

Research Article

Reflective Teaching in English Language Classrooms: Perception and Practice of English Language Instructors at Wachemo University

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This study aimed at examining how university English language instructors perceive reflection in teaching and the extent to which their perceptions were realized in reflective teaching. Adopting a convergent case study method, the study was conducted utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data sources. Quantitative data were elicited using a questionnaire from 41 English language instructors selected from Wachemo University through comprehensive sampling, and qualitative data were collected using interviews, observation, and reflective journal writing from four instructors taken through convenience sampling among the surveyed instructors on the basis of their willingness to participate. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed applying various stages of coding employing software called Open Code 4. Content analysis was applied to analyze reflective journal entry data. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics applying SPSS version 24. The results revealed that the surveyed instructors have good theoretical understanding on the basic concepts of reflection in teaching. However, classroom observation and journal entry data affirmed that there existed a gap between instructors' theoretical understanding and their application of reflective teaching. The study divulged that the instructors were found at a lower level of reflectivity regardless of the superficial understanding they hold about reflective practice.

1. Introduction

The concept of reflection in the educational sense goes back to [1] definition. American education scholar, Dewey [1], tried to compare reflective action with routine actions and defined reflection as a planned, active, constant, and careful consideration of one's beliefs rather than following routine actions induced from our usual and general principles and rules. It is a systematic inquiry method, which focuses on the constructivist approach to teaching and creative problem solving as a strategy applying critical thinking instead of passive transmission of knowledge via routine procedures established over years [2]. Reflective teaching has become a main paradigm in English language teaching (ELT) all over the world and there has been a general shift from the concept of a teacher as a technician to a teacher as a reflective

practitioner in teacher education [3, 4], which, in turn, signifies that reflective practice has received due attention for teacher development through building a bridge between theory and practice.

In a dynamic and challenging teaching context, more recently, it has been a subject of empirical study to better understand reflective teaching as it provides English language teachers with a very vital tool suggesting helpful ideas to deal with demanding teaching situations [5]. There are three roles of reflective teaching for teachers: expanding the understanding of teaching learning process, expanding ability/strategic options as a language teachers, and enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities in language classrooms [6]. Besides this, it helps learners understand what they already know and identify what they need to know in order to advance understanding of the subject and get feedback [6]. A

research conducted by Mathew [7] focused on the role of reflective teaching in providing effective classroom learning environment to improve English language skills and came up with a finding that reflective teaching provides with a rich language learning environment and resource for realizing mastery of English language skills creating a purposeful teaching learning context and smooth teacher–learner interaction resulting in improved academic achievement of the students (through collection of detailed information about English language classroom situations such as individual/group tasks and selection of appropriate of content) and enriched professional development of instructors.

This implies that reflective practice helps instructors to widen their English language pedagogical, as well as content knowledge to foster students' learning [8] having enhanced their engagement in learning process [9, 10]. Through reflective activities and process, the teachers are able to accomplish their teaching job [11, 12] identifying best assumptions which support them to frame their judgments and actions taken while planning, teaching, and postteaching phases [11] making use of innovative approaches to support students' learning [13]. This implies that through reflective practice, teachers think critically being more concerned and flexible with their classroom context pre-, while, and postteaching. That is, teachers are required to make use of reflective practice to reflect-in-action (taking actions/making immediate adjustments as the events unfold on the spot/at the moment while teaching learning is being carried out) and reflect-on-action (looking back on the past occurrences and learning from experience with the purpose of revising their practice/teaching plan for future action) [3, 14]. Thus, English language instructors are expected to be more reflective being flexible and creative in the course of planning teaching, managing classroom, and delivering the lesson considering students' prior knowledge, motivation, and time needed to learn the lesson [10, 15]. This generally indicates that teachers are determined to consider themselves as less transmitters of expert knowledge and more as facilitators of critical learning and transformation.

When we come to the local context, Ethiopia, like other countries, has been striving to put reflective teaching learning process into practice in higher education institutions inculcating it in a policy document platform of producing "reflective practitioners" [16–20]. According to the platform of the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia, teachers are expected to meet the five standards/packages of competence: facilitating student learning, assessing the student's learning, using a range of instructional approaches so as to engage all students in learning, having professional ethics, and being reflective practitioners who critically reflect with the aim of encouraging students to be reflective learners. We can deduce from this that reflective practice is taken as one of the packages of standard of competence laid by Ethiopian Ministry of Education. Teachers play lion's share in assuring quality education through helping learners to be effective in their learning [21].

To do so, teachers are expected to have the required competences and skills, including knowledge of subject matter and communicative competence, so that they are able to

teach employing suitable methodology having better social interaction with their students being effective in their job [22]. One of the goals of the policy document platform of Ethiopian Ministry of Education, as discussed above, is the realization of reflective and inquiry teaching methods through producing reflective practitioners and further enriching their critical reflective capacity through on-job trainings [20]. This entails that instructors are expected to operate as reflective practitioners as they are expected to perform at the competence standards put by Ministry of Education [23, 24]. In this regard, all Ethiopian teacher education colleges and government universities have been providing various on-job trainings, including higher diploma program for academic staffs with the aim of enriching the capacities of instructors as reflective practitioners [18].

