



An Exploration of Secondary School English Language Teachers Reflective Teaching Practices, Techniques and Challenges

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore secondary school English language teachers' reflective teaching practices, techniques, and challenges in Bishoftu Town, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. A descriptive cross-sectional case study using mixed research methods (quantitative and qualitative) is the design of this study. Primary data were collected from 43 English teachers and 6 English department heads, selected through comprehensive and purposive sampling, respectively. Data collection methods included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20, employing frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The results revealed that the majority of English teachers had low engagement in reflective teaching and rarely used techniques such as audio-video recording, journal writing, and peer observation, while completely neglecting student feedback. The main challenges identified were lack of knowledge, skills, and experience; lack of institutional support and commitment; and absence of clear guidelines. The study recommends institutional commitment to reinforce and design tailor-made training based on clear guidelines at regional and national levels.

Keywords: *Reflective Teaching Practice; Reflective Teaching Techniques; Reflective Teaching Challenges; Effective Teaching*

Introduction

Education enhances national, socio-economic, personal, and organizational development (Habte, 2014). High-quality education is crucial for achieving developmental goals (Meskerem, 2014), Ahmed (2013) states that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers' training. Effective teacher education is essential for improving overall educational outcomes. In Ethiopia, the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) program was developed as part of the Education and Training Policy implementation strategies, running from (2003 to 2011) for secondary school teachers. TESO emphasized professional orientations through extended practicum experiences and a reflective approach (Wondesen &

Tadesse, 2015). Since 2019, The Ministry of Education (MOE) has implemented the Post Graduate Diploma Training (PGDT) program in the curriculum. This program involves a 10-month training for trainee teachers who have completed a BA/BSc degree in subjects like English (Berhan, 2019). The PGDT program aims to help trainees acquire pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and understand learners and the teaching context. One of the mentioned courses is reflective teaching practice. Teachers employ a variety of instructional methods and strategies as part of their daily responsibilities. The experiences of these educators (Ambady, 2018) are closely linked to reflective teaching and encompass techniques such as self-observation, self-analysis, self-evaluation, peer observation, and discussions, among others. They may carry out different teaching methods and strategies to teach and learn since it is teachers' day-to-day activity. These teachers' experiences (Ambady, 2018) connect to reflective teaching and its techniques such as self-observation, self-analysis, self-evaluation, peer observation, discussion, and others.

Reflective teaching is a prevalent approach in foreign and second language teacher training, encompassing various interpretations across contexts. It involves teachers critically analyzing their classroom actions to identify areas for improvement (Nodoushan, 2015). Reflection allows teachers to reconsider past experiences and plan future actions, contributing to their professional growth (Sultan, 2013). Leila and Kobra (2017) note that reflective teaching enhances teachers' understanding of their practices and promotes quality improvements, fostering professionalism. Local studies, such as those by Wondesen & Tadesse (2015) and Desta, Dereje & Gemechise (2017), demonstrate that reflection helps teachers better grasp their classroom environments and prioritize student learning.

Meanwhile, the English language is currently taught as a major foreign language at all levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary) throughout Ethiopia. It is also used as a media language by many organizations. According to Wubalem & Sarangi (2020) and Amlaku (2013), English language proficiency is a prerequisite for many jobs and higher education opportunities in Ethiopia and globally. Consequently, the Ministry of Education (MOE), in collaboration with other stakeholders, has worked to improve English teachers' performance and proficiency through various projects, such as the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) and English Language Improvement Centers (ELIC). These efforts aim to ensure teachers' effectiveness in teaching English. However, many scholars have raised concerns about the current status of language teaching and students' proficiency levels.

EFL teachers have various tools and techniques for engaging in reflective teaching practices. Richards & Lockhart (1996), six techniques can be used to examine teaching English as a Second Language: journals, lesson reports, surveys, audio/video recordings, observation tasks, and action research. Although technology like the internet and social media can enhance these practices, accessibility issues in Ethiopia may limit their use (Birehan, 2019). Effective and easily implementable reflective practices encompass journal writing, lesson demonstrations, audio-visual recordings, peer observations, group discussions, and participation in conferences and workshops. Similarly, Fatemiour (2009, 2013) recommends teacher's diary, peer observation, audio recordings, and student feedback to gather data in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language

The theoretical framework of this study lies in three key theories: Dewey's Reflective Thinking Theory, which highlights the importance of connecting new knowledge to past experiences; Schön's Theory, which emphasizes the value of reflection both during and after teaching to improve reflective practice²; and Mezirow's Theory, which focuses on the transformative power of reflective thinking by challenging existing assumptions³. Together, these theories argue that reflective thinking is essential for improving teaching and learning by analyzing experiences, questioning assumptions, and reshaping perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

The research examines how teachers' teaching strategies influence student learning, emphasizing that English teachers often neglect to evaluate their practices through self-reflection, peer observations, or feedback from students. They do not collect data regarding students' learning preferences, and while supervision is conducted biannually, the focus is primarily on teacher behavior, while issues related to subject-specific evaluation remain unaddressed (Tadesse, 2013).

