

The Impact of Reflective Teaching on the EFL Teachers' Performance

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ABSTRACT: Reflective teaching is a movement in teacher education and essential type of thought that enables teachers to deliberate on their experiences and analyze their own practice. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of reflective teaching on the EFL teachers' performance. Descriptive statistics (range, means, and standard deviation), and a Paired Sample t-test were conducted to answer the questions raised in the study. The participants were 120 female intermediate students, and 10 EFL teachers. The data collection instruments were two reflective teaching tools, i.e., teacher diary and students' feedback. The study employed a quasi-experimental design which involved administering teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire as pretest and posttest in order to determine the effect of reflective teaching on teachers' performance. The results of the study revealed that the application of reflective teaching procedure had a significant effect on teachers' ability. Furthermore, the results showed that the teachers changed their teaching preferences and considered alternative activities, in order to improve their teaching effectiveness based on their reflection recorded through keeping diaries.

Key words: Reflection, Reflective teaching, Reflective tools, Teacher diary, Students' feedback.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a complex and highly skilled activity. Teaching as a profession involves a considerable amount of challenges and decision-making. To be excellent in teaching has always been a demanding concern in educational setting; so, teachers employ many different approaches if they wish to find a way to improve their teaching and learning. Teachers need to be aware of their roles as self-regulated learners in order to examine their practice and document their quest for self-development. How can teachers move to a higher level of awareness of their teaching? One way of doing this is reflecting on their teaching, and using observation and reflection as a way of bringing about change.

In this study, the researchers' interest was to explore how a reflective view of teaching can be developed and how a teacher's performance in the EFL classroom can be improved through reflection. Reflective thinking is not an innovation in teaching; this concept has been around for more than 50 years. It has its roots in the work of a number of educational theorists and practitioners. This approach is to improve the traditional teaching so as to adapt to the new English teaching in the new era.

Richards and Lockhart (1996) state that a reflective approach to teaching is "one in which teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching"(p.1). It is an approach to teaching and to teacher education which is based on the assumption that teachers can improve their understanding of teaching and the quality of their own teaching by reflecting critically on their teaching experiences. A reflective teacher is as one who assesses the origins,

purposes and results of work in classroom. As a result of these focused discussions a teacher is able to better understand practice and be able to take steps to improve practice (Rose, 2007).

Reflective teaching emphasizes on the actual teaching processes, and seeks to gain a better understanding of these processes by focusing on teachers what they do and why they do it; so, reflective teaching aims at teachers' change and self-development. The process starts with collection of data for self-analysis through written accounts of experiences- autobiographies, journal writing, collaborative diary keeping, recording lessons etc. That prompts reflection and refining of one's practices or changing one's attitude. Thus, the primary benefit of reflective practice for teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching style, and ultimately greater effectiveness as a teacher.

Reflective teaching helps teachers and enables them to develop more informed practice; it introduces a number of exploratory tasks, activities and action research, which teachers can carry out in their own classrooms. El-Dib (2007) investigated the experience of student teachers performing action research as a method of reflective thinking. Her findings support the view that reflective thinking does not develop with experience defined only in terms of the number of years in teaching. Expert teachers do not gain expertise in time. This view grants teachers the prospect of being responsible for their learning as agents and not as recipients of knowledge (Burns, 2007).

In this study, the researchers worked on the effect of two different types of reflective tools (teacher diary and students' feedback) to investigate the impact of practicing reflective teaching on the improvement of EFL teachers' performance. To this end, the following research questions were raised:

- Is there a significant relationship between reflective teaching and improvement of EFL teachers' performance?

- Is there a significant difference between the data obtained from different reflective teaching tools?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

To accomplish the objectives of this study, 120 intermediate learners from Iran Oxford Language Institute were chosen. The participants were adult learners with the age range of 16 to 35 years old. Their gender was not considered as a discriminator in this study. In addition, another sample of the study was total number of 10 language teachers from aforesaid Institute.

Teachers who were chosen had at least one class during a semester in the institute. One of the teachers was a native speaker of English language and others were MA holders of TEFL, who had good background in English teaching for 7 years. Therefore, the sample of the study consisted of 120 students and 10 teachers assigned to 10 classes. There was no control group in the study. Because the purpose was to investigate the results of applying reflective process by comparing the data obtained from the administration of pretest and posttest to students and their teachers.

Instruments

There are some procedures that can be used by teachers to investigate classroom teaching. Some of these procedures are also mentioned by Murphy (2001) and Tice (2002) and they properly label them as tools. The researchers had to choose a uniform procedure for obtaining data. In order to gather data and do the subsequent analysis, two instruments were utilized in this study: teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire. The teachers were supposed to report the results of their reflection recorded by diaries through filling out the questionnaire. Both teacher and student versions of the questionnaire were designed by Fatemipour (2009). The designed questionnaire was the instrument given to all students and class teachers. The questionnaire consisted of 43 items. Twenty eight items explored the teachers' domination in teaching; 4 items focused on examining the students' views of their responsibilities and those of their teachers, 10 items aimed to measure the role of material to learn English, and 2 items investigated learners' activities.

The items were Likert-scale statements which asked the respondents to indicate the degree of agreement to the posed idea, sequentially assigning

value of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to the options of "Completely disagree", "Disagree", "Have no idea", "Agree" and "Completely agree" respectively. In this regard, the results could vary from the minimum score (43) to the maximum score (215).

It is worth mentioning that the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using the data obtained from the participants the related index of Cronbach's Alpha appeared to be 0.91. To statistically investigate the construct validity of the questionnaire, the researchers took Cronbach's Alpha index into consideration. Garson (2006) states that one of the common methods of estimating the construct validity of a questionnaire is to compute the internal consistency of the items by applying Cronbach's Alpha (qtd. in Fatemipour, 2009).

