

Reflections on Reflective Teaching: A Case Study of Language Teaching in Pakistan

MUHAMMAD IMRAN
TENZILA KHAN
SHUMAILA KIRAN
MAHMOOD AHMAD AZHAR
Lahore Leads University
Pakistan

Abstract:

Present study is an effort to appraise the history and various features of reflective teaching in face of teaching intricacies. It also highlights the disparities and positive aspects of reflective teaching as compared with other teaching methods both traditional and advanced ones specifically in the perspective of language teaching. A case study derived from Pakistan has been exemplified and critically analyzed in this regard. After analysis, it is concluded that this teaching stratagem can bring about productive and rewarding outcomes in the field of language teaching if implemented appropriately.

Key words: Reflection, ELT, Advanced Teaching, Objective Oriented, Adaptation.

Introduction

Teaching is considered as all packed with convolutions and contradictions because it invites inquiry itself. The researchers like (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1993; Dana, Gimbert, & Silva 1999; Hubbard & Power 1993 as cited in Dana 2012, 1) are also of the view that “teacher inquiry is defined as a systematic, intentional study of one’s own professional practice”. According to Williams and Burden (1997) after the 1960, particularly, cognitive psychology development influenced and caused a significant move in ELT. Over the couple of

previous decades, much magnitude and significance has shifted to learners in the classroom and the greater emphasis has been put on teachers and effective teaching strategies. Presently, how learners can get new information in a better way and the kind of teaching that is employed to comprehend the information has develop into principal apprehension in the field of language learning. How experience plays an important role in the field of teaching? Is it (experience) enough for effective teaching? In fact experience is not enough for effective teaching, for we do not learn that much from experience alone as much as we learn from reflecting on that experience.

Talking about reflective teaching technique Editor (2011) pointed out that it identifies the importance of ‘what’ and ‘why’ in context of language classroom. It helps in identification and exploration of underlying teaching beliefs and learning objectives. Schulman (1987) took the reflective teaching as the blend of reconstruction of ideas, passion, achievements and execution of the previous work experience of teachers. Dewey (1933 p. 9) emphasizes “reflective teaching since it involves and necessitates unrelenting, and vigilant thoughtfulness of reflections assumed on the basis of sustaining and substantial grounds”. Open mindedness, accountability and dedication are the features categorized by Dewey. According to Dewey (1933) experience when shared with the reflection teaching leads to awareness, development and growth otherwise teachers become slaves to their routine and actions in the class room. Experience and Education by Dewey (1938) highlights conventional and progressive instruction in the US. He characterized the former as inert and static approaches while the latter as a retort to the former. Dewey enthused ‘enquiry learning’ that was based on developing better inquiries and stratagem that shares certain familiar characteristics with the constructivist learning approaches of Vygotsky and Bruner.

More recently, Zeicher and Liston (1987) also supported Dewey’s original views about reflective teaching where reflection or “critical reflection” (Richards p.1) refers to an action or a procedure in which an occurrence is recollected and assessed, generally with a purposeful rationale, thus initiating and providing a basis for future development and accomplishment. Bartlett (1990) asserts and advocates reflective teaching in that it sways beyond the traditional

passive presentation of material to learners rather its concern is better instructional modus operandi and managerial procedure, not solely acting rather as a component of broader didactic objectives.

Reflection-in-action means reflection on teaching during the teaching process. Schon considers it crucial for teachers to inquire every activity and its reaction during coaching otherwise teaching purpose may collapse. He (1983) assumes that in case of occurrence of a new-fangled situation or incident in class where our conventional set up may not function well, in that case, according to Schon (1983) instructor exercises reflection in action to tackle the new quandary.

Reflection on action views back on the event after it has happened (Hatton and Smith, 1995). It focuses on the cognitive process of teaching that depends on retrospection for analysis. Killen & Todwen (1991) believe that **Reflection for action** is the preferred upshot of the two types discussed above and more practical and upbeat. Day's (1993) notion of teachers acting within three different hierarchical levels of reflection:

- 1- Where teachers focus their reflection on behavioral actions (P1).
- 2- Where teachers also include justification of these reflections based on current theories of teaching (P2).
- 3- Teachers include the first two and look beyond theories and practices to examine their strategies within ethical, moral, and social ramifications (P3).

