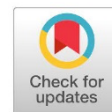


Research Article

An Investigation of the Reflective Teaching Strategies Utilized by Libyan EFL Preparatory School Teachers in Al-Bayda City to Reflect on Their Teaching



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Abstract: Teaching is an active process that requires continuous interaction between teachers and students and often involves challenges that encourage teachers to reflect on their practices. This study investigated reflective teaching practices among EFL preparatory school teachers in Al-Bayda, Libya, focusing on the strategies they use to review and improve their teaching. The study involved 31 teachers from 14 preparatory schools across different areas of the city. A mixed-method approach was adopted, using a 19-item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect data. The findings indicated that reflective teaching practices were evident among the participating teachers; however, three strategies were predominantly used: inspectors' feedback ranked first, followed by teachers' repeated research and collaborative reflection. In contrast, reflective journals, peer observation, and audio/video recording were the least frequently used strategies. Interview findings further revealed that some teachers employed these strategies informally. The study concludes with recommendations for further investigation and promotion of reflective teaching practices.

Keywords: Reflective Teaching, Reflective Teaching Strategies, Reflection, Preparatory school, Al-Bayda

استقصاء استراتيجيات مراجعة التدريس التي يستخدمها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المرحلة الإعدادية بمدينة البيضاء - ليبيا لمراجعة ممارساتهم التدريسية

المستخلص: يُعد التدريس عملية نشطة تتطلب تفاعلاً مستمراً بين المعلمين والطلاب، وقد تواجه خلالها المعلمين تحديات تدفعهم إلى التأمل في ممارساتهم التدريسية. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على ممارسات التدريس التأملية لدى معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مدارس التعليم الإعدادي بمدينة البيضاء في ليبيا، والاستراتيجيات التأملية التي يستخدمونها لمراجعة أدائهم التدريسي وتطويره. شملت الدراسة 31 معلماً من 14 مدرسة إعدادية موزعة على مناطق مختلفة من المدينة. واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج المختلط، من خلال استخدام استبانة مكونة من 19 فقرة ومقابلات شبه منظمة لجمع البيانات. أظهرت النتائج أن ممارسات التدريس التأملية كانت واضحة لدى المعلمين، إلا أن ثلاث استراتيجيات كانت الأكثر استخداماً، وهي: ملاحظات المفتشين في المرتبة الأولى، تليها البحوث المتكررة التي يجريها المعلمون، ثم التأمل التعاوني. في المقابل، جاءت اليوميات التأملية، وملاحظة الأقران، والتسجيلات الصوتية/المرئية في المراتب الأخيرة. كما كشفت المقابلات عن ممارسة بعض هذه الاستراتيجيات بصورة غير رسمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مراجعة التدريس، استراتيجيات مراجعة التدريس، المراجعة، المرحلة الإعدادية، البيضاء.



1. Introduction:

Classrooms are small active communities where the real meaning of variety is defined. Students of different backgrounds learning styles, different levels and complex psychologies are all in one class confronting a teacher. A reflective teacher who must keep all these varieties in mind and deliberately act in accordance to them. This requires a huge effort from the side of the teacher and a big amount of questioning the self. The complex nature of the teaching and learning process requires teachers to stop and think on the problems they confront with a constant occurrence of the whats, whys and hows. This act of examining is called (Reflection).

Reflection was first defined by John Dewey (1933, p.6) as "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the ground that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends." Hatton and Smith (1994) further explained Dewey's reflective ideas as intrinsic ones in that they signalize reflection as an energetic, intentional **cognitive** process that takes into consideration the connection between teachers' thoughts and knowledge joined with the chains of ideas activating in their minds. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), this process of thinking about thinking teaches teachers to investigate their thoughts, hence, make a difference in their teaching practice. Shandomo (2010) added that this act of thinking encourages teachers to continually improve themselves professionally. Thereby, classrooms are not specially created for students to learn, but teachers can learn there as well. This sustainable, complex process of thinking emerges rapidly in teachers' brains while carrying out their work inside the small, active society of the classroom, requiring them to handle the countless problems that arise. Hatton and Smith (1994); Toom et al. (2014) clarified that problems feature teachers' classroom performance and require them to determine those problems, reflect on their reasons and reach solutions. On this basis, Shandomo (2010) suggested that teachers must keep a constant act of examination and make reflection a routine in their practice. Taking this action for granted will liberate teachers from being slaves of authorities, their stimulus or unreflective practices, and move forward to become reflective teachers who inquire and assess their tactic, teaching practice, its validation and performance. Farrell (2018) added that practicing reflective teachers liberate teachers from being routine slaves as well. That is because reflection enables teachers to pause and think when they face problems, analyze them and learn from them, rather than falling in meaningless, unreflective act of repetition. The contradictory was explained by Zeichner and Liston (2014) in that teachers who do not examine their aims and attitudes that mark their work, never take in to consideration the environment in which they work, or do not reflect on their ideas, therefore, it can be suggested that these teachers do not practice RT. The fruitfulness of reflection is marked in its ability in producing meaningful results from specific occasions that improve understanding which in turn enables teachers to view and analyze the situation from different angles (Loughran, 2002). Shanmugavelu et al. (2020) confirmed that the application of reflection generates proficient and effectual teachers who will be able to manage misrepresentations, uncertainty and vagueness that ingest teachers while performing inside classrooms.