This lack of effective teaching has led to parental dissatisfaction in Ethiopia, where students, despite completing secondary school, show low proficiency in language skills. Amlaku (2010) demonstrates his concerns on graduates lacking the essential communicative competencies. Moreover, Dereje (2014) emphasizes that high school EFL teachers do not utilize their knowledge or skills effectively and miss opportunities for reflection and problem-solving.

Moreover, there was a need to explore English teachers at Bishoftu Town secondary schools regarding what kinds of reflective techniques they used and what challenges they faced. Understanding the techniques used, and the challenges encountered by English teachers can help identify best practices that can be shared across schools and can inform the development of training programs for teachers. It is, therefore, important to investigate techniques, challenges and implementation of reflective teaching in Bishoftu Town secondary schools.

The study titled “Exploring Secondary School English Teachers’ Reflective Teaching Practice Techniques and Challenges” provides valuable insights into the reflective practices of secondary school English teachers, focusing on the techniques they use and the challenges they face. The study suggests that supervisors and policymakers adopt a bottom-up supervision approach to foster dialogue among teachers, encouraging them to share and discuss their classroom experiences. This understanding is crucial for identifying and disseminating best practices across educational institutions and for designing targeted training programs for teachers. Ultimately, the study aims to enhance teaching effectiveness and improve learning outcomes in English language education.

According to the researcher’s observations, a significant barrier to effective language teaching and learning is the dominance of teachers during class, which remains an uncontrollable issue. Traditional pedagogical approaches that emphasize grammar and vocabulary can hinder students' overall language acquisition. Some students adopt a fixed mindset, believing they cannot make significant improvements in their English skills. Furthermore, many English teachers neglect self and peer evaluations, missing critical opportunities to evaluate and enhance their teaching methods. Despite having years of experience, this experience does not necessarily lead to improved teaching effectiveness without engaging in reflective practices.

The Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do secondary school English language teachers apply reflective teaching practices in Bishoftu town?
2. Which reflective teaching techniques do English teachers use in Bishoftu secondary schools when engaging in reflective teaching?
3. What challenges do English teachers in Bishoftu Town secondary schools face when engaging in reflective teaching?

Study Site and Research Methodology

Study Site

The study was conducted in Bishoftu Town, located in the Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia, East Africa. It included six secondary schools in Bishoftu Town, with the respondents being English teachers from these schools. The research investigated the practices, techniques, and challenges of reflective teaching in this educational setting.

Research Method

This study employed a descriptive survey design that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Privitera (2019) indicates that a mixed-methods approach emphasizes the collection, analysis, and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study or across multiple studies. A descriptive study is a plan that includes an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to the final analysis of data in the study (Creswell, 2014). Combining the two types of data means the researcher benefits from both the detailed, contextualized insights of qualitative data and the generalizable, externally valid insights of quantitative data. The data were gathered at a specific point in time, providing a snapshot of a particular group of people. Chosen method yields accurate, cost-effective, relevancy for various types of researches. Therefore, the design made it possible to investigate the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of English teachers in secondary schools.

Sources of Data, Sampling and Techniques

Sources of Data

The data source for this study was primary data, which involves directly collecting raw data from English language teachers in secondary schools in Bishoftu Town. Two sampling techniques were utilized: comprehensive sampling and purposeful sampling. The first data-gathering instrument used to be questionnaires for English Teachers (ETs), and the sampling technique was comprehensive, whereas the second was semi-structured interviews using purposeful sampling for English Department Heads (EDHS).

Comprehensive (Census) Sampling

The technique obtains data from individuals experiencing every possible condition or subgroup defined within the population. Comprehensive sampling is good if the research is not experimental (Gray, 2004). It involved gathering data from all English language teachers at Bishoftu Town Secondary School. 43 English teachers were conducted in the questionnaires. The reason for selecting this technique is that it is based on choosing individuals with similar characteristics (one department). English teachers have similar characteristics except for gender and service years.

Table 1: Description of sampled respondents for survey questionnaires

No.	Name of Secondary School in Bishoftu Town	Category of respondents	
		English Teachers No.	Percent (%)
1	Chelekleka	2	4.6
2	Model	12	25
3	Sedena	10	21.7
4	Bishoftu	9	23
5	Keta	4	9.2
6	Kurkura	6	12.5
	Total	43	100%

Source: Survey data

Purposeful Sampling

Privetria (2019) defines it as “Purposeful Sampling is used when the researcher needs specific characteristics to be represented in the sample (p. 242). It obtains an in-depth understanding of the central phenomena. Interviews were done by six department heads of English who served at six secondary schools. English Department Heads (EDHs) are both teachers and department leaders. They can sound like two main roles. The rationales behind the choice of purposeful technique are its extensive application in both qualitative and quantitative research, information richness, and limited resources (Patton, 2002).