To identify the degree of participants' awareness of the teaching process, the second questionnaire was applied in this study. This version of the questionnaire was also standardized by Fatemipour (2009). In his study, the researcher reported that the items were modified by experts' recommendations and also, he utilized the extracted data to calculate the predictive validity and reliability of the designed questionnaire. Consequently, the questionnaire was examined and the ambiguous items were modified or totally removed from the body of the questionnaire.

It also consisted of 43 items, the items were categorized in four sets: 28 items focused on examining the students' views of their teachers' proficiency in teaching, 10 items aimed to measure the role of material to learn English, 4 items explored the students' views of their responsibilities and 2 items investigated learners' behavior while working with others in the classroom.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 for completely disagree, 2 for "Disagree", 3 for "Have no idea", 4 for "Agree" and to 5 for "Completely agree". Therefore, the results could vary from 43 to 215. Learners by choosing one of the given five options could express their ideas clearly.

Design and Procedure

The study was exploratory in nature. In this research, there were a pretest as well as a posttest, an experimental group, and treatment. There was no control group. In addition, the participants were not randomly selected. The design of the present research was quasi-experimental because according to Levy and Ellis (2009), quasi-experiment known as 'field-experiment', is a type of experimental design in which the researcher has limited leverage and control over the selection of study participants. This study consisted of an independent variable, that is teacher

diary, and a dependent variable, that EFL teachers' performance. The amount of change in the performance of the teachers were measured by two reflective tools, i.e., teacher diary and student feedback.

In the data gathering procedure, at first, the researchers at the beginning of the term explained the aims and the process of doing this research to the participants, by a brief introduction to reflective approach and explained what was expected of them. Also, very short orientation session was held for the teachers; this action could make the subjects familiar with the goals of the study and agree on teaching sessions for administering the research tools.

In the treatment stage, the researchers introduced different types of reflective teaching tools to participants. The researchers, then, introduced the tools which were supposed to be used during the study and also the teachers who had participated in the preceding stage of data collection were asked to write reports or taking notes after each session. Taking notes could help them to fill out the questionnaire at the end of the term.

During the 8 treatment sessions, the teachers tried to concentrate on their teaching and reflected on their weak points in order to compensate them.

Afterward, at the end of semester the researchers re-administered the questionnaires to the subjects. Students were asked to give their feedback

on the teaching process by completing their questionnaire. Also, teachers were asked to reflect on their teaching by completing the questionnaire.

RESULTS

The data collected from both groups (teachers and students) were finally analyzed to trace the probable changes in and between groups as a result of the treatment. The statistical analyses of Paired-Samples t-test were run to investigate the effect of reflective teaching procedure on the performance of the teachers on the pretest and posttest.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference between pretest and posttest in the first group (students' questionnaires). The results of applying t-test show that the observed $t=-5.8$ is significant at the level of $\alpha=0.05$. Thus, regarding the obtained results and the fact that the obtained mean scores related to the posttest is higher than the pretest (Table 1), we can conclude that from the viewpoint of students the reflective teaching procedure has been effective.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the obtained data

Pair 1	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	153.9	120	9.6	0.9
Posttest	165.7	120	19.2	1.8

Table 2. Paired samples t-test: Data obtained from the learners' questionnaires

Paired Differences							
Pair 1	95 percent confidence interval of the difference						
Pretest post-test	Lower	Upper	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df
	-15.9	-7.8	-11.8	22.4	20.4	-5.8	119

Table 3. Paired samples t-test of the teachers

Pair 1	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	178.5	10	6.8	2.6
Posttest	206.2	10	6.0	1.9

Table 4. Paired sample t-test: Data obtained from the teachers' questionnaires

Paired Differences							
Pair 1	95 percent confidence interval of the difference						
Pretest post-test	Lower	Upper	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Df
	-29.9	-25.5	-27.7	3.1	.99	-28	9

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the data obtained from the administration of pretest and posttest to the teachers.

The results of applying t-test show that the observed $t=-28$ is significant at the level of $\alpha=0.05$. Thus, we can conclude from the teachers' point of

view the reflective teaching procedure has been effective.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted in two phases. First, an investigation was carried out in order to explore if reflective teaching actually improves the performance of teachers and secondly, a questionnaire was given to the participants so that their feedback in relation to teachers' performance could be surveyed. Based on data analysis, it was revealed that there is reflective teaching procedure has a significant effect on the improvement of EFL teachers' performance.

As it was shown there was a significant difference between the mean scores of pretests and posttests in both groups. And it was observed that the mean scores of posttests were higher than the mean scores of pretests. It means that both students and teachers believe that reflective teaching procedure has a positive effect on the improvement of the teachers' performance.

CONCLUSION

As the results of this study showed, teachers can get benefit from the reflective teaching procedure such as teacher diary and students' feedback for improving their performance in the process of teaching and not just at the end of the term. The findings of the study are supported by Bailey (1991) and Tice (2007) who found out that diary writing makes different aspects of teaching known to reflective teachers.

Teachers are expected to realize their role as a contributor to improvement of their students' learning; so, by using this approach, instructors can provide a way to progress gradually to be more aware of their weak points which can lead to better achievement in their teaching. Therefore, through applying reflective teaching procedure, teachers can reflect on their performance and do self-evaluation.

The results of current study have implications for language learners, encouraging them to become more conscious about the teaching/ learning process; particularly students' feedback as a beneficial learning tool. It can be conducted that using reflective teaching by teachers can help them to create situations that enable teachers to realize the inconsistency between their practices and the ideal view of the current situation (Burns, 2010).

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