P1 signifies teachers' reflection on classroom actions. Its rationale is found at P2 and validation at P3. Day (1993) maintains that most instructors stumble on preparation and performing at P1 level and fewer are found concentrating on observation, scrutiny and reflection at level P2 and P3. Day also criticizes Schon's (1983) conception of reflective application. Day asserts that Schon fails to deal with discourse; he enunciates that the dialogical facet of erudition emerges purely through the progression of argument, re-enactment and reformation. Day's main point here is that reflection needs to be analytic and involves dialogue with others thus benefiting learning-teaching field by liberating the teachers and learners from routine and impulsive action respectively. Reflective teaching may render language instructors more opportunities and confidence in significantly reflecting on various perspectives of their work,

developing more effective teaching strategies and making informed judgments. It is a cathartic experience for practicing (and novice) teachers.

Reflective Teaching and Professional Development

Reflective teaching differs from traditional professional development. Traditional development of teaching is called top-down approach where teachers can improve their classroom practices as a result of gaining new information and knowledge from taking a workshop. However, it does not prove to be much effective whereas reflective teaching as outlined above shares the common goal of improving teaching as the awareness of current practices is very important. Thus, reflective teaching involves looking at what is happening now in a teacher's class room rather than ingesting new information or knowledge about teaching methods or assessment.

Inquiry-Oriented Paradigm of Teaching Education

Zeichner (1983) deems four paradigms having dominated the discourse teacher education during previous decades. "Behavioristic," focusing on precise and discernible instruction; "personalistic" centering the progress of the psychosomatic development of tutor; "traditional-craft" focusing on the accrued astuteness of veteran professionals; and "inquiry" accentuates preference of educational objectives while taking into account the dexterities required for those objectives. He (1983) discern inquiry-oriented from the behavioristic, personalistic and traditional-craft. The primary aspect, received-reflexive, refers to specification of curriculum of the teachers' education. Behavioristic and traditional-craft assume teachers as flaccid recipients while personalistic and inquiry-oriented paradigms consider them as vigorous contributor in structuring curricular content (reflexive). In personalistic and inquiry-oriented paradigms, the program content is not predestined rather it is structured on the basis of alleged needs of instructors. Behaviorist, traditional-craft, and personalistic paradigms rely on didactic and communal framework wherein potential educators are supposed to work and appraise the success of given program and curriculum. Zeichner (1983, 7) emphasizes that "the fundamental task of teacher education from this point of view is to develop teachers' capacities for reflective

action and to help them examine the moral, ethical and political issues, as well as the instrumental issues, that are embedded in their everyday thinking and practice."

Reflective Language Teaching

Reflective language teaching was introduced later than other areas in education. Pennington (1992) first proposed a general reflective/development orientation for language teachers as a way to perk up teaching procedures and outputs by inculcating self motivation and confidence in them. She described reflection for language teachers generally as 'deliberating on understanding and familiarity, and epitomize and benefiting from past experience and knowledge. She assumes reflection as the input for enhancement and progress and vice versa (Pennington 1992). The focus, in the present study, is to scrutinize investigation, feedback and adaptation as an enduring and recursive cycle in ELT. However, and as in general education programmers, the precise definition of reflective language teaching remains vague (Roberts 1998). For example, reflective language teaching is taken synonymous to considerate practice where instructors occasionally, as Wallace (1996, 292) implies and assesses diverse features of their professional proficiency which is believed having no positive impacts on teaching rather leading to "unpleasant emotions without suggesting any way forward" (Wallace 1996, 13). A second stronger version of reflective language teaching suggests a methodical and organized expression and reflection on their own teaching so that they take more responsibility for their actions. Richard (1994) accentuates later description assuming that instructors should evaluate their teaching methods, analyze behaviors, viewpoint and assumptions and exploit them for their ELT class about teaching. Reflective language teaching is a bottom-up approach to teacher professional development. It starts with the internal rather than the external and the real centre of the process is teaching itself, and it uses the teacher's actual teaching experiences as a basic for reflection. By making systematic reflection on teaching, teachers can become free from making too many impulsive decisions about what to teach, when to teach and why to teach it. Reflective practice means that teachers must subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to critical examination. In language teaching

Pennington (1995) has defined this process as the procedure of collecting sequential from information gained through innovation in relation to the teachers' accessible teaching plans but she does not include the broader society in her description. However, Bartlet (1990) realizes this need. Why is he/she doing this (reason)?