Table 2. Information about English Department Heads (EDHs) for Interview

No.	Interviewees (English department Heads)	Qualification	Service Years
1	EDH 1	TEFL MA	12
2	EDH2	TEFL MA	13
3	EDH3	TEFL MA	34
4	EDH4	TEFL MA	10
5	EDH5	TEFL MA	20
6	EDH6	TEFL MA	32

Source: Interview Data

Data Gathering Instruments

Data-gathering instruments are a mixed approach (quantitative-qualitative). Mixed data gathering is an inquiry based on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides a more complete understanding of research.

Questionnaire Survey

Questionnaires are a straightforward task for an investigation to answer the research question. Privitera (2019) and Farell (2016) are compiled in numerical form and subsequently examined. A closed-ended, five-point Likert scale was used for this study. The reason why questionnaires were conducted, for uniform measurements, reliability, easily quantified and analyzed. The source of questionnaires was built on research objectives and adapted from a literature review, particularly by Richardson & Charlotte (1996). The survey used a 5point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

The Strongest favorable response is 5, while the strongest unfavorable response is 1 Alston and Miller (2002)

Table 3. Likret Scale value allocation and interpretation

Likert Scale	Value Allocation	Interpretation
1	1 - 1.49	Strongly disagree
2	1.50 - 2.49	Disagree
3	2.50 – 3.49	Neutral
4	3.50 – 4.49	Agree
5	4.50 – 5.00	Strongly agree

Source: Likret Scale value allocation and interpretation by Alston and Miller (2002).

Semi-Structured Interview

As stated by Privitera (2019), an interview is a type of survey where questions are delivered in a face-to face encounter, it is a series of questions presented to a respondent, with responses given verbally. She argues that a properly conducted semi-structured interview can obtain more in depth information than a questionnaire because the interviewer can ask follow up and flexible questions based on the

interviewee's responses, making respondents feel free to voice their views. This study conducted semi structured interviews with heads of English departments in Bishoftu Town secondary schools to explore their perspectives on reflective teaching practices, techniques, and challenges. The interview protocol was adapted from Artamonova (2017), and questions were sourced from Richardson & Charlotte (1996).

Method of Data Analysis

As the study utilized a mixed-methods research approach, the required data for the study were collected: first, quantitative data, followed by qualitative data. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data were examined using a variety of methods.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data (questionnaires) were numerically analyzed deductively. Concerning the data from the questionnaires, a quantitative data analysis approach was applied as follows: First, the accuracy and completeness of the responses provided for each question in the questionnaire were checked and cross-checked. Next, correctly filled-out surveys were coded to help with computer reading and data entry. Then, using the SPSS version 20 for Windows, was applied for data management.

Additionally, the validity and reliability of the variables were assessed through the chi-square (χ^2) test. This statistical technique is employed to evaluate the presence of a significant relationship between categorical variables. It aims to determine whether the observed frequencies in the dataset significantly deviate from the expected frequencies.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Next, the one-on-one, semi-structured interview was analyzed inductively through meaningful interpretation. First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded EDH1 to EDH6 to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. Then, all the transcripts were read and re-read rigorously to understand the way the English Department Heads (EDHs) described and thought about reflective teaching. In this way, relevant statements were extracted from the transcripts. Next, the selected statements were pooled together to constitute a range of categories or themes that represented the conceptions of reflective teaching practice, techniques, and challenges held by the respondents. This process was repeated until the final sets of categories were established.

Finally, both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to explore and analyze the practice, techniques, and challenges of reflective teaching by English teachers and department head in six secondary schools in Bishoftu Town.

Result and Finding

The purpose of this study was to examine the reflective teaching practices, techniques, and challenges faced by English teachers in Bishoftu Town Secondary Schools. The findings were presented according to the research questions, with statistical data analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20. All 43 distributed questionnaires were completed, resulting in a 100% response rate. Frequencies, means, and percentages were calculated for analysis, while Chi-square (χ^2) tests were employed to assess the validity and reliability of the variables by examining relationships between categorical data. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed inductively. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the reflective teaching practices of secondary school English teachers in Bishoftu Town.

Research Question One: English Teachers Implementing Reflective Teaching

Table 4, item 1, examined whether English teachers had completed a course titled "Teachers as Reflective Practitioners." The mean score of 2.30 indicates a general disagreement with the notion that they had taken such a course, as per Alston and Miller (2002). Specifically, 32.6% of respondents disagreed, and 37.2% strongly disagreed, indicating that the majority had not participated in the reflective teaching course during the Post Graduate Diploma Training (PGDT) program. Only 7% responded neutrally, while 14% agreed and 9.3% strongly agreed.

During semi-structured interviews, English Department Heads (EDHs) noted that only graduates from the PGDT program after 2011/12 had taken the course, while earlier graduates had not. One respondent with 13 years of experience mentioned, "I attended the course and gained some knowledge, but I did not keep up with developments, and the material has faded from my memory." Another interviewee with over 20 years of experience stated, "I have a vague recollection of Reflective Teaching from a course I took long ago, but it has since vanished." Overall, these insights suggest a significant gap in reflective teaching training among English teachers.

