress. Our research proves teacher preparation programs must teach reflective frameworks so educators can handle teaching needs in modern classrooms. Our research demonstrates the importance of educational institutions supporting reflective practices throughout their teaching organizations.

Research Objectives

This study holds considerable importance as it augments the current body of literature concerning reflective teaching by offering empirical evidence regarding the engagement of early-career language educators in reflective practices. Our research offers insights into teaching reflection in language teacher education plus supports their job development. This study delivers practical guidance to policy leaders and teacher training professionals about effective methods to develop reflective practices that help instructors enhance their teaching methods.

Researchers keep mentioning reflective teaching's crucial role in language teacher training according to Mann and Walsh (2017). Our research will study how reflective

approaches affect the early learning process of new language teachers. A detailed study in the Pakistani setting will reveal specific problems and create teaching suggestions specific to this location's needs. Research studies mostly focus on how reflection impacts student results yet ignore how reflection affects teacher development, classroom management and adaptability practice (Akbari, 2007). Despite useful theoretical frameworks from Schön and Farrell researchers have not studied how new language teachers use these methods and develop teaching skills during their critical early years. This research fills the gap in literature by studying how new language teachers use reflection to grow professionally and adjust to different classroom situations.

Previous studies rarely investigated the direct benefits reflective teaching brings to beginning language educators. There are fewer studies investigating the impact of reflection on language instructors' pedagogical skills, classroom management, and flexibility compared to the extensive research focused on student learning results (Akbari, 2007). This study aims to address the gap by examining the use of reflective teaching approaches by language instructors and the impact of these practices on their professional growth.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is:

1. How do reflective teaching practices influence the professional growth and pedagogical strategies of language teachers in their early years of practice?

1.1. What types of reflective practices do early-career language teachers engage in?

1.2. How does reflection impact language teachers' instructional decision-making processes?

1.3. What challenges do language teachers face in implementing reflective practices, and how do they overcome them?

Review of Literature

Reflective Teaching Practices

Reflective teaching has been a fundamental element in teacher education since Dewey's (1933) promotion of reflective thinking in education. Schön (1983) introduced the notion of the reflective practitioner, asserting that reflection-on-action is essential for professional growth. Reflective practice in language teaching pushes

educators to critically evaluate their teaching methods, student involvement, and instructional efficacy (Farrell, 2013).

Numerous frameworks for reflective practice are available, including Farrell's (2015) five-stage reflective cycle, which encompasses planning, teaching, observing, reflecting, and modifying. Akbari (2007) presented a methodology for reflective teaching tailored for language educators, emphasizing self-awareness, critical thinking, and peer cooperation. Notwithstanding these theoretical frameworks, actual research on the use of reflection by language educators to enhance their teaching and professional growth remains scarce. Prior research indicates that reflective teaching enhances instructional quality (Mann & Walsh, 2017), fosters teacher autonomy (Farrell, 2013), and facilitates ongoing professional development (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Gebhard, 2009).

Reflective Teaching Practices in Language Teacher Education

Reflective teaching stands as a core element of teacher education because critical reflection leads educators to better professional development (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). Public-school educators need to practice reflection because their classroom work requires them to lead various students and design unique teaching ways that work for everyone (Farrell, 2018). This study examines current research to show how reflection affects language education professional development with details about reflective methods, practice hurdles, and teacher progress and performance outcomes (Shah, Ali, & Ahmad, 2024; Kolachi et al., 2024).

Defining Reflective Teaching in Language Teacher Education

The approach of reflective language teaching changed since Dewey's theory (1933) recommended reflective thinking as a bridge between classroom practice and educational concepts. Schön (1983) deepened his theory by showing how teachers should think about their lessons immediately during class and analyze them later to see what worked well.

Language educators systematically examine their teaching methods student involvement and educational achievement using reflective teaching methods as outlined by Richards and Lockhart in 1994. At the same time this technique helps teachers find their strengths through critical self-analysis and professional growth (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Farrell established a reflective pattern for language teachers

that run from planning and teaching through observing, reflecting, and rethinking to demonstrate how reflection sustains our teaching improvements.