Conducting RT requires collecting information by using different reflective teaching strategies. Richards and Farrell (2005) verified that carrying out reflection must be conjoined with collecting data on teachers' own practice and think about it, utilizing strategies such as self-monitoring, observation and conducting case studies. Moreover, peer observation, keeping a reflective journal, coaching, workshops, teacher support group and audio/video recording of lessons are the RTSs

teachers can utilize to reflect on their teaching. Aghanimi et al. (2021) confirmed that the educational programs in Libya demerit introducing reflective strategies to Libyan teachers, and limit reflection to the occasional visit of the inspector to observe teachers' performance and judge it. In addition to limiting reflection to the periodic visits of the inspector, Covid-19 pandemic ban and teachers' strikes caused a remarkable time of delay and limited school hours, thus, reduced students' English language knowledge. It is also supposed that EFL teachers may be conducting RTSs while they are unaware of them. The recently updated versions of preparatory school syllabi and the content complexity in comparison with the previous ones, which contain less functional language lessons, less vocabulary and more grammar, may generate additional problems in learning and management inside classrooms.

For these reasons, the study aimed to provide significant information about the reflective teaching strategies utilized by Libyan EFL teachers at some preparatory schools. Also, it will verify the amount of consciousness the teachers hold for their reflective practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reflection

In (1933), Dewey defined thought as our awareness of whatever idea that emerges in our minds, and thinking as a unique act that is recalled by special opportunities and not being involuntary flurry. What evokes thinking is the occurrence of a problem. Helpern (2014) defined the problem as the gap or obstacle between our current knowledge and our desired act. Sharkey (2010) defined it as an inquiry that requires an answer and that can be achieved by questioning the problem and analyze it in order to reach a solution. This act of thinking is what Dewey (1933, p.80) believed that it will 'bridge the gap' and join knowledge with practice which were dissociated. The reason behind those problems emergence is the gap between teachers' intentions and the genuine outcomes. They further stated that this gap is generated because of the distance between theory and practice. Theories that are believed to be created solely at universities and practice that takes place solely at schools. In the educational context, (Richards & Farrell, 2011; Bruster & Peterso, 2012; Parra et al., 2014) denominated problem as the 'critical incident' and defined it as any unanticipated action or reaction that emerges during class by the students or their teachers. Explaining this incident; therefore, leads to understanding the situation, hence, modifying performance in accordance to the conclusions reached. Starkey (2010) pointed out that a careful consideration of the problem is what is first needed if we seek to solve it. The second crucial step is to avoid making assumptions. Avoiding this act of hypothesizing opens the door for researching and gathering the desired information, finding the correct information targets the critical thinker's attention to the main problem and not to its results, therefore, better persuasive conclusions are reached. A vital point is to reflect on the main problem and not on its symptoms or results. This can be achieved with a careful consideration of any vague causes of the problem or any consequences. In addition, working with a group helps distinguishing the real problem. Since classrooms are busy and dynamic places, those incidents continuously arise and require teachers to stop and think critically about them. Larrivee (2000) defined critical thinking as a process of putting unquestioned beliefs and assumptions under profound investigation. Therefore, the critical thinker observes the problem from different angles and views before taking action (Murawski, 2014). Larrivee (2000) added that the critical thinker engages in reflecting on current assumptions and reach new findings when a sense of incoherence

emerges and causes problems. The critical thinker is percipient of his/her needs and this mirrors his/her dispassion and intellectual modesty. On this basis, he/she decides to fulfill their needs by researching (Enciso et al., 2017). Brookfield (2012) stated that critical thinking is activated when a sense of inquiry about a certain assumption occurs and impacts our thinking and performance. Then, a careful determination and evaluation of those assumptions is conducted to decide on their accuracy. A key step in assessing our assumptions is to see them from different perspectives before taking the last step which is putting it into practice. Murawski (2014) stated that the eventual intention of critical thinking is solving problems.

