

Reflective Teaching and the Teachers' Self Efficacy in the Post Method Era: A Case Study of Jazan University, Saudi Arabia

Saeed Ahmad^{1*} Muhammad Suleman Hafiz² Nazeer Ahmad³ Muhammad Amir Saeed⁴

1.Faculty, English Language Center, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia

2.Faculty, Preparatory Year Deanship, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia

3.Faculty, Yanbu English Language Institute, Yanbu, Saudi Arabia

4.Department of Statistics, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

Abstract

The theoretical and practical underpinnings of reflective teaching and the teachers' self-efficacy were examined in this research to bring forth coherence in the construct and measurement of these apparently competing conceptual strands. The research found many implications of applying reflective teaching with its reconciliation with the teachers' self-efficacy for the practicing teachers. The study used Teacher Reflectivity questionnaire (short form) coined by Akbari, *et al* (2010) and the Teachers' Self Efficacy Scale developed on Bandura's (1997a) Social Cognitive Theory. The objectives of the study were to find correlation in (1) teachers' reflective practices and self-efficacy in overall teaching practice (2) teachers' reflective practices and self-efficacy on the basis of gender (3) teachers' reflective practices and self-efficacy on the basis of their educational level, and (4) teachers' reflective practices and self-efficacy on the basis of their job experience. A total of 96 teachers participated in this study. The study found that there was a positive correlation between the teachers' reflectivity and self-efficacy which means that the reflective practices by the teachers will obviously lead to teachers' self-efficacy.

Keywords: Language teaching, reflective teaching, self-efficacy, post-method era

1. Introduction

The post-method era in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as an International Language (EIL) has left the teachers with less or no reliance on any specific language teaching method (Ahmad & Ahmad, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2003, 2001). Now, the actual classroom practices mostly depend on the teachers' self-grooming, their experiences and beliefs (Noormohammadi, 2014; Akbari, 2007; Halliday, 1998; Johnson, 1996). The role of an English language teacher in the post-method era has changed to a great extent. His role is changed from merely a language practitioner to an inquiry based self-directed theorizer of his class room practices. He is not a follower of a specific set of language teaching rules as prescribed in a traditional methodology (Ahmad & Rao, 2013), not only transmitting mechanically pre-sequenced and preselected body of language through a 'fixed set of class room activities that serve as a prescription and therefore do not allow variation' (Bell, 2003) 'indiscriminately used by the teachers to what the theorists propose' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), but utilizing the best according to his beliefs, knowledge and experiences. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), methods carry certain myths with them: there is always a best method there yet to be discovered by the practitioners; they constitute the overall language teaching principles; they have historical and universal sets of language teaching values; the theorists conceive methodological knowledge and the practitioners consume them; these are neutral and they lack any motivational ideology for language teaching, etc.

Owing to these pitfalls of a language teaching methodology, the focus was shifted to the post-method era based on three fundamental frameworks forwarded by Stern (1983), Alwright (2003) and Kumaravadivelu (2006). Stern (1983) advocated integrated set of curricula implemented through a multidimensional theory-neutral framework of language teaching. He forwarded a three dimensional agenda: L1-L2 proportional dimension, analytic-experiential language teaching dimension, and an implicit-explicit dimension, in which each dimension forms a continuum of classroom practices beyond theorizing and methodizing. Alwright (2003) forwarded an exploratory practice framework of language teaching based on three fundamental rules: quality of life is better than instructional efficiency in a language class room; ensuring our understanding about the quality of life in a language class is more essential than developing lifeless methods; and, understanding the quality of life in a language class is a social phenomenon (as noted by Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Under this ideology, the language teacher first identifies a problem / puzzle, reflects and monitors the problem and then takes a direct action sharing his knowledge and experiences to others. The third framework is forwarded by Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2006) which he called 'Macrostrategic Framework' with three parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. About *particularity*, he argued that language teaching 'must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu'. His second parameter relates to *practicality* that is the relationship between theory and practice which he considers harmful for an effective language learning and teaching situation. He advocates using personal theories of the teachers and practitioners 'by interpreting and

applying professional theories in practical situations, ... theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize'. His third parameter is *possibility* which relates to power and dominance in language teaching with sociopolitical awareness. Multiple sociopolitical variables such as the teachers' and learners' identity (gender, race, color, social class etcetera) influences, directly or indirectly, any teaching learning situation. This framework includes micro and macro strategies in language teaching which maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, minimize perceptual mismatches, activate intuitive heuristics, foster language awareness, contextualize linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy, ensure social relevance, and raise cultural consciousness. Taking these guidelines, the language teachers can devise their own micro strategies according to their classroom situations.