Although much of the literature describes the potential benefits of reflective teaching and though Ministry of Education has ideally designed it as a program at the policy level, evidences showed that the question "To what extent instructors have actually been implementing reflective teaching perceiving it as they were trained to be reflective practitioners?" has received little attention of researchers in the local context. This implies that irrespective of studying reflective teaching practices of preteaching student teachers, which received much attention of researchers, the investigation of on-job instructors' actual implementation of reflective teaching was taken for granted.

There have been some local studies conducted on reflective practices mainly focusing on preservice teacher training as reviewed by the researchers. For instance, Hussein [25] conducted a related research and tried to examine preservice student teachers' reflective status and found out that student teachers are not doing reflectively as expected even though they seem to have the potential to reflect. This researcher mainly associated the gap with instructors' failure to pay attention to apply reflection in planning practically. Another researcher also explored preservice language student teachers' reflection and their inquiry learning in Haramaya University practicum context and found that preservice student teachers fail to reflect mainly due to their lack of effective tools for reflection and lack of time for it [26]. Still, another scholar studied secondary school English teachers' reflective teaching practices locally and came up with the conclusion that high school teachers haven't been trained adequately as expected as reflective practitioners [27].

Accordingly, the researchers of the current study identified some gaps between the present study and other reviewed research works done before. Primarily, the above researches were conducted employing merely a qualitative research design. Utilizing a mixed/convergent methods is preferred over a single research design as the former paves smooth ground for compensation (balancing the shortcomings of one another), complementarity, achieving a holistic view (completeness), and corroboration (generalization of conclusions) [28]. Therefore, this study (unlike the reviewed research works) applied convergent descriptive case study research design having both qualitative and quantitative data collected and analyzed independently and then merged

& interpreted to complement each other as stated by J.W. Creswell and J.D. Creswell [21].

On the other hand, most of the reviewed local research works aimed at exploring the reflective teaching practices of student teachers learning in preservice teacher education institutions, whereas the present study examines the actual practice of reflective teaching of on-job university instructors. Furthermore, concerning the research paradigm, unlike other locally conducted researches, the present study is guided by the philosophical stance of pragmatism, which allows both quantitative and qualitative methods to be blended and utilized together to complement each other in a single research in order to enhance the culmination and the strength of the findings as stated by Creswell [29].

Therefore, taking the reviewed research gaps into account, the present study aimed at answering the following research questions:

- (1) How do English language instructors perceive reflective practice in language teaching?
- (2) To what extent do English language instructors' classroom practices portray various levels of reflection (descriptive, comparative, or critical)?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Basics of Reflection in Education. Reflection is an important part of instructional route, which provides teachers with helpful tool to identify and solve problems regarding various aspects of their profession [30]. There is still a complain that although teachers have been practicing reflection in some way, it is only currently that the concept has got deep-rooted in the context of ELT [31]. Nowadays, it has been the issue of investigation enabling English language teachers to have a better conception of reflective teaching [32] and encouraging them to systematically enrich their engagement in such practices [33].

Likewise, reflective teaching enables practitioners to be good decision makers getting engaged in systematic reflection of their work passing through the stages of thinking, writing, and talking about their teaching by observing their own teaching and colleagues' gauging impacts on their students' learning [34]. Thus, reflective teaching is all about learning from experience and corroborative observation through diagnosing critical events [32, 35–37]. Reflective practice can further be explained as the procedure of examining one's practical, as well as theoretical experiences deliberately with the aim of understanding one's current practice [3, 4].

After all, reflection can be taken as intellectual process requiring exploiting learners' mind in order to realize sustainable and lasting learning facing relatively challenging and uncertain learning tasks or experiences having no one best answer and, therefore, need additional processing cognitive and affective domains of the students [38].

2.2. ELT Teachers' Perception on Reflective Teaching. Many researchers assure that reflection is essential to make sense of

the versatile environment of classrooms and maintain that practitioners need to be trained to reflect on the content and the application of certain teaching approaches, so that they can enrich their reflectivity on learners' thinking, understanding, interest, and thinking through analyzing their teaching from other perspectives beyond their "egocentric" view to become more reflective practitioners [25].

English language teachers may hold various wrong assumptions about language teaching originated from their experience as English language students in a system with discouraging environment. For example, Brookfield [39] claimed that, in terms of selection and application of teaching methods, teachers' job is highly influenced by the images, models, and conceptions of teaching derived from their own experiences as learners. For this reason, majority of teachers still depend on talk and chalk perhaps due to lacking either the competence or willingness to develop and employ a range of novel methods of teaching as far as researchers' knowledge is concerned. This, in turn, indicates how much innovative teaching is neglected in the system of education. Farrell [30] and William and Grudnoff [40] claimed that novice teachers may not gain as much as from instructional reflection as more experienced teachers as they miss the experience that an experienced teacher acquired. Lee [41] conducted a study of teacher perception on instructional reflection with novice teachers and experienced teachers and came up with the finding that teachers didn't conceive the benefits of educational reflection at the beginning of the experience; nevertheless, they discovered the usefulness of reflecting on their practice and how it can be used to develop their teaching skills. In view of that, it is worth examining to what extent reflective teaching is understood, conceptualized, and implemented by the instructors, so as to help students develop higher-order thinking skills to enable them to get prepared for global competition.