The Role of Reflective Teaching in Professional Development

For language teachers reflective teaching unlocks their potential for professional advancement. According to Farrell (2013) teachers can make better methods choices and better understand their professional identity when they reflect on their work. Through reflection educators find which parts of their teaching need improvement while creating fresh educational methods to boost their performance in the classroom (Ali, et al., 2023; Ahmad, Rashid, & Ali, 2023).

Studies prove that reflective methods boost the career growth of teachers who teach language. In their research Farrell and Ives (2015) found that ESL educators who practiced reflection became better aware of their teaching approaches and started making learning the student's focus. According to Akbari (2007) reflective teaching helps teachers develop independence by making them responsible for their own professional development without relying on outsiders for feedback.

Challenges in Implementing Reflective Teaching Practices

Research proves reflective teaching is valuable although teachers of foreign languages consistently face challenges when putting it into daily practice. Several sources point out that time constraints cause a major problem. Language teachers find it hard to make time for reflection because of their heavy class preparation work and grading along with administrative responsibilities (Farrell, 2016). Many language teachers struggle to keep up their reflective habits because their schools offer weak support and limited networking opportunities (Akbari', 2007; Akram, Ahmad, & Sewani, 2024).

Predetermined school practices and weak reflection traditions prevent instructors from engaging in reflective activities (Jabeen, Ali & Ahmad, 2023). Farrell notes that many teacher education institutions teach reflective learning models to new teachers but stop giving this support when students become working faculty. Teachers who lack ongoing reflection opportunities tend to become passive learners which blocks professional development.

Empirical Evidence on the Impact of Reflective Practices

Research demonstrates that when language instructors use reflective methods they

improve their teaching skills and develop professionally. Mann and Walsh (2017) interviewed language instructors to show that teaching reflection helps them solve classroom challenges and adjust their teaching style to serve a range of student needs. Educators who reflected often developed greater teaching self-assurance and were willing to experiment with different teaching techniques.

Farrell analyzed how new language teachers experienced reflective teaching practice through their teaching journals during his 2018 research project. Teachers at their first stage of employment used reflective diaries to document their thoughts and gain insights into classroom problems while exploring new ways to manage students. Analyzing themselves this way helped teachers understand their teaching practices better.

The research demonstrates both the benefits and limitations of using reflective teaching individually. According to Akbari (2007) teachers need reaction from other educators or mentors to make real progress with reflection. Without feedback from others educators will continue to use poor teaching methods and avoid better ways to teach. Finally educators find shared reflection with peers produces better results in their professional development.

The research shows reflective teaching trains language instructors to grow professionally and understand themselves better while adjusting their approaches and teaching methods. Implementing reflection methods depends on educational institutions offering time and allowing staff to work together. Research shows that while teaching reflection brings challenges teachers still develop more freedom to teach effectively plus grow as professionals.

Theoretical Framework

This research combined Schön's Reflective Practitioner Theory (1983) and Farrell's Five-Stage Reflective Practice Model (2015) to develop its theoretical approach alongside Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework. These theoretical frameworks built a strong foundation to study early-career language teacher reflection.

Schön's Reflective Practitioner Theory (1983) emphasizes two essential processes: Teachers used thinking both while teaching and after lessons to improve. Reflection-in-action means teachers fix teaching problems as they happen while

reflection-on-action requires teachers to evaluate lessons afterward and apply new insights. Through this theory the results demonstrate that new teachers made quick lesson changes while the class ran to match their students' needs plus wrote reflection journals after each lesson to assess their success.

Farrell's Five-Stage Reflective Practice Model lets teachers plan their activities then teach them while observing their results and making adjustments. Our study design matches how participants organized their work steps starting from feedback loop through self-evaluation and group reflection for teaching improvement. The research study centers its focus on reflection as an ongoing cycle discovered within Farrell's model.

We used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for a systematic approach to analyze our research data. The tool's specific steps helped researchers break down the data and find important patterns about how reflection affects teacher growth and classroom leadership. Our analysis joins two research methods to recognize and sort reflection types and show how they benefit new language teachers through teachers' personal development.