Accordingly, the practitioners can benefit from an array of the current ideals in language teaching, like reflective teaching. This study, however, was guided by these objectives:

- I. To find overall correlation between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy
- II. To find correlation between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy on the basis of gender
- III. To find correlation between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy on the basis of educational level of the teachers
- IV. To find correlation between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy on the basis of job experience

1.1 Reflective Teaching

Teaching reflections provide teachers with a powerful instrument to gauge their teaching practices and performance in the classroom. This living document serves as a showcase of their accomplishments, philosophy of teaching and professional goals with providing ample proof of development in their art of teaching over time. Reflections on teaching also summarize which courses were taught during a given time; which methods were adopted; and, what did or didn't work. It allows teachers think critically on how to improve their teaching for the betterment of their learners in the future classes. This is a systematic and consistent way for the teachers to track their progress and a chance to eliminate the unsuccessful methods and materials. Although in the hectic schedules and rigid time patterns in a teacher's daily life make it difficult to reflect on their teaching practices, yet considering mere experience not enough for further improvement, reflections set a path for teachers' professional development and provide means for critically evaluating their teaching beliefs, assumptions and actions. As a result, incongruities between beliefs and practices are discovered to further address the issues of professional training and development.

Now reflective teaching has become a dominant part of EFL teaching and teachers' training programs. Teachers reflecting on their practices become aware of their teaching impact on the learners, actively assess what they know and how to bridge the gap between their knowledge and ignorance. It also reflects on their beliefs about teaching and shows taking responsibility for critical thinking on their actions (Farrel, 2003). Van-Menan (2010) has defined this practice as "the process by which the teachers engage in aspects of critical thinking such as careful deliberations and analysis, making choices and reaching decisions about a course of action related to teaching. Such reflection steps make up reflective experience which in turn can lead to analysis and evaluation, then to further reflective actions". Dewey (1933) deliberates that reflective practice comprises on five steps: doubting and feeling perplexity in relation to a given situation, tentatively interpreting the possible meanings of the situation and/ or factors involved in it and their consequences, examining/exploring/analyzing all considerations that might help clarify the problem, elaborating the preliminary hypotheses, and deciding a plan of action.

1.2 Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Teachers' perceived sense of self-efficacy and their beliefs on the mechanisms involved in language acquisition, language learning and teaching are important in this field. Considering the impact individual variables may assert in EFL/ESL/EIL, the researchers in TESOL and Applied Linguistics have given it priority in the recent studies. The language teachers have been reported having individual variations on their perceived sense of self efficacy in language teaching based on their language learning background, interactions with the L2, experiences as language teachers, and socio cultural backgrounds. Self-efficacy according to Bandura (1995) is 'beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments... and it is a more constant predictor of one's behavior and accomplishments than the other variables related to it'. He further argues that self-efficacy is the most influential arbiter in human agency which plays a powerful role in decision making. Learning and performing in new skills in authentic situations greatly relies on beliefs about self-efficacy than the other constructs on one's self. Teachers' perceived self-efficacy has been reported to influence their level of performance and achievements in a given situation according to Bandura's (1997) theory on social cognition. He established that the set-goals increase an individual's cognitive reactions to his

performance outcomes as they specify requirements for his personal success with prompt self-monitoring on personal attainments and course of action. It is the personal determination language teachers possess on their own abilities to deal with different tasks during a classroom situation. It is, most of the times, context specific, but when established, it generalized to all situations with strong effects on the activities closer to those which improved their sense of self efficacy.

