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Exploring English as a Foreign Language High School Teachers' Perceptions of Reflective Teaching Strategies in Language Teaching

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Abstract: This study aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions of reflective teaching strategies in their teaching practice and the barriers that hinder the implementation of reflective teaching strategies. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained by using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study took place in the context of high schools in most of the provinces in the Mekong Delta. The respondents involved in this research were fifty English as a foreign language (EFL) high-school teachers. The results revealed that most teachers have positive perceptions of the significance of reflective teaching strategies in their teaching. At the same time, the participants found barriers preventing them from implementing reflective teaching strategies in their language teaching such as lack of awareness of reflective teaching strategies, time or workload limitations as well as some obstacles related to the application of peer observation as a strategy of the reflective process. Finally, accordingly, the findings gained from two types of research tools, some pedagogical implications, and research suggestions on the effectiveness of EFL teachers' application of self-reflection strategies in the teaching-learning process were proposed in the study.

Keywords: *High school, reflective teaching, self-reflection, teacher development.*

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Introduction

Nowadays, English has become a popular language in many aspects of human life such as communication, creating, and developing business relationships among diverse countries in the current economic growth (Pinner, 2016). Indeed, the requirements for the improvement of English quality have been significantly noticed in Vietnam, accordingly, a good English background will support Vietnamese young laborers to have more golden opportunities to find a job with well-paid income in reality (Nguyen, 2017). The value of English in today's world has been recognized by the Government of Vietnam as well as the Ministry of Education and Training. As a result, English has been a compulsory subject in the Vietnamese educational system from primary school to the high school level. In other words, the Prime Minister enacted Decision – Number 1400 “Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Formal Education System in the Period 2008 -2020” to improve the quality of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in the national education system (Vietnamese Government, 2008). From this Decision, the National Foreign Language Project was implemented to improve the English teaching skills of foreign language teachers. As highlighted in the Project, it is essential to enhance the quality of English teaching and learning in a high school context. In particular, teaching and learning English creates favorable conditions for students to have many opportunities to develop their English ability to achieve level 3 out of 6 levels of the Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam, equivalent to level B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) (Ministry of Education and Training, 2014). To gain such expectations, good academic results with which students can use the language becomes a primary concern in teaching English as a foreign language. To make progress in teaching English as a foreign language, teachers need to constantly develop their professionalism so that they can successfully improve the quality of their teaching.

To accomplish the above-mentioned goals, it is possible to mention the value of reflective teaching with many values in the field of education, which has been proven in many studies (Cornford, 2002). Reflective teaching brings benefits not only to pre-service teachers but also to in-service teachers in their teaching practices (Pacheco, 2011). Pandey (2013) highlighted that reflective teaching enables English language teachers to develop their professionalism. Through

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reflective teaching, teachers have changed their attitudes in teaching and raised awareness about professional development (Xu, 2009). According to a study by Liu and Zhang (2014), reflective teaching is an important foundation for teachers' professional development. Moreover, Li and Ye (2016) assessed that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers must practice reflective teaching as an effective method to improve EFL teaching performance if they want to improve the quality of their teaching. To successfully implement reflective teaching in the field of foreign language teaching, teachers should have a deep understanding of many common reflective teaching tools/ strategies such as teacher diary, student feedback, peer observation, and video-audio recording to stimulate their teaching-learning process (Fatemipour, 2013; Tice, 2004). As mentioned above, reflective teaching is considered to help language teachers improve their teaching performance effectively. Particularly, the research conducted by Nguyen et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between reflective teaching and professional development at universities. They stated that reflection was a great opportunity for teachers to effectively reflect on their teaching and learning experiences. Due to the reflective teaching process, teachers can make appropriate changes in their teaching practices. However, teachers' awareness of the need for reflective teaching, the reflective teaching strategies used, and the difficulties in applying the strategies to teaching practice in the context of high schools in Vietnam have not been studied by many researchers.

For the above reasons, the study aims at investigating teachers' perceptions of the roles of reflective teaching strategies as well as some challenges they encounter when realizing these strategies in their teaching contexts.

Literature review

What is Reflective Teaching?

Several definitions of reflective teaching have appeared in a number of studies related to teacher education. According to Tice (2004), reflective teaching is the process to examine what the teacher does in class, recalling the purposes of activities, and thinking about their effectiveness as a process of self-observation and self-evaluation of the teaching practice. Meanwhile, Fatemipour (2009, p.2) defined reflective teaching as "an outstanding model in teacher education which has been taken into consideration by educators in foreign and second language teacher education". According to Riyanti (2021), reflective teaching was considered an activity to reflect on what has been carried out in the classroom and evaluate the process of teaching practice. Similarly, reflective teaching was viewed as a process in which teachers think about their pedagogy, self-evaluate their teaching practices, and identify areas for improvement (Afshar & Farahani, 2015). Moreover, reflective teaching is understood as teachers' solutions to the problems occurring in the class "generated from the inner self, teaching methods and teaching goals" (Li & Ye, 2016, p.1). From these mentioned definitions, reflective teaching is the process by which teachers recall their teaching practices to evaluate their effectiveness in language teaching. Reflective teaching is explained as the process by which teachers collect and analyze descriptive data by reflecting on their actions in the classrooms, which helps to show where teachers can make a change for the better in their teaching practice (Salmani Nodoushan, 2011).