2.3. Levels of Reflection in English Language Teaching. Scholars tried to sort out the reflection at different levels/stages consisting of direct conceptualization of the experience and consideration of the alternatives leading to action [41]. More specifically, according to a study by Rodgers [42], reflective practice is put into various stages, including understanding experience, standing back, repetition, deeper honesty, clarity, enhancing better understanding, and making conclusion. Reflective levels can be sort out into three as low (surface), middle (pedagogical), and high (critical) reflection level in order of complexity [43]. The lower/first/surface/descriptive levels of reflection deals with the effectiveness teaching approaches and recalling theoretical aspects learning experiences (e.g., Shall I do it again and in a better way?). Teachers at this level are expected to achieve preplanned educational objectives efficiently and effectively applying a variety of strategies to the curriculum and the teaching learning process (45 : 210).

The developmental features of reflective practice range from low level of reflection dealing with technical aspects of teaching to higher reflection level, which focuses on realizing educational goals [43] and there exists a level called "non-reflective level" where teachers pay no conscious attention of imposing ownership of the risk on students considering

themselves as victims of situations taking things for granted without questioning them and failing to adapt their teaching on the basis of students' needs and preferences (12 : 342).

The second level what he calls "comparative/pedagogical reflection" comprises theoretical and practical approaches of teaching in which teachers strive to achieve consistency between what they say, believe, and value called the "espoused theory" and what they actually do in the classroom called "theory-in-use" which covers stepping back and forth, exploration, and consideration of different assumptions in order to check the associations of experiences [12, 43].

The highest level, critical reflection, involves exploring reasons in the wider sense of experiences by making certain critiques of an event and then locating them in broader ethical, moral, social, or historical contexts [12, 41]. Here, the practitioners are expected to deal with broader moral and ethical aspects of teaching (the social and political dimensions of education) directly or indirectly moving beyond the issue of effectiveness in imparting the lesson with mere aim of achieving educational objectives. Critical reflection provides teachers with moral and ethical implications not only for their classroom practices but also for their profession as lifelong learners [30].

The researchers of the current study got lessons from the above reviewed works that reflective teaching requires instructors to question the existing pedagogy through a peer and/or self-evaluation, in the course of (re)constructing their professional knowledge. In light of this, it is worth examining instructors' implementation level of reflective teaching practice in terms of checking their instruction and evaluating their pedagogical competence and practices, so as to update and transform their professional career gradually.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design. Case studies could be conducted utilizing both qualitative and quantitative evidences [44]. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed independently and then merged/triangulated and interpreted to more deeply understand the data. Quantitative data of the present study were collected by self-reflective questionnaire consisting of Likert scale items and analyzed descriptively. On the other hand, the qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes. Finally, the results of the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data were merged and interpreted to answer the research questions. Therefore, a convergent descriptive case study research design was employed in this study.

3.2. Participants. With the aim of securing quantitative data using self-reflective questionnaire, all 41 English language instructors were taken through comprehensive sampling from Wachemo University in the 2022 academic year as the sample size was manageable. Besides, in order to acquire rich qualitative data, the researchers took four English language instructors who participated in the study being selected among the surveyed ones using convenient sampling on the basis of their willingness to take part.

TABLE 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient range of reliability.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient range	Strength of association
<0.6	Poor
0.6–0.7	Moderate
0.7–0.8	Good
0.8–0.9	Very good
0.9 and above	Excellent

3.3. Instruments. As the present study required both qualitative and quantitative data, observations, interviews, and reflective journal entries were employed as tools to collect qualitative data. Classroom observation was conducted in order to describe the actual classroom reflective teaching practices of English language instructors nonjudgmentally. After getting their consent, interviews were held face-to-face with four instructors whose lessons were observed. Likewise, reflective journal writing was used as a data collection tool in this study in order to acquire data concerning instructors' level of reflectivity in their teaching. Just before writing their journal, the four instructors were provided with a short training on how to keep their journal/portfolio. On the other hand, two sets of self-reflective questionnaires were administered to the 41 English language instructors of Wachemo University in order to obtain quantitative data on their perception and their level of reflection in their teaching. The questionnaire was slightly adapted from online sources having reviewed the literature. Then, it was piloted with 15 conveniently taken instructors teaching English language in Wolkite University (which has equivalent status with the main study area) with aim of checking the reliability of the tool. Then, the results of the pilot study were analyzed using SPSS version 24 in order to examine the reliability having administered the questionnaire to the instructors who participated in the pilot study. Among various statistical approaches for checking reliability of the instrument, a method called internal consistency was applied as it was suitable to be used with single administration. According to a study by Hair et al. [45], the result of the internal consistency of the responses (Cronbach's alpha) for the questionnaire was calculated as 0.706, which can be interpreted to be good enough/reliable as the coefficient (0.706) lies between 0.7 and 0.8 based on the following cutoff points of strength.

This, in turn, implies that the items can elicit more stable responses making the researchers accept the reliability of the instrument with confidence (Table 1).

3.4. Procedures of Data Collection. Before collecting the data, the researchers tried to get the consent of participants to be observed, interviewed, and to write reflective journals after the participants were trained about the process of writing the journals. After getting their approval, the lessons they taught were video-recorded and then the interview sessions with the sample instructors were audio-recorded and transcribed. After all that, self-reflective questionnaire was administered to 41 English language teachers, including those who participated in the observation and interview sessions.