2. Literature Review

A plethora of research suggests that teachers' impact on the students' academic achievement is the most influential variable in the main stream education. Teaching style, teaching methodology, classroom strategies, and material selection, etc., are important in students' achievement (Alexander & Fuller, 2005; Sanders, 1998; Goldhaber, 2002; Wright et al, 1997; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). However, a little or no evidence is available as to which characteristics of teachers promote positive learning, specifically in second language pedagogy (Akbari, 2007). Teachers' reflective practice (Schon, 1987; Dewey, 1933; Kely, 1993, Akbari, 2007) and their perceived sense of self efficacy (Good & Proby, 2003; Bandura, 1997b; Larsen, 2007) are two variables that affect students' academic achievement and character building. A burgeoning research on these topics suggests that they have a substantial impact on teaching and learning in education in general and second language education in particular (Akbari, 2007; Good & Proby, 2003; Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Reflective teaching has variously been studied in relation with critical thinking (Hillier, 2005; Cornford, 2002) ' the process by which teachers engage in aspects of critical thinking such as careful deliberation and analysis, making choices, and reaching decisions about a course of action related to teaching' (Ferwana, 2006) which implies that the teachers are open to all aspects and willing to see issues from a multitude of views, always questioning and challenging the current state (Jackson, 2006). Al-Jabri (2009) examined teachers' attitude towards reflective teaching to the extent to which the teachers of English language reflected on their teaching practices and to the level of importance they attached to reflective teaching. This study showed positive results towards teaching reflections and the teachers' attitude towards reflective teaching. The hindrances to reflective teaching as identified in this study were teachers' workload, stressful class observation and the lack of cooperation among teachers. The teachers faced challenges in reflective teaching owing to the difficult terminologies associated with this concept. The theoretical underpinnings and practicality also pose challenge in this context about which Loughran (2002) asserted that challenging the distinction between theory and practice is important and in a way conceptualizing effective reflective practice is to help teachers in meaningful ways. Collin, *et al* (2013) also criticized the absence of clear terminology in reflective teaching. In their study, they first pointed out to clarify the concept of reflective practices for a substantial and methodical observation. They also pointed out problems involved in evaluation. The instruments for classroom observation and evaluation in reflective teaching should be thoroughly evaluated, improved and validated over time. Some of the scholars (Zeichner & Liston, 1996; LaBoskey, 1994; Schon, 1987; Sanders, 1998; Ferguson, 1998; Goldhaber, 2002; Farrell, 2003) studied the benefits of reflective teaching for effective classroom instruction that influences positively students' achievement and helps free teachers from impulsive behaviors.

The constructs of teachers' sense of self efficacy has well been studied in relation to teachers' effectiveness and students' achievement (Good & Brophy, 2003; Tschennan-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Midgley, *et al*, 1989; Zimmerman, 1995). These studies indicate that the teachers with a high sense of self efficacy set for themselves higher standards, accept challenges, take risks and adopt innovative ways leading to overall increased students' motivation to learning, self-esteem and collective success. It is sharply contrary to the teachers with low efficacy who have minimal influence on students' academic achievements, give up easily when confronted with challenging situations, are less resourceful, creating classroom cultures beyond students' cognitive development, relying on extrinsic motivation for corporal punishment, take pessimistic view of students' motivation, relying on strict classroom rules, show weak commitment to teaching and often feel that students cannot learn in extenuating circumstances (Ashton & Web, 1986; Bandura, 1995; Hoy, 2000; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

3. Research Method

The study shows partial results of an ongoing larger study that was taken in the faculty of English Language Center of Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study employed multi-dimensional variable technique with a triangulation of data source, including English language teachers, administrators and other stake holders. This paper, however, presents the results obtained from teachers in the form of questionnaire developed to answer such questions, as: what is the level of overall correlation between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy?, Is there any correlation found between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy on the basis of gender?, Is there any correlation found between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy on the basis of educational level of the teachers?, and, Is there any correlation found between teachers' practice of reflective teaching and self-efficacy on the basis of job experience? For this purpose, the study used Teacher Reflectivity questionnaire (short form) developed by Akbari, *et al* (2010) and

the Teachers' Self Efficacy Scale, developed on Bandura's (1997a) model of Social Cognitive Theory. For statistical analysis, Pearson two tailed correlation technique was adopted being the most suitable for this type of variables and research data. The research population consisted on male (38) and female (58) teachers who possessed Ph.D and Master Degrees, and had had multiple teaching experiences ranged from 1-10, 11-20 years, and 21-30 years.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 Correlation (overall) between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self Efficacy

		Teachers' Reflectivity	Teachers' Self-Efficacy
Teachers' Reflectivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.259
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N		96
Teachers' Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.259	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	96	

As shown in Table 1, the correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy is significant at 0.05 level. The Pearson Correlation was found 0.259 with a significance (2-tailed) 0.011 that is a lower correlation. The two variables, i.e. Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy are directly correlated since the correlation is positive which means that Teachers' Self-Efficacy increases with an increase in another variable, e.g. Reflectivity in teaching. Thus, the first hypothesis, 'there is found a positive correlation between teachers' reflectivity and teachers' self-efficacy' was accepted.