The Roles of Reflective Teaching Strategies in Language Teaching

The application of reflective teaching strategies offers EFL teachers a number of benefits in teaching English. First, reflection strategies are effective tools for teachers' professional development (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2014; Clarke, 2004; Farrell, 2008; Ferdowsi & Afghari, 2015; Liu & Zhang, 2014; Núñez Pardo & Téllez Téllez, 2015; Olaya Mesa, 2018; Pacheco, 2011; Xu, 2009). It can be said that an important foundation of teachers' professional development is reflective teaching strategies, especially for foreign language teachers (Liu & Zhang, 2014). The researchers studied that reflective teaching strategies enable teachers to not only achieve transformation in teaching but also develop teaching and research skills. Farrell (2008) found that teachers were able to deepen their understanding of their teaching and assess their professional growth when they engaged in reflective strategies. In support of this function, Pandey (2013) proved that the reflective process brought more benefits to teaching skills, and changed teaching practice as well as was one of the paths leading to the professional development of English language teachers. Second, through reflective teaching strategies, teachers can address situations they encounter in the classroom along with methodological improvements in their teaching practice. To assist with classroom problem solving and different teaching methods, Ferdowsi and Afghari (2015) explored reflective strategies as a useful tool to help teachers realize their own problems and find the right solutions. Second, what teachers improve on their method in their teaching practice by changing the appropriate techniques or methods in the teaching method was recognized as the effectiveness of the use of reflective teaching strategies (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2014). Third, reflective teaching strategies were proved to encourage teachers not only to comprehend their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching practice but also to assess students' achievements (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2014; Liu & Zhang, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2015; Orakci, 2021; Pacheco, 2011). Teachers who discover and reflect on their own teaching through reflective teaching can self-assess their teaching effectiveness and "take efforts to exploit resources, learn from other's strong points to offset their weaknesses" (Liu & Zhang, 2014, p.2400). To support this benefit, Ferdowsi and Afghari (2015) found that strategies of reflective teaching are valuable teaching approaches for collecting huge data from the classrooms as well as their teaching practice, from which they can self-assess their teaching to find out their strengths and weaknesses.

Common Reflective Teaching Strategies

Many researchers have suggested several commonly used approaches as useful for teachers' reflective teaching strategies. According to Richards (1991), some procedures for reflective strategies in English language teaching as a foreign language teaching include peer observation, written accounts of experiences, self-reports, autobiographies, journal writing, collaborative diary keeping, and recording lessons. These procedures are familiar with those of some researchers such as Liu and Zhang (2014), Li and Ye (2016), Mathew et al. (2017), Pacheco (2011), and Xu (2009). Likewise, many researchers offer some suggestions about other reflective teaching approaches including teacher diaries, student feedback, surveys and questionnaires, action research, teaching blogs, and micro-teaching (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2014; Fatemipour, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2015; Olaya Mesa, 2018; Orakci, 2021). Otherwise, other researchers would like to call the ways to reflect on the teaching practice with the label strategies like Ma and Ren (2011), Liu and Zhang (2014), Li and Ye (2016). Regardless of the term tool or strategy used, these procedures have been shown to benefit teachers to be reflective teachers in their teaching process.

Although many common reflective teaching strategies have been used for self-reflection on teaching practice, several investigations into reflective teaching strategies have shown that diaries, teacher feedback, student feedback, peer observations, and audio recordings are common helpful strategies used by foreign language teachers to effectively reflect on themselves in teaching English (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2014; Fatemipour, 2013; Orakci, 2021). Therefore, the researchers decided to apply these mentioned common strategies as the research framework in this study.

Methodology

Research Design and Research Questions

A mixed-method study was conducted to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the value of reflective teaching strategies in teaching language and the barriers that have influenced the implementation of reflective teaching strategies in high school contexts. To gain the research aims, this study finds out the answers to the following questions:

- What are EFL school teachers' perceptions of the roles of reflective teaching strategies in their teaching context?
- What are the barriers that hinder the implementation of reflective teaching strategies?

Participants

Fifty EFL teachers from seven provinces in the Mekong Delta were invited to participate in the study of which 5 teachers agreed to participate in interviews. The teachers were chosen based on convenient sampling by which they were willing to take part in the research. In other words, the researchers determined the purposes of the study or what to collect, then looked for participants who were willing to provide information to the researchers (Etikan et al., 2016).

Research Tools and Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods under the instruments of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were equally employed to collect the data for the study. First, the researchers designed the questionnaire to explore teachers' perceptions of the importance of reflective teaching strategies, and barriers encountered by high school EFL teachers when implementing reflective teaching strategies. Second, the interviews were conducted not only to reinforce the reliability and validity of the data gained from the questionnaire but also to illuminate several factors which were not discovered in the quantitative instrument.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS software version 20.0. The data from the open-ended question after each cluster included in the questionnaire together with the data from the interviews were collected and analyzed qualitatively according to Nguyen's (2018) model of the unfolding matrix.