TABLE 2: Mean and standard deviation of ELT instructors' perception of reflective teaching.

No.	Items	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I realize that observing my colleagues' lessons improves my teaching practice	3.27	0.704
2	I recognize the values my colleagues' observation on my classroom lesson	3.67	0.488
3	I feel that I can get valuable feedback talking to my colleagues concerning challenging classroom issues so as to advance my teaching	3.87	0.834
4	I feel that having new understanding changes my teaching practice	2.73	0.458
5	I am aware of the fact that I can prove my students' learning through exploring implications of classroom events	3.13	0.640
6	I am alert of the fact that I can get alternative ways to improve my current teaching practices searching on the internet or reading books	3.87	0.743
7	I think of asking myself what could I have done differently after class	3.87	0.640
8	I'm aware of the role of keeping a portfolio of classroom event and why such things happen and a plan for further action	3.33	0.816
9	I assume that I learn new things while I am teaching and after the lesson	4.13	0.516
10	I think of finding reasons for positive and negative classroom occurrences	3.93	0.799
11	I know what and why I do or say things in the classroom	3.87	0.743
12	I recognize the general atmosphere in the classroom (sleepy, tired, bored, active, angry, excited, etc. students)	4.47	0.516
13	I realize that I need to adapt an activity or come up with a new activity if the original one is too challenging for the students	4.00	0.756
14	I realize that I should ask students to reflect their ideas in the form of feedback on the lesson	4.07	0.704
15	I sense that I should plan what I need to do in the next class time to ensure that the students learn the unclear context	4.00	0.535
16	I recognize that I need to assess the difficulty level of every activity that the students work on	3.40	1.121
17	I sense that I should deviate from the plan if I see clues from the students that they do not understand	3.13	1.187
18	I think of possible consequences or reactions that need my actions	2.87	0.915
19	I consider the roles of every students' engagement while teaching and after the lesson	3.00	1.195
20	I realize values of keeping personal professional portfolio in which I collect proofs of my professional learning as a teacher over a specified period of time	3.13	0.834
21	I am aware of what goes well and wrong during the lesson	3.13	1.246
22	I think of discussing educational issues with colleagues informally at offices and formally in meetings	4.13	0.743

Source. Survey data (2022).

3.5. Method of Data Analysis. The qualitative data collected from the interviews were transcribed into a textual form. Then, initial/open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were conducted before starting the analysis of the data being aided by software called Open Code 4. Hence, thematic data analysis was employed in this study based on the grounded theory principles, moving data from one category to another, looking for commonalities and differences within the categories as the principle involves inductive data analysis. As the categories became clearer, themes emerged from the data and these were merged. Content analysis was applied to the data secured by the teachers' reflective journals based on a preset category as a framework. On the other hand, the quantitative data obtained from instructors' self-reflective questionnaire were analyzed for mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) using SPSS software version 24.

4. Results

This section deals with the discussion of study results regarding ELT instructors' perception on reflective practice together with

their level of reflection in their teaching (the extent to which they have been implementing it) at Wachemo University.

4.1. Instructors' Perception of Reflective Language Teaching. In this subsection, quantitative and qualitative data collected from English language instructors concerning their perception of reflective practice in Wachemo University were presented. The surveyed data on ELT instructors' perception/understanding on the concepts reflective teaching is summarized in Table 2.

The first item, which was about instructors' conception on whether observing their colleagues' lesson improves their teaching practice or not, received a mean of 3.27 falling in the neutral position in the Likert scale implying that the teachers are less familiar with such concepts of reflective teaching (Table 2). Likewise, sample respondents expressed their agreement concerning the practical elements of reflection items 2 and 3, which deal with whether they realize value of colleagues' observation on their lesson and talking to their colleagues about problematic issues in their classroom and get valuable feedback that can advance their teaching,

received mean values 3.67 and 3.87, respectively, which lied almost in the range of “agree” position (Table 2). The fourth item, which deals with the statement of that having new understanding changes one’s teaching practice, received lower mean (2.73) falling between the range of “disagree” and “neutral.” Item number 5, which is meant to identify instructors’ awareness of proving their students’ learning through exploring implications of classroom events, got a mean of 3.13. Item 6, which is intended to identify instructors’ perception/understanding on one of the cognitive elements of reflection, that is, searching information on the internet or reading books for possible alternatives of their current teaching practices along with the notion of self-reflection in item 7, which deals with whether they think of asking themselves what they could have done differently after the lesson, respectively, received a mean value (3.87 each), falling approximately in the position of “agree,” which, in turn, shows that instructors have better awareness on cognitive reflective aspects, as well as asking oneself self-reflective questions (Table 2). The question asked concerning whether instructors are aware of keeping portfolio, describing incidents in the classroom, why things happen in the classroom, and a plan for further action or not, under item 8 received a relatively low mean ($M=3.33$), which fell in the “neutral” position. Besides that instructors’ responses under item 9, which tries to identify whether the instructors have a better understanding about learning new things about their class while teaching and after the lesson, the received mean ($M=4.13$) that is in the position of “agree” (Table 2).