After analyzing reflective teaching, an affirmative liaison between reflective language training and training efficacy can be developed. Although it is obvious that reflective practice has received its share of criticism yet there still remain some unanswered questions about reflective teaching that teachers may want to consider as they reflect (adapted from Hatton and Smith, 1994:34-6). These are:

- 1- Is reflection limited to thought process about action, or more bound up in the action itself?
- 2- Is reflection immediate and short term, or more extended and systematic?
- 3- Is reflection problem-centered, finding solutions to real classroom
- 4- How critical does one get while reflecting?

Analysis of given case:

This is a qualitative study focusing on the procedures and phenomenon of reflective teaching. In order to analyze the phenomenon of reflective teaching in the perspective of ESL (English as a Second Language) in Pakistan, an interview was conducted with a lecturer in a university. This is a semi-structured and flexible interview, regarding the teaching/learning techniques in the classroom through skimming, scanning and predicting from the reading passage as well as some professional questions about the teaching. The purpose behind the teacher's interview is to research and gain comprehension of teaching and learning within one's classroom and to employ that data to increase teaching abilities/students learning. It is a systematic, documented inquiry into one aspect of teaching and learning in a specific classroom. This is a gateway through which we will try to identify and explore our own practices and underlying ideas and we will try to bring change and improvement in our own teaching. In presenting the finding, the approach taken by Pearson (1998) will be followed and it is, the

summary of what she said will be presented.

Our teacher generally uses the lecture method in order to overcome the disciplinary issues. The reason behind incorporation of this methodology is to acquire the maximum students' attention as our expert considers only book reading in adult's learners class creates monotonous and produces passiveness among students. The documents which she chooses for her classes also reflect her reflective attitude towards her students and without making them confused to involve them in complexities, she follows smooth pattern without relying on only one source of knowledge. Along with this, she also uses the reading two/ three excerpts in the class from recommended books. She believes to elicit students' background knowledge before going on reading. Her strategy to treat the reading material gives us an insight of her reflective teaching and also makes her classroom distinctive from traditional classroom environment. She also repeats the lectures in order to eradicate the students' confusion as she said, when they (students) are asking about which they find difficult, definitely I will prefer to make it easy in the class but when I will find that one is really unable to understand then I will carry on my lecture despite of wasting the time on one students, because other students may mind it that why the teacher is wasting time only for one students. Therefore she counsels them after the class in order to resolve their issues. Our expert firmly believes to give different tasks to learners as their home task and also as classroom activity in order to make them mentally prepare for their next class work. Her task selection is very prudent as she compares the students' cognitive level with task complexity level and assigned it according to her findings. Her attitude towards students' classroom tasks is very promising as she consistently remains there with students to resolve their problem and to keep their morale high by motivating them. According to her, students must review the activity and explore their own progress. She strongly admires the role of motivation not only in a student life but also in all spheres of life to make us determined to encounter the worries of life and consistently takes us towards our destination. She believed, when human nature could not overcome complications and intricacies, definitely he/she would lose attention, if we will apply difficult method and activity, students will feel dreary and it will decrease their interest in study. She gradually raises the complexity of learners'

reading in order to give them the conscious realization of their cognition building. This practice gives us perspicacity of her reflective attitude as a trainer. She also makes this possible of not following the same strategies in all her classes and tackles the situation according to learners' condition. In short, her manners of conduction diverge each time on the basis of her learners' need. Her technique to mark the students' error is very constructive as she does not count their mistakes explicitly because according to her, this thing becomes the hindrances of learners' overt expression as she said; adult learners are very sensitive and conscious towards their self-respect. Firstly, there is a need to tackle them wisely by employing that very technique which gives preference to students. Secondly, this is the pre-requisite to build strong relation among students.