The extracts from the collected qualitative data were coded randomly among participants. Table 1 gives some examples of the coding method for categories.

Table 1. Examples of Coding Method

Code	Extracts	Coded for
R-T3PD135	<i>"Based on my teaching experiences, I find that a teaching method cannot apply with different students and different classes"</i>	T3 = Teacher 3 R = Role PD = Professional development 135 = Line
R-T1SP55	<i>"Sometimes students feel bored, they do not want to be questioned. So I reflect on my teaching to find the reasons why students do not understand lessons. I consider if they don't have sufficient knowledge or my methods make them unintelligible."</i>	T1 = Teacher 1 R = Role SP = Students' problems 55 = Line
R-T4SW80	<i>"When I think about my teaching, I can realize my strengths to better as well as my weaknesses to improve"</i>	T4 = Teacher 4 R = Role SW = Strengths and weaknesses 80 = Line
R-T5CS40	<i>"My teaching experiences help me deal with the problems in the class."</i>	T5 = Teacher 5 R = Role CS = Classroom solutions 40 = Line
R-T4OT102	<i>"Self-reflecting on my teaching helps me communicate with students effectively."</i>	T4 = Teacher 5 R = Role OT = Others 102 = Line
B-T2SS79	<i>"When there are a few people, students can honestly contribute their opinions to my teaching. I can get many things instead of asking them to give their feedback in the class."</i>	T2 = Teacher 2 B = Barrier SS = Students' support 79 = Line
B-T3TW144	<i>"Working as a homeroom teacher affects the teaching practice, it occupies more time than the teaching career"</i>	T3 = Teacher 3 B = Barrier TW = Time or workload limitation 144 = Line
B-T5LA225	<i>"I think this concept is not familiar in Vietnam. In the educational field, I have never known the concept before. Or I am unaware of it."</i>	T5 = Teacher 5 B = Barrier LA = Lack of awareness 225 = Line
B-T2LT122	<i>"In general, my school doesn't have many modern facilities to support me."</i>	T2 = Teacher 2 B = Barrier LT = Lack of facilities 122 = Line
B-T4LM146	<i>"Now, reflective teaching strategies seem to be reduced."</i>	T4 = Teacher 4 B = Barrier LM = Lack of motivation 146 = Line
B-T3AO195	<i>"Teachers who are the same level usually do not assess each other."</i>	T3 = Teacher 3 B = Barrier AO = Others 195 = Line

As mentioned above, the qualitative data gained from the interviews were used to reinforce the quantitative data from the questionnaire. In other words, the reliability of the qualitative data in this study was assured by a careful scientific analysis using a logical thematic method of coding the data for reference to the quantitative aspect, especially categorized by a researcher from the perspective of an outsider.

The Reliability of The Questionnaire

The collected quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0. The results from the Scale Test illustrated that the reliability coefficient of the pilot and post questionnaires were reliable enough for this study to be carried out (as shown in Table 2)

Table 2. The Reliability of The Questionnaire

Administering the questionnaire	Number of participants	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)
Post questionnaire	50	.793

Findings/Results

Teachers' Perceptions of the Roles of Reflective Teaching Strategies in Their Language Teaching

Teachers' perceptions of reflective teaching strategies in their teaching context were analyzed by running the *descriptive statistics test*. The participants' responses to statements about teachers' perceptions of the significance of reflective teaching strategies were shown with the overall mean score in Table 3.

Table 3. The Mean Score of Teachers' Perceptions of The Roles of Reflective Teaching Strategies

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Teachers' perceptions of reflective teaching strategies	50	1.07	4.79	4.03	.53

The results described in Table 3 displayed that the overall mean score of teachers' perceptions of reflective teaching strategies was quite high ($M = 4.03$) and the distinction between minimum and maximum scores was .53 ($SD = .53$). A *one-sample t-test* was run to check whether the mean score of teachers' perceptions of the roles of reflective teaching strategies ($M = 4.03$; $SD = .53$) was significantly different from the test value of 4.0, a high level of agreement in the five-point Likert scales. The results indicated that no difference between the mean score ($M = 4.03$; $SD = .53$) and the test value of 4.0 was observed ($t = .419$, $df = 49$, $p = .677 > .05$). The results reported the conclusion that EFL teachers in high school contexts had a highly positive perception of the importance of reflective teaching strategies in their teaching. The following table summarized teachers' responses to each item of the research issue.

