THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN ELT: UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH TEACHERS’ VIEWS

by

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We, the undersigned, approve the Master’s Thesis of Ambreen Zehra.

Thesis Title: The Role of Reflection in ELT: University of Sharjah Teachers’ Views

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Dedication

To all those teachers whose teaching practices are the reflections of their reflection.
Abstract

Reflection is a vast and vague concept. If it is simple to reflect in some ways, in other ways it is complicated. We cannot find out what is going on in someone’s mind until it is externalized in the form of actions. Especially, to know whether teachers reflect or not is an important issue because teachers’ reflection affects the process of teaching and learning both for teachers and students. The aim of this study was to understand University of Sharjah teachers’ attitudes and views about the role of reflection in their professional development, as not enough is known about how university level teachers in the UAE feel about reflection. The study investigated whether these teachers reflect or not and if yes, then how they reflect. It also tried to identify those factors which helped them in reflecting, and the constraints which impede reflection. Data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews. 40 out of 48 teachers who are currently working in the English Language Center at the University of Sharjah were invited to participate, and 30 out of those 40 teachers responded to the surveys. Five of them also volunteered for follow-up interviews. The data analysis helped me to find the answers to my research questions and unveiled the situation of reflection in this specific English language teaching situation. Findings of this study revealed that a majority of the participating teachers were aware of the concept of reflection and that they showed a positive attitude towards the role of reflection in their professional development. Results also indicated participants’ different preferred modes of reflection and some factors that they thought inhibit reflection in teachers. It was suggested that to know about reflection and to show positive attitudes towards reflection are not enough. There is a need on the part of teachers to understand what to reflect about and to act wisely on their reflection. Finally, although this study’s concern was to understand teachers’ attitudes and views towards reflection, I believe it could also help teachers notice some important aspects that could trigger their interest towards reflection.

Search Terms: reflection, reflective practice, language teacher development, ELT, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is so simple, natural, and human to think and reflect, but some of us do not realize its importance in our lives. I was also one of those who were not aware of the importance of reflection. Especially, as an English language teacher, I never gave a thought to my thoughts. I didn’t even know what makes reflection so important until I read Seidel’s (2006) article, “Some Thoughts on Teaching as Contemplative Practice,” in which she suggests that “contemplative practices might open paths for negotiating and rediscovering depth, grace, and courage in our work as teachers, in a time when such ways of living are not broadly or politically encouraged” (p. 1901). She also suggests that our actions are the physical forms of our meditation and thoughts so our thoughts matter a lot in our lives. Seidel’s ideas inspired me to read more to get more insight into this concept.

This idea was further consolidated when one of my teachers during my master’s in TESOL study asked us to write about the reasons of the successes of our lessons that we taught as a demonstration in our class. I started to think about it and realized my lesson plan was successful because I thought a lot about it to make it successful. I thought about it during driving, while washing dishes, even during taking a shower. My thoughts gave me new ideas and helped me to polish my lesson plan. Finally, I realized that my reflections on my lesson were the ultimate agent that made my lesson successful. My reflections helped me to take wise decisions, and to act accordingly. I also recognized that my thoughts and reflections were the part and parcel of my teaching practices. This realization made me wonder whether other language teachers think along the same lines or not.

Purpose of the Study

Ur (1996) states, “It has been said that teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories: those with twenty years’ experience and those with one year experience repeated twenty times” (p. 317). This suggests that time spent on teaching is not a criterion of a good teaching experience, but rather teachers need continuous efforts, development, and growth to ensure fruitful experience. Richards (1998) considers reflection to be a key component of teacher development. Bartlett (1990) states that “improvement of teaching may be achieved
through reflection” (p. 204). According to Mann (2005), “teachers develop by studying their own practice, collecting data and using reflective processes as the basis for evaluation and change” (p. 103). Mann also believes that “reflection is a pre-requisite of development” (p. 108). This much importance given to reflection in literature provokes some questions: Are teachers aware of the concept of reflective teaching? Do they really reflect on their daily teaching practices? How and when do they reflect? Does reflection play any role in their professional development and success? These questions further urged me to investigate language teachers’ attitudes and views about reflection, as I am a language teacher and wanted to know what teachers really think in this context.

To gain insight into questions like those above, I surveyed and interviewed teachers of the English Language Center at the University of Sharjah. There were all together 48 teachers – 29 male and 19 female – who were teaching in the intensive English programs on the different campuses of Sharjah and Khorfakan when I carried out my study. This group of teachers included both native and non-native speakers of English. Out of these 48 teachers, 40 teachers were contacted and 30 – 17 male and 13 female – filled out the survey. I also interviewed five teachers – one male and four female – who completed the survey and agreed to be interviewed. In my research, I investigated the following questions:

1. Do these teachers reflect?
2. If yes, why do they reflect?
3. If yes, how do they reflect?
4. If no, why don’t they reflect?

**Significance of the Research**

There has been a lot of research on reflection, and it is often considered an important and integral part of teachers’ development which ultimately affects students’ learning. There has been some research about teachers’ views and attitudes towards reflection here in the UAE. In this context, for example, Yassaei (2011) recently investigated former American University of Sharjah MA TESOL program participants’ views about reflection. These teachers were exposed to reflective practice during their MA TESOL program, whereas most of the subjects of my research are experienced teachers who might not have been exposed to reflective
practice during their master’s studies. Knowing more about how important reflection is for these teachers has helped to unveil some of the mystery of their teaching practices. Therefore, I believe that my research contributes to the literature on experienced teachers’ perceptions of reflection and reflective practice.

This research also provides insight into these teachers’ points of view about their own development as teachers. At the same time, knowing about those factors that help and contribute to reflection and those factors which impede teachers’ reflection is beneficial in order to suggest some practical implications.

**Overview of the Chapters and Appendices**

Chapter 1 incorporates an introduction to the theme of the study, its purpose, research questions, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to the study. In the beginning, the definition of the term “reflection” and its understanding in teaching in general is discussed. Then the chapter highlights reflection’s significance and limitations. The chapter also reviews the importance of reflection in teachers’ professional development. In addition to that, the chapter illustrates some factors that help teachers in reflection and also those factors that inhibit reflection. Finally, it gives a detailed account of tools for teachers’ reflection, and suggests that different tools can be adopted or adapted according to teachers’ preferences and contexts. Chapter 3 describes the methodology. First it discusses the design of the study, the procedure that is followed to conduct the surveys and interviews. Then it describes the participants of the study. After that, it provides the details of the instruments which were used to collect data. Chapter 4 provides data analysis and findings of the study in detail. Chapter 5 includes the summary of the major findings of this study, implications for teachers and administrations, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

There are five appendices in this thesis. Appendix A is the college- and university-level teachers’ survey. Appendix B includes teachers’ semi-structured interview questions. Appendix C displays teachers’ survey results. Appendix D presents teachers’ responses to open-ended questions. Finally, Appendix E contains samples of interview transcripts.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter, first, focuses on understanding reflection in teaching in general and considers its significance and limitations. Further, it focuses on the role of reflection in language teacher development. Next, the chapter moves on to discuss those factors that help teachers in reflection and inhibit reflection. Finally, tools that help in reflection are discussed to investigate how reflective practice can be improved in language teaching.

Understanding Reflection in Teaching in General

Akbari (2007) states that “historically and theoretically, reflection has been influenced by many trends and philosophies which make the term reflection open to different interpretations” (p. 192). In the same way, Richardson (2004) also believes that “it is almost impossible to come to a universally accepted definition of reflection because of the diverse meanings and purposes assigned to it” (p. 431). Various terms have been used in the literature to refer to reflection: reflective teaching, reflective practice, reflective learning, reflective inquiry, and contemplation. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), “reflection is viewed as the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one’s teaching practices and routines” (p. 7). Boody (2008) believes that “the way reflection shows itself most fully is as change – a change of self, leading to a change of how one is as a teacher with others” (p. 505).

Shkedi (2000) states that “reflection is thus meta-thinking (thinking about thinking) in which we consider the relationship between our thoughts and our actions in a particular context” (p. 95). According to Farrell (1998), “reflection-in-teaching refers to teachers subjecting their beliefs and practices of teaching to a critical analysis” (p. 1). Pollard et al. (2008) explain that “reflection is the process through which teachers become aware of the complexity of their work and are able to take actions which impact positively on this” (p. 476). Karm and Poom-Valickis (2006) believe that “we reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as the result of reflecting – so reflective learning as a term simply emphasizes the intention to learn as a result of reflection” (p. 31).
Schon (1991) discusses two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs during the action when one can change the present action, and this is exercised individually. Reflection-on-action occurs after the action. Schon suggests reflecting on action in order to improve for the future, and it is usually carried out collaboratively. Stanley (1999) believes that “reflection is a complex cognitive and affective process which takes time and practice to develop and integrate into one’s mind, heart and life” (p. 111). Stanley (1998) also gives details of a series of five phases in the development of reflective teaching practice: (1) engaging with reflection, (2) thinking reflectively, (3) using reflection, (4) sustaining reflection, and (5) practicing reflection. According to her, “the phases do not represent a sequence that is followed but rather moments in time and particular experiences that constitute a particular phase” (p. 585).

For analyzing reflectivity, Amobi (2005) suggests a framework of four stages: describe, inform, confront, and reconstruct. She asked trainee teachers (the participants of her study) three questions in order to structure their reflective thinking. The results of her study suggested that four stages for analyzing reflectivity were embedded in those three questions:

1. Describe...What did I intend to do in this lesson?
2. Inform...What did I do?
3. Confront and Reconstruct...What would I do differently if I were to teach this lesson again? (p. 119)

Clarke and Otaky (2006) believe that “reflection is an intellectual and emotional orientation, rather than a series of steps” (p. 119). Larrivee (2000) states, “The process of becoming a reflective practitioner cannot be prescribed. It is a personal awareness discovery process” (p. 296). Edwards and Thomas (2010) are of the view that the attributes of being reflective are descriptive rather than prescriptive. Edwards and Thomas explain the term reflective practice as follows:

It is the term given to the process of continually improving one’s teaching craft through engagement in it; critical capacities are a necessary feature, rather than additional processes operating in a disconnected rational realm. Reflective practice is thus something teachers necessarily do rather than a set of attributes they acquire. It can never, without contradiction, be a form of education to be drawn up as a blueprint and applied. (p. 405)
Rivera (2010) states, “Reflective practice is a process that consistently challenges a person to observe and analyze what is happening in any situation in order to assure that the work done is on track” (p. 25). Rivera’s (2010) definition will be used to discuss findings of this paper.

**Significance of Reflection**

In the literature, teachers’ reflection is considered significant in various ways. Seidel (2006) suggests that a teacher’s future is in the hands of the act of reflection and contemplation, so we as teachers must contemplate before making decisions. Seidel states that contemplation brings “mindfulness to the moment of teaching” (p. 1903). According to her, reflection stops teachers from being distracted. They become more attached to their students and their work and start living in every moment of their teaching. Seidel also suggests that “contemplation is not a method, but rather a practice – an everyday practice that can transform the world” (p. 1911). She proposes the idea of contemplation and meditation in teaching practice. According to her, reflective practice gives our profession of teaching more “depth, grace, and courage” (p. 1901) and attaches us emotionally to our work. Once we develop this habit of contemplation within ourselves, it changes our personalities as teachers. In return, we try to change the world around us: the world of our classrooms, the world of our students, and the world where we live as teachers.

According to Gunn (2008), through reflection a negative teaching experience can be turned into a positive one which helps us to develop professionally. The story of her classroom experience with a disruptive student and the reflective process that followed the experience suggests that sometimes reflection-in-action can help us in tackling the difficult classroom situation, whereas reflection-on-action can turn a negative experience into a positive experience. Gunn (2010) also believes that “regularly reflecting on our teaching practice can lead away from possibly falling into an attitude of routine, repetitive ‘one size fits all’ teaching to more skillful, productive teaching” (p. 208).

Alwan (2002) believes that “reflection has many advantages added to the fact that it is a prerequisite for change” (p. 180). The same point is supported by Boody (2008) as he states, “Through [reflection] we re-create ourselves. Through [reflection] we become able to do something we never were able to do” (p. 505). According to
Boody, reflection triggers our creativity and helps us to perceive the world and our relationship to it differently. The results of a study by Rodman (2010) suggest that through reflection “pre-service teachers were able to better identify the nature of the learning process and ways to utilize more appropriate learning tasks and strategies” (p. 31).

According to Stanley (1998), “More teachers and teacher educators are understanding the issues of teaching through the lens of reflection” (p. 584). Williams and Grudnoff (2011) believe that reflection helps experienced teachers to heighten and widen their scope and focus from classroom level to school level. They want to bring changes not only in their classrooms but also in their schools. Karm and Poom-Valickis (2006) state, “We learn more deeply and systematically from experience when we consciously think them over by reflecting upon them critically” (p. 32). Day (1993) considers reflection to be a necessary part of the learning process and teachers’ survival in the classroom. Larrivee (2000) believes that “unless teachers engage in critical reflection and ongoing discovery they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations,” so their critical reflection brings their commonly-held beliefs into question (p. 294).

Richards and Lockhart (1994) believe that “critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching” (p. 4). Explaining experiential learning theory, Kohonen (1999) points out that reflection plays an important role in the process of experiential learning. In this learning process, theoretical concepts are internalized and become part of our personal constructs when we reflect on our experiences at deeper levels of understanding. This leads to form new meanings which are used in active ways in the form of our actions. In this context, Knezevic and Scholl (1996) state, “Reflection has the power to help the teacher connect experience and theoretical knowledge in order to use each area of expertise more effectively” (p. 79).

**Limitations of Reflection**

In the literature, it is argued that reflection has its own flaws and limitations. Akbari (2007) believes that “it is good to reflect, but reflection itself also requires reflection” (p. 205). Highlighting some flaws in the reflective teaching argument, Akbari states that “current reflective views lack a critical dimension since the emphasis has mostly been on rational aspects of the term” (p. 192). Akbari points out
that historically and theoretically, reflection has been interpreted in different ways because the term reflection has been influenced by different contradictory trends and philosophies. So it has lost its main meaning and created a kind of confusion about what the term actually means. Ultimately, he says academia has often decided the rules of reflective practice for its teachers. This situation becomes ironical for teachers when in their teaching contexts they are expected to develop and practice their own theories, but at the same time they have to follow those rules of reflective practice which are set by their institutions.

In the context of teachers’ training, Tummons (2011) states, “Competing and sometimes conflicting understandings of what reflective practice actually is impact on both student and tutor meaning making” (p. 10). Giving reasons for some of her graduate students’ resistance to reflection, Gunn (2010) points out her students’ lack of understanding of what reflection is and states that “the students felt that because they were describing situations and writing journals about their experiences this alone was a reflection” (p. 216).

Edwards and Thomas (2010) believe that the prevailing instrumentalist approach in teachers’ education programs of Western schooling has diverted teachers’ attention from reflective practice to performativity. Now teachers as well as students often want to perform either to pass an exam or to make an impression on people around them. Instead of making efforts to understand complex educational problems, teachers are too often busy in acquiring pre-established pedagogical knowledge which impacts the creativity of their act of teaching. But Edwards and Thomas argue that the outcomes of our performances should not be considered as important as the social practices in which teachers could be engaged to resolve problems by reflecting on them.

Edwards and Thomas (2010) point out that there is a misconception that teachers’ teaching practice will improve if they are taught to be more critically reflective. However, they claim that teachers are always reflective because “reflection is already necessarily embedded within the practice” so there is no need to teach it to them (p. 407). This suggests that teacher educators should not focus on how to teach reflection; rather they should focus on those practices that are worthy of teachers to be engaged in: “Teacher educators should shift their concern away from whether
teachers are reflective and instead examine to what purpose their reflection is directed” (p. 410).

Marcos, Sanchez, and Tillema (2011) state that “the reflective approaches being advocated generally stress the need to be aware of the steps to be taken in reflection, but not how to gain awareness about what to reflect about” (p. 32). In the same way, Akbari (2007) also believes that most teacher training programs are limited to techniques of reflection, and the emphasis is on how to reflect instead of what to reflect on.

According to Akbari (2007), in the professional literature, most of the emphasis has been on retrospective type reflection, consequently neglecting the imaginative and creative aspects of reflection. There is often too much emphasis on analytical remembering of events instead of imagining and creating for the future. In retrospective reflective practice, there are chances that reflection will reveal only what is already known. Akbari believes that it is ironical that teachers’ imagination and creativity are overlooked unintentionally since making teachers independent and autonomous in their teaching decisions should be one of the main goals of reflective teaching. Akbari suggests that “this autonomy [of teachers] needs the foresight to get prepared to try other alternative solutions to the problems they confront in their day-to-day struggles” (p. 197).

Evaluating various texts on teacher reflection, Marcos, Sanchez, and Tillema (2011) argue that “the articles do not disseminate evidence-based knowledge about reflection, but generate statements of opinion and belief” (p. 33). They also noticed that in the studies they evaluated, accounts of actual teaching problems faced by teachers in their daily teaching situations were not given. Their findings suggest that when teachers have to reflect on their practice, they just echo the concepts and beliefs about reflection they read in the literature instead of reflecting and reporting about their own practice. Marcos, Sanchez, and Tillema also state that in this way “teachers are provided with only limited information on how to improve their reflective practice, which may hamper its use” (p. 21).

Akbari (2007) points out that in ELT teacher education programs, teachers are expected to reflect about themselves as practitioners. However, Akbari argues that teachers should reflect not only about themselves but that their reflection should also contribute to the improvement of human society. In terms of identifying problems,
Akbari points out that “problem identification needs trained eyes, which many teachers, specially novice ones, lack…. Many teachers use their reflection for justifying what they do since they are incapable of finding what is wrong with their performance” (p. 199). This suggests that in some situations, reflection may be used by teachers simply to justify their mistakes.