Table 4, Item 2, requests English teachers' awareness of reflective teaching under the Ethiopian curriculum. The respondents indicated that reflective teaching is one of the developmental parts of the Ethiopian curriculum. The mean result of reflective teaching endorsed in the curriculum is $M = 3.29$, which lies between agree and disagree. As a result of the semi-structured interview used for item 2, all interviewees (EDHS) were aware that reflective teaching was part of the Ethiopian curriculum.

Moreover, Table 4, Item 5, explores classroom interaction such as Teacher Talk Time (TTT), Student Talk Time (STT), Student-Student Interaction (SSI) and Teacher Student Interaction (TSI) to create balance in language classrooms. The mean value of the respondents is 2.28, which shows disagreement. Specifically, the majority of respondents (69.7%) showed disagreement about creating a balance in classroom interaction, and one percent was neutral. But, minority respondents replied (18.6%) and (9.3%) agree and strongly agree, respectively.

One of the interviewees (EDH3) genuinely indicates as follows: "I do not bother much about students' participation. Many classes were missed due to meetings, health problems, and other issues, so as a teacher, I focus on covering all chapters and sub-topics in the textbook ; I mostly applied to the teacher-dominated class. The issue is mostly uncontrollable. EDH1 and EDH5 said that we had inculcated the idea of a communicative approach; we had tried creating context to increase students' practicing time. Nevertheless, we couldn't succeed for many reasons. From these results, one can deduce that there is a great restriction on English teachers and students equalizing talk time in language classrooms except in some cases.

Based on Item 6, the respondents were asked to respond whether to distinguish and identify low achiever students and treating them by getting remedial action or not. More than 65.1% of those who replied that there was no special treatment and remedial action for low-performance students. But, 11.6%, 18.6 %, and 4.7 % responded neutral, agree, and strongly agree, respectively. The mean value is so 2: 30 shows that the result inclines to disagreement.

Table 4. English teachers practice of reflective teaching

Q. Items	Descriptive Variables	Likert scale										Cronbach's Alpha	Significance Level(p-value)	
		1		2		3		4		5				Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	During pre-service training , I took reflective teaching course as part of the "Teachers as Reflective Practitioners" under the Post Graduate Diploma Training (PGDT) program	14	32,6	16	37.2	3	7	6	14	4	9.3	2.3	0.75	p < 0.001
2	I am aware that Reflective Teaching is endorsed by the Ethiopian Educational Curriculum	2	4.7	11	25.6	5	16	21	48.8	4	9.3	3.29	0.78	p < 0.001
3	I ask myself what areas of my language skills I can still develop professionally	2	4.7	8	18.6	4	9.3	22	51.7	7	16.3	3.56	0.76	p < 0.001
4	Reflective teaching is incorporated into my class plan considering my experience.	16	37.2	11	25.6	3	7	13	30.2	0	0	2.56	0.77	p < 0.001
5	I encourage student participation by balancing teachers and student discussion time depending on the kind of language skills.	5	11.6	25	58.1	1	2.3	8	18.6	4	9.3	2.28	0.74	p < 0.001
6	In my reflective teaching, I distinguish and identify low achiever students and treat them by getting remedial action	13	30.2	15	34.9	5	11.6	8	18.6	2	4,7	2.3	0.79	p < 0.001
7	I collect students' regular feedback to identify differentiation of learners' learning styles of language skills and to solve learning problems	5	11.6	29	67.4	5	11.6	4	9.3	0	0	2.28	0.75	p < 0.001
8	There is a formal request and enabling environment of reflective teaching practice discussion in the department and in the institute.	13	30.2	15	31.9	5	11.6	8	18.6	2	4.7	2.35	0.78	p < 0.001
9	The English department has a formal organized group to support and implement the adoption /adaption/ of EFL reflective teaching	5	11.6	25	58.1	8	18.6	1	2.3	4	9.3	2.28	0.76	p < 0.001
10	Reflective teaching is one of the topics covered during the mentor and teacher discussion	6	14	26	60.5	3	7	5	11,6	3	7	2.37	0.77	p < 0.001
11	I believe I have self-autonomy to evaluate and analyze my EFL teaching (Classroom events).	6	14	4	9.3	9	20.9	14	32.6	10	23.3	3.42	0.74	p < 0.001

The p-values for all the items are less than 0.001, indicating that the results are statistically significant at the 0.1% level. This suggests that the questionnaire items have a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

Source: Survey data (2023)

The interviewee EDH1 expressed, "I rarely assisted low-level students"; EDH5, "I do not think. Indeed, I sometimes give the opportunity and appoint for help a few students who did not understand the lesson to encourage and discuss them". Thus, it was evident from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview responses that English teachers provided little support for students who performed poorly.

Table 4, on items 8 and 9, the mean score was 2,3, which indicated that the respondents disagreed with the presence of formal requests and enabling the environment to discuss reflective teaching practice in the school. This implies that the school (leaders) and English department heads are not concerned about reflective teaching issues.