Table 4. Summary of Teachers' Responses to Each Item in The Cluster 1

Item	Strongly disagree and disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree and agree
1. Reflective teaching strategy is a process by which teachers reflect on their teaching	4.0 %	2.0 %	94 %
2. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers improve their teaching	2.0%	0 %	98 %
3. Reflective teaching is one of the effective strategies for developing teachers' professionalism	2.0 %	6.0 %	92 %
4. Reflective teaching strategies give a chance for teachers to self-evaluate their teaching	2.0 %	4.0%	94 %
5. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers realize problems in their classrooms	2.0%	4.0 %	94 %
6. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers choose appropriate teaching methods	2.0 %	6.0 %	92 %
7. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers understand beyond students' outcomes	8.0 %	30 %	62 %
8. Reflective teaching strategies create an opportunity for teachers to learn from their experiences	2.0%	4.0 %	94 %
9. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers realize their strengths and weaknesses	4.0 %	6. %	90 %
10. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers find out better solutions for situations in classrooms	4.0 %	8.0 %	88 %
11. Reflective teaching strategies help teachers create a good learning environment for students	2.0 %	18 %	80 %
12. Reflective teaching process helps teachers enhance their knowledge about professional learning	2.0 %	16 %	82 %
13. Reflective teaching is a way of improving the quality of teaching and learning	2.0 %	2.0 %	96 %
14. Reflective teaching strategies create more problems for teachers in their classrooms	74 %	16 %	8.0 %

Interestingly, all of the items about the significance of reflective teaching strategies in language teaching were highly appreciated. Particularly, most of the participants were well-aware of reflective teaching strategies to improve their teaching (98%). In other words, 74% of the teachers disagreed that they had problems if they employed reflective teaching strategies in their classrooms. The responses to items 2 and 14 indicated that reflective teaching strategies were beneficial to teachers' teaching practice.

Additionally, 94% of participants found the existence of reflective teaching strategies in language teaching, particularly item 1 "*reflective teaching strategy is a process by which teachers reflect on their teaching*". The findings were compatible with the ones gained from the interviews and showed that teachers were conscious of engaging in the self-reflecting process in language teaching and learning process. The teachers stated that:

[...] reflective teaching process mainly comes from ourselves. (R-T2NA121)

[...] reflective teaching certainly exists in the teaching practice. (R-T5NA229)

As found in Table 4, a large number of participants (92%) agreed that reflective teaching strategies helped them develop their professional life. Similarly, 92% of teachers thought that they could choose proper teaching methods for each group of students like item 6. This point was consistent with the data obtained from the interviews. The data gained from the interviews showed that all of the participants highly evaluated the necessity of reflective teaching strategies. They said that thanks to applying reflective teaching strategies in their teaching, they achieved many advantages for their professional development in general and teaching methodologies in particular. They could enhance professional knowledge and make changes to their teaching methods which were suitable for different types of students. For instance, they stated:

[...] When I teach a lesson, for example, I only focus on five grammatical points, but after teaching a class and reflecting on that lesson, I realize need to add more [...] (R-T1PD77)

[...] When I apply a new method, I find that students can acquire the lesson effectively. This means I can improve my professional knowledge. I realize this after that (R-T2PD56)

[...] Based on my teaching experiences, I find that a teaching method cannot apply to different students and different classes. (R-T3PD135)

[...] When I first entered my teaching profession, I always thought that I had to teach everything from the textbooks, but gradually I look back and I identify that there are some main points I need to explain to my students. (R-T4PD120)

Furthermore, teachers' reflective teaching on their teaching performance was considered to be an effective way to identify students' problems as well as find out the ways to deal with the problems in the classroom illustrated in items 5 and 10 with the percentages of agreement in turn 94% and 88%. This was comparable with the data obtained from the interviews. A major of participants pointed out that:

[...] Sometimes students feel bored, they do not want to be questioned. So I reflect on my teaching to find the reasons why students do not understand lessons. I consider if they do not have sufficient knowledge or my method makes them unintelligible. (R-T1SP55)

[...] When I applied new teaching methods in my teaching, after that I recalled and realize students can learn more quickly. They are interested in the lessons. They are more dynamic than before. (R-T2SP26)

[...] What makes students admire their teachers is quite important. For bad students, if teachers constrain them to learn, they can give up. Although they are not good, if they like their teachers, they will try to learn more. Generally, teaching methods and teachers' attitudes will affect the teaching quality and students. (R-T3SP238)

[...] I was rigid when I started to teach. This makes students scared and they neglect their learning. Or when they see me, they feel anxious, they forget the lessons. Gradually, I realize this, so I am friendly with them. (R-T4SP47)

[...] My teaching experiences help me deal with the problems in the class. (R-T5CS40)

Teachers who participated in the survey agreed that they were able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching outcomes through the application of reflective teaching strategies (90%). This point was consistent with the one from the interview data. Especially, teacher 4 highlighted that:

[...] When I think about my teaching, I can realize my strengths to better as well as my weaknesses to improve. (R-T4SW80)

Similar to this view, teacher 1 reported that

[...] When observing other teachers' classrooms, I can realize positive and negative points in teaching more easily. (R-T1SW134)

Simultaneously, it is interesting to explore that teachers gained some more benefits from applying reflective teaching strategies in their teaching practice. According to the findings from qualitative data, teachers could better understand teacher-student interactions and effectively engage students' attention in the classroom by getting student feedback or observing their peers. An example can be seen from teacher 4:

[...] *reflective teaching on my teaching helps me know how to communicate with students effectively.* (R-T40T102)

Teacher 5 also shared the same thing as teacher 4

[...] *There were a number of students in a class who do not pay attention to the lessons. The teacher reminded them, but the way she talked to students is both clever and humorous. It makes students realize their mistakes. I learned from her how to manage the class, how to interact with students, and how to talk to them humorously.* (R-T50T142)

Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that most participants perceived the importance and benefits of reflective teaching strategies in their language teaching including developing professionalism, realizing strengths and weaknesses as well as interacting with students effectively. Additionally, the results provided stable reasons why teachers had better reflective teaching strategies in their language teaching.