Moreover, instructors tend to express their agreement on if they have a better perception on what they do/say in the classroom and why they do/say such things, the received mean value ($M=3.87$) lying in the agree position in the Likert scale (Table 2). On the other hand, the data under item 12 show that the instructors have better perception on the affective/learner components of reflective teaching, that is, being aware of the general atmosphere in the classroom (sleepy, tired, bored, active, angry, excited, etc. students), which received the mean value ($M=4.47$) lying approximately at “strongly agree” position in the Likert scale (Table 2). Likewise, their data concerning “adapting activity or coming up with a new activity if the original activity is too challenging for the students” (which received mean $M=4$), “asking the students to reflect their ideas in the form of feedback on the lesson” (which received mean $M=4.07$), planning what they need to do in the next class time to ensure that the students learn the doubtful context (which received mean $M=4$), and discussing educational issues with colleagues informally at offices and formally in meetings (which received mean $M=4.13$) (Table 2). From this, the researchers can realize that instructors tend to have better awareness/perception on different theoretical aspects of reflective teaching practices, including simplifying activities, asking students to provide reflective feedback, and planning for the next lesson based on the feedback they got along talking about educational issues with colleagues (Table 2).

Generally, from the above quantitative data discussions concerning English language instructors’ perception/understanding

of reflective teaching as a whole with the total/grouped mean value, $M=3.6$, it can be inferred that EFL instructors in Wachemo University have a relatively good theoretical understanding on the general principles of reflective teaching (Table 2).

On the other hand, with the rational of triangulating the above quantitative data under this theme, interviews were held with four instructors (among the surveyed ones) who were currently teaching English language courses in order to elicit detail information on how they see reflection and reflective practice in teaching English language using the following guiding question: “What does reflection, reflective practice, and reflective teaching mean to you?” They normally tried to define reflective teaching as being aware of their own instructional practice to allow learners to apply knowledge of reflection in range of realistic circumstances reflecting critically about their learning practice.

More specifically, the following sample extracts were noted from the interview discussion held with the instructors: One of the respondents (Instructor 1) tried to react to the interview question saying:

To my understanding, reflective teaching must be seen as an opportunity to deepen the understanding of self and teaching learning situations. Possibly, reflection should be a habit of mind which is inspired by environmental circumstances, allowing us to focus, research, and feel safe in tight conditions to solve problems (Appendices A and B).

As implied from the interview data of Instructor 1 above, reflective teaching requires teachers to design activities that require students thinking critically and practice by experiencing practical challenges. Likewise, the other respondent (Instructor 2) realized that reflective teaching is connected with the nature of experience and one’s interest to acquiring a thorough understanding of a problem or situation through asking a number of thought-provoking questions and in search of responses for such questions. This respondent tends to agree that reflective teaching plays a vital role in providing English teachers with tools of understanding different contexts through asking and answering questions faced teaching in actual classes.

Likewise, Instructor 2 elicited his understanding of reflection and reflective teaching as it is continuous process in which teachers monitor, evaluate, and revise their own teaching practice continuously and critically reframing of lived experience. Regarding the issue under discussion, Instructor 3 tried to forward his reflection as:

I see reflection as thinking and processing about what we see, hear, touch evaluating usability and applicability of the contents/course material we teach instead of taking that for granted (Appendices A and B).

This implies that this instructor theoretically understood that reflective practice is a continuous way of thinking employing a logical interpretation of what one has

TABLE 3: Mean and standard deviation of ELT instructors' descriptive level reflection.

No.	Items	Descriptive level reflection	
		Mean	Standard deviation
1	My analysis of instructional practices focuses on technical aspects about teaching process	4.21	0.538
2	I modify teaching approaches without considering underlying assumptions about teaching and learning	2.88	0.714
3	I occasionally connect specific teaching methods to underlying theory	3.61	0.494
4	I support beliefs with evidence from my teaching experience	3.61	0.494
5	I make some adjustments for students' different learning styles	4.20	0.749
6	I react to student responses from various angles but I don't recognize the patterns	4.32	0.687
7	I adjust teaching approaches in line with current situations without developing a long-term plan	3.39	0.802
8	I look for solutions to problems that focus on short-term outcomes	3.76	0.435
9	I make modification based on prior experiences	4.12	0.640
10	I question the utility of specific teaching method but not general policies or practices	4.10	0.583
11	I provide varied instruction to address learners' individual differences	3.12	0.640
12	I follow institutional guidelines rather than being innovative because I do not want to get into trouble	3.71	0.461
Total		3.75	0.63

Source. Survey data (2022). Bold values signify the average mean value of the total items under this category.

experienced engaging one's sense organs to arrive at a sound understanding. Further elaborating reflective practice, Instructor 4 forwarded his idea as:

Reflective practice is an approach/means or tool helping learners' vigorous engagement in critical inquiry learning through linking their past experience with current learning practice. He added that a reflective practitioner is the main actor of teaching by exploring problematic classroom contexts, and being responsible for one's own actions so as to improve performance in teaching (Appendices A, B, and C).

This also indicated that the instructor ideally seemed to understand reflective practice as an instrument linking theoretical aspects with one's practical life experience, learning experience, and with colleagues' personal experience.

Overall, the interview data confirmed that the instructors in the study area have a good theoretical understanding on the basic conception of reflective practice and its value in ELT.