Semi-structured interview result with respondents in the item 8 and 9 confirmed that school principals and supervisors do not have the commitment and responsibility to creating opportunities for reflective teaching. The English department heads also have no formal and non-formal group facilitating and practicing reflective teaching.

Based on the questionnaire and interview data of Research Question 1, it can be concluded that the practice of reflective teaching among secondary school English teachers in Bishoftu Town, was generally low except in certain instances, such as during supervision periods or due to personal interest.

Research Question Two: English Teachers Utilize Reflective Teaching Techniques

Table 5, question item 14, investigated whether English teachers use open-ended survey questions to collect feedback from students for self-evaluation. The results showed that a majority, 32 respondents (74.5%), disagreed with this practice, while only 8 (18.6%) agreed, and 7% remained neutral. This indicates that most teachers do not utilize feedback questions for self-assessment, with a mean value of 2.1 reflecting a strong unfavorable response.

In semi-structured interviews, one respondent expressed, "I rarely ask general questions to students to know my strengths and weaknesses in teaching, as I do not trust their ability to answer." Another interviewee noted, "Some students may submit unethical responses and write destructive comments." These insights further highlight the reluctance of teachers to engage students in feedback processes.

According to Question Item 16, the mean score of 2.35 indicates that the majority of English teachers disagreed with the notion of inviting peers to observe their teaching. Specifically, 44.2% disagreed, 20.9% strongly disagreed, 9.3% were neutral, while 20.9% agreed and 4.7% strongly agreed.

While respondents acknowledged that peer observation is an effective and important aspect of reflective teaching practices that contributes to becoming an effective teacher, they rarely implemented it due to various challenges. One respondent (EDH1) noted, "We do not consider practicing peer observation because of many challenges, and we only do it when supervision groups come." Another respondent (EDH4) remarked, "English teachers rarely engage in peer observation with a checklist. They learn a lot from each other through observation and discussion, but this activity is seldom practiced." Overall, language teachers infrequently extend invitations to their peers for observation and discussion, as indicated by the interview responses.

From Table 5, item 17, the mean score of 2.1 indicates overall disagreement among respondents regarding the use of audio-video recording materials for reflective practice. Specifically, 27.9% disagreed, and 51.2% strongly disagreed, showing that the majority do not utilize such materials, with only a small percentage reporting their use.

In interviews, one respondent (EDH2) noted, "I once tried using audio-video tools for reflective practice, but it was unsuccessful due to noise and poor recording quality." Another (EDH4) mentioned, "I rarely use my mobile recording device in class. While it helps me observe student engagement and measure talking time, the sound and video quality are significant challenges."

Overall, the findings from both the questionnaire and interviews indicate that audio-video recording is seldom used for self-evaluation, primarily due to low-quality equipment and lack of experience.

Item 19 of the questionnaire's results showed that the majority of respondents revealed that keeping a journal was not a frequent kind of reflective activity. As a result, 16.3 % and 55.8% of the respondents said they strongly agreed and agreed that they did not utilize it to reflect their teaching. Along with that, the result showed (4.7%) neutral, (20.9%) disagree, and (2.3%) strongly disagree.

One respondent emphasized the use of "personal notes" for documenting alternative teaching methods and other materials (EDH1). Another respondent, EDH3, shared that he takes notes on teaching-related issues, primarily focusing on student misbehavior rather than on teaching techniques. This indicates that his reflections are centered on student-related problems rather than classroom interactions or teaching methods. While EDH1 uses personal notes for documenting alternative teaching strategies, there is no standardized format among respondents for these notes.

Regarding Research Question Two, the study found that four common reflective teaching techniques, audio-video recording, journaling, peer observation, and open-ended survey questions, were largely underutilized by English teachers, with only a few instances of their application.

Table 5. Techniques of teacher reflective teaching implementation

Q. Items	Descriptive Variables	Likert Scale										Mean	Cronbach's Alpha	Significance Level(p-value)
		1		2		3		4		5				
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
12	Reflection on-action (reflect after classroom) is the common practice of my teaching	10	23.3	26	60.5	6	14	6	14	1	2.3	2.1	0.815	p < 0.001
13	Reflection in-action (reflect while teaching) is the common practice of my teaching	13	30.2	10	23.3	1	2,3	14	32.6	5	11.6	2.7	0.823	p < 0.001
14	I deliver open-ended survey questions to students to collect my teaching data for self-evaluation.	6	14	26	60.5	3	7	5	11.6	3	7	2.1	0.809	p < 0.001