Barriers to The Implementation of Reflective Teaching Strategies

A *descriptive statistic test* was run in order to analyze the overall mean scores of the factors hindering the implementation of reflective teaching strategies in high school contexts. The results of the test was presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The Mean Scores of Barriers in The Implementation of Reflective Teaching Strategies

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Barriers to implementing reflective teaching strategies	50	1.88	4.38	3.32	.487

As can be seen in Table 5, the mean score of obstacles in the use of reflective teaching strategies was 3.32 ($M = 3.32$) and the distance between the minimum and the maximum scores was .487 ($SD = .487$). The mean score was at the average level among the five-point Likert scales. Hence, a *one-sample t-test* was conducted to check whether the mean score ($M = 3.32$) was significantly different from the test value of 3.0, the accepted level. The test indicated that a significant difference between the mean score ($M = 3.32$) and the test value of 3.0 was observed ($t = 4.63$, $df = 49$, $p = .00 < .05$). The result revealed the conclusion that the level of participants of the barriers to implementing reflective teaching strategies in their teaching was higher than 3.0, signifying a slightly high degree. The participants did not attain high perceptions of the factors impeding the implementation of the strategies in the reflective process. Table 6 summed up teachers' responses to the items of the research issue.

Table 6. Summary of Teachers' Responses to Each Item in The Cluster 3

Item	Strongly disagree and disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree and agree
1. Teachers lack encouragement to implement reflective teaching strategies in their profession	16 %	48 %	36 %
2. Teachers have the motivation to apply reflective teaching strategies in high school	10 %	42 %	48 %
3. In high schools, teachers do not have sufficient support for developing reflective teaching strategies in their language classrooms	16 %	48 %	36 %
4. Teachers do not apply reflective teaching strategies because of their workload	30 %	10 %	60 %
5. Teachers lack opportunities for devoting themselves to the job	32 %	30 %	38 %
6. High school teachers do not have adequate facilities for teaching and learning languages to practice reflective teaching strategies	26 %	26 %	48 %
7. Teachers lack understanding of reflective teaching strategies in their language teaching	16 %	30 %	54 %
8. Students' feedback is not efficiently exploited after each lesson	14 %	24 %	62 %

Table 6 highlighted that a number of participants had few barriers to implementing self-reflection strategies. For some items like 1, 2, 3, and 5, the participants expressed their neutral attitudes because they could not perceive the

difficulties in their self-reflection. Among all the factors preventing teachers from engaging in the reflective process in their teaching practice, students' support, unawareness of the reflective process, and workload limitation were common factors. The proportions of these barriers are 54%, 60%, and 62%, respectively. The results indicated that most of the respondents considered students' support, lack of awareness of the reflective process, and workload to be popular factors hindering EFL teachers' use of reflective teaching strategies. On the other hand, motivation, institution support, lack of facilities as well as lack of opportunities were not the main concerns of teachers.

In this study, besides analyzing the results of the quantitative data from the questionnaire, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed to cross-check and corroborate the obtained quantitative data. Interview data showed that teachers faced a number of obstacles that were believed to prevent the implementation of reflective strategies in their teaching. Key factors that were realized through the analysis of the interview data were students' support, unawareness of reflective teaching, and workload limitation or time limitation.

Particularly, when being asked about the factors impeding the implementation of teachers' strategies in self-reflecting, nearly all teachers suggested that students' support was one of the main factors having an impact on teachers' use of strategies. Students with whom the teacher had a good relationship were willing to contribute their ideas to the teacher's teaching. In detail, teacher 2 stated:

[...] When there are a few people, students can honestly contribute their opinions to my teaching. I can get many useful ideas instead of asking them to give their feedback in the class. (B-T2SS79)

Teacher 1 gave an example *"For example, I can sometimes talk to the students who are close to me"*. (B-T1SS218)

Similarly, teacher 4 claimed that *"The sincere students are willing to contribute, but the ones who are afraid of me do not dare."* (B-T4SS92)

At the same time, teacher 5 emphasized that students' attitudes to provide feedback should be considered.

[...] If students keep it in your heart, of course, I never know it. I also vaguely guess. If they are embarrassed to say it means there is a problem. (B-T5SS196)

Another factor that two out of five respondents rated as hindering teachers from adopting self-reflection strategies was time and workload limitations. Participants described that their self-reflection on teaching results was influenced by their work as homeroom teachers and their personal duties. Furthermore, what teachers assumed in many classrooms made their teaching reflections worse. The reasons were illustrated in teacher answers 3 and 4.