4.2. Instructors' Level of Reflection in the Reflective Language Teaching. Under this subsection, quantitative and qualitative data regarding ELT instructors' level of reflective teaching in the English language classrooms were presented.

4.2.1. Presentation of Quantitative Data on the Level of Reflection. Table 3 presents the results of the mean and standard deviation of the responses concerning instructors' levels

of reflective language teaching. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of all items of the questionnaire of the levels of teachers' reflectivity are summarized in the tables below employing the three cutoff points specified by Van Manen [43], including descriptive level/technical rationality which deals with technical application of educational knowledge aimed at achieving predetermined goals (finding out whether the students are doing what the teacher asked them to do or not), comparative/pedagogical level which deals with delivering the lesson with the aim of meeting educational objectives (i.e., checking if the objectives are achieved or not and how they are achieved), and critical level which requires instructors to emphasize on the value/worth of ethical and social aspects of teaching (i.e., was content important to students? What were the strengths of the lesson? and what should be changed?). According to the above cutoff points, items 1–12 are categorized under descriptive reflection level, items 13–23 are clustered under comparative/pedagogical level, and items 24–26 are grouped under critical level of reflection, as summarized in Tables 3–5.

The questionnaire data displayed in the above table reflect that instructors are found to be at the lower descriptive levels of reflectivity mainly dealing with technical aspects of teaching rarely connecting their teaching methods to underlying theory focusing on short-term outcomes merely dealing with fulfilling institutional guidelines without being innovative in applying various teaching approaches such as reflective teaching (Table 3). The total calculated mean value of all items under this subtheme ($M = 3.75$) indicates

TABLE 4: Mean and standard deviation of ELT instructors' comparative level reflection.

Comparative level reflection			
No.	Items	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I look into connection between teaching practices and student learning	3.41	0.499
2	I seek ways to connect new concepts to students' prior knowledge	3.27	0.449
3	I have genuine curiosity about the effectiveness of teaching practices, leading to experimentation and risk-taking	2.59	0.706
4	I accept constructive criticism on my own teaching	2.27	0.708
5	I adjust my teaching methods and strategies based on students' relative performance	2.59	0.631
6	I analyze the impact of group organization, such as cooperative learning groups, pair/peer grouping on students' learning	2.66	0.825
7	I have commitment to ongoing learning to improve my practice	2.56	0.808
8	I identify various options of reflecting ideas and concepts to students	2.39	0.737
9	I recognize the complexity of classroom dynamics while teaching	2.59	0.706
10	I welcome what students bring to the learning process	2.27	0.708
11	I perceive teaching practices as remaining open to further investigation	2.59	0.631
Total		2.65	0.68

Source. Survey data (2022). Bold values signify the average mean value of the total items under this category.

TABLE 5: Mean and standard deviation of ELT instructors' critical level reflection.

Critical level reflection			
No.	Items	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I see my teaching practice within the range of sociological, cultural, historical, and political situations	2.66	0.825
2	I consider the ethical implications of classroom issues and practices into account	2.56	0.808
3	I address issues of equity and social justice that arise inside and outside of the classroom	2.39	0.737
Total		2.53	0.79

Source. Survey data (2022). Bold values signify the average mean value of the total items under this category.

that the respondents were almost at the position of “agree” value d-4 in the Likert scale reflecting their agreement to the statements provided (Table 3).

The questionnaire data presented in the above table show that instructors' responses under the comparative domains of reflection got lower mean value of 2.65 when compared to the descriptive or technical level of reflection (Table 4). Their response rate tends to be at the “neutral” position among the given scales with the mean value of each separate item ranging from highest mean ($M = 3.41$) which deals with looking into connection between ones' own teaching practice and that of students learning to lowest mean ($M = 2.27$) which encompasses bearing in mind what students bring to the learning process while teaching English language context (Table 4).

The data in the above table show that instructors' responses concerning their reflection level under the critical domain items got a low total mean value of 2.53 of the applied 5-point Likert scale self-reflective questionnaire having mean values of each separate item ranging from 2.39 to 2.66 (Table 5). This, in turn, reveals that the instructors are the least reflective in terms of linking teaching practice with sociological, cultural, historical, and political aspects of the students inside and outside of classroom.

As indicated in the figure above, among the three levels of reflection displayed in Tables 3–5, the highest total mean value ($M = 3.75$) goes to items grouped under descriptive reflective level dealing with technical application of educational knowledge and basic curriculum principles (Figure 1). However, the items categorized under the comparative/

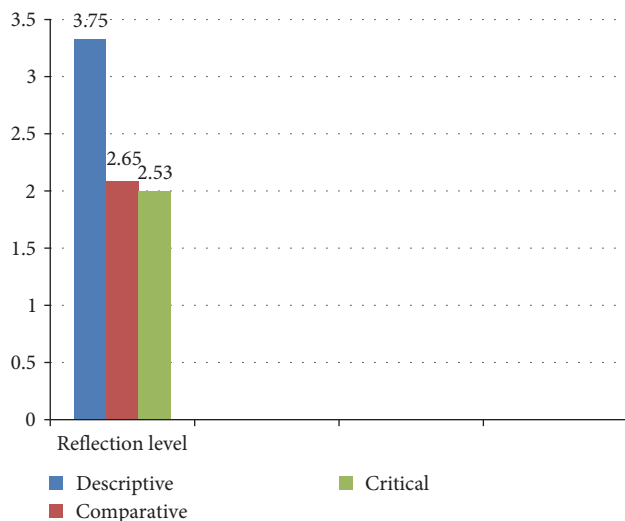


FIGURE 1: Summary of instructors' levels of reflection.