15	My portfolio consists of my teaching day-to-day events, activities, strength and weakness	8	18.6	5	11.6	3	7	22	51.2	5	11.6	3.2	0.819	p < 0.001
16	I invite my peers (colleagues) to observe my teaching and discuss	9	20.9	19	44.2	4	9.3	9	20.9	2	4.7	2.4	0.817	p < 0.001
17	I use audio - video recording material for self-evaluation	12	27.9	22	51.2	2	4.7	6	14	1	2.3	2.1	0.811	p < 0.001
18	I keep a journal reflection to record my thoughts about teaching regularly	8	18.6	24	55.8	6	14	5	11.6	0	0	2.1	0.814	p < 0.001
19	Journal writing is my common practice of reflective activity	7	16.3	24	55.8	2	4.7	9	20.9	1	2.3	2.3	0.816	p < 0.001

The p-values for all the items are less than 0.001, indicating that the results are statistically significant at the 0.1% level. This suggests that the questionnaire items have a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

Source: Survey data (2023)

Research Question Three: English Teachers Encounter Problems While Implementing Reflective Teaching

One respondent highlighted the use of "personal notes" to document alternative teaching methods and materials (EDH1). Another respondent, EDH3, mentioned that he primarily takes notes on student misbehavior rather than teaching techniques, suggesting that his reflections focus more on student-related issues than on classroom interactions or instructional strategies. While EDH1 uses personal notes for documenting teaching strategies, there is no standardized format for these notes among the respondents.

In relation to Research Question Two, the study revealed that four common reflective teaching techniques-audio-video recording, journaling, peer observation, and open-ended survey questions-were largely underutilized by English teachers, with only a few instances of their implementation.

Table 6, item 22, also reveals the mean score was 3.5, which indicates that the absence of an organized body in the department is the bottleneck of the implementation of reflective teaching. Specifically, the majority of the respondents (46.5 %) agree and 16.3% strongly agree and concurred that they thought one of the challenges of Practicing reflective teaching is the absence/lack/ of a focal person who facilitates in the department.

Moreover, Table 6 and Item 25 rise whether pre-service training is inadequate for English teachers. The average score shows 4.0, indicating that respondents agreed that pre-service training knowledge is not enough to implement reflective teaching in EFL teaching. Specifically, (51.2%) of respondents answered that they “agree” and (32.6%) “Strongly agree”.

The rest (11.6%), (2.3%), and 2.3 %) were neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree, respectively. Thus, the majority of respondents (83.6 %) showed agreement with the statement.

Table 6, item 26, assesses whether practical guidance is available for reflective teaching. The mean score of 3.7 indicates that respondents perceive time as a significant barrier to implementing reflective teaching, with 60.5% agreeing and 16.3% strongly agreeing with this statement. Only a small percentage (9.3% neutral, 9.3% disagree, and 4.7% strongly disagree) indicated otherwise. Additionally, 76.8% of respondents acknowledged that a lack of guidance materials is a major challenge in practicing reflective teaching in EFL secondary schools.

Table 6. Obstacles to the practice of reflective teaching

Item	Descriptive Variables	Likert Scale										Mean	Cranach's Alpha	Significance Level (p-value)
		1		2		3		4		5				
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
20	I can evaluate my own teaching practice without schedule.	2	4.7	8	18.6	4	9.3	23	53.5	6	14	3.5	0.824	p < 0.001
21	I prefer to just think about my lessons without having to write down comments	13	30.2	2	4.7	1	2.3	19	44.2	8	18.6	3.5	0.827	p < 0.001
22	Lack of initiated and organized body in the department is one of the hindrance of implementation of reflective teaching	7	16.3	20	46.5	4	9.3	11	25.6	1	2.3	3.5	0.818	p < 0.001
23	I am confused when I implement reflective teaching	12	27.9	20	46.5	0	0	9	20.9	2	4.7	2.2	0.812	p < 0.001
24	It is not easy to find comments about reflection on a regular basis due to time scarcity	3	7	3	7	7	16.3	19	44.2	11	25.6	3.9	0.828	p < 0.001
25	Pre-service knowledge is not enough to implement reflective teaching in EFL teaching	2	4.7	4	9.3	4	9.3	26	60.5	7	16.3	3.7	0.821	p < 0.001
26	I use reflective teaching guidance for implementation..	1	2.3	1	2.3	5	11.6	22	51.2	14	32.6	4	0.825	p < 0.001

The p-values for all the items are less than 0.001, indicating that the results are statistically significant at the 0.1% level. This suggests that the questionnaire items have a high level of internal consistency and reliability

Source: Survey data

From the questionnaire and interview data related to Research Question Three, it was concluded that secondary school English teachers in Bishoftu Town face multiple challenges in implementing reflective teaching. Key issues identified include inadequate training, insufficient support from educational institutions, reluctance among educators, and a lack of clear implementation guidelines. These barriers significantly impede the effective practice of reflective teaching.

Discussion

Introduction

This study seeks to explore the reflective teaching practices, techniques, and challenges of English language teachers' attitudes at Bishoftu Town secondary schools. By providing insights into how teachers engage in reflective teaching, what techniques they use, and what challenges they face, the study aims to contribute to the development endeavors of interventions in improving English language teaching and learning outcomes. To seek answers for research questions, qualitative and quantitative data sources were utilized and the finding results were presented in the preceding section. The discussion section is broken up into three research questions as follows:

Research Question One: To What Extent Do Secondary School English Language Teachers Apply Reflective Teaching Practices in Bishoftu Town?