[...] Working as a homeroom teacher affects the teaching practice, it occupies more time than the teaching career. (B-T3TW144)

[...] I have no time to reflect. Very little. (B-T4TW141)

In contrast, teachers 1 and 2 reported that teachers' self-reflection was not affected by time and workload.

[...] I think time does not affect me because I spend 5 or 10 minutes reflecting upon the teaching performance. (B-T1TW253)

[...] After each lesson, I can draw from my teaching experiences without any delay in time and without any difficulty. (B-T2TW116)

In addition, the lack of awareness of how to reflect was believed to hinder the practice of reflective teaching strategies. Teachers have implemented reflective teaching strategies in their professionals; however, they were not able to understand what the strategies were and why they should apply strategies in their language teaching. Teacher 1 discussed that

[...] I have not found out yet. Maybe there are many difficulties, but I cannot realize that. (B-T1LA273)

With the same perception, teacher 5 provided that

[...] I think this concept is not familiar in Vietnam. In the educational field, I have never known the concept before. Or I am unaware of it. (B-T5LA225)

In particular, teacher 2 indicated that lack of facilities could become a barrier hindering teachers from engaging in the reflection in teaching. She said

[...] In general, my school doesn't have many modern facilities to support me.

(B-T2LT122)

Similar to this idea, teacher 4 supported that *"For example, there are knowledge students are difficult to understand, so I need to review and refer to many documents. But at that time, the documents were not enough and there was no Internet."* (B-T4LT131)

Only one teacher argued that he lacked the motivation to reflect on his teaching due to students' attitudes towards learning as well as their behavior. He declared

[...] Now, self-reflecting strategies seem to be reduced. (B-T4LM146)

[...] Generally speaking, firstly I am busy with my work. Second, the student's enthusiasm almost dropped and the students' study attitude was too bad. (B-T4LM148)

As a result of the interview data, teachers faced other obstacles when applying peer observation as a reflective teaching strategy in their teaching context. They reported that the observer's attitude towards the observation was a barrier to the implementation of the teacher's strategies in reflection. They described that peer observation was really beneficial to observers when they had a spirit of learning and sharing experiences instead of participating in observing to deal with institutional requirements. Again, they shared that some observers participated in the observations with a puzzling attitude. These reasons above have made peer observation become influentially negative. To prove this barrier, teacher 3 elaborated:

[...] For negative points, some teachers attend observations to ensure the institutional criteria or to gain achievements without getting any benefits. (B-T3A097)

In the same perception, teacher 5 supposed that:

[...] This depends on teachers' attitudes towards the discussions about their lessons. If the teachers have positive discussions about strengths and weaknesses so that the teachers who are observed can improve their teaching, it is very good. Otherwise, this has negative influences." (B-T5A0148)

Furthermore, teacher 3 also suggested that the lack of cooperation among peers was identified as difficulty in applying peer observation for self-reflection. He said that although teachers observed their colleagues, they were not willing to share their teaching experiences nor contribute to lessons after the observation. They did not interfere in professional matters. He indicated that

[...] At my school, there are some teaching movements so that the groups can participate. Teachers also take part in the movements. But sharing among them is difficult because they are afraid of interfering with other professional knowledge. If there is any need for evaluation, the teachers in each group will assess together without the participation of teachers from other groups. Sometimes, the assistant principal evaluates teaching methods. (B-T3A0187)

[...] Teachers who are at the same level usually do not assess each other. (B-T3A0195)

Teacher 5 pointed out the veracity of observations as an obstacle to peer observation. He concluded that if traditional classroom activities or situations lack honesty, observers cannot learn from the teaching experience by watching their peers. He described the situations:

[...] If the observations are not shown or ready-made scripts, the teachers observing can realize unexpected situations that are interesting, and they can learn many things. While the observations are scripts, teachers cannot learn. (B-T5A0144)

Most teachers claimed that they had no professional growth when they observed their peers due to differences in their professional knowledge. Peer observation was believed to be beneficial to teaching methods and classroom management. This was the teacher's own thinking, which inadvertently created barriers to learning from other subject teachers through self-reflection and peer observations. For instance, teacher 2 concluded that

[...] It means when teachers observe other subject teachers, they cannot develop their professional life, but they can improve their teaching methods. It is so beneficial.

(B-T2A084)

At the same point, teacher 5 indicated that

[...] I can manage the classroom and teacher-student interaction. But I think it is more helpful to observe the classroom of teachers in the same group because I can easily learn from teaching experience both in terms of teaching methods and professional development. (B-T5A0160)

In conclusion, it is consistent between the quantitative and qualitative data obtained. The results showed that the participants were aware of barriers to implementing self-reflection strategies in their teaching. They indicated that students' support, time and workload limitation, as well as lack of awareness of reflective teaching, were factors that hinder the implementation of teachers' reflective teaching strategies. Furthermore, data gained from interviews indicated that when applying peer observation as a reflective teaching strategy, teachers have encountered a number of barriers including teachers' mindsets and attitudes towards observation, lack of cooperation among colleagues, and the veracity of observations.