Akbari (2007) states that since novice teachers, in the early years of their teaching career, are concerned about their survival and want to improve their self-image, they may not reflect in order to develop any innovative ideas relevant to their teaching practice. These novice teachers need some time to feel themselves secure in their new teaching environments and to move to the next stage of their professional development. So Akbari suggests that reflection should be introduced to novice teachers at the proper time; otherwise, reflection could be counter-productive.

The Role of Reflection in Language Teacher Development

“Development implies change, and fruitful change is extremely difficult without reflection” (Wallace, 1991, p. 54). According to Wallace, the never ending cycle of teaching practice and reflection leads to professional competence. Mann (2005) believes that language teacher development “is a process of articulating an inner world of conscious choices made in response to the outer world of the teaching context” (p. 105). In Larrivee’s (2000) view, reflective teaching “involves infusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity, resulting in developing a deliberate code of conduct” (p. 293).

Piai (2005) believes that “development can only come from within you” (p. 20). He suggests that as far as training is concerned, it is an outward process that can be presented or managed by others, but development is an inward process that happens within us. Reflection is a source that we have within us that can help us to develop, grow, and change professionally. So we ourselves are responsible for our development as teachers because we develop from within ourselves. Education and training can help us in the early years of our professional life as they give us knowledge and train us in teaching skills and strategies, while a reflective approach towards our teaching practice helps us to grow professionally. As Tse (2007) points out, “The ability to reflect is widely known as a factor affecting the effectiveness of teacher development” (p. 495).
According to Ur (1996), “The first and most important basis for professional progress is simply your own reflection on daily classroom events” (p. 319). Richards and Lockhart (1994) point out that in developing knowledge and theories of teaching, the process of reflecting on one’s own teaching plays an essential part, and in this way is the main element of one’s professional development. Bartlett (1990) states, “Becoming a critically reflective teacher is intended to allow us to develop ourselves individually and collectively” (p. 205). Burton (2009) points out that teachers’ reflection in its different forms is considered central to the learning process of teachers. According to Richards (1998), “reflection is seen as a process that can facilitate both learning and understanding, and plays a central role in several recent models of teacher development” (p. 21).

Tarone and Allwright (2005) discuss education, training, and development as three relevant concepts in the field of second language teacher programs. According to them, education is concerned with teachers’ knowledge, training is concerned with teaching skills and strategies, and development is concerned with understanding. Here understanding is something which helps us to use our skills and knowledge as a teacher in more appropriate ways. All these three characteristics of a teacher complement each other and keep that teacher on the track of development. According to Tarone and Allwright, “understanding may also be what helps us to feel we know what we are doing and why so that we may be able to feel at ease with what we are doing with our skill and our knowledge” (p. 8).

Factors That Help Teachers’ Reflection

“Where there is reflection there is suspense” (Dewey, 1944, p. 148). According to Dewey, we reflect when there is a problem or a situation of uncertainty or doubt. Problems, uncertainties, and doubts trigger reflection which ultimately urges us to look, to inquire, and to investigate into things. Larrivee (2000) also stresses the importance of uncertainty and points out that uncertainty in the form of inner struggle is an important and essential stage in the reflective process. She further states that “fully experiencing this sense of uncertainty is what opens the door to a personal deeper understanding, leading to a shift in ways of thinking and perceiving” (p. 304).

Another important factor that is involved in reflection is teachers’ emotions. According to Stanley (1999), “emotions not only serve as catalysts, but can also
permeate the reflective process” (p. 115). For some teachers, emotions are considered as integral to the process of reflection. Emotions also compel teachers to investigate their teaching situations. In this regard, Karm and Poom-Valickis (2006) explain that “learning to deal with emotions is … important; it is often through these that we evaluate our experiences” (p. 37). Stanley (1998) also believes that teachers can be reflective when their personal, professional, and contextual factors are stable, and when they are curious about learning the process of reflection. Akbari (2007) states, “Teachers’ personality, and more specifically their affective make up, can influence their tendency to get involved in reflection and will affect their reaction to their own image resulting from reflection” (p. 201).

Boody (2008) sees reflection in the framework of ethical obligation, obligation that teachers feel toward their students and toward their own values as teachers and human beings, and they reflect as a moral response. So a compassionate mind reaches out to reflect when it is under moral obligation to others, and this moral obligation is “the motive power” (p. 503) which urges teachers to reflect on a particular teaching/learning situation.

According to Clarke and Otaky (2006), usually reflection is triggered either by an uncomfortable experience or by one where we face a clash between our expectations and reality. Larrivee (2008) states that “the capacity for reflection is embedded in values, assumptions, and expectations” (p. 345), and points to studies that show that acknowledging, articulating, and challenging their beliefs help pre-service teachers to reflect. Amobi (2005) believes that thinking about our teaching weaknesses, while keeping in mind that we are criticizing our teaching actions and not ourselves as persons, can be a first step towards critical reflection that brings changes in our teaching practice and ultimately leads us to professional growth.

Dewey (1944) states that “the material of thinking is not thoughts, but actions, facts, events, and the relations of things…. To think effectively one must have had, or now have, experiences which will furnish him resources for coping with the difficulty at hand” (p. 157). This suggests that our teaching experiences may also help us in thinking effectively. McIntyre (1993, cited in Williams & Grudnoff, 2011) also stresses the importance of experience in reflection and argues that through reflection, experienced teachers learn far more than novice teachers because experienced teachers’ experiential knowledge helps them to reflect. Ivason-Jansson and Gu (2006)
posit the need of knowledge, skills, and time for teachers in order to reflect on their teaching practices.

**Factors That Inhibit Teachers’ Reflection**

According to Stanley (1998), “personal, professional, and contextual factors may limit and even inhibit a teacher’s ability to engage with reflection” (p. 586). Sometimes personal issues of self-esteem can stimulate guilt and pain when teachers start reflecting about their teaching practice. Ur (1996) believes that on a personal level, some teachers hesitate to share their successes because they fear that other teachers will think about them as if they are boasting about themselves or showing off.

Some factors like our difficulties and emotions that help in reflection may sometimes also inhibit reflection. Dewey (1944) states, “A difficulty is an indispensable stimulus to thinking, but not all difficulties call out thinking. Sometimes they overwhelm and submerge and discourage” (p. 157). According to Stanley (1999), emotions, depending on their types, can play an important role in blocking and stimulating reflection. For example, she states, “Teachers may be fearful of reflecting on their teaching if they experience blame, guilt or anger at themselves for not having taught well” (p. 112).

Discussing some of her students’ resistance to reflection, Gunn (2010) states, “They [some MA TESOL students from the Middle East] do not want to have a written record of something that showed they had made a mistake or done something ineffective in the class” (p. 215). Stanley (1998) believes that there may be conscious or unconscious resistance towards reflection if the experience of reflection is very painful for the teacher, and “it takes a healthy degree of ego development to put oneself and one’s work under the microscope. Therefore, some teachers may not become reflective for reasons that are beyond the scope of the field of teacher education” (p. 586).

In the same way, professional factors can also affect a teacher’s ability to reflect. For example, Stanley (1998) believes if a teacher is overburdened, there are chances of not having enough time to reflect. Kwo (1996) suggests lack of reflection may also be due to a structure of teaching practice which does not provide time or encouragement for reflection during teaching practice. Alwan (2002) also considers
time and effort as conditions that may constrain reflection. In the context of sharing, discussing, and thinking about each other’s ideas, Ur (1996) points out that sometimes feelings of professional rivalry between teachers stops them from sharing their successes and “revealing professional secrets to one another for fear of being ‘overtaken’ in some kind of professional race” (p. 320).

According to Akbari (2007), it is possible that teachers may lose their real reflective spirit due to a systematized and reduced set of techniques set by academia, and “a consequence of reducing reflection to a set of techniques is disregard for teachers’ personality” (p. 201). Akbari suggests that individual differences among learners have been given due importance in the teaching/learning literature, whereas individual differences among teachers are neglected in such a way as if teachers have no personality of their own that could affect their teaching ways. Teachers’ tendency towards reflection also depends on their personality type.

Contextual and cultural factors also play an important role in affecting teachers’ ability to reflect. Halbach (2002) conducted a study to investigate “whether the reflective approach in teacher training is really suited to other cultures and contexts” (p. 243) because various studies suggest that what might be suitable for Western societies might face many problems in Eastern cultures. Based on the findings of her study, Halbach proposes “an ‘acculturated’ mode of reflective teacher training” in which the reflective approach in teacher training is to be adapted to some extent in order to suit local contexts and cultures (p. 247). For example, the participants of her study were from a Spanish education background where the focus was on transmission of knowledge instead of critical thinking. Their reluctance to reflect suggested that reflective approach might not be suitable to a Spanish learning environment. In this context, Halbach posited the idea of scaffolding students with an introduction to reflection and giving them some gradual positive experiences of reflection so that they would feel more confident when they reflect.

Gunn (2010) gives an account of her students’ reflection and states that “the [MA TESOL Middle East] students who are from a culture with more oral than written traditions were not comfortable writing their reflections down, especially ones that could be interpreted as being negative or critical of themselves” (p. 221). In a multicultural student teachers class in the Middle East, where Gunn (2008) promoted the idea of students’ autonomy and asked students to sort out their problems
themselves, students seemed to accept the idea of student autonomy. But one student accused Gunn “of purposely withholding information so she would not get a good grade” (p. 22). This situation suggested to Gunn that “as a Western woman teaching teachers in a multicultural class in the Middle East, I need to take a good look at the Western ideas I bring to the classroom” (p. 22).

Richardson (2004) states that teachers’ “ability to engage in reflection is affected by their previous (and current) experiences of the schooling process, its culture and climate” (p. 431). Richardson analyzed the influence of Arabic-Islamic culture on the reflective practices proposed for an education degree at the Higher Colleges of Technology in the UAE and suggests that students’ resistance to reflective practice is the outcome of their previous prescriptive learning experiences in the local Arab primary and secondary schools where they were used to doing exactly what they were told. Richardson concludes, “It is clear that cultural values represent powerful constraints on individual behavior which could limit the success of reflective practices for trainee teachers in local schools” (p. 435).

Clarke and Otaky (2006) “advocate a view of reflection as a ‘human’ capacity…even though the particular forms it takes will inevitably be shaped by historical, cultural and social factors” (p. 120). In response to Richardson’s (2004) argument that reflective practice is inappropriate to the values of Arab-Islamic culture and so it is inappropriate for teacher education in the UAE, Clarke and Otaky (2006) argue that “it is difficult to understand how or why we might want to claim such a fundamental human capacity as inappropriate to, or incongruent with, any one group or culture” (p. 119).

According to Clarke and Otaky (2006), “culture can be usefully understood as a never-finished site of competing historical and social discourses, rather than as a received set of beliefs and values” (p. 120). In their study, Clarke and Otaky examined the uptake of reflective practice of female student teachers from a Bachelor of Education degree program in the Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE. The data were collected from students’ journals, Web CT discussions, and face-to-face conversations. The data analysis suggests that Emirati student teachers are critical, reflective thinkers and are involved in reflective practices.
Tools for Teachers’ Reflection

Farrell (2001) suggests that “in order for reflective teaching to happen, opportunities must be created for teachers to use conscious reflection as a means of understanding the relationship between their own thoughts and actions” (p. 23). In this regard, Wallace (1991) believes that recalling and analyzing teaching practice can facilitate a reflective process. These acts of recalling and analyzing teaching practice are further facilitated by some tools that help in “externalizing reflection” (Stanley, 1999, p. 119). Stanley also believes that in recalling details without using a tool, one usually tends to replay only those events that go wrong, which sometimes gives rise to negative emotional reactions. In the literature, various tools are suggested that can facilitate reflection in teachers: journal writing, classroom observations, audio-video recording of lessons, teachers’ collaboration and dialogue, and action research.

Richards and Lockhart (1994) discuss the idea of second language teaching as an internal process in which teachers explore what they do and why they do it in their classes. Reflection, self inquiry, and self-evaluation are considered to be means of professional development. Richards and Lockhart introduce some simple procedures such as journal writing, lesson reports, surveys and questionnaires, audio or video recording of lessons, observation, and action research to investigate classroom teaching. All these procedures are physical forms of reflective practice, and they are interrelated with reflection itself. Almost the same procedures are suggested by Piai (2005) to develop a reflective attitude. Piai suggests that teachers can improve themselves at the personal level by reflecting weekly, revising their old material, learning from their students, observing themselves, imagining themselves as students, and observing someone else.

In the literature, writing is often recommended as an important reflective tool. Burton (2009) states, “Writing is a composing process, which means that it actually involves reflection. Moreover, writing can document reflection-in- and on-action. So in itself writing has the potential to function as a uniquely-effective reflective tool” (p. 303, italics in original). Karm and Poom-Valickis (2006) also argue in favor of reflective writing and state that “journal keeping is central to both the inquiry and development processes” (p. 34). They also believe that “writing makes thinking visible” (p. 32).
Lee (2007) explored how dialogue and response journals can be effective in order to encourage reflection among pre-service teachers. She quotes one of the participants of her study who stated, “If I don’t write journals, I would not think so much about my teaching and learning” (p. 326). Smith’s (2005) study enquired into how part-time college level teachers might develop collaboration between each other, how it would affect their perspectives, and how it might impact on their own professional development. Apart from collaboration and meetings, the participants of this study had to write teachers’ journals. One of the participants of Smith’s study stated, “It’s like I’m putting pressure on myself, writing in the journal. Forcing myself to really think about what I’m doing” (p. 209). According to Ur (1996), unrecorded reflection allows digression, whereas reflection recorded in writing keeps us to the point and balanced in our thinking.

Discussing intrapersonal journals and dialogue journals, Gebhard (2009) points out that in writing intrapersonal journals, teachers have the opportunity to explore feelings and insights that they might not want to share with anyone else. On the other hand, dialogue journals also have their own value, as by keeping a dialogue journal teachers can see each other’s entries and comment on them. In this way, they can realize that problems and issues relevant to teaching are common, and they are not alone in facing those problems. This helps them to get rid of feelings of isolation that sometimes come with classroom teaching. Evans (2006) shares her personal experience of using reflective journals and explains how reflection based journal writing helps teachers as well as students in improving their teaching and learning. She states, “The journal helped me to become a better instructor for the course; the more I reflected, the better I was able to meet the students’ need” (p. 29).

Richards (1998) believes that participation in classroom observation can help develop a reflective attitude in teachers towards their teaching. According to Ivason-Jansson and Gu (2006), “[classroom] observation brings about an interaction with a concrete circumstance or condition, which produces a reaction causing reflection in which past knowledge and experiences are recalled in order to frame and explain the new phenomenon” (p. 10). They also consider reflective learning based on an organized observation an important tool for teachers’ professional development. In their study, Ivason-Jansson and Gu explored and analyzed what teachers observed during observations, how they thought about what they had observed, and what they
learned through these observations. Referring to the participant teachers of their study, Ivason-Jansson and Gu state that it is good to observe those teaching practices which teachers cannot normally see when they are teaching themselves. Teachers’ perspectives change as their positions change from teachers to observers.

Richards and Farrell (2005) believe that “observation as a component of teacher development … involves discussion and reflection in order to arrive at a valid understanding of the meaning of the events observed” (p. 87). Richards and Farrell also point out that observing other teachers provides opportunities for teachers to see how their colleagues deal with many of those common teaching problems which they have to face on a daily basis. By observing other teachers, there are chances for teachers to discover their colleagues’ effective teaching strategies that the observers have never tried.

Video and audio recordings are also considered helpful for the implementation of reflection on teachers’ teaching. In fact, Gn (2010) believes that “the best tool to involve teachers in reflection would be to video record their lessons” (p. 3). Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan (2001) state that “video enables us to see ourselves the way others see us” (p. 118). According to Stanley (1999), audio or video recordings are especially helpful in recalling the details of a lesson in a class. Listening to a lesson recording or watching a video of a class can help teachers to go back into that class and notice many of the details which they were unable to see or realize at the time of teaching.

Stanley (1999) also believes that using an audio or video recording of “one’s teaching can put negative emotional reactions in check since the task of remembering or reviewing details on … tape often forces a more factual and even neutral stance towards the events” (p. 118). Richards and Lockhart (1994) point out that since so many things happen at the same time in the class during a lesson, video recording of their lesson can make their teaching easier to examine and reflect upon. Finally, Amobi (2005) also points out that “individual viewing of the videotaped lesson for the purpose of writing a critique of instructional performance is a common practice aimed at encouraging the development of self-analysis and consequently, reflective practice” (p. 116).

Atay (2008) discusses the importance of collaboration with colleagues, and cites the view of one teacher who said, “I find it difficult to reflect on my own work
when I’m alone, but when a colleague tells me about my weaknesses and encourages me to talk about myself I found a solution easily” (p. 145). According to Ivason-Jansson and Gu (2006), teachers not only learn by their own reflection on their own action but also from others’ reflections through discussions with them. In the same way, Pollard et al. (2008) explain that a reflective activity becomes more valuable when it is performed in collaboration with other colleagues, and a successful collaboration is one that is based on sincere acknowledgement of strengths and weaknesses of each other. In addition, Knezevic and Scholl (1996) believe that “collaboration – shared responsibility inside and outside the classroom – gives teachers an opportunity for heightened reflection” (p. 79).

In the context of collaborative teacher development, Johnston (2009) gives an account of narrative inquiry and explains that professional growth can result from the stories that teachers tell about their own teaching experiences. Johnston argues that this is not only an act of storytelling, but it can lead to further reflection and critical analysis of teachers’ teaching experiences. Knezevic and Scholl (1996) also consider storytelling a powerful method of reflection, because this act naturally helps teachers to explore their tacit knowledge and allows them to share their experiences in new ways, thus developing new insights into teaching. Edwards and Thomas (2010) believe that telling stories to each other about their pedagogical inquiries is a valuable practice for teachers. They explain, “Stories enrich a teacher’s constructs and generalizations. They are living archives of teachers’ attempts to solve pedagogical problems and their potential for pedagogical fecundity must not be overlooked” (p. 408).