Currently, after this analysis, we can claim that she follows the 'reflective in, on and for' approach in a clear way in her teaching with slight modification. She also cares about Dewey (1933 P.9) three important attributes of reflecting teaching which are "open mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness". The following teacher also consider the Editor (2011), view of reflective teaching which 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.

Conclusion:

Reflective language teaching is much more than taking a few minutes to think about how to keep students on track. According to Dewey "Reflective teaching is a cyclical process, because once you start to implement changes, then the reflective and evaluative cycle begins again".

- a) What are you doing?
- b) Why are you doing it?
- c) How effective is it going to be?
- d) How are the students responding?
- e) How can you do it better?

After all the discussion we can assume that reflective teaching involves teachers systematically gathering data about their teaching experience and using this information in order to make informed decisions about their teaching practices. It, thus, implies a dynamic

way of being in the classroom. There is a conscious recall and examination of the classroom experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source for planning and action. There is a need to implement it properly, and this strategy can put forth quite fruitful results in the field of language teaching where there is found much space and capacity for reflection and exploitation of one's experience in teaching/learning scenario.

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Appendix

Interview

S.NO.	Interviewer's Questions
Q.No.1	What do you do before you start to read a passage in the class room?
Q.No.2	Do you think that your instruction strategy is appropriate to the level of class?
Q.No.3	Madam, you said that you do not like to read the material but focus on delivering the lecture, my question is that where you get your topic material from? From books or internet.
Q.No.4	On internet, we have lot of material regarding one topic like criticism, theories, etc. Do not you think, it's a complicated process and suppose if you have chosen difficult topic it also becomes problematic for the students?
Q.No.5	You said that you keep focus only on delivering the lecture, so for that do you inform your students that what they have to do tomorrow in the class?
Q.No.6	Do you motivate your students before going on activity?
Q.No.7	How much it is necessary?
Q.No.8	What do you like to do during the reading activity in classroom?

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Q.No.9	Do you keep an eye on students' mistake and write down those mistakes?
Q.No.10	Do you inform them about their mistakes?
Q.No.11	Do you think its wastage of time to discuss the things with students again and again especially when they do not understand and despite of that you go on teaching them?
Q.No.12	Why would you like to leave it?
Q.No.13	What do you like to do when you find that students are feeling boredom in the class?
Q.No.14	Do you think that students feel boring because of our teaching methods or because of our difficult material/activity?
Q.No.15	Do you think we need to change our teaching style?
Q.No.16	After completing your activity what do you like to do
Q.No.17	Suppose, you want to plan your one week teaching work, what strategy would you like to use.
Q.No.18	When you yourself do not understand something in the passage then what do you do? Do you like to leave it or try to understand it from the context?
Q.No.19	Why, would you leave it?
Q.No.20	Madam, you said that you will not discuss with your students then would you discuss it with your senior colleagues?
Q.No.21	Do not you think that our senior teachers know better than we do because of their experience? Secondly, why do you not like to share your problems with your senior colleagues?
Q.No.22	Do you feel embarrassment to share your problems with your senior colleagues?
Q.No.23	Suppose, you have to provide specific information from the reading passage and your passage comprises of fifty lines, would you like to go for whole of the passage or the specific lines?
Q.No.24	Would you not like to use any other kind of technique?
Q.No.25	I mean to say techniques like skimming etc.
Q.No.26	What do you do when you yourself do not understand mid lines of the passage? Do you like to relate it with previous lines for understanding?
Q.No.27	Do you analyze the material before teaching in order to see whether it makes sense for the students and they understand it easily or not?
Q.No.28	Do you want to teach all the things to the students or give them short information about the reading passage?
Q.No.29	I mean to say some teachers teach shortly and leave rest of the work for students with a thought that if students do work themselves they will get more.
Q.No.30	Do you punish your students in any way, when they do not give you any response?
Q.No.31	Why?
Q.No.32	Then what you do?
Q.No.33	Do you observe your teaching abilities through students' reaction?
Q.No.34	Do you think experience is enough for teaching purposes without looking at the shortcomings of the teaching?
Q.No.35	Most of the time rather always we give preference to an experienced man for the job but not to a new talented and skilled person, what is your view about this.
	Thank you Madam for your kindness and giving your valuable time