Research Methodology

This research project took a qualitative method to analyze reflective practices among new language teachers using interview data and classroom observation. A qualitative research approach works well because it lets us understand deeply what educators think and feel about their work according to Creswell and Poth (2018). The study participants consist of English language teachers with between 1-5 years of teaching experience who work at major and minor education institutions. The study selected 12 beginning language teachers for study using purposeful sampling to focus on young teachers who use reflection regularly in their teaching. Through semi-structured interviews we wanted to learn about teachers' reflective practice activities their work challenges and professional growth steps. The researchers recorded and transcribed the interviews for professional analysis purposes. I directly watched classrooms to check how teachers use reflection methods during their normal lessons. The observation outcome served as the foundation to understand how teachers think when they decide what to teach. To assess early-career English language teachers in Karachi the study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic method for analyzing

data. The research results demonstrated clear ways that reflection can help educators improve their work practices and make better choices in teaching situations. Reflection formed an ongoing practice during which teachers adjusted their teaching to match student needs and solved problems with school restrictions.

During the familiarization period we produced full transcripts of interviews and classroom observations then read them through multiple times to immerse ourselves deeply in the information. Our initial analysis showed important findings like "teachers updating their plans after reflection" and "journal writing as a self-evaluation strategy." The research team grouped the identified codes into key teaching aspects including how reflection affects this work and what hinders successful reflection alongside successful collaboration in reflection practices. The final step refined main themes to match the project requirements and made them easier to understand. Supporting quotes helped us reveal participant experiences in detail to show how they matched with key themes. Our technique helps find major patterns which show how reflection affects teachers' teaching style and their ongoing development while dealing with classroom challenges. Our thematic analysis process studied every response from interviewees and classroom observations to best show what participants did.

We started evaluation by meticulously listening to recorded interviews and producing over 100 pages of raw text from those recordings. We carefully studied this data to pinpoint repeating patterns and solutions found by our team. The first coding stage cut the data into smaller parts that directly addressed the study goals. I make changes to my teaching schedule because students tell me how to approach lessons. We classified these coded data points into major teaching categories during the next step. Participants discovered new classroom methods because of reflection yet faced implementation challenges in their teaching practice. We optimized our themes during detailed reviews to keep them separate from other research goals. Subthemes organized our analysis to show how teachers selected specific reflection methods and what techniques they used to address their teaching challenges. At the end we listed the key themes to match our study's main investigation targets. The research included direct participant statements to make results seem real and comprehensive. The results showed how reflective practices shape teachers' professional identity while adapting

lessons and deal with school rules at the same time.

Findings and Discussions

Impact of Reflective Teaching Practices

Through reflective practices participants strengthened their understanding of their roles as educators and updated their teaching techniques to better serve students. People reported reflection drives their professional development and helps them better understand themselves.

A professor in public university emphasized how reflection helped him see both good teaching practices and steps to improve. That helped him identify his strengths and areas for improvement," he stated. His narrative illustrated how reflective teaching fostered self-evaluation, enabling educators to recognize and tackle their areas of weakness. "Upon reflecting on my lessons, I recognize the adjustments I could make to better support students who face challenges with grammar," stated a 29-year-old instructor at a university. It inspires me to develop innovative approaches to ensure their understanding of the topic. The participant claimed that he developed a heightened awareness of his pupils' needs through a continuous cycle of testing, reflection, and adaptation.

Moreover, several participants indicated that engaging in reflective practices empowered them to experiment with innovative teaching methods. For example, a 26-year-old teacher explained how her implementation of interactive group activities to enhance student engagement was inspired by her personal reflection, "that she does not knows about biasness in her teaching until and unless, she put some reflection on it, after that I engage students."

Professional Development of Language Teachers

Students learn teaching better when they select reflective tools that match their teaching style and professional aims. The participants used several teaching methods starting with basic self-reflection while also holding peer discussions and sharing informal feedback.

Varieties in Reflective Teaching Practices

Through this pattern educational professionals show they can change their reflective methods to fit unique teaching situations and demands. The variety of reflection methods proves that reflection stays current while adapting to solve different learning

problems.

People used journaling as their preferred way to reflect. Students observed it as their standard method to keep records of their teaching days and learn about problems while viewing their success results. Class observations stay in my notebook for analysis explains one teacher from our local degree college. My journal helps me find what problems happen often so I can prepare better plans for next classes. Writing helped her arrange her thoughts plus document her education career's growth.