According to Smith (2005), “collaboration facilitates teacher reflection on practice, promotes collegial interaction, and involves teachers in school change” (p. 201). Ur (1996) believes that teachers cannot progress without having a clear idea of where they are at present, and the main sources of feedback on their teaching are their colleagues, their students, and their personal self appraisals. So by discussing and sharing their successes and problems, and by observing each other’s classes, Ur argues that teachers can give feedback to each other that can help them in reflecting on their own teaching. In the same way, “students are an excellent source of feedback [for teachers on their teaching]” (p. 323). Furthermore, Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) consider literacy coaches’ coaching conversations helpful in
teachers’ reflection. They define literacy coaches as people who serve as peers and facilitators, and encourage teachers’ reflection through instruction based conversations. They believe that even without literacy coaches, however, teachers can conduct coaching conversations with each other after peer observation and video sharing of their teaching practices.

Action research is another important tool which can lead to reflection on one’s teaching. Richards and Farrell (2005) explain that planning, action, observation, and reflection are the different phases of action research which most of the time recur in a cycle. Action research involves investigation and collecting information to solve a teaching problem or to improve a classroom situation. Action research can be carried out at both the individual and collaborative level depending on the requirements of the situation.

According to Wallace (1998), “the main function of action research is to facilitate the ‘reflective cycle,’ and in this way provide an effective method for improving professional action” (p. 18). Explaining the process of action research, Wallace states that action research is a structured way of reflection. Action research follows the problem-focused approach where problems give rise to questions and questions lead us into various areas of inquiry. Nunan (1990) states that action research requires a reflective attitude from its practitioners in which they are “engaged in critical reflection on ideas, the informed application and experimentation of ideas in practice, and the critical evaluation of the outcomes of such application” (p. 63). Nunan also believes that “encouraging teachers to become their own classroom researchers can have a beneficial effect in all areas of the curriculum…. It has great potential for professional self-development and renewal” (p. 75).

However, all of the above mentioned tools for teachers’ reflection may not necessarily be successful for all teachers. Tummons (2011), for example, points out some student teachers’ discomfort with reflective writing, and explains that sometimes student teachers feel nervous writing about themselves when they come to know that their reflective writings are going to be evaluated or assessed by someone else. In a case study, Farrell’s (2001) participant felt stressed while writing her reflective journal and said that writing didn’t help her to reflect. In addition, Lee (2007) points out that pre-service teachers sometimes face the problem of lack of
ideas to sustain their interest in writing journals, or sometimes teachers simply don’t have time to write.

Moreover, some teachers do not like to be observed. For instance, Farrell (2001) quotes one of his case study participants as saying, “I can’t do my best in front of people” (p. 31). The participant conveyed her uneasiness regarding her class observation and said that she was not ready to be scrutinized by an outsider. Akbari and Tajik (2007) discuss teachers’ psychological reactions to being observed and state, “Teachers feel intimidated and threatened by the entire supervision process because the models of supervision that we have inherited are authoritarian and directive” (p. 243). In this context, teachers may be anxious about making mistakes in front of their observer and cannot avoid feeling that they will be criticized by their observer.

In the same way, Croskery (2007) explains the limitations of recording a lesson, and points out that everything cannot be captured through recording. Recording can also be intrusive and can cause disruption. Therefore, Croskery suggests that recording be voluntary. Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan (2001) also give an account of drawbacks of some tools of reflection and point out that sometimes the data collection techniques used doing action research, such as video recording, can disturb teaching as they are time consuming and can get in the way of teaching tasks such as lesson planning, material development, and evaluating students’ work.

Yost, Sentner, and Forlenza-Bailey (2000) state, “Critical reflection is a multifaceted construct requiring a multifaceted approach” (p. 46). It seems likely that the tools highlighted above may induce reflection in student teachers if they are used under the guidance of knowledgeable teacher educators. Farrell (2001) conducted a case study investigating one teacher’s preference for different modes of reflection. The subject of his study preferred group discussion to journal writing and class observation. Other teachers may have different preferences. Farrell suggests that teachers should be provided with a range of different tools for reflection, out of which they can select and tailor them to their individual needs. Karm and Poom-Valickis (2006) also support this idea and stress that student teachers should be allowed to “select ways of reflection suitable for themselves” (p. 31).
Conclusion

A variety of definitions of reflection are available in the literature, and various terms like contemplation, reflective teaching, reflective inquiry, reflective practice, and reflective learning are associated with this concept owing to its diverse interpretations and purposes. The concept of reflection is considered by many researchers and writers to be a key element in teacher development. But at the same time its limitations cannot be neglected. Studies show that in academia and teachers’ education programs, the creative and imaginative aspects of reflection are sometimes overlooked and teachers are too often required to reflect according to a set of rules of reflective practice. In some teaching/learning contexts, the emphasis is on the attainment of pedagogical knowledge and the measurements of outcomes instead of problem solving. In other words, the focus may be on theory instead of practice, whereas to be critically reflective, teachers need to be involved in social practices which engage them in reflection to solve problems.

The above literature gives us some insight into the practice of reflection and suggests that there are some factors that help teachers in reflection, but at the same time some factors inhibit teachers’ reflection. In addition, reflection is seen as an internal process which can be triggered, sustained, or developed in teachers with the help of some tools or activities which lead them to reflect in a purposeful direction. It is suggested that these tools can be adapted to teachers’ needs and contexts to help them develop their reflective practice. The literature suggests that a lot of research has been conducted on pre-service and in-service teachers’ uptake of reflective practice in their relevant educational programs. However, there has not been much research carried out in order to know the experienced working teachers’ perceptions of reflection, especially in the UAE. This study intends to investigate to what extent there is a match between what the literature says and what University of Sharjah teachers actually do, think, and feel about reflection and its role in their professional development.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The fundamental purpose of this study was to explore university level teachers’ views and attitudes about the role of reflection in their professional development. The study aimed to investigate whether Sharjah University teachers reflect and what they think about the value of reflection in their professional development. The study further attempted to explore the means through which these teachers reflect and the factors that discourage and restrain them from reflection. So the study was an attempt to understand what University of Sharjah English teachers think and feel about reflection. To investigate these issues, the following research questions were postulated:

1. Do these teachers reflect?
2. If yes, why do they reflect?
3. If yes, how do they reflect?
4. If no, why don’t they reflect?

Design of the Study

The director of the English Language Center at the University of Sharjah was informed about the plan of the whole study before I started the data collection procedure. I got an official approval to carry out the study process of conducting surveys and interviews. In the study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were chosen for data collection. A survey questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the teachers (see Appendix A). Likert-scale style statements were included in the survey. The participants of the study had to read the statements and choose from five responses: “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” In order to collect qualitative data, some open-ended questions were also included in the survey that helped to further explore the participants’ opinions.

In addition, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews in which the participants had the liberty of expressing their views in detail and I had the opportunity to understand their perceptions and attitudes towards reflection. At the end of the survey, the participants were asked to give their contact details if they were
interested in being interviewed, and only those teachers who volunteered to be interviewed were contacted to set up interviews.

**Piloting of the Surveys**

I piloted the surveys with eight pre-service or in-service teachers. Out of the eight, seven were currently enrolled in the MA TESOL Program at the American University of Sharjah, and one was a former student of the same master’s program. The surveys were piloted in September 2011. The purpose of this pilot study was to check the applicability and aptness of the surveys’ statements and questions. I also wanted to know whether the way I intended to pose the questions was appropriate or not. After piloting the surveys, I revised and clarified the surveys’ statements and questions for further necessary improvements based on the comments and responses of the participants of the pilot study.

**Data Collection**

During the month of October 2011, I gathered data for the study. The surveys were distributed among the teachers currently teaching in the IEPs on the two campuses in Sharjah and Khorfakan of the University of Sharjah. To gather the data, I contacted the teachers on the Sharjah campus personally, whereas I requested a colleague teaching on the Khorfakan campus to survey the teachers there. At the beginning of the surveys, a brief definition of reflection, especially as it applied in the teaching context, was given (see Appendix A) so that all participants of the study would have the same concept of reflection in their minds. The teachers were also given the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of their names, information, and opinions.

I conducted the interviews in November 2011. Only those teachers who volunteered to be interviewed were contacted for the interviews. They were those teachers who voluntarily gave their contact details for the purpose of an interview at the end of their surveys. There were altogether five teachers who agreed to meet me for the interviews. The interviews were arranged according to the convenient time and place of the interviewees. Before starting the interviews, the participants were informed about the main purpose of the study, and it was clearly explained that their information and ideas would be kept strictly anonymous and confidential. In the
interviews, teachers were asked semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B).

**The Participants**

The subjects of this study were teachers from the English Language Center at the University of Sharjah. I chose this group of teachers as the majority of them were experienced, and I wanted to know university level experienced teachers’ views and attitudes towards their own professional development and the role of the reflection in their daily teaching practices, especially in the UAE. At the same time, being a colleague of these teachers, it was convenient for me to contact them.

The total number of teachers in the English Language Center at the University of Sharjah was 48. Out of these 48 teachers, 19 were female and 29 were male. Four of these teachers told me in advance that they would be too busy to respond to the survey and would rather not be included, so they were not invited to participate. In addition, four other teachers were newly recruited faculty members with no previous experience teaching in the UAE or at the University of Sharjah, so I decided not to include them in the sample. Therefore, a total of 40 University of Sharjah teachers were invited to participate in the survey. Out of these 40 teachers, 30 responded. At the Sharjah campus, 27 were contacted and 23 responded to the survey. Hard copies of the survey were provided to these teachers to obtain their responses. In Khorfakan and the Eastern Zone, 13 were contacted and seven responded. Due to the long distance constraint, the teachers in Khorfakan were contacted by the researcher via an email and requested to respond to the survey. Soft copies of the survey were sent in an attachment to all of them. At the same time, hard copies of the survey were also sent to these teachers by one of my colleagues who daily commuted from Sharjah to Khorfakan. Three out of the seven teachers preferred to respond via an email, and four responded through the hard copies.

**Development of the Instruments**

**Surveys**

To obtain quantitative and qualitative data, a five-page survey instrument was designed by the researcher (see Appendix A) to be distributed among the University
of Sharjah teachers. 30 teachers responded to the surveys. The survey focused on teachers’ perceptions and attitudes about the role of reflection in their own professional development, and in their daily teaching practices. The survey was divided into three main sections. The first section was intended to gather personal data and general information about the participants. In this section, each participant was supposed to give information about his/her gender, teaching experience, place of teaching experience, and degrees. In addition, each participant was also required to mention whether he/she was a native or non-native speaker of English. The second section of the survey was comprised of 32 close-ended statements to gather quantitative data. Likert-scale style was used to develop these statements. These statements were mainly designed to investigate teachers’ perception of the role of reflection and its incorporation in their teaching practices.

The third section of the survey included five open-ended questions to give teachers the opportunity to explain their thoughts in detail. These questions were designed in such a way that if teachers had missed something in the close-ended statements, they would be able to add and further explain in the response of these questions. In the sections that follow, the participants’ written responses are not edited and are quoted as they were written. Only four out of the 30 participants did not respond to the open-ended questions. All the survey statements and questions were based on the study’s research questions and the concepts and views found in the relevant literature. For example, statements number 1-8 were based on research question number 1. Statements number 9-15 were based on research question number 2. Statements number 16-26 were based on research question number 3, and statements number 27-32 were based on research question number 4.

**Interviews**

As mentioned earlier, interviewees were selected through the surveys. Five of the teachers who responded to the surveys volunteered to be interviewed by providing their names and contact details at the end of their surveys. I interviewed all five of these teachers. I prepared a number of semi-structured interview questions for the interviewees (see Appendix B). These questions helped to give further insight into interviewees’ perceptions and attitudes about the role of reflection in their daily professional lives. Before the interviews, some interviewees showed uneasiness due to
their lack of theoretical knowledge about reflection that they thought was required for the interview. I assured them by explaining very clearly that it was only their views and perceptions about reflection that was important for the interview. Interviews were administered during the month of November 2011. 15-30 minute interviews were held in Sharjah University City, either in the teachers’ offices, in the teachers’ homes, or at my home according to interviewees’ convenience. I recorded the interviews through an iPod and transcribed them (see the sample interview in Appendix E), and the interviewees’ original responses are quoted without editing in the data analysis section of this study.

Overall, the qualitative data collected through interviews complemented and consolidated the data obtained through the survey. Through the interviews, teachers’ attitudes and views about reflection were gathered in detail. The findings of the interviews provided further insights on practical implications and also helped in illustrating some of the research’s limitations, suggestions, and recommendations.

**Data Analysis**

Data were attained by both quantitative and qualitative methods through a survey and interviews. Quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed to find out the frequencies and percentages of the responses. Descriptive analysis of the qualitative data collected through the survey’s open-ended questions and the interviews’ questions were used to support and clarify the quantitative data. Data analysis and findings are discussed and illustrated with figures, tables, and bar charts in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the data analysis, findings of the study and discussion of the findings. The results of the study are based on the responses of 30 teachers who are teaching in the English Language Center at the two campuses in Sharjah and Khorfakan/Eastern Zone of the University of Sharjah. Five of those teachers were also interviewed. The study’s results are divided into five sections. The first section presents the demographics of the participants and the results of the analysis. The other four sections address this study’s research questions in the following order: The second section answers the first research question – Do the teachers teaching in the English Language Center at the University of Sharjah reflect? The third section is based on the second research question, which tried to find out the University of Sharjah teachers’ attitudes and perceptions about the role of reflection in their professional development. The fourth section covers the third research question, which tried to explore the different ways through which teachers reflect and various aspects that help in reflection. The last section presents the findings of the fourth research question, which investigated the factors that inhibit teachers from reflection.

Demographics of the Participants

Out of 30 teachers who responded, 13 were female and 17 were male. Altogether, 23 responded from Sharjah and seven responded from Khorfakan and the Eastern Zone. Table 1 below summarizes some background data about the participant teachers.

Table 1: Background Data about the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharjah</td>
<td>Males: 11, Females: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khorfakan and Eastern Zone</td>
<td>Males: 6, Females: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Participants</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38
The 30 teachers who took part in the study and responded to the survey were both native and non-native speakers of English. 11 of them were native speakers of English, and 19 were non-native speakers of English. Six out of the 30 were PhD holders and the remaining 24 were master’s degree holders. Table 2 summarizes the demographic data of these teachers.

### Table 2: Demographic Data about the Participants’ Language and Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NS of English</td>
<td>NNS of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MEd</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Participants = 30

NS: Native speakers; NNS: Non-native speakers

The majority of the participant teachers were experienced. 26 out of the 30 participant teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience (ranging from 11 to 38 years, and four had either 10 or less years of teaching experience. The 30 teachers had experiences of the following places: 12 had taught only in the UAE; seven had taught in the UAE and other countries in the Middle East; and 11 had taught in the UAE and other places like Libya, Japan, Nepal, the UK, Sri Lanka, Africa, Asia, Canada, Europe, South America, Poland, and Ireland. Table 3 below summarizes the demographic data about the participant teachers’ experiences.

### Table 3: Demographic Data about the Participants’ Years of Teaching Experience and Place of Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Places of Experience</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Years/less than 10 years</td>
<td>UAE only</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>UAE and other countries</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Participants = 30
Five out of the 30 participant teachers volunteered to be interviewed and were contacted for interviews. Out of these five teachers, one was male and four were female. Two, including the male, were native speakers of English, and three were non-native speakers of English. All the interviewees were experienced teachers having experience ranging from 15 to 31 years. Table 4 summarizes the background data about the interviewees.

**Table 4: Interviewees’ Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>NS of English</th>
<th>NNS of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Interviewees = 5

NS: Native speaker; NNS: Non-native speakers

**Teachers’ Awareness and Use of Reflection**

Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the majority of the University of Sharjah teachers were aware of the concept of reflection and reflected on their teaching practices. Responses to the Likert-scale statements revealed that the majority of the teachers had some knowledge about reflection and they considered themselves to be reflective teachers. Specific Likert-scale statements that helped in identifying this finding were from statements 1 to 8, which suggested that most of the teachers were aware of the concept of reflection and reflected on their students’ learning problems and their own teaching weaknesses as well as strengths (see Table 5).
### Table 5: Knowing and Practicing Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am familiar with the concept of reflection in language teaching.</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>12 40%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t reflect on my teaching.</td>
<td>14 47%</td>
<td>12 40%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I reflect on my students’ learning.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I reflect on my students’ learning problems.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
<td>13 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I reflect on the strength of my lesson.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>16 53%</td>
<td>12 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I reflect on the weaknesses of my lesson.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>18 60%</td>
<td>12 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I reflect on the weaknesses of my teaching style.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>17 57%</td>
<td>12 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I consider myself to be a reflective teacher.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>16 53%</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the first statement, “I am familiar with the concept of reflection in language teaching,” 90% of the participant teachers strongly agreed or agreed, while only 3% (one participant) remained neutral and 7% (two participants) strongly disagreed. Statement numbers 3 to 7 investigated whether or not teachers reflect on their students’ learning problems, as well as their own teaching strengths and weaknesses. 93% to 100% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they reflect on these situations, while 3% to 7% of the participants were neutral. In addition, 87% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement 2 that states, “I don’t reflect on my teaching,” while 13% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed. In response to statement 8, 90% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they considered themselves reflective teachers, whereas only 10% remained neutral.

Teachers’ responses to the first open-ended question, in which they were asked to give their own definition of reflection (see Appendix D), showed that the concept of reflection in teachers’ minds was quite clear. For example, one of the male teachers wrote the following about reflection: “Self-evaluation with a view to
modification of practice. Part of a developmental process.” One female teacher gave this definition of reflection: “Reflection according to me is analyzing my own teaching methodology, the achievement of my lesson objectives, finding out the strengths and weaknesses and finally improving on it.” During the interviews that were held after the teachers responded to the survey, some of the participants expressed their surprise at the concept of reflection and explained that they had never thought or read about it before. However, after completing the survey, they said they found it very interesting when they realized that they were reflecting unconsciously without knowing its importance.