Discussion

Teachers' Perceptions of The Roles of Reflective Teaching Strategies in Language Teaching

Results from questionnaires and interviews showed that EFL teachers positively perceived the importance and necessity of self-reflection strategies in their teaching process. In fact, in this study, participants found that reflective teaching strategies were beneficial for them in improving their ability to teach, in particular, because they were able to continuously develop their expertise. This was compatible with Ma and Ren's (2011) research finding that reflective teaching strategies had an impact on one's professional growth. One possible reason for professional development could be the selection of appropriate teaching methods for the student's level group. In addition, through reflective teaching strategies, teachers could learn from their teaching experiences, leading to more changes in their teaching in the future. Moreover, by using reflective teaching strategies, teachers were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching performance. This point was similar to the results of Olaya Mesa's (2018) study. After self-reflecting on the teaching performance, teachers can realize what they are good at or where they need to improve in their careers. In other words, based on recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, teachers can effectively improve their teaching skills. In addition, the role of reflective teaching strategies was explored in identifying student problems as well as finding solutions in the classroom. With similar results, Ferdowsi and Afghari (2015) emphasized in their research that reflective teaching strategies are effective to assist teachers in detecting problems in the classroom as well as in dealing with them effectively. Pacheco (2011) stated that experienced teachers created more rotation in their teaching practice by following the guidelines of self-reflection, inquiry as well as critical thinking. Furthermore, the participants suggested that the involvement of teachers in the reflective process in their teaching would help them deepen their understanding of classroom management. Not only could they learn to control their own classroom, but they could also gain students' attention by observing their colleagues' classrooms. For the above reasons, it is believed that reflective teaching strategies have helped EFL teachers improve their teaching ability.

However, the benefit of reflective teaching strategies was assumed to be to support teacher instruction without the goal of promoting student outcomes. Teachers reflected on the results of their activities to assess whether their activities or the methods used were effective for improving the quality of instruction. Out of the five interviewees, only one of them set the goal of the lesson to be conducted in a student-centered manner; accordingly, all activities were applied in class to help students become active learners and better learners.

In summary, when teachers used reflective teaching strategies in their teaching practice, they gained more benefits to improve their teaching performance. In contrast, teachers implementing reflective teaching strategies did not focus on student outcomes to help students learn better.

Barriers to The Implementation of Reflective Teaching Strategies

The barriers to implementing reflective teaching strategies in language teaching, like the first question, were explored using a questionnaire and interviews. The data analysis of the questionnaire revealed that students' support, unawareness of reflective teaching, and time or workload limitation were the main factors affecting teachers' application of reflective teaching strategies in their language teaching. Similarly, interviewees found that they encountered many obstacles including getting students' feedback, lacking time, lacking awareness of self-reflection, and overworking when engaging in the self-reflecting process. In this study, the first factor that prevented teachers from using reflective teaching strategies was student support. The teachers who participated in the study clearly expressed that students who did not have a close relationship with their teachers were often worried about giving their feedback to the teachers. Sometimes, they were not interested in learning English so their feedback was not honest. Thus, it is difficult for teachers to understand more deeply what students thought about their teaching practice. This finding was consistent with research by Olaya Mesa (2018) showing that students were not thoughtful to give feedback about teachers' performance. Furthermore, inadequate awareness of self-reflection has been shown to be an impediment to the application of reflective teaching strategies. Teachers only used reflective teaching strategies when they had problems with their teaching results. In addition, they applied peer observation as a self-reflection strategy to deal with institutional requirements. This was consistent with research by Tajik and Ranjbar (2018) showing that teachers' lack of awareness about the usefulness of reflective teaching strategies makes them unable to use strategies for self-reflection. Time or workload limitations were a barrier to implementing the self-reflection strategies that participants indicated. Most teachers working in high schools had to take on many roles such as subject teachers and homeroom teachers. Interviewees described that working as a homeroom teacher is extremely time-consuming. Therefore, they could not spend all their time enhancing their teaching practice. Similarly, Orakci (2021) agreed that one of the difficulties of using reflective strategies was the time limitation. Al-Ahdal and Al-Awaid (2014) also illustrated that teachers had to face many challenges in their self-reflection and one of them was a lack of time keeping teachers busy with their lives. From the analysis of interview data, the participants identified lingering problems in the practice of reflective teaching strategies in their language teaching in the high school context

Most teachers indicated that the teacher's mindset, the teacher's attitude towards observation, the lack of collaboration among peers, and the truthfulness of the observation were believed to affect teachers' avoidance of implementing peer

observation as a reflective teaching strategy. The purpose of peer observation was to provide an opportunity for teachers to analyze and evaluate the teaching process. By observing, observers could learn other teaching methods as well as teaching skills that helped them to teach better. In addition, teachers could share their views on observational teaching so that observed teachers could improve their teaching effectiveness in the future. However, the information from the interview did not show these benefits because teachers were not willing to share and learn from other teachers.