Table 2 Correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self Efficacy (on gender basis)

		Teachers' Reflectivity	Teachers' Self-Efficacy
Teachers' Reflectivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.261
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N		96
Teachers' Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.261	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	96	

As shown in Table 2, the correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy on the basis of gender is significant at 0.05 level. The Pearson Correlation was found 0.261 with a significance (2-tailed) 0.011 that is a lower correlation. The two variables, i.e. Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy according to gender are directly correlated since the correlation is positive which means that Teachers' Self-Efficacy increases with an increase in another variable, e.g. Reflectivity in teaching. Thus, the second hypothesis, 'there is found a positive correlation between teachers' reflectivity and teachers' self-efficacy on the basis of gender' was accepted.

Table 3 Correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self Efficacy (on education)

		Teachers' Reflectivity	Teachers' Self-Efficacy
Teachers' Reflectivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.252
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014
	N		96
Teachers' Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.252	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	
	N	96	

As shown in Table 3, the correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy on the basis of the level of education is significant at 0.05 level. The Pearson Correlation was found 0.252 with a significance (2-tailed) 0.014 that is a lower correlation. The two variables, i.e. Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy according to their level of education are directly correlated since the correlation is positive which means that Teachers' Self-Efficacy increases with an increase in another variable, e.g.

Reflectivity in teaching. Thus, the second hypothesis, 'there is found a positive correlation between teachers' reflectivity and teachers' self-efficacy on the basis of the level of education' was accepted.

Table 4 Correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self Efficacy (on experience)

		Teachers' Reflectivity	Teachers' Self-Efficacy
Teachers' Reflectivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.259
	Sig. (2 –tailed)		.011
	N		96
Teachers' Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.059	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	96	

As shown in Table 4, the correlation between Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy on the basis of teachers' years of experience is significant at 0.05 level. The Pearson Correlation was found 0.259 with a significance (2-tailed) 0.011 that is an average correlation. The two variables, i.e. Teachers' Reflectivity and Teachers' Self-Efficacy according to the years of teaching experience are directly correlated since the correlation is positive which means that Teachers' Self-Efficacy increases with an increase in another variable, e.g. Reflectivity in teaching. Thus, the second hypothesis, 'there is found a positive correlation between teachers' reflectivity and teachers' self-efficacy on the basis of teachers' experience' was accepted.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The purpose of this study was to explore correlation between the English Language Teachers' reflective practice and sense of self-efficacy in the English Language Center of Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. The results obtained through questionnaire show a positive relationship between teachers' reflective practices and their sense of self-efficacy. The results were analyzed on four levels: overall correlation between teachers' reflections and self-efficacy, and on the basis of gender, education and teaching experience of the teachers. The study suggested that teaching reflections provide a boost in teaching practices since it is a constant way of improving teaching strategies, materials and styles. There is, however, a dire need to familiarize teachers with the importance of reflective teaching, organize training session and periodical workshops to freshen-up their knowledge on this issue of the core interest for uplifting the standard of their teaching overall. The teachers also need feedback on their reflections from the concerned authorities and the professional development unit for the sake of boosting their motivational level and the sense of self-efficacy, since reflective teaching provides teachers job satisfaction, autonomy and self-reliance. It also gives confidence and motivation to the teachers for a life-long learning and self-improvement.

The research, however, employed limited resources and sample population, hence limited reliability and validity of research. It, thus, cannot be generalized with all kind of educational set-up. The results may differ if the same research techniques and strategies were used with other population, at another place and with the teachers of other fields. It may also produce different results with other levels of education and academics. Further studies can be taken to find correlation between reflective teaching and students' achievements in learning new concepts, or students' motivational level, or students' employability/marketability, or personality development; or it can also find correlation between reflective teaching and the institutional efficiency at larger scales. It is, therefore, suggested that, since the area of reflective teaching is comparatively new in the realms of education, new teacher education models be developed on the basis of their training on reflective teaching. Continuing professional development programs should also include this strand of practice into their scheduled training, seminars and workshops.

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