2.2 Reflective Teaching

Reflective thinking necessitates analyzing available data against the reasonable explanations and against beliefs, assumptions and hypotheses. Any reached conclusions remain under investigation (Larrivee, 2000). Dewey (1933) explained that when we think critically about a situation, we search for more information that helps in arriving at certain proposals that will either verify those possibilities or defeat them. Richards (2015) further added that critical reflection occurs when we evoke a particular situation, analyze it and evaluate it to approach wider intentions. The complex environment inside classrooms creates a fertile environment for reflection to take place. Farahian and Rajabi (2022) affirmed that when teachers, specifically EFL teachers, conduct reflection, they develop themselves professionally and meet their learners' needs. This includes various types of thinking and cognitive processing during all teaching phases (Richards & Farrell, 2011). Richards and Farrell (2015) clarified that teachers who critically reflect about their teaching improve attitude and awareness of their teaching performance by adjusting and modifying it, in addition, provide the best assistance their learners seek. Teachers can achieve this by observing their teaching practice and make specific decisions about the effectiveness of the lesson and if any changes needed to be made in any of the lesson sections from timing, lesson plan to activities, in order to decide on the effectiveness of the lesson and whether the targeted objectives were accomplished (Richards & Farrell, 2011). According to this, RT is holistic. Shanmugavelu et al. (2020) conveyed that RT includes thinking about all sides of teaching together to decide, adjust and develop the teaching and learning process. So, this act of thinking has to be held critically to make changes; otherwise, it leads to nowhere. This is what Brookfield (2006) called 'informed thinking' (p.25) and compared it with the uninformed version of thinking which is the uncritical, unreflective thinking. He explained that unreflective teaching simply resembles imitating what is sustained deep in teachers from their experiences with their teachers when they were students. As a result, the amount of help teachers should afford their students detracts. Linking theory with practice creates the experience; each experience is unique on its own and provides the perfect environment for reflection. Loughran (2002) said that teachers best learn from reflecting on their teaching experience. This includes accurate understanding of the relationship between noticing the situation and taking an action towards it, hence, improves teachers learning and practice through experience. Schon (1987) explained that the relationship between theory and practice needs to be seen from a down top direction i.e., from practice to theory, hence to learn from experience and adjust practice in accordance. The teacher should begin from a careful examination of the experience not on searching for the best ways to bring theory into practice. Hall and Simeral (2015) distinguished the aware teacher from the unaware teacher by clarifying that the aware teacher owns a profound understanding of the content, context, relationships and the misrepresentations to be solved.

Therefore, the aware teachers reflect on his/her teaching practice in a way that facilitates their students' learning by adopting the learning styles and teaching methods that best suit them. On the other hand, unaware teachers lack such kind of critical practice. They have not developed such a kind of sensitivity towards the minutest details of their classrooms, thereby; they have not practiced reflection yet.

2.2.1 Dewey's Three RT Attitudes

For RT to be effectively achieved, it has to hold three critical attitudes introduced by Dewey (1933) which are open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness. Open-mindedness was defined as the willingness to listen to different views, be open to all possibilities and changes even in their beliefs (Zeichner & Liston, 2014; Rodgers, 2002). Hence, open-minded teachers question logics constantly and fight for evidence. They continuously examine their practice and not sightlessly follow unquestioned ideas. Responsible teachers consider the results of their acts on their students (Zeichner & Liston, 2014). Rodgers (2002) argued that responsible teachers connect their knowledge and their thinking with the world and accept changes and act in accordance to them. Responsibility binds open-mindedness and wholeheartedness. Wholehearted teachers hold a continuous sense of reflection on their assumptions and beliefs; the conclusions they reach and examine their performance to gain new knowledge. Wholehearted teachers hold a careful consideration of their students and the impact of their teaching practice on them (Zeichner & Liston, 2014). Wholeheartedness symbolizes the curiosity and enthusiasm in teachers' teaching practice which activates their critical thinking (Rodgers, 2002).

2.2.2 Types of Reflection

In (1983), Schon introduced his two highly- renowned types of reflection, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. A remarkable proportion of reflection-in-action depends on the emergence of surprise. The teaching practice tends to be unreflective when this sense of surprise is absent, but when a flash of happiness, willingness or frustration surprises the teacher; reflection-in-action is activated. Schon (1987) further added that reflection-in-action takes place during performance and adjusts the action while it is taking place. Zeichner and Liston (2014) explained that reflective teachers deliberately modify their practice while teaching to manage unanticipated learners' reactions. Hall and Simeral (2015) verified that such modification occurs simultaneously in the teaching approach, lesson plan or students' grouping. The complexity of reflection-in-action raises from the constantly changeable, active life in classrooms, that is what makes every moment particular (Manen, 1995). Schon (1987) clarified that reflection-in-action does not have to be spontaneous; it can be carried out in a zone of time that extends over weeks or even months as long as the solutions could make a difference. "Reflective teaching is a kind of experimenting." (Schon, 1983, p.132). Generally speaking, unreflective teachers believe that they are able to deal with their students' problems immediately, whereas reflective teachers think about their practice and react with awareness (Manen, 1995). Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, occurs after the experience is finished. According to Schon (1987), this type of reflection recalls the experience and puts it under investigation, examining the reasons behind the practice that led to such results. Killion and Todnem (1991) introduced the third type of reflection, reflection-for-action. They pointed out that reflection-for-action is the aspired result of the two previous kinds of reflection in

that it directs the future performance. Zeichner and Tabachnik (2016) clarified that reflection-for-action views the teaching and learning process in the future and try to reshape it before it happens.

2.2.3 Reflective Cycles

Helpern (2014) classified problems into two types; the first one is the ill-defined problem which does not have only one solution but more, while well-defined problem has only one solution. Ill-defined problems resemble the problems teachers face during their teaching practice; therefore, they require continuous careful analysis. Kolb (1984) explained the four phases of reflection in his famous experiential learning cycle. The first phase is the experience that requires reflection, phase two is the reflection on which the reflective teacher digests and drips the experience in order to generate new results. In phase three the teachers test those results and finally reflect on the effectiveness of the solutions. Gibbs (1988) provided a more detailed six- steps reflective cycle. Describing what happened in the first step. Reflect on your feelings about what happened. Evaluate what went well and what went bad then begin your analysis by seeking information from others' experiences and other resources. Formulate a general conclusion before stepping to a more specific one. Reflect on the effectiveness of the solution i.e., what will you do differently the next time you confront this situation and what other steps to follow. Richards (1991) explained conducting reflection in three stages. The first stage is the actual teaching practice during which reflection is activated either personally or when observing others. A careful analysis of what happened during that experience is in stage two. The examination begins by collecting information using different RTSs to gather as much details as possible. The final stage provides a full description of all the aspects that surrounded the problem and the questions about it.