In summary, teachers faced many barriers preventing them from implementing reflective teaching strategies including student support, lack of awareness about the role of reflective strategies in language teaching, and time or workload constraints. Some factors affecting the implementation of the strategies can be recognized as teachers' mindset, teachers' attitudes towards observation, lack of collaboration among colleagues, and observation's authenticity.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that reflective teaching strategies are considered beneficial and play an important role in improving teaching quality. The existence of self-reflection strategies in the teaching-learning process is effective for the success of English language teaching. After collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, the researchers found that teachers had a positive perception of the meaning and necessity of reflective teaching in language teaching. Through the implementation of reflective teaching strategies, teachers gain an in-depth understanding of aspects of instruction including professional development, classroom management, teacher-student interactions, and more. This helps to improve the quality of teachers' teaching. Most of the participants had a positive perception of reflective teaching strategies. Of the four effective strategies, all of them typically use peer observation, student feedback as well as teacher diaries to recall the teaching process. Moreover, in the real teaching context, sometimes teachers use other strategies to engage in reflections that effectively illustrate student achievement and teacher meetings. On the other hand, by implementing teacher strategies in the reflection process, EFL teachers are said to be able to avoid barriers. The teachers acknowledged that students' support, lack of awareness of self-reflecting strategies, and time or workload limitation were the main factors hindering the implementation of reflective teaching strategies. Additionally, the challenges like teachers' mindset, teachers' attitudes towards observation, lack of collaboration among colleagues, and observation's authenticity had an impact on the application of the reflective teaching strategies of EFL teachers in their teaching practice.

Recommendations

For English Teachers

These findings may emerge as an issue of teachers' understanding of reflective teaching and some conventional reflective teaching strategies. Therefore, there are some suggestions for English teachers. Teachers must be willing and self-aware of the reflective process in their teaching. They should keep abreast of pedagogical changes and professional development. All teachers both pre-service and in-service teachers continuously undertake reflective teaching from start to finish in teaching practice as this is believed to help them make improvements in their teaching careers. Moreover, teachers need to pay attention to choosing appropriate strategies for their reflection process as well as consider applying different reflective teaching strategies to have a comprehensive view of the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, this study was carried out to investigate reflective teaching in the field of education as the understanding basis for the reflective process. Therefore, teachers who have no practice of reflection in teaching could deliberate on the significance and the benefits of using reflective teaching in their teaching life.

For Department of Education and Training and Education Managers

Based on the findings of the study, the implications of developing reflective teaching can be drawn. First, this study investigated that the participants were not sufficiently aware of the existence of reflective teaching in their teaching practice. The fact is that at present, teachers have difficulty evaluating research papers on the field of reflection because of the lack of documents related to teaching reflection in high schools. Therefore, teachers should be equipped with a resource to teach reflexively both written and online materials.

The teacher's teaching time on the other hand must have a balance to teach effectively. Teachers utilize their time as full-time teachers while having deadlines to fulfill their teaching duties. School administrators should devote more time to English teachers to develop their teaching careers and support their language proficiency and teaching skills.

Furthermore, teachers need more opportunities to promote their reflective teaching. The findings showed that teachers lacked cooperation among their peers after observing their colleagues' classrooms. It is important to share teaching experiences and provide feedback on teaching outcomes. This enables teachers to not only update their teaching knowledge but also effectively reflect their teaching practice. Therefore, educational institutions need to consider encouraging teachers to be willing to support their colleagues. In addition, school administrators should create opportunities for English teachers to exchange teaching experiences with teachers of other schools through seminars,

conferences, etc. Thus, besides learning from experience, English teachers can be aware of the strategies reflected in the teaching process so that they can make full use of these strategies in the next teaching plans.

It is interesting to supplement and refine the understanding of current reflective teaching strategies used by teachers. Indeed, teachers must gain a deeper understanding of reflective teaching strategies. They only self-criticize their teaching when they recognize problems in the course of their activities. This process happens spontaneously so strategies such as peer observation, student support, and teacher journaling are also available in the teacher's context. So this is why these strategies are frequently implemented. Some uncommon strategies such as audio-video recording should be adopted during self-reflection of the teaching process so that teachers can reflect on teaching effectiveness.

For Further Studies

Based on the results and discussion of the study, further studies can be carried out in a variety of contexts with a wide range of participants from different educational contexts such as primary or secondary school to generalize their beliefs and practices. Furthermore, research can be done to explore the differences in perception and practice of reflective teaching between pre-service and in-service teachers in their teaching practice and how they overcome barriers in implementing teacher's strategies in the reflection process. Research results have revealed an overall view of teachers' perceptions. Therefore, it is helpful to conduct research to explore students' understanding of the impact of the reflection process on their learning outcomes.

Limitations

In spite of reaching the research aims, there are regrettably some unavoidable limitations. In fact, research should be carried out in all areas of the Mekong Delta with wider participation of teachers to have a more multi-dimensional view of research results. In addition, research should also be conducted on learners to measure the effectiveness of reflective teaching strategies.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Phan: Interpretation, writing, editing/reviewing, supervision, final approval, secure funding. L. T. Nguyen: Conceptualization, design, data analysis, drafting manuscript. K. D. Nguyen: Data collection, writing, critical revision of the manuscript, technical/ material support.

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