pedagogical and the critical levels of reflection received the lowest mean values ($M=2.65$ and $M=2.53$, respectively) comparatively, lying under the range of “neutral and strongly disagree” position. In short, the highest mean ($M=3.75$) goes to the descriptive/technical reflective level followed by the comparative/pedagogical reflection level ($M=2.65$), but the critical level of reflection received the lowest mean ($M=2.53$) (Figure 1). This, in turn, implies that instructors' level of reflectivity lies at the lowest/technical/application level merely trying to meet educational objectives, but they are less reflective at the comparative and even the least reflective under the category of critical reflection level giving less attention to the worth of teaching in sociocultural aspects of education.

4.2.2. Presentation of Qualitative Data on the Level of Reflection. On the other hand, with the aim of verifying or triangulating the quantitative data concerning the degree of practical application of reflective teaching in ELT, classroom observation and instructors' journal entry data were used. The qualitative data under this theme are presented as follows.

The researchers tried to observe four sample instructors' English classroom lessons with the aim of examining the actual practices of teachers' reflection in their teaching process. In doing so, an average of eight sample classroom lesson observations were taken and analyzed. As the researchers examined the sampled English language instructors' classroom teaching observation data, it was realized that the instructors gave due attention to the technical instructional processes such as introducing the topic, error correction, and monitoring learning merely focusing on achieving the effectiveness of educational objectives without trying to link the topic either to the previous lesson topic or past experiences of the learners. The observation data also showed that the sampled instructors were rushing to cover the daily lesson in time

without helping learners to be self-evaluative and autonomous through providing self-regulating activities. The instructors were rarely seen employing different strategies to make learners engage in critical reflective/inquiry/constructive learning and seldom reflect on various social issues in groups/pairs. This implies that the instructors are found at the technical rationality level of practicing reflective teaching even if they hold a superficial theoretical understanding of it.

This reality was also confirmed by the reflective journal entry data prepared by the sample instructors. The reflective journal was aimed at examining instructors' level/degree of reflection. However, when the researchers examined their journals, it was noted that the journal entries remarked mere narrations of what and how they did in class than why they did them as can be seen from the sample journal entries of the instructors here under:

Instructor 1:

Today's lesson focuses on teaching paragraph writing. In doing so, first I highlighted the basic concepts of writing a paragraph (its definition, components, quality, types, etc.) to the students. Next to that, I tried to discuss the basic stage of writing a paragraph (Planning stage to final drafting stages). After that, the students were guided to write a paragraph on debatable issues like “Women should stay at home and work on household work”. I guided the students to collaborate and generate idea in group, but majority of students were not volunteer to take part in the group discussion instead they were trying to write independently. Two groups of students were arguing that the girls should work at home because house hold work is females' specialty (Appendix D).

Likewise, another instructor (Instructor 2) has written his journal as follows:

The lesson I taught today deals with a reading passage entitled “Reading for Study” which is found in Unit-1, page-9 of the new Communicative English Skills-I module. In Preparation stage of my lesson, I introduced the topic lesson topic to the students and I provided them with the concept of scanning and skimming strategies of reading shortly; then I made the students read silently and individually with the objective of guessing the contextual meanings of the new words and answer comprehension questions. The lesson was not completely successful due to the fact that students did not finish the exercise on time (Appendix D).

According to Larrivee [12], the contents of the above sample journals indicated that the instructors' journal entries heavily focus on technical aspects of teaching with the very aim of meeting educational objectives. This, in turn, shows that instructors tend to fall at the lower level (called

“technical rationality” level of reflection where the practitioners are concerned with the technical application of educational knowledge) and basic curriculum principles (examining the skills, strategies, methods, and principles used to achieve predetermined goals or objectives) [12]. Regarding the success/effectiveness of their teaching and learning experiences in classroom teaching, the instructors wrote that their lessons were not fully successful. For example, one of the instructors (*Instructor 1*) disclosed in his journal that the students faced a time shortage to complete the paragraph writing lessons for that specific period and he made them as a home take assignment.

Instructor 2 also wrote his reflective journal as “My lesson was not completely successful or did not go well as the students did not finish the exercise on time. That is, I could not finish my planned lesson on time and majority of the students did not participate in the question answer sessions because of the time I consumed teaching reading strategies.”

One of the sample instructors (*Instructor 3*) still included a complaint in his journal concerning his learners’ knowledge or awareness gap while writing the paragraph by saying:

The students were guided to write a paragraph on a given debatable issue/topic: “University students should/shouldn’t pay cost-sharing”, but I identified a problem from their paragraph. That is, although I gave them a topic that makes them write an argumentative paragraph, they wrote it in a plain expository paragraph rather than presenting in a debatable form trying to convince other opponents/the readers. This in turn indicates that they had less awareness about organization, word selection, and providing concrete details and logics to convince the reader (Appendix D).