2.3 Reflective Teaching Strategies

2.3.1 Keeping a reflective journal

A teaching journal is a book or a notebook on which the teacher registers all reflections, ideas and observations in order to think critically about them later (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

2.3.2 Teaching portfolio

A portfolio is a file that contains different documents that enables teachers to trace their work through the information documented in this file (Richards & Farrell, 2005). It includes lesson plans, comments, students' feedback on their teacher's work, teaching and learning materials used, summaries, in addition to the teacher's beliefs and assumptions (Richards & Farrell, 2011).

2.3.3 Peer observation

Peer observation is the attendance of another teacher to watch the class in general or certain points in the performance and collaboration taking place to collect information and better understand the problems (Richards & Farrell, 2005). This strategy is highly important since controlling and noticing all aspects of the teaching and learning process solely by the teacher is considered overwhelming.

2.3.4 Audio/video recording

Fakazli (2021) defined video recording as self-recording the teacher carry out for the purpose of reflecting on their work inside the classroom to enhance their future performance. Richards and

Farrell (2011) stated that audio/video recording enables teachers to notice some aspects which they were not aware of during practice.

2.3.5 Students' feedback

Students' feedback enables teachers to reflect on their teaching by gathering information through questionnaires or interviewing students. These data collection methods will reveal students' ideas and opinions to the teachers about their teaching, hence, adjust the performance in accordance (Hung & Thuy, 2012; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

2.3.6 Classroom observation

Classroom observation raises teachers' consciousness towards their decisions and the reasons behind them. Teachers can tackle it themselves or with one or more colleagues (Farrell, 2018). It occurs when the supervisor visits and monitors the teaching and learning process closely from inside the classroom. This strategy improves teachers' performance through the constructive feedback provided by the supervisor (Hung & Thuy, 2012; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

2.3.7 Peer coaching

The reflective strategy of peer coaching includes two teachers, one acts as a coach or critical friend who provides constructive, nonjudgmental feedback to the other teacher, the second teacher hence, benefits from the coach's feedback with the right to add his/her own reflections on its appropriateness. This critical friendship raises the trainee's or the observees' consciousness towards their teaching practice and reflective abilities (Farrell, 2018; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

2.3.8 Teachers study group

This group involves two or more teachers who cooperatively work together to develop their work. This group provides a secure educational haven to discuss their hopes, fears, intentions and experiences besides working on enhancing the various sides of their performance, the syllabus they teach and their reflective strategies (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

2.3.9 Self- monitoring

Teachers monitor their practice by collecting information about it using different reflective strategies, hereafter; they analyze them to decide applying any adjustments (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Richards and Farrell (2011) added that those modifications can be applied to the timing, lesson plan, activities or any other aspect that will lead to meet the desired results.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

To answer the research questions, the study integrated a descriptive and an exploratory type of research. The descriptive side provides a clear picture of the phenomenon under investigation through describing the data gathered quantitatively by the questionnaire. Reaching detailed descriptive findings was due to the beginning with accurate research questions (Neuman, 2014). Heppner et. al., (2008) confirmed the benefit of conducting descriptive research in reducing bias through the choice that this type of study provides in selecting its sample participants randomly. The researchers explored the concept of RT and its strategies deeply utilizing semi-structured interviews. "Most exploratory research uses qualitative data. In general, qualitative research tends to

be more open to using a wide range of evidence and discovering new issues" (Neuman, 2014, p.39). Integrating descriptive and exploratory types of research led to the integration of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Adopting mixed-method approach provides more precise findings because quantitative and qualitative approaches fill each other's gaps and complement each other. Mixed-methods incorporate the significant features of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This enables the researchers gaining more insight other than utilizing a solely one method (Creswell, 2009; Toddle & Tashakori, 2009). To accurately conduct a mixed-method approach, the researchers used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect data. Triangulation boosts the validity of the research findings (Griffee, 2012). Deciding on a triangulation type of data collection was an intent by the researchers to reach more accurate and valid outcomes.

3.2 Sampling

Sampling is selecting a sub-group that resembles a larger population from which researchers can draw conclusions about the target population as a whole (Creswell, 2012; Griffee, 2012). The study sample consisted of 31 EFL preparatory school teachers, all female, from 14 preparatory schools, 13 schools for girls and one school for boys all in Al-Baida city. Kothari (2004) verified that the optimum sample size is the one from which the study reveals reliable results that reflect the whole population. Based on this, the researcher believed that 31 participants is a representative number to generate the in-depth information the researcher seeks. Even though the Cronbach's Alpha test revealed a good level of reliability in teachers' responses, still the researcher believes that including a larger sample will reveal clearer findings and enhance the possibility of generalizing from the study.