Additionally, all five of the teachers who were interviewed said that they did reflect on their teaching practices in some way or other. When they were asked whether they had any initial training in reflection during their master’s studies, two of the female interviewees said that they had never studied about reflection and never came across the term later in their professional life, but they always reflected in an unconscious way. In response to an open-ended question, one female teacher similarly argued, “It’s [reflection’s] just instinctive. You don’t consciously think about it.” A male teacher wrote, “It is human nature to do some reflecting. For me, it is a state of mind that has always been part of my personality.” Another female interviewee who had 30 years of teaching experience and had studied about reflective teaching during her master’s said, “Most of the reflective teaching has come from myself actually, and that’s what made me really think about my teaching, and after that in my constant quest to improve really. That’s how I got involved in it; it was not a big part of my master’s.”

In the same way, one female interviewee who studied about reflection during her master’s explained, “Basically it was something I was literally doing, but I didn’t know that it was called reflective teaching, but when I was introduced to the term [during my master’s] I knew that what I was doing was what we call reflective teaching.” It was interesting to find that whether the participant teachers were exposed to reflective practice during their master’s studies or not, they attributed it to their own personalities. These findings are consistent with the views of Edwards and Thomas (2010) as was mentioned earlier in the literature review: “Reflective practice is … something teachers necessarily do rather than a set of attributes they acquire. It can never, without contradiction, be a form of education to be drawn up as a blueprint
and applied” (p. 405). They also claim that teachers are always reflective because “reflection is already necessarily embedded within the practice” (p. 407).

**Teachers’ Attitudes towards Reflection**

Results derived from the surveys and the interviews indicated that the majority of the teachers appeared to maintain an overall a positive attitude towards reflection. For instance, statements 9, 10, and 11 aimed to inquire about the following: whether reflection improves teachers’ teachings, whether reflection gives them insight into their teaching practice, and whether reflection helps them to sort out their classroom problems. The results of these statements revealed that 100% of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that reflection helps them in these situations (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Teachers’ General Attitudes towards Reflection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Reflection improves my teaching.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
<td>19 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Reflection gives me insight into my teaching practice.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>14 47%</td>
<td>16 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reflection on my teaching can help me to sort out my problems that I face in my classes.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>When I reflect, my lessons are more successful.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>18 60%</td>
<td>9 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Through reflection, I learn about myself as a teacher.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>19 63%</td>
<td>9 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Reflection is an integral part of my professional development.</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>17 57%</td>
<td>10 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I reflect on my teaching only when I’m required to do so.</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>18 60%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>6 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43
In an answer to an open-ended question, that asked, “Do you think it is necessary to reflect in order to be a good teacher? Why or why not?,” one female teacher wrote, “Definitely, it allows us to iron out the kinks in our practices. Secondly, it prevents us from falling into a rut and thirdly, it gives us a boost when we have been successful in class.” Another female teacher answered, “I can’t imagine being a teacher without reflecting on your classes. How else would you develop and meet students’ needs?” Responding to the same question one male teacher stated, “I think it is always essential – perhaps more so earlier in professional life as traits develop, but never outgrown. Without reflection, there is only reaction to circumstances rather than proactive development.” Another female teacher wrote, “Yes, without reflection one can never improve as a teacher. Recognizing where one has failed enables one to rethink the approach and then try again.”

Furthermore, the results of the interviews also pointed to the fact that the majority of the participant teachers were of the view that reflection plays an important role in their professional development. When all five interviewees were asked about the role of reflection in a teacher’s development, they all agreed that it plays an important role, and one of them said, “If you don’t reflect, I think you’re not going to improve.” In response to the open-ended question, “Why do you reflect?,” some teachers gave the following answers:

- “To inform my teaching practices.”
- “To improve; to effect a better learning experience for my students.”
- “I reflect because I want to enhance my performance. Thinking about performance helps.”
- “To grow, as a person and a teacher. To be able to give more to students. To not go through the motions in life.”
- “I reflect to improve my teaching skills and better benefit my students. I think without reflection and after a few years, teaching would be so boring.”
- “Seeking professional development.”
- “To observe and evaluate myself to improve and change my teaching.”
- “Honest self-reflection is the key to success. I need to examine what has worked and what hasn’t in the classroom. This might be painful for me but it will transform my teaching techniques for the better.”
The findings of these responses suggest that the participating teachers understand the importance of reflection in their professional development.

Moreover, statement 14 in the survey also elicited teachers’ views about reflection as an integral part of their professional development, and 90% of the participant teachers agreed or strongly agreed while only 10% remained neutral. In the same way, the findings of statements 12 and 13 showed that 90% and 93% of the participants, respectively, agreed or strongly agreed that when they reflect, their lessons are more successful, and through reflection, they learn about themselves as a teacher. Only 10% and 7% of the participants, respectively, were neutral about those points. Another statement that sought to reveal whether teachers only reflect when they are required to do so was statement 15. The findings showed that 73% of the participant teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed, whereas 20% of the participants agreed and only 7% remained neutral (see Table 6). In general, it seems that the majority of the participant teachers’ attitudes towards the role of reflection in their professional development confirm the importance of reflection that is given to it in the literature in this context.

**Factors and Tools That Help Teachers to Reflect**

Statements 16 to 26 were developed in an attempt to study how teachers reflect or what helps them to reflect (see Table 7). These 11 statements were designed to investigate what factors and tools teachers consider could help them to reflect and what factors and tools they actually use to reflect.
Table 7: How Teachers Reflect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Discussions with my colleagues cause me to reflect on my teaching.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Discussions with my students cause me to reflect on my teaching.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Observing my peers causes me to reflect on my teaching.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>If I encounter problems in the classroom, I find it more useful to talk to more experienced colleagues than simply to reflect on it myself.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I write reflective journals.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>My reflection is based on observation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I sometimes audio tape my lessons and reflect on them.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I sometimes video tape my lessons and reflect on them.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I believe that it’s useful to audio tape lessons and reflect on them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I believe that it’s useful to video tape lessons and reflect on them.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I find it helpful to keep a teaching journal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statements 16 and 17 proposed that the most common factors that help participating teachers to reflect on their teaching is their discussions with their colleagues and students. In both cases, 90% of the participant teachers agreed or strongly agreed (see Figure 1), whereas only 10% were neutral.
In addition, two female interviewees expressed their views in favor of discussion with students. One of them said, “I ask my students to give feedback on what I did, and so I benefit from their comments.” The other said, “I get informal feedback from my students and reflect on their input.” In this context, she further added, “I come back after my class and come into my office and I talk to my colleagues.” Another female interviewee said, “It’s very helpful to listen to other people’s experience.”

To further investigate participants’ views about the tools of reflection, an open-ended question was posed in the surveys, which was “If you reflect, how do you reflect?” In response to this question, some teachers commented as follows:

- “Students’ feedback.”
- “Think about what went right and why or what went wrong and why. For me this is a quiet, internal process but sometimes I seek other input.”
- “I prefer to discuss issues with trusted and experienced colleagues and to draw insights from reading and thinking.”
“Usually, self-reflection to begin with and followed by discussion with peers.”

“Not formally – mainly students’ feedback through a short questionnaire or a chat with them after class.”

The participant teachers’ second most commonly used tool for reflection appeared to be peer observation, which according to statement 18 and 21, causes them to reflect on their teaching. 80% and 87% participating teachers agreed or strongly agreed with these statements, while only 13% to 20% of the participants showed that they were neutral about these points. In response to the open-ended question, “How do you reflect?,” one female teacher stated, “I do peer observation and I make it a point that I discuss my performance with my colleagues and get the feedback from them.” Another female interviewee said, “Observing others is a great help.” Other interviewees also believed peer observation is a helpful tool for reflection.

The findings obtained from statements 20 and 26 indicated that writing reflective journals and keeping teaching journals seemed to be not very commonly used tools by the participating teachers. According to these findings, only 7% of the respondents agreed that they write reflective journals, while 63% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 30% were neutral. 37% of the participants found it helpful to keep teaching journals, whereas 23% of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed and 40% of them were neutral. Only one male teacher wrote in his response to an open-ended question, “Sometimes I use my journal to respond to teaching events. At other times I mentally reflect on what went wrong or the significant parts of the lesson.” In the same way, none of the interviewees suggested either reflective journals or teaching journals as a helpful tool in reflection. During the interviews, when they were specifically asked about journal writing, some of them said no and others said that they were not good at it.

On the other hand, some of the teachers pointed out note taking as a helpful tool in reflection in an answer to the open-ended question, “How do you reflect?” As one of the respondents wrote, “I jot down all the things that went well in my class and all the things that didn’t.” Another one added, “If the teaching load permits, I’d keep a small notebook to remind me of what worked and what didn’t. Just small keynotes.” One more teacher answered, “By taking notes.” Another explained, “I usually take notes of the unusual phenomena that occur during my lesson…. Then I either take
some time to think about them after the lesson or mention them to my colleagues to discuss or just share the experience.” The findings of the results of survey statements 20 and 26 and interview results about journal writing revealed that participants didn’t have much interest in journal writing. However, the results of the above mentioned open-ended question response in which teachers suggested that note taking is a helpful tool in reflection perhaps indicate that either participating teachers’ concept of note taking is different from journal writing or that there is a contradiction in the results.

Teachers’ responses to statements number 22, 23, 24, and 25 exhibited a somewhat contradictory attitude. In response to statement 22, for example, 73% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that they audio tape their lesson and reflect on them, while in response to statement 24, 70% of the participant agreed or strongly agreed that it is useful to audio tape their lessons and reflect on them. Similarly, in response to statement 23, “I sometimes video tape my lesson and reflect on them,” no one agreed or strongly agreed, whereas in response to statement 25, “I believe that it is useful to video tape lessons and reflect on them,” 60% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests that the participating teachers seemed to believe audio taping and video taping are helpful reflective tools, but possibly due to some constraints, they do not use them in practice. Two of the interviewees, however, mentioned that as younger teachers they used to audio tape their lessons. One of them said, “It [audio taping] was a really vital tool.” Another one of the female respondents of the survey’s open-ended questions answered in favor of audio taping and wrote, “I reflect by audio recording.”

In addition to this, the participants of the study also suggested other tools that they used to reflect on their teaching practices. One male interviewee and one female interviewee showed their interest in action research and said that they do it in either a formal or informal way. Two interviewees said that they reflect by assessing the results of their students’ quizzes and the outcomes of the lesson. Similarly, in an answer to an open-ended question, “How do you reflect?,” some participant teachers answered that they reflect in the form of asking questions and reflecting on their students’ assessment and by checking whether they achieved the goals of their lesson or not. One male teacher wrote, “I reflect during teaching and immediately after class.
It’s simply posing questions to yourself in your mind like: Why didn’t that work? What could I have done better? That went well; what was the reason for that?”

Apart from these tools, some of the participating teachers pointed out some factors that help them or lead them to reflection. For instance, one female interviewee said that she always reflects if she detects a problem. Her idea confirms Dewey’s (1944) assertion that we reflect when there is a problem or a situation of uncertainty or doubt. Problems, uncertainties, and doubts trigger reflection which ultimately urges us to look, to inquire, and to investigate into things. Another female interviewee explained that when something doesn’t work or class becomes monotonous and boring, these situations urge her to reflect. One more female interviewee said, “I use my past experience to reflect in what happened in one class to improve my teaching in another class. Haven’t you noticed that, always, the second time you teach a course it’s much better than the first time you did. It comes from reflection.”

Furthermore, in response to an open-ended question, “If you reflect, why do you reflect?,” one male participant wrote, “I have a conscience. May be it’s a self-evaluation reflex.” Another male participant answered that he reflects because of “humility.” These findings seem to be consistent to some extent with Boody’s (2008) opinion in the literature which suggests that moral obligation to others is “the motive power” (p. 503) which urges teachers to reflect on a particular teaching/learning situation.

**Factors That Inhibit Teachers’ Reflection**

Some factors that inhibit teachers’ reflection were commonly recognized by the majority of the participant teachers of the study in statements 27 to 32 (see Table 8). Only the findings of teachers’ responses to statement 27 and to the open-ended questions section of the survey exhibited an assortment of varying attitudes, as 67% of the respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they don’t have time to reflect, while 13% of them were uncertain and another 20% of them agreed or strongly agreed. On the other hand, a majority of the respondents admitted in the open-ended questions section of the survey that they don’t reflect because of time constraints, busy schedules, and being overloaded. One male respondent wrote, “I don’t reflect out of being busy or having other things on my mind. Put simply the mundane things in life get in the way.”
Table 8: Factors That Inhibit Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I don’t have time to reflect.</td>
<td>6 20%</td>
<td>14 47%</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>It really requires effort to reflect.</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>9 30%</td>
<td>7 23%</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I don’t reflect because it sometimes makes me feel guilty about not having taught well.</td>
<td>8 27%</td>
<td>19 63%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I don’t think reflection improves my teaching.</td>
<td>13 43%</td>
<td>15 50%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Reflection sometimes leads to negative feelings towards teaching.</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
<td>8 27%</td>
<td>7 23%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Reflecting on my teaching is stressful.</td>
<td>5 17%</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
<td>10 33%</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same was found in the interviewees’ responses, as most of them seemed to consider time constraint as the most common factor that inhibits reflection. As one of the male interviewee remarked, “There’s constraint of time, constraints of life outside the classroom if you’ve got a busy family to run, you may not have so much time to look back at the classroom and try to analyze what’s happening there, what you might do differently.” One female interviewee said, “Being overloaded, and continuously busy. It doesn’t give them time for improvement. The more time a teacher has for planning and reflection, the better performance they can give.”

Similarly, in response to an open-ended question, another male teacher pointed out, “Increasingly, administration seeks to put teaching methodology and practice in lockstep, hindering experimentation and individual expression. The increasing demands on teacher time outside of class also make reflection hurried and piecemeal.”

This remark confirms Kwo’s (1996) and Akbari’s (2007) opinions in the literature about the same issue. As Kwo suggests, lack of reflection may be due to a structure of teaching practice which does not provide time or encouragement for reflection during teaching practice. According to Akbari (2007), it is possible that teachers may lose
their real reflective spirit due to a systematized and reduced set of techniques set by academia, and “a consequence of reducing reflection to a set of techniques is disregard for teachers’ personality” (p. 201).

Moreover, statement 28 received discrepant attitudes from the teachers, as the findings showed that 40% of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that it really requires effort to reflect, while 23% of the teachers showed a neutral response and 37% of the teachers agreed. In response to statement 30, no one showed agreement to the point that reflection doesn’t improve their teaching. 93% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed, and only 7% were neutral. In response to statement 31, “Reflection sometimes leads to negative feelings towards teaching,” 23% of the teachers agreed, while 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 27% remained neutral. Responses to statement 32, “Reflecting on my teaching is stressful,” indicated that 54% of the respondent didn’t agree, while 33% of them were neutral and 13% showed agreement.

As for statement 29, “I don’t reflect because it sometimes makes me feel guilty about not having taught well,” 90% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while only 3% of the respondent agreed and 7% remained neutral. In this context, some participating teachers’ comments through interviews and open-ended questions revealed interesting findings. For example, answering an open-ended question, one female teacher commented, “To be able to teach means to be able to face the challenge and admit that I was wrong here or there and then make it right. Some people find this painful or stressful or they just think they are perfect teachers!!” A similar attitude was expressed by a female teacher in the interview: “Some teachers unfortunately believe that they are so perfect, that they don’t need it [reflection].”

In the same way, another female interviewee explained that some teachers are overconfident and they behave as if they don’t want to face the issues dealing with teaching practices. Almost the same idea was conveyed by a male interviewee who pointed out, “It could be arrogance…that ‘it all went wrong and it’s not my fault.’” All these responses suggest that these teachers believe that some personality traits such as considering yourself perfect, being overconfident, and being arrogant could inhibit reflection in teachers.
The open-ended questions’ and interview responses also suggested some more factors that could impede reflection in teachers. In this context, one of the male interviewees made an interesting point when he said, “Teachers do reflect anyway, inevitably they will, whether they have the ability or luxury of acting on that reflection in a wise way, is another matter.” This remark reminds us of Akbari’s (2007) point that “problem identification needs trained eyes, which many teachers, specially novice ones, lack…. Many teachers use their reflection for justifying what they do since they are incapable of finding what is wrong with their performance” (p. 199).

Furthermore, on this issue, one female interviewee pointed out that the factor of “carelessness” indirectly might keep teachers from reflecting. She added, “I mean, not caring so much about, even the profession, considering as a job, where they can get the money only, they don’t care about the students.” To some extent, the same issue was raised by a male interviewee who signaled another possible factor: “Laziness, lack of commitment, in which case they’ve [teachers] probably chosen the wrong job.” Another male teacher responded to an open-ended question and wrote, “Reflection should come naturally to anyone in the teaching field. If a teacher doesn’t constantly analyze or self-critique their own work in the classroom, this apathy suggests that perhaps the person has made a wrong career choice.” In general, these findings indicate that some participating teachers considered the wrong career choice also to be a contributing factor in inhibiting reflection in teachers.

In conclusion, findings of this study revealed that all the participating teachers were relatively aware of the concept of reflection in English language teaching and its immense benefits. This is evident by the definitions of reflection given by the participating teachers in the open-ended questions section of the surveys (see Appendix D). Overall, they showed positive attitudes towards the role of reflection in their professional development. The next chapter summarizes the major findings of this study, provides some practical implications for teachers and administrators, lists some limitations of the study and ends with some suggestions for further research.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

This chapter first provides a brief summary of the study’s findings. Then, based on the discussion of the results, some practical implications for teachers and administrators are suggested. Next, some limitations of this study are identified and at the end, directions for further research are recommended.

Summary of Findings

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of this study was to investigate teachers’ views and attitudes about reflection and its role in their professional development. Interpretation of the study’s results suggest that most of the 30 teachers surveyed and interviewed for the study were aware of the concept of reflection and its positive effects on their teaching practices. Results also indicated that the majority of the teachers were in favor of reflecting on their daily teaching practices through various means in order to improve professionally. The findings also revealed the participating teachers’ views about some factors that impede reflection.