Research question one asks and responds to the topic of whether English teachers implement reflective teaching or not. One of the key findings of reflective teaching practice was that in most English teachers who responded, the engagement of reflective teaching is very low except in a few cases. Most English teachers are aware that the Ethiopian curriculum supports reflective teaching; nevertheless, they are still quite disconnected from the fundamental concepts and techniques of reflective teaching.

Teaching as a reflective practitioner is practically taught in Ethiopian universities as part of the PGDT program, linked with other courses. (Berhan, 2019). After completing a three- or four-year BA/BSC program in a subject like English, trainee teachers have access to a 10-month Post Graduate Developmental Training (PGDT) program. Only 8 (18.6%) of the participants in this study completed the course "Teachers as Reflective Practitioners," while the remaining 35 (81.3%) did not complete any training or courses. According to the respondents, this meant that they did not apply reflective teaching in the classroom and outside. As a result, the respondents claimed that they were unable to update their reflective teaching since the training was insufficient and inconsistent.

A prevalent misunderstanding regarding reflective teaching among some respondents is the link between reflective teaching and teacher evaluation. EDH2 and EDH3 acknowledged that the primary focus of reflective teaching often lies in highlighting each other's weaknesses while also bolstering their strengths. Nevertheless, reflective teaching practice goes far beyond mere evaluation. As noted by Paye (2020), proficient English teachers implement reflective teaching methods that address the varied learning preferences and needs of their students, enabling them to develop creative and adaptable lesson plans. Furthermore, by employing open-ended survey questions, English teachers can effectively gather insights into their students' learning preferences.

Various literature reviews indicate that the English teaching method necessitates adaptable materials and diverse classroom interaction strategies (Nodoushan, 2015). Most respondents in the survey recognized that teacher dominance is a significant issue in English classroom teaching. Additionally, they admitted to giving insufficient attention to the needs of low-performing students. These issues represent some of the challenges teachers face in facilitating student learning. Noprianto (2019) and Mathew (2012) suggest that EFL teachers should create standardized evaluative questions to evaluate their instructional practices. This approach allows them to identify areas needing improvement, formulate strategies, and

assess the effectiveness of those strategies. Richards and Lockhart (1996) note that reflective teaching may not have a precise definition; instead, it includes various activities such as participating in workshops, engaging with pertinent literature, and utilizing methods like audio-video recordings, peer observations, self-evaluations, open-ended surveys, and journaling.

However, in Bishoftu Town, secondary school English teachers report a low engagement with reflective teaching techniques. Tadesse (2013) found similar results at Fassilo Secondary School, indicating that EFL teachers lack adequate exposure and training to become reflective practitioners. Additionally, a study by Desta et al. (2017) revealed that teachers in the Southwest Cluster Zones of Oromia Regional State have a limited understanding of reflective teaching practices, with some teachers entirely unaware of what reflective teaching involves.

Wondesen and Tadesse (2015) assessed the reflective teaching practices of secondary school teachers in North and South Gondar Zones. The study finding is contrasted with the current study. This study revealed that most high school teachers have a good practice of reflective thinking process and practice which was manifested in different activities of the teachers. In contrast to the current study, Li and Li (2019) used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and job satisfaction. The study found that EFL teachers who practice reflective teaching are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction.

Research Question Two: Which Reflective Teaching Techniques do English Teachers Use in Bishoftu Secondary Schools When Engaging in Reflective Teaching?

As stated in the previous section, RQ 2 aimed to investigate the English teachers' experience in what kind of reflecting techniques were utilized. The majority of English teachers (73%) indicated that they had never used any of the four previously recommended reflective techniques: journal writing, peer observation, audio-video recording, and student feedback.

The teachers invite their colleagues to observe their class and document the session. During the observation, teachers may use some general checklists for reflective strategy. Inal and Sengul (2016), the observer and the observed teachers argumentation and discussion are effective in reconstructing English teachers methods and identifying areas for improvement. The respondents urged that they seldom implemented peer observation when the supervision groups inspired them.

Students' feedback serves as a valuable tool for understanding learners' opinions and perceptions regarding the teaching process. According to Mathew et al. (2017), teachers can gather this information through direct questions and questionnaires. However, the study found that 80% of respondents ignored student feedback in their teaching evaluations, with many students unable to complete feedback forms or providing non-ethical responses.

Audio-visual recordings of lessons are considered beneficial for reflective teaching, as they allow teachers to observe their behaviors and classroom activities. Yet, over 80% of respondents reported never using this method, citing poor quality recording materials as a barrier.

Journal writing can also facilitate reflection, allowing teachers to document classroom events, emotions, and student activities. However, respondents did not utilize teaching journals but instead relied on personal notes. These personal notes differ from structured portfolios and may include brief reflections on language skills, teaching methods, and student behavior. While personal notes are recognized as a traditional method of reflection (Ashraf, Samir & Yazdi, 2016), they lack a standardized format and vary significantly among teachers.