The researcher followed a non-probability sampling approach. This is apparent through her selection of a sample of teachers who shared common characteristics i.e., Libyan EFL preparatory school teachers. Although non-probability sample does not provide equal chance of inclusion for every member in the population, it provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher also followed a convenience sampling strategy in meeting the teachers who were readily available and willing to share. The researcher took this point into consideration in choosing schools as well as the teachers. The researcher met the available teachers in every school without setting any date beforehand. She also made sure not to manipulate the scheduled lessons and met them at free times.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection is explained in this section. This phase took place between 17th December, 2023 and 29th February, 2024. During this period, the researcher visited 14 preparatory schools in Al-Baida city and administered the questionnaires followed by the semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

Piloting a questionnaire or an interview require testing it beforehand in order to apply any modifications on it before administering it on a large population (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the researchers adopted a questionnaire from a study by Hung and Thuy (2012). Griffee (2012) stated that 'Questionnaires, once developed, can be used by other researchers in different situations if the questionnaire is believed to measure the same construct' (p.138). Since the researchers considered

the topic of RT a newly arrival, they translated it into MSA so that to clarify what the items mean, hence, produce trustworthy results. There is a shared belief that translating questionnaires in participants' native language (L1) minimizes misunderstanding that may occur if the questionnaire items are written in second language (L2) in which participants may not be professional enough in it (Griffiee, 2012). He further argued that we cannot confirm on the validity of the participants' responds on an adopted questionnaire just because they might understand it in a different way intended by the researchers. For this reason, the investigator was eager to administer the questionnaire directly and be present with her participants to provide any explanations or clarifications required. Moreover, she provided a prior explanation for two specific points which are points 10 and 12, exploring the usage of the two reflective strategies of the reflective journal and the portfolio, because the researchers did not arrive at any perfect equivalent that could reflect a clear meaning for those two items.

3.3.2 The Questionnaire

The researchers followed a triangulation approach to data collection in order to reach confidential conclusions. Accordingly, a questionnaire was administered to collect the quantitative data. Questionnaires are considered a highly noted instrument that saves time and effort. The questionnaire utilized in the study consisted of 19 close-ended items. Close-ended items provide data that can be quantified, which makes them easier and more rapid to be answered and analyzed than the open-ended items (Griffiee, 2012). The questionnaire was taken from Hung and Thuy (2021). It consisted of 19 items that were divided into two parts. The first part investigated the Libyan EFL preparatory school teachers' awareness of reflective teaching (items 1-9), while the second part aimed to investigate the reflective teaching strategies utilized by the teachers to reflect on their teaching practice (items 10-19). A Likert-type scale of five levels was included. The respondents had to choose between the five options grading as (Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, Never).

The data collection procedure started at the middle of December 2023 by visiting the schools. The researcher required each school headmaster's permission officially through the permission letter provided by the Libyan Academy Dean. After getting the permission, the researcher collaborated with the social workers at each school in order to organize the meeting with the participants. A careful consideration was addressed so that the natural rhythm of the teachers' daily work had not been interrupted. In accordance, the researcher spent the full-time work at each school in order to manage meeting the participants in their free time. Once the meeting began, the researcher introduced herself to the teachers and the research idea was introduced to provide a clear image about the study. An invitation letter was submitted to each teacher seeking for their permission. The participants were given the absolute right to ask for any clarifications or questions at all stages of the process. The participants who showed willingness to share were requested to sign their names at the back of the letter before answering the questionnaire. It was confirmed that the whole process take place in a quiet room and without interruption. Once the questionnaire was handed to the respondents, the researcher confirmed them to carefully read the items before they answer and assured to provide any clarification whenever needed. Even though the questionnaire was translated into MSA, the researcher continuously explained items 10 and 12 before the teachers respond on them because it was believed that these two RTSs (Portfolios and Reflective journals) were not clear enough even when translated. After the questionnaire, the researcher shared a cup of coffee

with the participants to harmonize the discussion environment before moving to the in-depth part through the semi-structured interviews.

3.3.3 The Semi-Structured Interview

To deeply investigate the topic, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews after the questionnaire. Creswell (2012, p.218) mentioned some advantages of interviews as qualitative instruments, "they provide useful information when you cannot directly observe participants, and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information." As a reminder, the researcher explained the idea of the study again based on the information the participants get from the questionnaire. One-to-one semi-structured interviews were held with each teacher privately in a quiet room. "A semi-structured interview means questions are predetermined, but the interviewer is free to ask for clarification and even add follow up questions" (Griffie, 2012, p.160). Dawson (2002) highlighted that semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a good chance of flexibility in investigating issues in relation with the study and which arise during the meeting. Adopting a semi-structured interview provided the chance to make use of probes and take the advantage to elicit more information and ask for clarification when required. Utilizing probes helps in verifying and expanding participants' ideas (Creswell, 2012). Three main questions were asked and probes were added as a tool of enquiry that helps the researchers approach more detailed and valuable data. The first question aimed to be a warm up and asked the teachers about the different problems they face in their teaching practice, either inside or outside the classroom, with the syllabus, with the students or with the facilities available. In the second question, the different tools and strategies the teachers utilize to overcome these problems were investigated. The last question aimed at giving teachers the chance to reflect about the effectiveness of their strategies and share their self-evaluation with the researcher.