With regards to participating teachers’ general attitude towards reflection, most teachers thought that reflection is an ongoing process, and it is an inevitable phenomenon for teachers. Overall, the findings revealed that no discrimination of participants’ attitude towards reflection was found due to difference of their cultures or genders. Whether the participants were native or non-native speakers of English or males or females, their responses were in agreement to each other (see Appendix D). The results also showed that the most commonly used tool for reflection by participating teachers appeared to be discussions with their colleagues and students. In addition, the findings of interviews and open-ended questions disclosed that the participants consider lack of time to be the factor that most inhibits reflection, although these findings seemed to contradict the opinion that was observed in survey statement 27 in which the majority of the participants disagreed that they don’t have time to reflect (see Table 8 on page 51). The participating teachers also pointed out some other interesting factors that they believe impede reflection, such as teaching as a wrong career choice, being over-confident and arrogant, considering yourself perfect, and the inability to act wisely on one’s reflection.
Implications of the Study

The findings of this study accentuate the importance of introducing teachers to some activities that could give them awareness about the concept of reflection, as some participants of the study were not aware of the concept of reflection in teaching. Arrangement of professional development sessions and workshops for teachers that focus on reflective teaching could be beneficial to introduce and develop the concept in teachers. Teachers should be made aware of the importance of reflection and understand that they have this capacity that can be utilized to develop professionally.

It is also recommended that administrators should encourage a reflective approach in teachers in such a way that they should not feel that they are being forced to reflect. During the interview, in response to the question, “Do you think administrators should require teachers to reflect?” all of the interviewees said that reflection cannot be forced on teachers. Teachers must not have the feeling that it is being imposed on them; otherwise, it could cause resistance towards reflective practice. On the part of administrators, there is a need to provide teachers with opportunities which help them to become involved in reflective practice. In this context, administrators could arrange workshops or round table informal conferences at regular intervals in which teachers could discuss and share their teaching problems and successes. Teachers should also be encouraged to conduct action research and present their case studies in the professional development sessions of their institution.

The results also indicated that these teachers do not use audio/video recording to reflect, but they believe that it is useful to reflect on audio/video recorded lessons. This finding highlights the importance of providing teachers with audio and video recording facilities and minimizing their technical constraints in order to promote the use of audio/video recording in their daily teaching practices. Moreover, the findings suggest that the majority of the teachers consider peer observation a helpful tool for reflection. But the process of observation is also considered stressful, as it is usually used to evaluate teachers’ performance. There is a need to promote anxiety free classroom observations in our teaching systems where teachers can observe their colleagues’ classes in order to learn from each other. Observing or being observed without the feelings of being evaluated could free teachers from the anxiety and nervousness that teachers usually feel during observations.
In my opinion, teachers’ positive attitudes towards reflection and their awareness of its benefits should urge teachers to overcome the challenge of time constraints. They should manage and avail their time to reflect. In order to do this they could even utilize the gaps in their free time when they are physically busy but mentally free to reflect, such as during driving, jogging, doing dishes or laundry, etc. In the same way, administrators should also realize that teachers should not be overburdened with extra teaching load or involved in extracurricular activities which ultimately take them away from their reflective practices. They should not neglect the fact that a relaxed mind works far better than an overburdened, tired mind.

The findings of this study suggest that reflection is an inevitable aspect of teaching. One of the interviewees even said, “It [reflection] is a teaching trait.” So if some teachers are not interested in their profession, how could we expect them to reflect and act upon their reflections in ways that would ultimately lead them to make wise decisions? The findings suggest that teachers’ career choice is a point worth considering for teachers and administrators. Teachers should try to seek in themselves the true spirit of a teacher. They should ask themselves whether they are in this profession by mistake or just to earn money, or whether they really love to teach and feel the rewarding experiences of teaching. The future of humanity is in the hands of the profession of teaching. In this profession, to have teachers who do not want to be teachers but became teachers just to earn money is a societal dilemma. So it is teachers’ moral duty to understand this fact and make decisions about their profession accordingly. Similarly, administrators should also establish some criteria for teachers which could help them to decide who is really interested in teaching. In this regard, teachers’ questionnaires, interviews, students’ evaluation of their teachers, and teachers’ observations could be beneficial before or after hiring teachers.

**Limitations of the Study and Directions for Further Research**

The concept of reflection is so personal that it is difficult to investigate who really reflects and who doesn’t, especially when teachers know that it is a positive attribute of teachers. Knowing that something is professionally good and admitting its deficiency in one’s personality is not easy for everyone. After conducting the surveys and interviews, I realized that it was not an easy task to elicit responses that could portray true pictures of teachers’ reflective attitudes. The findings revealed that the
teachers exhibited positive attitudes towards reflection and they also reflect, but whether they take appropriate actions and make good decisions based on their reflections or not was not very clear from their responses.

To some extent, this limitation can be attributed to the Likert scale survey statements that were used to indicate responses of “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree,” where teachers’ responded in a fixed structured way. In addition, the study might yield different results if students of the participating teachers were included. This would allow for a comparison of what students think of their teachers’ performance and what teachers think of themselves. Moreover, observations of the participating teachers’ classes might have yielded further insights.

Owing to its broadness, the concept of reflection leaves open new vistas for other studies to be conducted within its scope. This study has provided some valuable insights into teachers’ perceptions of reflection, but it might reveal different results if the subjects of the study were school teachers, as they are considered to be more overburdened as compared to university or college level teachers and could have different attitudes towards reflection. Some findings revealed through this study led to an interesting issue of English language teachers’ career choice which could drive further studies. In a future study, the choice of English language teaching as a career could be investigated. Teachers could be asked why they chose teaching as their profession, and their answers could reveal some further interesting findings about their reflective attitudes. As findings of my research suggest that to ask teachers directly whether they are reflective teachers could not unfold the complete story, it might be better to investigate the issue in more indirect ways.
References


Appendix A: College and University-level Teachers’ Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify teachers’ views and attitudes towards reflection. Please note that the participants of this study will remain anonymous and data provided will be used only for analysis as part of my thesis in the Master’s in TESOL Program at the American University of Sharjah.

Please read the following carefully in order to understand the general concept of reflection which will help you in answering the survey’s questions.

Reflection:
“Reflective practice is a process that consistently challenges a person to observe and analyze what is happening in any situation in order to assure that the work done is on track” (Rivera, 2010, p. 25).

Please complete the background information below, circle the appropriate response for statements #1-32, and then write a short answer for #33, #34, #35, #36 and #37.

Gender: Female Male
Teaching Experience: ________ years
Place of teaching experience: _______________
Training/Degrees: __________________________
English language: Native speaker Non-native speaker

1. I am familiar with the concept of reflection in language teaching.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. I don’t reflect on my teaching.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. I reflect on my students’ learning.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. I reflect on my students’ learning problems.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. I reflect on the strength of my lesson.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

6. I reflect on the weaknesses of my lesson.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. I reflect on the weaknesses of my teaching style.
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
8. I consider myself to be a reflective teacher.  
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

9. Reflection improves my teaching.  
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

10. Reflection gives me insight into my teaching practice.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

11. Reflection on my teaching can help me to sort out my problems that I face in my classes.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

12. When I reflect, my lessons are more successful.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

13. Through reflection, I learn about myself as a teacher.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

14. Reflection is an integral part of my professional development.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

15. I reflect on my teaching only when I’m required to do so.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

16. Discussions with my colleagues cause me to reflect on my teaching.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

17. Discussions with my students cause me to reflect on my teaching.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

18. Observing my peers causes me to reflect on my teaching.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

19. If I encounter problems in the classroom, I find it more useful to talk to more experienced colleagues than simply to reflect on it myself.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

20. I write reflective journals.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

21. My reflection is based on observation.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

22. I sometimes audio tape my lessons and reflect on them.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

23. I sometimes video tape my lessons and reflect on them.  
    Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
24. I believe that it’s useful to audio tape lessons and reflect on them.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

25. I believe that it’s useful to video tape lessons and reflect on them.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

26. I find it helpful to keep a teaching journal.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

27. I don’t have time to reflect.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

28. It really requires effort to reflect.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

29. I don’t reflect because it sometimes makes me feel guilty about not having taught well.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

30. I don’t think reflection improves my teaching.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

31. Reflection sometimes leads to negative feelings towards teaching.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

32. Reflecting on my teaching is stressful.
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

33. What does reflection mean to you? Give your own definition.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

34. Do you think it is necessary to reflect in order to be a good teacher? Why or why not?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
35. If you reflect, how do you reflect?


36. If you reflect, why do you reflect?


37. If you sometimes don’t reflect, why not?


Please fill in the information below if you would like to be interviewed. The interview should take about 15-20 minutes and will discuss more issues about your involvement in reflection.

I would like to be interviewed:  yes  no

If yes, Name: ____________________
Mobile: _____________________   E-mail: ____________________
Appendix B: Teachers’ Interview Questions

1. After getting knowledge, education, qualification and training, do you think you are a good teacher or there are chances of improvement/development? If yes then how can you improve or develop?

2. During your MA, did you study about reflective practice/ were you given any practice in reflection during your studies?

3. Do you think that reflection plays an important role in teachers’ development?

4. How do you reflect on your teaching if you do?

5. When do you reflect on your teaching if you do?

6. How often do you reflect?

7. What do you think are some factors which might keep teachers from reflecting?

8. Do you think there are some limitations or drawbacks in reflection?

9. If you think that reflection is not important for your development, then what is important?

10. Do you think there is difference between those teachers who do not reflect and those who do reflect? What is it?

11. Do you think administrator should require teachers to reflect?

12. A lot of importance is given to reflection in literature and in teaching dept and teachers are being trained to practice reflection. How much is being practiced in reality in teachers’ life?

13. What do you think can be done in order to promote reflection by teachers?

14. Do you think that to be reflective is a personality trait or can it be developed?
## Appendix C: University of Sharjah Teachers’ Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>I reflect on the weaknesses of my lesson.</td>
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<td>I reflect on the weaknesses of my teaching style.</td>
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<td>I consider myself to be a reflective teacher.</td>
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<td>Reflection improves my teaching.</td>
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<td>Reflection on my teaching can help me to sort out my problems that I face in my classes.</td>
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<td>I reflect on my teaching only when I’m required to do so.</td>
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<td>Discussions with my colleagues cause me to reflect on my teaching.</td>
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<td>Observing my peers causes me to reflect on my teaching.</td>
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<td>If I encounter problems in the classroom, I find it more useful to talk to more experienced colleagues than simply to reflect on it myself.</td>
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Appendix D: Teachers’ Responses to Open-ended Questions

1. What does reflection mean to you? Give your own definition.

Native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

**Females**
- Basically regularly examine what works and what doesn’t in the classroom!
  Be critical of yourself in a way.
- Looking at/thinking about what I do in the classroom and evaluating the teaching/learning process.
- Reflection on my teaching allows me to see where I’m going wrong, where I could do better, and where I can complement myself.

**Males**
- Reflection should come naturally to anyone in the teaching field. If a teacher doesn’t constantly analyze or self-critique their own work in the classroom, this apathy suggests that perhaps the person has made a wrong career choice.
- Paying attention to what works.
- Reflection involves analyzing the lesson I’ve taught. The lesson plan used for that lesson, and how that lesson fits into the curriculum, in order to have a sense of perspective and progression. By scrutinizing the lesson in this way, I am able to evaluate my performance and that of my students’.
- To think carefully and critically about something.
- To me it means learning about my teaching through self-inquiry.
- Self-evaluation with a view to modification of practice. Part of a developmental process.
- Reflection is simply self-assessment and trying to figure out what you can do to improve performance.
- The ability to analyze how a lesson and class progressed and why it progressed as it did with the goal of gaining insight on how you can act more successfully in the future.

Non-native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

**Females**
- It means looking back at your teaching and assessing its success (or failure)!
- Improving my teaching
- Reflection to me is two-fold. The first step is informal – going over what happened in class. The second step is more formal – analyzing and critiquing the events.
- Self evaluation – examining what works and what doesn’t in the classroom.
- Reflection for me is like self talk. When I leave class, I start thinking and talking to myself about what I did right and what I need to improve next time I teach the same lesson.
- To me reflection is a vital part of my teaching routine. Reflection would be my evaluation of how well a class went and where it failed.
- To me, reflection is a way of analyzing experiences in order to learn from them.
Reflection according to me is analyzing my own teaching methodology, the achievement of my lesson objectives, finding out the strengths and weaknesses and finally improving on it.

Males
- It means following up and find suitable solutions.
- I look at what I do in the classroom, think why I do certain things and think if my techniques work. In other words, it is a self-observation and self-evaluation in order to improve and change our teaching techniques.
- It means thinking about your teaching. You always think how to make your teaching more effective.
- It means feedback to me.
- Reflection meant to me assessing the success or otherwise, of the strategies that I used, or the steps that I went through to achieve the objectives of my lesson.
- Reflection simply means I am being realistic when handling a class, rather than merely applying theories I read in books. Reflection bridges the gap between theory and real situation. It helps me to do the necessary modifications to fit my teaching skills for a particular learner group.
- Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works—a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. This involves keeping diary, recording our own lesson, peer observation so on…

2. Do you think it is necessary to reflect in order to be a good teacher? Why or why not?

Native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females
- Yes and No. It could sometimes help when you’re trying something new, or teaching something for the first time, and no, because it shouldn’t become an obsession. One should have confidence in oneself.
- Yes, I do. By identifying and exploring our classroom practices, we can improve.
- Yes, without reflection one can never improve as a teacher. Recognising where one has failed enables one to rethink the approach and then try again.

Males
- Of course, but again this should come naturally although I’ve no doubt there is always a variety of ways to improve upon it.
- Yes, because it raises consciousness and improves theory of mind.
- Yes, reflection heightens awareness of a teacher’s strengths and weaknesses, even if the reflection is not structured or systematic.
- I’m not sure if it ‘necessary’, but for me it does help. You realize that something didn’t work well, and you try to do it differently and better next time.
- Yes! Critical reflection can help me to discover whether there is a gap between what and how I teach and what my students learn.
- No. Reflection is usually associated with humanistic views of teaching and the classroom. This is only one type of model and certainly not the only valid one.
• Yes. If you don’t reflect, it implies that there is nothing to adapt, change or alter in your approach to teaching. This is clearly false. You need to know what’s not working before you can improve. That involves reflection.

• I think it is always essential—perhaps more so earlier in professional life as traits develop, but never outgrown. Without reflection, there is only reaction to circumstances rather than proactive development.

Non-native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females
• Yes. Reflection improves teaching considerably!
• Yes, it improves my methodology of teaching.
• Definitely. It allows us to iron out the kinks in our practices. Secondly, it prevents us from falling into a rut and thirdly, it gives us a boost when we have been successful in class.
• Because of the constant changes in our classrooms, it is crucial to see how we can adapt to meet the changing demands. Without reflecting this cannot happen.
• Definitely. It’s a tool through which a teacher can consolidate and reinforce his good classroom practices and improve or work on his weaknesses.
• I can’t imagine being a teacher without reflecting on your classes. How else would you develop and meet students’ needs?
• It is very necessary to reflect because this action promotes my teaching styles. I can learn from my weaknesses and stress on the strong points.

Males
• Yes, simply because reflection gives feedback which helps us to revise our plans and make any required modifications.
• Yes, it is necessary to reflect to be a good teacher because it gives you feedback about things you should change in your teaching.
• Yes, because reflection may lead you to identify your weaknesses and find ways to improve your teaching.
• Yes, for development.
• As teachers, we cannot speak of self-development without reflecting on our acts inside the classroom. Reflection helps us find out the true image of our teaching profile.
• Yes I do because. As mentioned earlier, it helps me to adjust my teaching skills to fit one particular group of learners.
• I consider it to be an essential practice as it helps me understand my teaching approach and my students’ learning pragmatics.

3. If you reflect, how do you reflect?

Native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females
• Students’ attitude, 2. Students’ results, 3. How satisfied/dissatisfied I feel after a teaching session. 4. Students’ feedback
• Think about what went right and why or what went wrong and why. For me this is a quiet, internal process but sometimes I seek other input.
• I try to spend a quiet few minutes after each class to analyse how it went.
Males

- Consider the class- for example if I have one good class, eager learners and they are earning high marks I am less likely to reflect upon my method that if I had another section, same level, same skill, same book, same lesson but they are not achieving. For that poor class, I’ll spend time reflecting upon what the problem may be and adjust my delivery of materials accordingly until I find out which methods works best for them.
- I try to understand or sense what is going on in a student’s mind and a class’s collective consciousness. I adapt to those intuitions.
- For me it is a normal reflex action. I think that “yes, it went well” or “No, change things next time”.
- Sometimes I use my journal to respond to teaching events. At other times I mentally reflect on what went wrong or the significant parts of a lesson.
- Varies
- I reflect during teaching and immediately after class. It’s simply posing questions to yourself in your mind like: Why didn’t that work? What could I have done better? That went really well; what was the reason for that?
- Less on paper than I did as a younger teacher. I prefer to discuss issues with trusted and experienced colleagues and to draw insights from reading and thinking. Also, professional seminars cause you to reflect on specific facets of teaching, often to great effect.

Non-native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females

- I examine the results of my lesson and see if I achieved the goals. Why, or why not, and what would have worked better.
- Usually, self-reflection to begin with and followed by discussion with peers.
- Not formally – mainly students’ feedback through a short questionnaire or a chat with them after class.
- I jot down all the things that went well in my class and all the things that did not. I also get feedback from my students on a regular basis through a small survey. In addition, I do peer observation and I make it a point that I discuss my performance with my colleagues and get the feedback from them.
- It depends on how much time is available for me. If the teaching load permits, I’d keep a small notebook to remind me of what worked and what didn’t. Just small quick notes. If too busy, I’d just take time while preparing for classes to reflect mentally.
- I reflect by asking myself these questions: Where did I fail as a teacher? What can I do to make my teaching more fun? Do I still enjoy teaching? How have my beliefs about learning changed over the years?
- I reflect by audio recording, asking questions, peer discussion, students’ assessments, etc.