The participants showed that spending time with others helps them reflect on their work. The teacher in Karachi believes classroom discussions with colleagues bring value to instruction because they catch things her students' lessons may miss. Peers frequently help me understand subjects better than I did before. Educators could connect to educational peers to access community information which let them enhance their problem-solving ability.

Some participants discovered new ways to reflect by studying student work to know how well they teach. As a college lecturer I study student assignments to measure my teaching quality. Failures from many students let me know it's time to update my teaching methods."

Reflection as a Self-evaluation Tool

Participants used reflection for making good choices about their lessons. By reviewing their teaching session's participants found problems in their approach and developed better ways to run their class which produced stronger results for students. Through self-reflection one teacher showed us how she used the method to overcome student disengagement in the classroom. The participant used data from her teaching observations and used it to create student-led activities that successfully pulled students in. By changing her approach to student-centered learning she transformed her classroom dynamics for the better.

A university teacher explained how reflection changes his lesson preparation process. In response to my observations I regularly update my teaching plans so all students can learn successfully. By regularly making changes to his teaching methods he created lessons that worked better for different types of students which improved overall classroom inclusivity. All participants pointed out how they use reflection to make teaching decisions repeatedly (Naeem, Ali, & Ahmed, 2022). After examining

their teaching results they saw potential problems ahead so they made specific enhancements. Our participants showed how reflecting on practice helps them grow professionally and adapt better to changing situations.

Challenges in Implementing Reflection

The study participants mentioned that time and workplace policies made it hard to find proper time to practice self-reflection. Teaching staff found their job split between evaluating student work, creating lesson plans, and handling administrative tasks which stopped them from focusing on student instruction. One participant commented that they find it difficult to devote uninterrupted time to reflection because of the combination of grading and lesson preparing. She usually does one writing entry each week and finds that process rushed even though she tries. Her findings demonstrate a struggle between teachers' desire for ongoing reflection and their everyday work requirements.

Our study showed strong evidence that teachers faced support problems at their jobs. According to our interviewee who works at a private university students don't have access to specific programs that facilitate reflective teaching. No educational system exists to support us in adopting reflection practices into our teaching approach. Teaching staff often had to find their own way to practice reflection because their institutions did not provide support that made things easier. Participating teachers proved their strong commitment to reflection because it helped them develop professionally.

Overcoming Barriers

Despite encountering obstacles participants created new ways to practice reflection. The participants developed self-study systems that combined discussion teams with daily journal entries and lesson planning analysis. At his university another lecturer began keeping a weekend journal to avoid distractions when reflecting on his work. Although it lacks total effectiveness it helps me do what I need. Another teacher at the same school institution explained the essential need for working together. We created a small team to share feedback and ideas with our peers outside regular class time. It has proven to be invaluable for introspection.

Early-career educators prove their talent by finding creative ways to maintain reflective habits despite system and individual barriers. By hosting workshops and

forums about teaching students would benefit from improved reflection abilities.

Classroom Observations

Our classroom observations showed what early-career language teachers do when they reflect on their teaching. Teaching professionals use reflection while instruction progresses to make immediate changes that help students participate better and grasp content better. Through group discussions Participant 4 learned that working together with peers produces new problem-solving ideas. When teaching Participant 3 evaluates his performance by studying student feedback and personal reflections. Participants 1 and 4 explained that excessive work responsibilities and limited time blocked regular deep reflection moments. Participant 5 introduced new learning methods by letting students reflect while chatting about class materials during casual school discussions. Having casual discussions with colleagues alongside weekend journaling (stated by Participants 2 and 5) lets reflecting support professional development and improve instruction skills.

Conclusion

Our research shows that reflective teaching helps new teachers develop professionally while making lessons more adaptable and improving how they run their classroom. Reflective techniques helped teachers understand teaching better and felt more certain in their duties. The use of separate reflective methods like writing in journals and talking with peers helped teachers evaluate their practices before including user feedback.

Despite these challenges organizations did not provide enough time or resources for teachers to practice reflection. Every day participants showed remarkable strength by finding new solutions while working well together to overcome their difficulties. Our results show that institutions need thorough coaching support to help their teams start using reflection methods. The necessary resources are dedicated training time plus peer guidance plus teacher growth sessions.