The interviews were conducted in Libyan Arabic (LA). The reason behind this particular step was to create a relaxing environment for the participants to share their ideas comfortably without any stress in looking for the suitable words to express their ideas, to avoid hesitation or any kind of embarrassment, all of which that would have affected the validity of information. The interviews were audio-recorded using the mobile phone recording application. It was taken into careful consideration to end the interviews smoothly and express thankfulness for the teachers for their participation.

3.4 Limitations

During the data collection phase, it was confirmed by the researchers to not to interrupt the teachers' daily lessons and meet them at free times. The researcher managed to meet 27 at their schools and complete the whole process on location, but 4 teachers finished answering the questionnaire and had to leave due to social issues. To complete collecting the research information, the researcher requested to complete it via What's App mobile phone application. In addition, some teachers did not feel comfortable to be audio-recorded, so their wish was definitely respected. This caused a big delay in collecting the required number of participants, in consequence, the researcher invited those who refused to be audio-recorded to write notes instead. 24 teachers agreed to be audio-recorded and 7 members preferred to write down their comments.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were used to indicate the mean of each item in the questionnaire and the average mean. Both 'indicate the general tendencies in the data,' (Creswell, 2012, p.182). The standard deviation (SD) was statistically calculated to indicate the spread of scores according to the participants' responses to each point in the scale as presented by the different means. The findings obtained by the questionnaire answered the two research questions. They were exposed into two parts. The first part, items (1-9), displayed the findings that answered the first question: To what extent do Libyan EFL preparatory school teachers reflect on their teaching? While the second part, items (10-19), answered the second question in the research: What are the reflective teaching strategies utilized by Libyan EFL teachers to reflect on their teaching.

4.1.1 Analysis of the Teachers' Reflective Practice

As stated in this section, the first 9 items of the questionnaire displayed the practice of RT by the teachers. The findings were distributed in a five-point frequency scale ranged from (Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, Almost never), on which each scale had a percentage that showed the result.

Table (1) Teachers' practice of RT

	Items	Mean score	Std. Deviation	Always (%)	Usually (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Almost never (%)
1	I can quickly react to teaching problems happening in class	4.22	0.71	41.9	41.9	16.1	0.0	0.0
2	I notice students' attitudes during the teaching process.	4.67	0.79	83.9	9.7	0.0	6.5	0.0
3	I adjust my instruction or activities based on students'	4.54	0.88	71.0	19.4	6.5	0.0	3.2
4	I try to understand my purpose, intentions, and feeling in any teaching	4.54	0.59	77.4	16.1	6.5	0.0	0.0
5	Before class, I plan the lesson and anticipate what may happen and try to find a	4.35	1.08	67.7	16.1	6.5	6.5	3.2
6	After class, I look back on what happened in class.	3.77	1.33	41.9	22.6	12.9	16.1	6.5
7	After class, I try to find out the reasons for teaching problems in the previous	4.06	1.06	41.9	35.5	12.9	6.5	3.2
8	I analyze my teaching activities based on the objectives of my lessons	3.93	1.09	35.5	38.7	12.9	9.7	3.2
9	I can figure out teaching problems happening in class.	3.96	1.16	41.9	29.0	19.4	3.2	6.5

Average Mean=4.24

The findings shown in table (1) conveyed that the surveyed teachers reflect on their teaching performance and this was displayed in the average mean score 4.24 (out of 5), see (Appendix 3). Topping the list Item 2 ($M=4.67$) revealing that the teachers notice their students' attitudes during the teaching process. Items (3,4) received the same mean score (4.54), hence came second, while Item 5 ranked third showing that teachers practice reflection-for-action with ($M=4.35$). Item 1 ($M=4.22$) came fourth reflecting that teachers have the ability to react to the teaching problems happening in class. Item (7) uncovered that teachers practice reflection-on-action with ($M=4.06$), it stated that teachers try to find out reasons for teaching problems in the previous lesson. Teachers can figure out teaching problems happening in class as displayed in item 9 with ($M=3.96$). With an average mean of 3.93, Item (8) revealed that the surveyed teachers analyze their teaching activities based on the objectives of their lessons. According to the results, Item 6 came last ($M=3.77$) showing that they look back on what happened in class.

The results also show that the SD scores are low indicating that the data points are close to the mean, hence they are consistence.

4.1.2 Reflective Teaching Strategies

The findings of the RTSs teachers utilize to reflect on there are presented in this section. Items (10-19) indicated the ten strategies the surveyed teachers responded they use.

Table (23) shows that the surveyed teachers provided a variety of responses in relation to the strategies they utilize. The moderate average mean (2.67) reflects that teachers' practice of the surveyed strategies lies in the middle of the range. According to the mean score registered for each strategy, Item (17) takes the lead ($M=4.51$) for the supervisors' feedback as a reflective strategy. Item (13) came second with ($M=3.47$) reflecting that teachers research repeated teaching issues to reflect on their teaching practice. Item (15) ranked third with a mean score (3.35) revealing that teachers work together, have an observation and reflect on each other teaching. According to the findings, the fourth strategy teachers use to reflect on their teaching is joining a study-group ($M=2.83$), followed by students' feedback with a mean score (2.67). Collecting teaching portfolios was the sixth strategy recording ($M=2.54$). Item (18) represented the seventh strategy utilized by the teachers with a mean score (2.29) which is joining workshops to help them reflect on their performance. The results uncovered that the RTS of documenting on a reflective journal scored a mean (2.00) as set in Item (11) in the table. Item (14) scored a mean of (1.51) revealing that peer observation is the ninth RTS in rank, whereas the RTS that came last was the audio/video recording in Item 11 ($M=1.29$)