Males

- I believe that reflection should be a continuous process.
- I go through what I will do in class. I also review what I and my students did in class.
- By taking notes, sometimes record my lessons and do questionnaires.
• I usually take notes of the unusual phenomena that occur during my lesson (difficulties of teaching/learning or success of some action) etc. Then I either take some time to think about them after the lesson or mention them to my colleagues to discuss or just share the experience.

• First, I analyze a particular matter from different standpoints, in addition to mine such as the student. Second, I try to form a picture about my way of teaching from, for example, the student stance. Third, I synthesize the two points of view i.e., the student’s and mine, then I think about what to change and expected results. Finally, I try the most useful change that is convenient to the student and the teacher while maintaining the goals of the program.

• By collecting information about what goes on in our classroom, and by analysing and evaluating this information, we identify and explore our own practices and underlying beliefs.

4. If you reflect, why do you reflect?

Native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females
• It’s just instinctive. You don’t consciously think about it.
• To inform my teaching practices.
• To improve; to effect a better learning experience for my students.

Males
• It is human nature to do some reflecting. For me, it is a state of mind that has always been part of my personality.
• I have a conscience. May be it’s a self-evaluation reflex.
• Humility
• I reflect because I want to enhance my performance. Thinking about performance helps.
• To grow, as a person and a teacher. To be able to give more to students. To not go through the motions in life.

Non-native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females
• To improve my teaching and achieve better results with my students.
• Personally, I reflect over all my actions in a day. It’s a habit that I’ve grown up with and now it’s part of my teaching routine. I find reflection useful in planning my next lesson – it helps me decide what to continue with and what to discard.
• In order to adapt and remain relevant.
• Seeking professional development.
• To do a better job. There’s always room for improvement and I believe my success largely depends on meeting my students’ needs and helping them learn better to reach their goal.
• Honest self-reflection is the key to success. I need to examine what has worked and what hasn’t in the classroom. This might be painful for me but it will transform my teaching techniques for the better.
• To better understand the teaching and learning process and to improve on it.
Males

- To make sure that things are OK and on the right track.
- To observe and evaluate myself to improve and change my teaching.
- Because with reflection you may improve your performance as a teacher. How can you improve if you don’t try to benefit from your own experience?
- I reflect to understand, to treat and to overcome a certain problem or to reiterate some successful experience.
- I reflect to improve my teaching skills and better benefit my students. I think without reflection and after a few years, teaching would be so boring.

5. If you sometimes don’t reflect, why not?

Native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females

- You don’t reflect when it’s the same lesson that you’ve practiced over the years and has constantly proven to be successful.
- If I’m too busy or stressed it can be difficult to reflect. However, I’m aware that non-reflection has a negative effect on my self-confidence.

Males

- Sometimes I don’t reflect when I am truly happy with my lessons and my students. Being exhausted doesn’t help either.
- Tiredness, lack of mental stamina. Reflection can be said to be luxury for teachers who have little time to spare. Teaching can be demanding and very unrewarding if the teaching load is heavy and students lack motivation.
- Time constraints, tiredness, work load often means I’m not in the mood to reflect.
- Arrogance.
- I don’t reflect out of being busy or having other things on my mind. Put simply the mundane things in life get in the way.
- Increasingly, administration seeks to put teaching methodology and practice in lockstep, hindering experimentation and individual expression. The increasing demands on teacher time outside of class also make reflection hurried and piecemeal.

Non-native Speakers of English Teachers’ Responses

Females

- Generally I do reflect.
- Not having time.
- Too busy – overloaded.
- I do like and believe in video-taping. However, I don’t do it because it is time consuming and needs a lot of arrangements.
- Time, time, time, and time!!
- To be able to teach means to be able to face the challenge and admit that I was wrong here or there and then make it right. Some people find this painful or stressful or they just think they are perfect teachers!!
- Lack of time, very busy, etc.
Males

- I always reflect.
- Because of overload teaching and lack of motivation.
- It would be due to being over worked i.e; a question of time arises.
- Actually, reflection in an integral part for me. I believe that it not only makes me a better teacher, but also a better person – humble and open-minded. Reflection changed me a lot. I think, if I do not reflect, it could be I’m so upset or so tired, but after I relax I would reconsider reflecting on that matter.
Appendix E: Sample Interview Transcripts

Interview #1: Male Native Speaker of English Teacher

My first question is, after getting knowledge, education, qualification and training, do you think that you are a good teacher, or there are chances of improvement or development?

One of the first things that happened to me after I got my RSA diploma, was my teaching went heavily downhill for a year or two, because of it being such an intensive course, that it exhausted me. I think what I found true was many of the people who studied along with me at the same time, all of us felt that we had, rather, less to offer at the end of the course, than the beginning, and it really took a year or two after that, really until we started developing and improving again. Was that the answer to your question?

No, I mean like, so, you think that when you did that course, you felt yourself that you improved a lot and developed.

Yeah, I got benefit from it, but the benefit was not immediate. The benefit came in a year or so later. But I’m still trying to do things to improve my teaching. And the last qualification I took was some years ago. I’m usually trying to do something new in the classroom just to see what happens. You know, listen to other teachers, see what they’ve got to say, try and pick up a few ideas, so the development process is, I hope will go on till retirement.

So do you think there are some other ways of improving or developing?

Other ways than what?

Like, as you said, getting this qualification, this course you were talking about, so other than that, could be there something which can help you to improve or develop?

Oh yeah, just the ability to identify problems. If you’re going to identify problems in the classroom than surely it suggests that you’re interested in solution to them as well. So just a little bit of ad hoc reaction to your own teaching is one way of attempting to improve and develop as a teacher. I hope I’m still doing that.

Alright, you did your masters, so during your masters; did you study about reflective practice? Or were you given any practice in reflection during your studies?

Yes. It wasn’t only about practice, but if I give you the name, Mike Wallace, does that mean something to you? Well, he was one of the tutors on the course, he recently published a book, it was 1986 he published the book I think, on reflection, which is regarded by many as the first major publication in the area, trying to bring in the
strands that have been going on for some years, so he was the big man in this sort of thing, and of course that was one of the themes which we were supposed to read on the course and take account of in what we were doing, both in the classroom practice and in the theory.

So it was both. So in classroom practice, what did you do regarding reflection?

The thing is, with the classroom practice, which is part of the master’s degree, we were supposed to keep a diary, I wasn’t very good at it, I wasn’t as…motivated as I should have been. But, I’ve sort of lost track of the question, what…

Like, for example, you said that during your master’s, theoretically you know about this reflective practice, and you said that you practiced some reflective activities, diary or some other one?

Diaries, trying to compare lessons to, subsequent lessons, certain amount of experimentation, in what we were doing in the classroom as well. And of course build in some of the theories in the theoretical essays and assignments which we had to do in the course as well.

Were there any kind of observations, like classroom observations, observing each other.

No, it’s been quite a few years now.

Writing, you know, reflective journals, that sort of thing.

Well, not as such, the dissertation, yes, I had to give some kind of account for what I had been doing in the classroom, why I had been doing it that way, so at the time of course, I was keeping my own records. And recorded a lot of classroom recording, at that time it was cassette tape recording, and transcriptions. That is very, very time consuming, as you will probably find out, if you don’t know already, when you transcribe a few things from what we’re talking about now.

So do you think that reflection plays an important role in teachers’ development?

Well, it can, there’s reflection anyway, any teacher will reflect, it’s a question of what you mean by reflection. Nowadays, the term tends to be used almost exclusively as structured analysis of the classroom experience.

It terms of structure analysis I would say that rather it would be called action research.

Well, ok, yes, that can be a form of reflection, depending what it is.

Reflection you could say that for example, like I gave this definition in the questionnaire also, like, reflection is like thinking about and analyzing your own
classroom experience, and then trying to find out the problem solving areas and then to analyze and improve them according to the students.

It’s not just the question of problem analysis of course, it’s, you can also have success analysis, if you particularly ask that, why was it so good? Could I do that again? Could I do it with different students? Is there something here which I can tell my work mates so they could benefit from it as well. Reflection isn’t negative, not by any means.

So you think that reflection plays an important role in teachers’ development?

Yeah I think it inevitably will. Whether you want it to or not. It’s a part of what teachers do.

So if you say that you reflect, I would ask you how do you reflect on your teaching?

Anything from cursing the students at the end of the day, to my office neighbor or to my wife, listening to them curse too. That’s one form of reflection. I don’t keep diaries, I don’t keep records of what I do in the classroom, but I am very aware of what’s gone wrong and what’s gone right. Now I’m old enough, and perhaps, to some extent, set in my ways. But that doesn’t necessarily now lead to a particular course of action. I try to do something different every week or so, just to see what what’s going to happen with it.

So I experiment in that sense I suppose you could call it action research, I do some of that, sometimes I’ll keep records of it if I want to compare classes, if I’m interested in telling people what I’ve done, but more often than not I don’t keep any record apart from memory.

So when do you reflect on your teaching if you do?

When? Well, during the lesson, after the lesson, long after the lesson, before the lesson, trying to think of what’s coming, is that reflection, when you anticipate? Surely it is, if you plan lessons, it has form of considering what’s likely to happen, and what you want to happen, very often it does not happen in the way you expect it to, but I think that’s probably a form of reflection as well. It’s planning, it’s sort of preplanning or post planning, and I think that’s just part of what teachers do, and that can be within the class, when you decide, this isn’t working. When you decide, you need to change tact somehow. I think teachers need to have fairly agile minds.

Any other, it’s ok? That’s all? You want to say something else?

Agile minds, let’s also regard teaching as… if I was trying to keep a job, then I perhaps would not be as agile minded, perhaps.

So how often do you reflect?

That is really part of the question you just asked. I think that’s answered. I answered it most of the time.
Yeah, ok, do you feel sometime that your reflection is restricted only to your thoughts. Like, you just think, and you do nothing. Or do you think that it leads to any particular action?

Oh it very often leads to action. It leads to changes in the way you do what you’re going to do, you can confirm in the way you’re doing things, you can blame others, which is always very satisfying, but yeah, it’s teacher development is a continuous process, I think you keep doing that as long as you teach. I don’t think that’s just me, I think that it’s true for teachers, it’s not just my experience, I think any teacher will continue to develop.

So it’s not restricted to your thoughts, like, of course you take some actions based on your thoughts.

If I feel like I can or should, yes.

What do you think are some factors which might keep teachers from reflecting?

Laziness, lack of commitment, in which case they’ve probably chosen the wrong job. Can I say that some teachers are stupid? I think some of them are, sometimes I am too, there are people, there’s nothing wonderful about teachers, there’s probably some atomic scientists or brain surgeons could be stupid as well, I’m sure, I hope they’re not too stupid when they’re operating on me, but, yeah, laziness, there’s all those negative things, there’s constraints of time, constraints of life outside the classroom, if you’ve got a busy family to run, you may not have so much time to look back at the classroom and try to analyze what’s happening there, what you might do differently.

You said that sometimes you feel that some teachers are stupid. No, some people are stupid, now some of those people are teachers.

I mean teachers are like, of course they are also people, the question is, what do you think are some factors that might keep teachers from reflecting? Now you said, it means that to be stupid is kind of like hindrance that keeps you from reflecting?

Yeah, inability to analyze, it could be arrogance as well, that ‘it all went wrong and it’s not my fault’, I do that, I blame other people, very obvious, that’s just what I’m saying, I shan’t name any names, it’s convenient to attach blame to people in authority, there are various constraints which we all work under, which we don’t like, but we usually put up with.

Ok, my next question is, do you think there are some limitations or drawbacks in reflection?

You can overanalyze, a lot of what happens in the classroom I think is just, what’s the term, are you familiar with the term; flying by the seat of your pants. It means like, doing things instinctively, and I think very few people are gifted teachers, there are certainly many good ones, and a lot of good practice is, I think, instinctive. And a certain amount of analysis can be destructive.
If you think that reflection is not important for your development, then what is important?

No, but I do think it is important.

Ok, you don’t think there is something else…?

There are other important things too. When the money’s nice. More money would be nicer, it would help me develop. Bit more leisure, less teaching, that’s the irony of it of course, most of us are on 20 hours, I think we probably feel that’s pushing us to the largest limit that we’ll tolerate, and more than that, would be too much of a burden. It’s an irony then, that more or better quality, personal development might be more possible with less teaching. Now get me 12 hours, I’ll flourish. Give me 20, and I’ll keep pace with the rest.

Ok, do you think there is a difference between those teachers who do not reflect and those who do reflect? If you think there is a difference, then what is it?

The problem there is that reflection is such a personal thing. As I said teachers do reflect anyway, inevitably they will, whether they have the ability or the luxury of acting on that reflection in a wise way, is another matter.

Do you think administrators should require teachers to reflect?

Administrators should keep their noses out of things. You can’t force reflection on people. You can’t force wisdom on people. You can require them to be in the classroom for certain hours, and you can require them to do certain things. But you can’t insist on quality, you can’t- “my thoughts are my own”, that’s a German proverb. Administrators have nothing to do with it. Except insofar, teachers like themselves administer.

Ok, so you think like, it’s a kind of internal process, something which is like, very personal.

It’s personal, like I already said, it’s inevitable anyway, that teachers will. I think there’s a danger in requiring teachers to do certain things. If I was administrator, and I would say ‘we’re going to set aside one half hour every afternoon from 3 o’clock till half past 3, when you reflect.’ After that you can go home. You’re laughing, I think we both know why, don’t we? Yes. It’s not going to work.

You know a lot of importance is given to reflection in literature. And in teaching department, teachers are being trained to practice reflection, nowadays in like, you know, in practical course. They ask us to observe classes, they ask us to write reflective journals, and you know, sitting together and discussing, sharing our ideas, something like, different activities. How much is being practiced in reality in teachers’ life?
Yeah, exactly. I think that’s a very good question. I also think in a course, a master’s course when you’re required to keep journals, required to observe, required to do this and that and the other, it’s not actually reflection. I think perhaps it isn’t. I think classroom observation is classroom observation. And that’s not necessarily the same as reflecting. There is a personal element to reflection, can you reflect on another teacher’s performance? You can discuss it. You can ask them things, you can get them to account for what they’ve been doing. Maybe to suggest ways they might do things differently. In that case, they’re reflecting, perhaps. You’re not.

So you think that when you’re observing someone else...

Well reflection is a mirror. When you look in the mirror, you don’t see another person, you see yourself.

No sometimes like, when you are looking at someone, you see yourself there.

Well of course you don’t. You see someone you believe to be similar to you.

Yeah. You can say it that way.

We’re close, yeah there can be similarities between people. But that again, that’s not reflection. I can’t watch a lesson and then and guess, and firmly believe in the accuracy of my guesses for what your motivation is for doing something in a certain way. I can ask you to account them and you can justify them in a way in which you believe to be honest. But I’ve no way of actually assessing you’re telling the truth or not.

What do you think can be done in order to promote reflection by teachers?

Why should you want to promote it?

Because it is considered very good and as I said, you know-

Well, it’s inevitable anyway. So why not leave it alone?

So you think it cannot be promoted?

No I don’t think one thing or the other. I think it’s, you can outline what reflection is, what action research is, you can outline all of these things, you can lead a horse to water, can you make the horse drink? You can outline what it is, you can outline more efficient ways of doing it, after that, it’s up to the teacher. And, should you? Like I said, as the problem with the administrator setting aside half an hour. Is it going to happen? No, I’m going to talk to my office mate about football instead.

So you think that to be reflective is a personality trait?

No, because, it’s a teaching trait. Teachers’ broad spectrum, representing about all society, it’s not a personality thing, it’s past and parcel of what we do when we’re committed to the classroom. There’s a very small number of teachers who aren’t of
course, who’ve gotten the job by mistake, and have decided to do it because the money comes in. and they’re not really interested. Are they going to reflect? We’ve all met teachers like that, haven’t we?

No, but you know like, for example, if we, what literature says, like there are some tools which help teachers to reflect. For example, they say that video, audio recording of your lessons observing others’ classes, discussing and sharing your ideas with other teachers, writing reflective journals, action research, and, etcetera. So what do you think, what is the role of all this?

Well, a lot of those things you just listed, a lot of those happened anyway, or were promoted anyway before anybody thought of bringing all together under one umbrella called reflection. Well, teacher observation has been going on for hundreds of years, as long as there’s been the teaching profession. There’s nothing new, there’s nothing magic about it. It’s not a big deal. A lot of it isn’t a big deal, tools for reflection, you can call that if you want to. I said already, audio recordings from my own experience, I’ve done some video as well, it’s one of the things you can do. Then good luck to you, go ahead. But again, it’s not anything new, it’s not even anything to make an awful lot of fuss about, since teachers will do it anyway. Good ones will.

Ok, thank you very much.
After getting knowledge, education, qualification and training, do you think you are a good teacher or there are chances of improvement or development?

I do believe that I’m a good teacher but this doesn’t mean that I’ve learnt everything about my job, still there’s a lot to learn and there’s always the room for professional development.

So what do you think, how can you improve or develop?

There are many tools like attending workshops, getting involved in training sessions, peer observations, thinking of your classroom practice and performance all the time, thinking and reflecting on what you do in your classroom all these are tools through which I can improve all the time.

During your masters, did you study about reflective practice?

Yes I did, I did.

And were you given any practice in reflection during your studies, like did they give you any tasks, asking you to write reflective journals or something like that. Reflective journals…yeah

Not only reflective journals specifically, I mean were you given any practice on reflection?

Yeah, there was some practice given. And basically you know, I decided to continue and get my masters degree, basically it was something I was literally doing, but I didn’t know that it was called reflective teaching, but when I was introduced to the term I knew that what I was doing was what we call reflective teaching, because when you believe that no one is perfect and that you know as I said there is always room for improvement, you seek for, or you think of ways through which you can get the benefit from other people who have more experience, who can help you, so yeah I do believe that it’s a good way of improving ones performance.

So do you think that reflection plays an important role in teacher’s development?