Reflection training helped participants build better teaching skills and learn more about themselves. Educators highlighted that engaging in reflection allowed them to enhance their teaching methods and recognize their individual strengths and areas for improvement. This process facilitated their development as educators. Reflecting allowed them to gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses as

educators. Upon reflection, they recognize that their examples in the classroom were overly abstract. Hence, they incorporate more relatable examples, and there appears to be a noticeable increase in student engagement. Among participants, journaling, peer discussions, and self-assessment emerged as the predominant methods of self-reflection and critical evaluation providing them a systematic approach to record and reflect on their experiences. Engaging in peer discussions offered diverse viewpoints on the challenges of teaching. Participants who frequently document their thoughts in a journal identify trends in effective and ineffective approaches. Engaging in discussions with peers following classes serve as primary method for reflection. Occasionally, the peers identify problems that a teacher may overlook. Reflection played a crucial role in shaping instructional choices by fostering flexibility and attentiveness to the needs of students.

Participants indicate utilizing reflective insights to adjust lesson plans, incorporating interactive activities as best reflective practices to cater to various learning styles. Upon analyzing the reasons for student non-participation, more interactive activities were implemented, resulting in enhanced engagement. Contemplation enabled participants to modify my evaluations. Significant obstacles included time limitations and insufficient institutional backing. Participants faced challenges in finding time for reflection within their demanding teaching schedules. The culture within institutions frequently showed a deficiency in resources or support for engaging in reflective practices. Time presents a significant challenge and participants aspire to engage in deeper reflection, yet they find it challenging to journal even once a week. Institutional support for reflective practices is found to be lacking hence structured workshops or reflective forums are essential.

In the face of challenges, participants devised innovative strategies, including informal peer groups and weekend reflections. Educators discovered that working together with peers and allocating specific time for reflection enabled them to maintain their practices effectively. An informal group has been established to address various challenges. Obtaining diverse viewpoints is exceptionally beneficial and teachers document their thoughts on weekends to engage in reflection free from interruptions.

Discussion

Our research demonstrated that reflective teaching methods help new language teachers at school learn how to handle today's classroom realities. When teachers reflect on their lessons they adapt teaching methods to meet students' needs and develop their professional identity stronger through effective leadership (Akram, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022). The study data demonstrates how reflection leads to better professional development and helps both individuals and teams learn continuously.

Reflection brings clear advantages yet the study shows present challenges including maintenance of time limits and weak organizational support. Schools need to build official programs that support teachers in making reflective teaching part of their regular professional growth. Schools need to create ways for teachers to connect socially while giving those tools for reflection and officially recognize the importance of reflection work through technology integration (Ali, et al., 2023). Through reflective teaching educators enhance their career growth which improves education delivery across multiple classroom environments. Future researchers should test proven programs for teaching reflection methods in schools and study how these methods help students and educators over time.

Our results support findings from reflective teaching studies particularly reflection-on-action work from 1983 and Farrell's reflective cycle of 2015. The teaching practices in Pakistan align with global reflective studies but local funding problems and resource scarcities impact how teachers implement them in the curriculum (Dilshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023). Our findings show teaching institutions need to create unique teacher training programs to teach reflection techniques for their staff. Our study reveals that reflective techniques play an important role in the career advancement of beginning English teachers in Pakistan. As challenges arise participants use their creative strength to keep practicing reflection which proves essential for teaching success (Haider, Ahmad & Ali, 2024). Good results depend on school help to build reflection as a permanent part of Pakistan's school system.

Recommendations

The following were the recommendations of the study were made on the basis of findings:

➢ The study highlights the importance of reflective practices in the professional

development of teachers with diverse type of reflective practices, so it is recommended that school teachers should implement different reflective practices in their classroom to enhance their learning.

➢ The findings of the study revealed that professional development of language teachers plays important role in their classroom practice, so it is recommended that professional development session should be arranged to the language teacher's skills.

➢ The results of the study showed that reflection as a self-evaluation tool of language teachers plays significant role in enhancing their self-assessment to improve their language skills in classroom, so it is recommended that teachers should be motivated to focus on their self-evaluation which enhance their professional and subject expertise.

➢ The outcomes of the study revealed that challenges in implementing reflection and classroom observation are most important elements for language teachers to implement different strategies about language teaching, so it is recommended that school administrators and heads should focus on these issues and challenges while teaching in the language classroom to effectively run the classroom.

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