Table (2) Reflect Teaching Strategies

	Items	Mean score	Std Deviation	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never
10	I document my teaching experience using a reflective journal.	2.00	1.29	6.5	9.7	12.9	19.4	51.6
11	I record videos or audios of my teaching practice and reflect upon them.	1.29	0.78	3.2	0.0	0.0	16.1	80.6
12	I collect a teaching portfolio to reflect on my teaching.	2.54	1.52	16.1	16.1	9.7	22.6	35.5
13	I research repeated teaching issues to reflect my teaching practice.	3.74	1.31	38.7	22.6	22.6	6.5	9.7

14	I use peer observation to reflect on my teaching practice.	1.51	0.88	3.2	0.0	6.5	25.8	64.5
15	I and my colleagues work together to have an observation and reflect on each other teaching.	3.35	1.11	16.1	25.8	45.2	3.2	9.7
16	I join a study-group with other teachers where we discuss on our lesson plan, have an observation and reflect on our teaching.	2.83	1.67	29.0	6.5	19.4	9.7	35.5
17	The supervisor in my school visit classrooms to observe and give feedback. I reflect on my teaching based on their feedback.	4.51	0.88	67.7	19.4	6.5	6.5	0.0
18	I attend teaching workshops and reflect on my teaching practice based on them.	2.29	1.39	9.7	12.9	16.1	19.4	41.9
19	I collect students' feedback and reflect upon them.	2.67	1.49	12.9	22.6	19.4	9.7	35.5

Average Mean=2.67

The table also shows that Items (12, 16, 18, 19) recorded a high score of SD compared with their mean scores. This reflects that the data points are scattered further away from the mean; therefore, unveils that the surveyed teachers' responses vary on the five-point frequency scale.

4.2 The Qualitative Analysis

The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically. The researchers coded the data following an inductive approach. The researchers arrive at the required themes by thoroughly reading the transcript several times (Creswell, 2009).

4.2.1 Teachers Reflective Practice

The interviews conducted with the teachers revealed that all teachers observe a variety of problems with their students during teaching. One of the problems is students' attitudes towards English language. The conclusions that these teachers reached regarding their reflection on what they noticed was that this negative attitude was derived either from the family, lack of desirability to learn the language or their limited knowledge of the subject. A teacher added:

Students have a strong belief that English language is a complicated subject to learn, they do not even desire to make any effort to learn it.

The second problem the teachers mentioned was students' lack of knowledge. The vast majority of the teachers confirmed that they begin the recent academic years from the alphabet. A teacher explained:

I spend the first two weeks from every academic year in teaching the primary simple grammar rules, the present simple, past simple and after that I move to teaching the syllabus.

All teachers agreed that students' abilities vary from one student to the other. To cope with this problem, all teachers affirmed that they reteach the same point repeatedly in a more simplified way and with more example. A grade 7 teacher shared her experience saying:

Some students look sad, others look distracted, they look here and there, while others tell me that they do not understand this point or that point. I can see it in their eyes, in their body language.

The vast majority of the teachers considered the syllabi as well-prepared but difficult compared to the students' levels, the time available and to the lack of facilities. As a reflective act towards this point, all teachers shared that they simplify their lesson by dividing it into a number of sections and teach each section in one lesson. A grade 9 teacher clarified:

I prioritize teaching grammar if there is one in the lesson and then move to the rest of it. I leave the sections that require students' opinions and discussions due to lack of time.

4.2.2 Reflective Teaching Strategies

The vast majority of the interviewed teachers agreed on the crucial role of the inspector's feedback, but they provided different reflections according to their experiences. Most teachers had a positive attitude towards the inspector's role. One of them said:

The inspector may observe an aspect which I'm not aware of.

Another teacher said:

I show all my advantages and disadvantages in front of the inspector to seek honest and authentic feedback from her.

Regarding peer observation, only one teacher mentioned that she invited a colleague to attend her lesson and observe her practice. She reflected that it was a fruitful strategy since the observer noticed that there were some students at the back of the class who were inattentive, hence, advised her to take an action that attracts their attention. Nearly half of the teachers interviewed confirmed that they work with their English language partners to negotiate their problems. All the teachers who utilize this RTS said that they discuss their problems and provide each other with solutions, whether the problem was related to the students, the syllabus, teaching practice or testing. The information generated from the interview uncovered that students' feedback is limited to confirming students' understanding of the lesson. Only one teacher said she conducted this strategy: Their notes helped me a lot. Some of them complained about some aspects in my behavior, they asked me not to do this act or that with us, so I tried to avoid the points they do not like. They even asked me to teach them in some way or teach them some skills.

She further added:

I took their viewpoints into consideration and applied them and I noticed a positive response and attitude from them.