Yeah I do, of course I do.

How do you reflect on your teaching, if you do, like you said you do reflect, so how do you do that?

I do this so often, I should say, when I realize that something went very well in my classes, I just check what went well and, you know, what did not work as I expected it and so, I keep notes of what has happened in the classroom, to what extent I was successful, I achieved the objectives, you know anything you can think of, like time management, to what extent the students were responsive, to what extent I was able to
achieve all the objectives and goals. So it’s taking notes after I finish any class, sometimes, I ask my students to give feedback on what I did, and so I benefit from their comments, basically, because you can’t imagine, how creative they are and they come up with brilliant ideas, so they give suggestions on doing things in a better way probably and, they comment on what I do in my classrooms, they say, “ok miss, this is what we like about your teaching, this is something we want you to improve next time,” so or not “improve” basically but “I want you to do it in this way” because its – so I do like to observe one of my colleagues classes, peer observations is another tool of reflection, but I don’t know, maybe due to lack of time sometimes or some teachers simply don’t believe that its useful, because you know when you decide ok, you want to benefit from someone, you have to make sure he’s cooperative enough, you’re going to benefit from his experience, he’s going to be truthful to you, he’s going to be I don’t know – I don’t want to say trustworthy, but there should be some sort of trust, understanding, cooperation if we are to look at this as an effective tool of teaching reflection.

When do you reflect on your teaching?

When something is not working as I expected it, or when I feel I need to try new things, when I feel that I reached a point when I’m not doing something new, or I’m not doing something creatively, or its all the same, or I don’t know, when I start feeling bored myself, I start thinking there’s something wrong with what I’m doing, so I need to do it in a different way. I need to learn more about it. I need to ask people around me how can I do it in a better way. So I start thinking of more ideas, I start thinking of my practices in the classroom, my teaching practices. So it’s then that I reflect, I mean it’s at that time I start to think of…

How often do you reflect?

It’s…I talk to myself everyday when I finish my classes, to what extent, at the end of the day, to what extent I was successful, to what extent I’m satisfied with my classes.

So you can’t say that it’s like, one time or two times, something like that. Not that kind of thing…

No no, it should be continuous, it should be continuous. If we are to improve, if we are to do things in a better way, it has to be continuous.

What do you think are some factors that might keep teachers from reflecting?

Some people simply are not familiar with the concept itself. They don’t know what reflective teaching means. Others don’t believe it’s important. Some may find it difficult, or they don’t know simply how they can go about it. Ok fine, each teacher I believe is looking for professional development or most teachers lets say, but maybe they don’t know how they can do this, and they don’t that reflective teaching possibly is one of the tools.

Ok take it in another way. For example they do know about it, but still they don’t reflect. What do you think?
Ok, some teachers unfortunately believe that they are so perfect, that they don’t need it. This is one way of thinking. Other people may feel it’s a waste of time, or needs a lot of arrangements. For example if I do my peer observation and I really would like to benefit from other teachers experience or I would like them to benefit from mine, probably the personal relationship is a factor. They need to be close enough, they need to be you know, understanding, they need to be cooperative. As I said, trustworthy, so that they don’t become your weaknesses, or they don’t undermine your efforts or whatever, so there should be some sort of trust I believe and cooperation, so these might be some of the obstacles..

Do you think there are some limitations or drawbacks of reflection?

Drawbacks…I don’t know, it calls for objectivity I believe, the teacher has to be so objective, because if he’s subjective, or… no I don’t think it has drawbacks…no I don’t think so.

Do you think anything else which is better than reflection for teacher development?

You know getting the knowledge about something is really important but let’s assume that we have already got the knowledge, we know how to teach, then it’s the practical side we need to focus on, right? So here, reflective teaching is really important, because we are interested in putting things into practice, we are interested in knowing to what extent they were effective and to what extent we are doing it the right way, we are on the right track or not, I don’t know I can’t think of something more important than this. You know, for teachers’ development.

Do you think there is a difference between those teachers who do not reflect and those who do reflect?

Yeah, its their…their attitude is different, you will find them, you know, more open to new ideas, you will find them – I do believe their performance must be much better. They are more creative, they are more open to new ideas. They don’t find it embarrassing to talk about you know, the things that did not work, you know, well in their classes, they are willing to improve, they are willing to learn from others, so I think people who believe in this, have better performance and better attitude if you like, they are very, I don’t know, I find them different. It’s a difference of attitude and performance.

Do you think administrators should require teachers to reflect?

You mean enforce it on them?

I mean it should be like a requirement on the part of teachers, like for example, if you have to work here, you have to do this.

Ask them to write journals, right? Many people – this may be a drawback I believe, might be, because then it will be an extra burden, no not an extra burden, because if
they want documentation that should go with it, or it will be looked at, like, more paper work, so they will not be interested I believe, so it has to come from within. Teachers have to, you need to convince them that this is really important for them and there will be you know, benefits, otherwise if they are not convinced and they are enforced to do it, then I don’t think it will be a rewarding experience for them, they will look at it like, as I said, as a burden, as an extra work and they will not benefit from it.

I think, whatever you are saying, for example, it should be from, I mean, it is good if it is from administrator, but it should not be in the form of extra burden.

Yeah.

Actually the thing is like, you know, we cannot see it. Because its an ongoing process inside, but if you cannot see it, then how will you be able to know, like, for example, from administration point of view, I want to see what is going on, how can I see it? So then they will ask you in the form of documentation. If it comes in the documentation form, then it becomes an extra burden.

Yeah, yeah, lets take peer observation for example, if the administration here enforced the teachers, they will probably accept it, but if they are asked to document it or to submit something in writing, so probably they will lose interest and they will not be interested to and their focus will be diverted here in this case. Because they will not be so much interested in learning from each other, you know, this is my feeling, whenever something is imposed or enforced, or whenever you are asked to document it, then you just feel this is an extra burden and you don’t need this. I don’t know if by mistake or not-

On your own you can do a lot, its human psychology.

Yeah, I do believe that if the teacher’s convinced then, it’s much better, so probably we need to work on that, I believe, spreading awareness among teachers that, specially because you know, as I said, many people who are not familiar with the concept itself, then try to familiarize them in the first place so, show them the benefits and giving them the tools maybe, so definitely when teachers see that they are getting a lot out of it, then they will try their best, and they will do it, without any kind of enforcement.

A lot of importance is given to reflection in literature and in teaching department and teachers are being trained to practice reflection. How much is being practiced in reality in teacher’s life?

It’s not enough. Definitely it’s not enough. There is a gap. So its not practiced as much as it should be, to tell you the truth, yeah its not, and even, so here comes the importance of having it as part of the system, I don’t know how can we go about it, how can we guarantee that its there, and the teachers are doing this, but in a way that doesn’t enforce them or doesn’t make them feel that its an extra burden, but it has to be basically part of the system. Of any educational system I believe if we are seeking
perfection, or if you are seeking professional development it has to be like, part of the whole process, it has to be.

But how?

How? I don’t know how. It’s like a big question. It’s not something easy we can answer.

So, what do you think can be done in order to promote reflection by teachers?

What can be done. Probably some workshops, introducing them to the concept itself, showing them good examples. Teachers presenting them with their own experience with the thing, talking about it and sharing ideas, would be like, the most effective way I believe.

Ok, let me give you my last question. Do you think to be reflective is a personality trait, or can it be developed?

It’s a mix combination of both, as I said, the person has to be willing in the first place, he has to be open to others, to get ideas, because if you are not willing you will find it very difficult, like I said, some people believe they are perfect teachers, there is no need to do anything extra, all what they are doing is perfect, is excellent they don’t accept the idea, so it depends, it is a personal trait, plus, since it has to be done systematically, then, teachers need to be trained how to do it, they need to be introduced to different ways, they need to be introduced to the tools, how can you do this, maybe, as I said, give them an idea about you know, examples, teachers who are really excellent at doing this, teachers who are really good at this, so it’s a combination of both.

So you mean there should be a spark there…

Yeah. Teachers need to be willing to do this, or at least open, not to be resistant. The person has to open to new ideas, willing to learn, willing to improve, willing to develop.

Anything else you would like to say in the end.

No nothing . its you know, its something really very useful that teachers need to focus on, but the argument can be sometimes is that they don’t have enough time for this and they are busy, overloaded with a lot of things that are not related to the work, so, I mean, the administration need to bear this in mind when they ask their teachers, you know, or when they think of improving the system basically, it has to be like, I meant they should be given enough time, or it should be like flexible enough, they can find enough time to do this. So that’s all, otherwise, I don’t think there is anybody who can argue that its not useful we don’t need it or, no I mean all of us agree that it will be very useful and effective. That’s all!

Thank you very much!
Interview #3: Female Native Speaker of English Teacher

After getting knowledge, education, qualification, training, do you think that you are a good teacher or there are chances of improvement or development?

That is only the beginning of a very long road. There are massive opportunities for improvement after you’ve acquired your qualifications.

What do you think, how can you improve or develop?

Teaching and reflecting. And by reflecting I mean thinking, talking, asking, reading about teaching and always looking for ways to improve you’re always trying to get better.

You did your masters. So during your master’s study, did you study about reflective practice in those days, because of course it’s not a recent one.

Yes, we did. It wasn’t as big as you might expect it to be, most of the reflective teaching has come from myself actually, and that’s what made me really think about my teaching, and after that in my constant quest to improve really. And also articles that I’ve read in journals, that’s how I got involved in it, it was not a big part of my masters.

Were you given any kind of practice, like, did your teacher give you any kind of activities asking you to write reflective journals, that kind of thing?

In my masters degree? No. I didn’t write reflective journals.

It was just, theoretical? Theoretically you just read about it?

Yes it was just theoretical.

Do you think reflection plays an important role in a teacher’s development?

I think it plays a vital role, if you don’t reflect, I think you’re not going to improve. You can only improve by thinking about what went well, and what didn’t go so well, and how can I improve it. But if you don’t stop to think about it, you’re not going to become aware of it.

How do you reflect on your teaching?

It’s a long time since I’ve done this, but when I was a younger teacher, I used to tape myself. Audio tape. Never video tape, it was always audio tape. And that was a really vital tool, as a younger teacher. Since then, one way of reflecting, I think about my classes, also, I get informal feedback from my students. Very informal with smiling faces and frowning faces. And that gives me an opportunity to get feedback from them and to reflect on their input. Yeah, I come back after my class and I come into my office and I talk to my colleagues.
Why did you leave that? As you said, that you used to do it…

Yeah, interesting isn’t it? I hope its not the matter of getting complacent as I’ve gotten older, I hope that’s not it. But yeah I do not do it as much as I used to do, am I getting confident at this stage? I have built up my confidence, but I hope I’m not over confident. But I used to tape myself when I was a younger, less experienced teacher. Because one of my biggest problems was Teacher Talking Time, TTT.

Oh so you wanted to over come that.

Yes I wanted to overcome that, and part of that came by reflecting upon my teaching through the audio cassettes.

So, what would you say, like, you don’t need to do that anymore, that’s why you left doing that?

Interesting. I don’t need to do it anymore. That sounds over confident. I do still reflect, but I don’t use that method anymore. Why not? Maybe I think I don’t need it, I’ve actually had people peer observe me since I’ve been at the University of Sharjah. I have had other teachers come in, and they have observed me, and given my feedback on my classes. Purely peer to peer. So that’s also very valuable method of reflection, so lets just say I chose other methods, not necessarily less valuable. I am constantly reflecting but I’ve chosen other methods.

When do you reflect on your teaching, if you do, for example, what forces you to reflect?

Always, if I detect a problem. When I’m attending a class, I detect a problem, what’s going on here, how can I improve it. I reflect very seriously when I’m three weeks into a new semester which is when I give out my informal student evaluations, that’s a very serious time for me because I think 3 weeks into the semester I know the students a little bit, and I’ve still got time to improve or to solve any issues that might be in the classroom. At the end of the semester I always reflect , before I go into the new class I reflect, what am I going to find, who are these students, where they come from, you know what’s going on in their minds, how am I going to find them in my classroom. Yeah, it’s a constant ongoing thing Ambreen, I come back after class, I talk to my office mate, its just constant. And other teachers come and talk about it.

On an average, what would you say, how often do you reflect?

Well, in various moods, constantly! It’s just an ongoing process. Yeah it really is. Well constantly talking about classes, every time I’ll open a file, to choose an activity, I’m reflecting: Is it appropriate for the level? Is it appropriate for my class? Its just a constant ongoing activity.

What do you think are some factors which might keep teachers from reflecting?

Hmm. Time, overwork, not that it applies to all, but some teachers, overconfident, possibly, and if they have, I have heard from people, those that don’t really want to
face the issue, they don’t want to face the issue head on, they don’t want to deal with it, they prefer not to deal with it so they won’t reflect in any great depth on it. One way of not dealing with it is not reflecting on it.

**Like they can’t face the reality…**

Yes, some people like that, it isn’t their issue.

**Do you think there are some limitations or drawbacks in reflection?**

I think, if you don’t share your thoughts, there could be some drawbacks, because then you’re only having your own input. So that’s a very good place to start. But also I think true reflection does, it starts with yourself, and I think it will help if you also bring in other people so you can talk about your problem, read about your teaching, not problem, excuse me, problem’s definitely the wrong word, but the challenges that take place in the classroom, that we all face on a daily basis.

**If you think reflection is not important for your development, then what is important?**

It is vital, it is vitally important.

**Anything else that is important in teacher development? Other than reflection?**

Keeping on track, keeping fresh. That’s probably the most important thing I can think about teaching, keeping fresh. Keeping updated, and constantly recycling your own material.

**Do you think there is any difference between those teachers who do not reflect and those teachers who do reflect?**

Well I don’t know teachers who don’t reflect. They would have to be, I should imagine, a reflective teacher is a thinking teacher, and I should imagine that thinking will be very apparent in her interactions in the classroom, and in her dealing with students, and in her teaching philosophy and in her teaching methodology.

**So you never came across someone who…**

Well I haven’t actually spoken as in “do you reflect” “no I don’t” I mean, how can I judge if they reflect or not. Do you see what I mean..? I’m assuming that particularly in our environment I’m assuming that teachers are reflective teachers.

**Do you think that administrators should require teachers to reflect?**

Are you talking about, providing a visual means – a diary or journal of their reflections?

**Yeah…like the process itself, it can be outward, it can be inward, like, it should be a requirement from the administration that teachers are required to reflect?**
Yeah… they can’t require us to think, can they? And if we are thinking and talking, how would that be documented or proved? I thought you were asking about, should teachers once a year… we do reflect, don’t we? We do reflect in this environment. Once a year, we have to complete an end of year self-evaluation. Some of it is quite mechanical, just sitting in classes in numbers, but parts of it are actually quite reflective, where you have to talk about your teaching philosophy. I think that’s a good thing.

A lot of importance is given to reflection in literature and in teaching departments and teachers are being trained to practice reflection. How much is being practiced in reality in teachers’ life?

That actually depends – first of all how would you evaluate if they’re practicing it or not? Only if they’re doing a written reflective journal or something, otherwise it’s very difficult to judge to what extent they are reflecting. I’m talking about my own working environment, where I know that people do reflect, and how do I know? Because they ask questions, they talk, we talk about teaching issues, so I know they are reflecting. That is one way of reflecting. But how can we judge how much they are reflecting, actually the only way to ask for a diary or a journal.

What do you think can be done in order to promote reflection by teachers?

I suppose it would have to be a journal, or a diary, or a monthly report, something like that if people wanted to evaluate people’s reflective process, to see the process.

Not to see, but to promote, that teachers should be on the track of reflection, like they should be involved, they should practice reflection.

By providing opportunities to talk about, think about and ask about teaching practices.

Do you think that to be reflective is the personality trait or can it be developed?

I do think it is a personality trait. People are like, almost, humble in their teaching, constantly seeking improvement, knowing that they are not the world’s best teacher, knowing that there is always room for improvement. So that is a personality trait I suppose. However, if the personality trait is not there, it can be nurtured by asking the teacher to think about certain questions. And these are the questions: what happened in your class today? What went good, what went bad? And why, and how you can improve it next time. I think.

Ok. Thank you very much!
Interview #4: Female Non-native Speaker of English Teacher

After getting knowledge, education, qualification, training, do you think that you are a good teacher or there are chances of improvement or development?

I can’t say that I’m a good teacher, I mean as a teacher, a teacher needs training, needs improvement all the time. We need to read, we need to explore things, we need to discover new things, so that we can update our students and update ourselves as well, with the new teaching techniques and things like that. Teaching and being a good teacher does not necessarily mean having a good certificate or good qualifications from this university or that university, they are important, I’m not saying they’re not, but teaching, I think it has something to do with talent, with love to the profession you are having, without these you cannot carry on. I mean everyone can have a certificate in any field, but this does not mean that he or she is going to be successful in this field.

So you think there are chances of improvement and development?

Yeah. I think there are other tools to this profession.

So then how can you improve or develop? What do you think?

Attending seminars, reading, following up with the new teaching techniques, experimenting, doing research, you know, all these things will help, definitely. And as long as you still love this profession, if you lose this love, your performance will not be that good. So I think that the most important point is love to this profession.

During your MA, did you study about reflective practice?

Well, it was quite a long time back.

No problem that’s why I’m asking, whenever you did, no matter when you did it- Yeah but that was quite a long time ago.

That’s why I’m asking, my question is, did you study about reflective practice?

I don’t think so.

Ok, so it means, if you were not given any theoretical knowledge, means, you were not given any kind of practice in reflection during your studies, like asking you to write reflective journals, and you know…

We were asked to write some things, we were asked during that time.

About what, writing what sort of things?
Because we took semantics you know, these branches of linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and we were required to do papers on these. Every fortnight or something like that, we are required to do and present it and something like that.

**Was there any kind of diary writing sort of thing that think about your study…**

I don’t think so, it was merely collecting information, and maybe at the end of our paper we would reflect our own point of views. But it was merely collecting data.

**So it was not so much reflection.**

Exactly, I would say so.