The findings of this study align with those of Tosriadi et al. (2018), which highlighted that in-service English teachers in Indonesia also underutilized reflective teaching tools such as journals, peer observation, and audio/video recordings. Similarly, Fatempiour (2013) identified effective reflective teaching tools in ESL classrooms, but the current study reveals that secondary school English teachers in Bishoftu Town have not fully embraced these techniques. Notably, there has been no prior research on the use of these reflective teaching methods in Ethiopia.

To this end, according to the interviews and questionnaire responses of RQ2, Bishoftu Town secondary school English teachers had little interest in conducting open-ended surveys to obtain feedback, engaging in peer observation between observers and observed, keeping journal writing and recording their teaching about teaching.

Research Question Three: What Challenges do English Teachers in Bishoftu Town Secondary Schools Face When Engaging in Reflective Teaching?

The third research question investigated the difficulties English teachers have while implementing reflective teaching. The largest obstacle that respondents face is a lack of knowledge, expertise, and experience in the area of reflective teaching, according to Table 3, items 22 and 25 of the survey. Another problem of implementing reflective teaching is related to the limitation of institutional support. The institution, educators, supervisors, department heads are reluctant to encourage teachers and to prepare and conduct tailor-made training by inviting scholars about reflective teaching. The legality of reflective teaching has been endorsed in the Ethiopian curriculum. Some English teachers took the course during the PGDT program many years ago. They were unable to attend training about reflective teaching. The majority of English teachers never took the course. Furthermore, there are no clear guidelines for how reflective teaching is implemented; what techniques are used; and how challenges are faced.

Partially similar to this finding, Desta et. al. (2017) studied difficulties of reflective teaching in second-cycle primary schools (5-8) for English teachers in the Southwest Cluster Zones of Oromia Regional State. The findings of this study, some domains such as lack of prior experience, are similar difficulties to Bishoftu Town secondary school English teachers. A different finding from the current study was investigated by Artamonova (2017): the experiences of teachers in one NIS school in Kazakhstan. He found out in his study that the key difficulties of teachers in their reflective teaching are lack of time and fear of introducing something new. English teachers may encounter resistance from school administrators and peers when practicing (advocating) for reflective education. The Alshahrani and Alharbi (2020) study is also similar problem of this study. Moreover, lack of adequate training, absence of implementation guidelines, and educators' reluctance are the major challenges to the implementation of reflective teaching in Bishoftu Town secondary school English teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices, techniques, and challenges of reflective teaching. In this study, a pragmatism paradigm was used. A survey design and a mixed method were employed. The data collection tools were a questionnaire and an interview. The respondents were English language teachers in Bishoftu Town secondary schools. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics (mean and percentile), and the result finding and conclusion were made based on the findings of the study.

Based on the above findings and discussion, some conclusions are drawn. First, reflective teaching is endorsed in the Ethiopian curriculum; the course has been given to pre-service teachers under

the PGDT program at the university. Conducting reflective teaching is crucial for English teachers. Research has shown that reflective teaching leads teachers to be professional; it enhances students' results which direct positive learning outcomes; teachers take into account the different learning preferences and needs of each student, and they design fresh and adaptable lessons based on these considerations. However, the practice of reflective teaching at Bishoftu Town secondary school English teachers implemented at a very low level.

Through reflective teaching techniques, teachers can evaluate their classroom performance and events by revisiting their action to identify the gap for immediate or future solution; reflective teaching techniques point out classroom events to avoid a teacher-dominated classroom, which is an unacceptable way of teaching the language. Research shows the four reflective teaching techniques (peer observation, student feedback, journal writing, audio–video recording) are available and common techniques for English teachers Berehan (2019). Through engaging reflective teaching techniques, reflective English teachers identify the gap and adjust the appropriate methods and techniques of English language. However, Bishoftu Town secondary school English teachers had little interest in conducting open-ended surveys to obtain feedback; engaging in peer observation between observers and observed; keeping a journal and recording their teaching to solve the problem.

A major obstacle to the implementation of reflective teaching is the lack of adequate experience, training, and comprehension in the area. Additionally, the absence of institutional support presents another challenge to the successful application of reflective teaching methods. Furthermore, the absence of well-defined guidelines constitutes another significant problem.

Recommendation

It is essential for organizations, educators, administrators, and department leaders to offer support to teachers by facilitating specialized training sessions led by experts in reflective teaching. Besides, clear guidelines or frameworks should be prepared for teachers use implementation of reflective teaching practices

Declaration

Declaration of Computing Interest: The authors declare that we have no known competing interest that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

CreDiT Authorship Taxonomy: Samson Bekele: Formal investigation, writing-original draft and; analysis Abiy Yizaw: Conceptualization and Methodology, Anegagregn Gashaw: Writing Review, Editing and Supervision:

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