This RTS is conducted by a number of teachers using the internet for different reasons. They explained that they search on the internet to find different methods and activities to teach lessons in more flexible and effective ways. One of the teachers explained:

I constantly search the internet to find how to solve certain problems. If I noticed a student with a particular problem, I search to find a solution for it. I also search for more simplified methods or techniques that facilitate learning.

Even though this strategy was not investigated in the questionnaire, however, the results obtained conveyed that a number of teachers consult the social and psychological experts at their schools and reflect a highly positive attitude towards its role.

5. Discussion

The qualitative and the quantitative findings show highly consistent conclusions in relation to teachers' reflective awareness and practice. These results agree with Aghanimi et al., (2021) which revealed that 66 Libyan teachers out of 86 (76.7%) answered they always reflect on their teaching after class. These findings also match Karwad (2016) study which concluded that 62 (81.5%) of the teachers always reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching performance and continuously ask themselves (what and how).

The questionnaire results revealed that 45.2% from the teachers answered that they sometimes work with other colleagues to have observation and reflect on each other teaching, and 25.8% responded that they usually do, recording an average score 3.35. These findings reflect a high level of agreement with Hung and Thuy (2020) uncovering that 44.9% from the study participants answered they sometimes do. The findings of item 14 conveyed that 64.5% from the teachers almost never use peer observation as an RTS. This result disagrees with Aghanimi et al., (2021) study which displayed that 34.8% from the surveyed participants answered they never utilize peer observation as an RTS. Tosriadi et al., (2018) which revealed that peer observation is one of the five RTSs utilized by four EFL teachers in Indonesia. Item 16 displayed a remarkable spread out of results with a mean score 2.83 and SD of 1.67, recording 35.5% of the teachers almost never join a study-group with other teachers where they discuss their lesson plans, have observations and reflect on each other work. These results disagree with Hung and Thuy (2020) which reflected equal percentages 34.7% for both sometimes and rarely. Even though students' feedback is considered one of the most important RTSs, the questionnaire findings displayed that 35.5% of the teachers responded that they almost never utilize this strategy. The researchers related this to teachers' perspective of students' feedback. The interviews uncovered that the majority of the teachers interpreted students' feedback as a confirmation of the students understanding of the lesson or any particular point in it solely. This finding agrees with Yanuarti and Treagust (2015) which stated that Indonesian EFL teachers limit their reflective practice to students' achievements in the subject. It disagreed also with Karwad (2016) with 82.8% of the teachers considering it a crucial RTS helping them better understand their students. The inspector's feedback received the highest mean score (4.51), locating it first on the ten RTSs investigated. Item 17 'The supervisor in my school visit classrooms to observe and give feedback, I reflect on my teaching based on their feedback', displayed 67.7% of the teachers responding that they always follow the inspector's feedback. These findings disagree with Aghanimi et al., (2021) results which concluded that 77.9% from its surveyed teachers strongly agree that their self-reflection is more effective than the inspectors' reflection. However, Hung and Thuy (2020) study revealed some degree of consistency with the current study with 53.1% of the teachers answered that they usually reflect on their teaching based on their inspectors' feedback. In their answers to item 10 'I document my teaching experience using a reflective journal', 51.6% of the teachers responded that they almost never use this RTS. This result is identical with Hung and Thuy (2020) with 51.0% of the study's surveyed teachers answering they almost never do. A remarkably high result is recorded to item 11 with 80.6% of the teachers responding that they almost never audio or video record their teaching performance to

reflect on it later. This finding puts the study in disagreement with Tuncer and Ozkan (2021) which concluded that video recording of lessons is an effective RTS playing an important role in enhancing critical thinking abilities of both teachers and learners. Collecting teaching portfolios as an RTS displays a remarkable number of spread results with a mean score 2.54 and an SD 1.52. Hung and Thuy (2020) findings reflected a noticeable amount of consistency with 40.8% of its surveyed teachers answering that they almost never collect teaching portfolios to reflect on their teaching. In response to item 18 'I attend teaching workshops and reflect on my teaching practice based on them', 41.9% of the teachers answered they almost never do. These findings disagree with Hung and Thuy (2020) which shows a high mean score (4.10) with 34.7% of the teachers always attend workshops and 42.9% usually do.

6. Conclusions and Implications

The importance of this study lies in the remarkable insights it provided on the basis of teachers' reflective practice and the dominant RTSs they utilize to reflect on their teaching. The reader of this research will recognize that the target participants are aware of their teaching practice and their students' needs and abilities. However, they will also notice that the RTSs these teachers use to reflect on their teaching are limited to four dominant strategies. This study introduced valuable RTSs which the reader will learn about, apply in their practice, hence, hopefully make positive justifications and changes in their performance. The constraints that inhibit teachers from reflecting properly on their teaching such as limited class time, lack of facilities and the required syllabus to cover in comparison with time load, are all presented and require policy makers to take serious steps to resolve them. On equal importance, the solutions the teachers apply in reaction to the problems they observe have to be assessed in accordance with the problems they seek to solve and modify for better performance. These steps should be taken by educational specialists to help teachers provide better teaching practice and develop themselves professionally.

- Policy makers should organize training programs for teachers to introduce the concept of RT and RTSs to them and familiarize them with these strategies.
- Teachers should try to utilize different RTSs and reflect on their effectiveness.
- Teachers need to familiarize themselves with the RTSs they newly know through this study.

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