**Do you think that reflection plays an important role in teachers’ development?**

Now, yes, of course, I feel it is very important, of course. Yes.

**It helps you to develop.**

Exactly, yes. And we need it.

**If you say yes, then, do you reflect?**

In an unconscious way, or lets say, in an indirect way, yes. Yes.

**How do you reflect on your teaching?**

Like sometimes asking students about their feedback, do they feel that they have improved, what benefits have they gained, after taking this lesson or that lesson, and I always, when I want to talk about my lesson I don’t put it at the beginning, I ask them about different topics and then I put my lesson in the middle, say, you know, this is the way, how I can get information.

**So do you think that helps you to reflect?**

Of course, there are other ways.

**No, what helps you. I’m not asking about general ways, like which are in your knowledge, no, the way you do, that I’m interested in, that what you do. Or it could be the only way, you can say, that only this way, it’s up to you.**

Yeah, yeah. No, I, that’s the only thing, maybe quizzes, something like that yeah, you see how well they are prepared, if they care, if they like.

**Yeah, maybe the quizzes result helps you to…to start thinking about your students, “what is the level of my students.”**

Yeah, exactly. Yes. And also would give you an insight if the student cares for this lesson or it doesn’t. I think this is also one way.
When do you reflect on your teaching?

After some time of course. Like after a month or something like that. You know, like, not immediately, not during the first few weeks, no, I give them time to know the lesson, to know what the lesson is, try to understand what the objectives are of the lesson. And then I try to reflect in the sense that, if they have understood it, if they like it, if they need improvement, you know, something like that. Yes, not immediately of course.

Maybe you would feel like it is overlapping the question, how often do you reflect?

Yeah, as I said, not during the first few weeks. No, because I need some time to settle. And I also need the students to settle at the same time. Once I feel that they are acquainted with the lesson, at this stage I think they are capable of expressing their own feeling towards the lesson.

What do you think are some factors which might keep teachers from reflecting?

Carelessness. Yeah, I mean, not caring so much about, even the profession, considering as a job, where they can get the money only, they don’t care about the students themselves, their level. Well I think teaching is a responsibility. So it’s not just a job where you can get money, no, I don’t look at it this way at all.

Do you think there is anything else? Which keeps teachers from reflecting, they do not reflect.

Motivation. I mean problems, I mean home problems.

Sometimes they are like, they have their own problems that the can’t solve.

Of course, yeah, yeah. Sometimes they already are in depression, you know all these things, you know personal problems sometimes. Of course yes. But maybe this will for sometime, but not for always, like you are depressed for sometime, you have a problem, you need to sort it out, so you’re kind of split between two things.

Is there any other factor that you would like to mention? Which you think that keep teachers from reflecting?

Sometimes the students themselves. I mean if it’s a proper class, with proper students, I mean the teacher knows the responsibility, the students too, this is perfect. But sometimes you feel that you are doing your best, your giving your students everything that you can, the point is that the receptors, the students themselves, they don’t care, so what keeps me from doing that, although I do, I do, because I always want to make sure that the receptors, the students understand me, its not just that, doing my job. Not only that, no. That’s not the point at all. Sometimes, as I mentioned, the students themselves, they’re not motivated, they don’t care, they don’t feel they have to, that this is important. So this might give you a set back.
Means like, you would stop reflecting.

I wouldn’t say I’d stop reflecting, I feel sad, because you know, if you have, as they say for a lesson to be successful, there are three factors; teachers, students and textbook. So when the textbook is there, the teacher is there, but the students are not there, so I can’t work miracles by myself. So unless they participate, they do their own job, I mean, the whole process would be successful. But if they don’t, and you always try to, you know, kind of motivate them, do this, do that, always talk to them, I mean it can’t be successful without them doing something, I mean having a role.

Do you think there are some limitations or drawbacks in reflection?

Drawbacks, I would say that sometimes, a person would not like to, someone else telling him or telling her that you were wrong, this method is wrong, or you’re not doing your best, or this and that, maybe this is the only bad thing about reflection. In the sense that, you are confronted, with the idea that you are not doing your job properly. But we have to face it, after all, you have to deliver the message, in a proper way. The setback is that you discovering that you are not good enough for this. And this is you know, bad feeling, when you feel that you’re not up to it. So in this case you need to do more, you need to do all that in your best to make this class alive.

So what are the limitations of reflections, or drawbacks of reflection. For example you are reflecting and you think, no, it has its own limitations also.

I don’t think it has limitations, Ambreen. On the contrary, it’s a good way. If we always reflect, I mean, this is a sign of a good teacher. We need to, we have to,

If you think that reflection is not important for your development, then what is important?

Yeah, but I think it is important.

Ok, so do you think there is difference between those teachers who do not reflect, and those who do reflect?

Yeah, and I was talking about those teachers who are careless. You know, they consider just as a way of getting money at the end of the month. That thing.

I’m asking about their performance, like for example, if someone who is reflecting, as a teacher, what would you say, how would you…

You know what, sometimes you may not call it reflection, by name, because with the experience, it comes something habitual, because your experienced enough to understand that. So you don’t need to ask and do this and do quizzes, because with your knowledge, khalas, you reflect, you already reflect, all the time, without having to do this, do that, you know yourself, you know…

You want to say that its quite a personal thing.
It is.

**You cannot externalize it or you cannot document it, ok, in a complete form.**

No, it is something inside the classroom, between you and your students, and you are the one in control, and how you’re going to make those people play. And what goes wrong and how to improve it. Its all with you, the tool, or lets say the stick is with you.

**Do you think administrators should require teachers to reflect?**

They should encourage them. Because some people, if you love the profession, you would automatically do it. You don’t need other people to tell you, “reflect, do this do that.” Because if you are a teacher, you always need to know, you want to know, that you’re doing your job in a good way. If you make it a prerequisite for other teachers, I mean, some people mumble, they might not like it, it’s forcing them to do something.

**You cannot force someone.**

Yeah, no, exactly, yes.

**A lot of importance is given to reflection in literature and in teaching department and teachers are being trained to practice reflection. How much is being practiced in reality in teachers’ life?**

Do you mean do they try to apply what they have learnt?

**Yeah, is it there also? To that much extent where it is available in literature and educational programs.**

They might apply some of the things that they have learnt in teaching. But as I said, teaching is there, I teach because I have learnt so many things and also in a way, it is a personal thing, you know, but of course, without knowledge, I cannot teach, I mean if I don’t get this knowledge, if I don’t know how to reflect, they don’t tell me what to do, I cannot do it. I need it, at the beginning, I think I need it. Then they will, just like, they give you the data, they tell you, this is the way, and then, when you are left alone in the field, I think you can add more of your personal, because the case then would be different, because you are left alone in the field, so left alone in the field with the knowledge that you already have, plus as I said, it’s personal experience, so you can add.

**So you want to say that, for example, teachers must have some knowledge about it.**

Guidance.

**Guidance, mentoring, or knowledge.**
Yes, yes. I think it’s guidance, because, the ABCD’s of teaching, not everyone knows that.

**No, I’m not talking about guidance of teaching, I’m talking about the idea or concept of reflection…. The idea of reflection should be in their mind, they should be guided….**

At the beginning, yes, just to draw their attention to this fact.

**Because now I would like to ask about your experience, because as you said that you didn’t know about the idea of reflection.**

Yes, yes, I do it without knowing that this is reflection.

**But you used to do it, so it’s something personal, it’s already, but in your opinion it would be helpful.**

Yes, if I have learnt it before, of course it would be helpful.

**So my question is like, how much is being practiced in reality, do you think that teachers-**

Again Ambreen, teaching is applying your personal style. That’s why every teacher is different from the other teacher. It’s your style, doing something. I can’t be you, you can’t be me, I can’t be him, he can’t be me. Because there is some kind of personal touch in every lesson that you can add, how you add it.

**So means, you cannot know this, about others, as I asked you.**

There might be something in common, certain things in common, but still, I mean, your way is peculiar, my way is peculiar, you know, and so on, because you know I think this is the only difference. I mean how I apply it, how you apply it, how you look at it, this is the difference between you and me.

**What do you think can be done, in order to promote reflection by teachers?**

Well as you said, you were talking about administration, things like that like-

**But you said that we cannot…**

No no, I’m not talking about forcing, no, like, always asking, not forcing, trying to draw the teachers attention to this point, not forcing them and not observing them, not spying on them, no not that. In addition to attending, you know these peer observations, things like that, I think this could help quite a lot.

**Yeah, in literature it’s considered a very important tool for reflection.**

You see? Yeah, so I think peer observation is very important, and that’s why I tell you that it is something to do with the style of a person. You know, its just like, you know.
when you do something in a good way, I do it, it’s one way, suppose both of us are supposed to present it in a good way, you’d do it one way, I’d do it – every one of us would have a touch or a style.

Ok, now my last question is like, do you think to be reflective is a personality trait, or it can be developed?

Both, as I said, yes, but so much of the personality. Yes.

There is a personality touch.

Yes, yes.

Not all are perfect.

No not all, but it’s accumulation you know, its kind of a combination of both.

But it can be developed you feel.

Of course, of course, because as long as you want to improve yourself, improve your tools, it can be developed. Of course.

Ok, thank you.
Alright, my first question is, after getting knowledge, education, qualification and training, do you think you are a good teacher, or there are chances of improvement or development?

I think I’m a good teacher but there’s always a chance for improvement and development.

If yes, then how can you improve or develop?

Well, continuous professional development and courses, meetings, conferences. And by looking back at my own teaching and seeing what worked and what didn’t work. You can always build on that and improve, of course.

During your masters, did you study about reflective practice?

No.

No? I mean even not theoretically?

No, my master’s was not anything related to teaching English. It’s applied linguistics and translation.

Do you think that reflection plays an important role in teachers’ development?

Definitely, of course. If a teacher is sensitive to the environment around her or him, then, they can improve on their teaching. If you can read the signs of positive teaching and negative teaching to your students, and you know that something improved the level of your student, then you would work harder on that. If you do a practice and you see that it didn’t work with your students, then you need to change it, or modify it in some way.

So you think that it plays an important role in teachers’ development. How do you reflect on your teaching, if you do?

By assessing the outcome of the lesson, the goals, and see I’ve achieved them or not, and checking which area needed more time. This means that the technique was not probably, effective enough, and needs to be improved, because students did not reach that goal easily. But if goals were reached faster, it means the technique was working and it was fruitful. Am I making sense?

Yeah, of course. Is that the only way, or do you think there are some other ways also?

By educating myself on methods of teaching of course, I like to discuss it with colleagues and read on different ways of doing the same thing and try a couple of
them in my classes and see which one works better, by, again, by assessing the outcomes. Then I would identify that, ok, this method works better. Sometimes you change the method according to your students.

Yeah, yeah, of course. So you think when you discuss it with others, it works, like, it’s good to discuss.

Yes, it’s very good, it’s very helpful to listen to other peoples’ experience.

And in the same way, sometimes like, looking at the assessment, like, the result of assessment of your students, they help you.

Assessment, yes, but not necessarily formal assessment, it could be ongoing assessment as well. Concept checking, all the time.

Any other way? Like, observing someone, recording…

This is part of no recording myself, no, I remember what I did in class, I don’t need to record myself, but yes, observing others is a great help. You learn, you know, by looking at … this is the same as discussing with other people, you either observe other peoples’ experience, or you ask them about what they do.

Do you have the habit of writing something, like you know writing journals?

No. No.

When do you reflect on your teaching, if you do?

In the planning phase, while I’m teaching, and after the classes, its, that’s the most important one. After the class is finished, thinking about what happened inside the classroom will make me, if I have to repeat the same class, the same lesson to the other class, it makes me modify it for the next class.

So, you reflect for example, when you want to reuse your lesson, can you say that?

Yeah, when I’m planning it, based on previous experience, while I’m in class, and then later on, after I finish, I use my past experience to reflect in what happened in one class to improve my teaching in another class. Haven’t you noticed that, always, the second time you teach a course it’s much better than the first time you did. It comes from reflection.

How often do you reflect?

Always.

Always. So you think that it’s an ongoing process?

Yes. Always.
Ok. What do you think are some factors which might keep teachers from reflecting?

Being overloaded, and continuously busy. It doesn’t give them time for improvement. The more time a teacher has for planning and reflection, the better performance they can give.

Only these factors? Or you can think about some others?

Just, the size of the class of course, also contributes to the, amount of work you have to do after class, correction. Overburden, yeah.

Do you think there are some limitations, or drawbacks in reflection?

Limitations or drawbacks. I can’t think of any. It’s a positive thing. Unless, it might create some hesitancy in some people, in not sure, did I do this right, did I do this, but if you talk to people around you, exchange experiences, you can reassess your practices.

If you think that reflection is not important for your development, then what is important? Or, as you said that it is important, what else is important?

Professional development. Taking courses, attending conferences, and exchanging experiences, research is very important. Being registered with the latest magazines or website, it keeps you updated with new ideas.

Do you think there is a difference between those teachers who do not reflect, and those teachers who do reflect?

I wonder if there are any teachers who do not reflect.

Really?

What do you think, have you seen any?

No, I mean, actually this is an internal phenomenon, you can’t say, this is something which is going on inside, how can you just say?

I don’t know, I don’t know if there’s anyone who doesn’t reflect. One way or another, even if it’s just thoughts in the mind. I don’t think it’s possible to work without reflection. At all.

You cannot survive without it.

No, no. Then you’ll never go anywhere in front of you, you will always stay where you are.

So you think it is an essential part of the teacher.
Definitely. I never thought of it this way, but yes it is! But it does make you think.

**You know, the relevant question with this was, if there is a difference, then what is it?**

If there is somebody who doesn’t reflect, at all, and maybe their mind is of, one mindset, the don’t- not being dynamic. It will definitely affect their improvement as teachers, they cannot develop, they cannot. Because we deal with different generations all the time. You can’t grow, you cannot develop. Then this teacher will not advance at all.

**Do you think administrators should require teachers to reflect?**

Formally, you mean? As in terms of writing? They can’t require them to think about something.

In the kind of, the end of year report we write, it’s a sort of reflection of what you did. For yourself, for your development as a teacher throughout the year, isn’t it? Because in it, you have to remember, you have to write down all the contributions you made to your university, to your teachers, to your classroom.

**Do you think that you write it in a reflective way? Or you just like, you know, talked about those things which you did.**

In some places, they particularly ask you to, reflect on how more you can improve yourselves, certain points of weakness you need to identify, and build upon.

**So you really write it in that way?**

I think I do, yes, I think its more personal. And it eventually shows on a person’s performance.

**So it means that at administrator level, it can be encouraged, but it cannot be enforced.**

It can be highly encouraged. And its results can be judged, from a teachers’ performance, but forcing it, I wonder, that would be a very negative thing. Because it’s a personal thing.

**Ok, you know, a lot of importance is given to reflection in literature and in teaching department, and now in educational programs, teachers are being trained to practice reflection. How much is being practiced in reality in teachers’ life?**

Even when we did the CELTA, after every class, they want you to reflect, I used to hate that. It’s a matter of training, if you didn’t have enough training to do, because in our schools, they never trained us to reflect. And now, when I see my kids, in their schools, they’re teaching the children to reflect on their studies, their approach on
their studies, so later on, whichever profession they take, they know how to reflect on themselves.

So yeah, my question was that, for example as the importance is given to it in literature, and in educational department also, what do you think that how much is being practiced in reality by teachers? You know like, for example they ask us to write reflective journal, they ask to observe the class, then after that write down the reflective journal on that, write about whatever you think you had in class.

In some schools they require it from teachers, that after they write their lesson plans, they have to write, afterwards, what goals were met, and what goals were not met and why. But, because of the work conditions, here for example, it is highly competitive, even if people have – that’s why I’m saying it’s personal, because even if you do reflect, and you do realize, something wrong that went in your lesson, you’d be reluctant to write it down on paper, and have your supervisors look at it, because of the competitiveness of the situation. In places where you are employed by the government in your own country, and your job is secure, you have a better chance of doing reflective work.

So what do you think, in Sharjah University’s context, in our situation.

It should be encouraged, but not enforced. Because of the competitiveness.

So what do you think in reality, is it going on? What is happening, that I’m asking. What do you think?

Nothing much is happening. We do have the end of year report. It used to be more reflective, now we have to fill the same report, the whole university’s filling it, it’s not very reflective. It just lists what you published what you did, there isn’t a section in it that requires you to look back at your own practice. We used to have it, in the old reports I have, I have samples of old reports if you like, I think there used to be a place to talk about your teaching method, and how you can improve it. This is reflective. Now we don’t do that anymore, like last year, the end of year report that we filled was a very generalized one, that requires you to list your accomplishments, nothing reflective in it. It used to be encouraged more.

It means compared to literature or…

No, it’s not given as much importance as it is. As it should.

Ok, what do you think, what can be done in order to promote reflection by teachers?

What can be done to promote reflection? If annually a teacher is required to set goals for him or herself, and then the next year, they have to review their report, their report should be a continuation of what they wrote last year, instead of writing a new one, and then assessing, whether the goals they put for themselves were accomplished or not, why or why not. This encourages reflection.
Do you think that to be reflective is a personality trait, or it can be developed?

It can be developed.

So means it’s not a personality trait?

Some people are more reflective by nature. I know I am. In general, all of my life, not in my teaching as well, but other people, no, they’re not so quite reflective. They don’t think back of what happened, and they always want to move forward. Without looking back, some people are like that by nature, but it can definitely be trained, everybody can be trained on to reflection.

So it means that, if we want to train someone, it can be done.

But through guided forms. They won’t be able to do it on their own. They will need some sort of clear directions, clear questions, that asks them to look at particular things they did in the past. Give examples of them, and what they were. Something successful that worked, and something not so successful that didn’t work, why, and how can you improve it. And this slowly by – if they’re not reflective by nature, and they ask you to reflect on something, they wouldn’t know what to do. But if you direct them with clear questions, with time, it becomes a habit.

Ok, that was the last one.

Finished?! That was easy….
Vita

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