From the above extract of the instructor’s journal entry, we could see that the instructor’s purpose was checking if the students were doing what he asked them to do (which is a technical aspect of reflection).

In short, it was indicated in the journal entry that the instructors did not attempt to critically write about the worth of teaching rather than focusing on the effectiveness of their teaching learning process with the aim of achieving the pre-planned objectives. Here, it was evidence from the reflective journal entry data that the instructors are found to be at lower technical level in terms of practical application of reflective teaching although they tended to say that they held a theoretical understanding on the principles of reflective teaching.

5. Discussion

The triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data confirmed a clear gap between instructors’ theoretical perception and practical application of their knowledge. This was an indication of the instructors’ lack of enough

awareness of their reflection and reflective practices, which plays a vital role in the course of their professional development, which, in turn, makes teaching more effective taking the demands of the wider context of education into account.

In order to explain the results of the present study, we need to refer back to the meaning of reflective practice, as conceptualized by its pioneers [1, 3, 4], which entails that the practitioners assume a practical frame of mind (unlike the routine actions), which is carried out with the intention of changing practice. This implies that reflective practice is an ongoing process enabling the practitioners to have certain cognitive skills, so as to compare the current teaching learning situation with similar situations experienced in the past as a base to change practice as stated by Farrell [34]. This implies that reflectivity considers various contexts among social, pedagogic, and moral perspectives. With respect to this, reflective practice is less likely to be implemented practically in the context of the present study area due to the fact that the instructors were seen carrying out routine actions striving for the success of daily educational objectives. As categorized by Van Manen [43], levels of reflection include descriptive, comparative, and critical reflection. Interpreting the results of the present study in terms of these levels, we can argue that the participant instructors mostly focused on their own actions of successfully finishing their daily lesson, but they were less likely to examine their beliefs and theories and to contextualize their actions in the wider context. The reason why teachers often quit the use of newly introduced teaching strategies and revert to the traditional way is that reflection is not supported as a necessary element to make sense of the new strategy in context. The instructors’ practices depicted through the survey data and classroom observation suggest a mismatch between theory and practice further informing a superficial engagement with contextualized critical inquiry activities. This can be an indication of instructors’ lack of engagement in reflective practice although they have got better theoretical understanding on it as to their response to the questionnaire under this theme. The findings of this study are consistent with that of a study by Ostaz [46], which indicated that in-service teachers had a reflective practices level far below acceptable. However, in terms of instructors’ theoretical awareness of reflective practice, the findings of the present study are inconsistent with that of a local research conducted by Gudeta [47], which found out that EFL teachers in the secondary schools have no good understanding or they have a knowledge gap in their understanding of reflective teaching and which further indicated that teachers’ understanding of the concept and use of reflection as a teaching strategy are below the expected one. The current study showed that instructors in the study area seem to have a misconnection between the teaching strategies they use and theoretical knowledge they hold. In this regard, it is more likely to argue that the instructors see their teaching more as habit formation or “learning by doing” than learning through engagement in critical thinking and reflective practice.

6. Conclusion

The current study was carried out with the aim of examining how ELT instructors perceived and experienced reflective practice together with their level of practical reflectivity in their teaching. The findings of the study indicated that although instructors have a good hypothetical understanding on the basic concepts of reflection and its values in education, they do not practically implement it as the classroom observation and reflective journal entry data proved. This leads to the conclusion that there is a gap between instructors' theoretical understanding about reflective teaching and their actual practice of reflective teaching with commitment. More specifically, it can be deduced that regardless of the superficial understanding they hold about reflective practice, ELT instructors in the study area are found at a lower descriptive/technical level of applying reflection trying to make use of educational knowledge they hold with the very aim of achieving the preplanned educational objectives.

The results of this study also depicted that instructors focused more on the practical aspect of teaching (what and "how") giving less regard to the broader educational purposes (why questions). It can be inferred from this finding that instructors rarely endeavor to critically reflect on the worth of teaching considering the broader social aspects of teaching outside the class (the contexts of the classroom, school, community, and/or society) that affect their teaching practice. Therefore, it can generally be concluded from the results of the study that ELT instructors in the study area haven't developed the culture of reflective teaching such as asking advanced questions like "What were the strengths of my lesson? Was the content covered important to the students? and what should be changed in my lesson teaching?".

Appendix

A. Transcribed Interview Data under the Theme of "Instructors' Perception of Reflective Language Teaching"

Researcher: Welcome to this interview session.

Instructor 1: Thank you very much

Researcher: Well. Coming to the question, could you tell me what does reflection, reflective practice, and reflective teaching mean to you?

Instructor 1: To my understanding, reflective teaching comprises many things. It must be seen as an opportunity to deepen understanding of self and teaching learning situations. Possibly, reflection should be a habit of mind, which is inspired by environmental circumstances, allowing us to focus, research, and feel safe in tight conditions to solve problems.

Researcher: Thank you very much for being volunteer to take part in this interview. I would like to reflect your idea for the following question: What is reflection, reflective practice, and reflective teaching mean to you?

Instructor 2: Reflective teaching is a continuous process in which teachers monitor, evaluate, and revise their own teaching practice continuously and critically reframing of lived experience. Indeed, since teaching is a complex activity, it requires professional decisions in situations where there are no "right" answers. You know, there are teachers who only follow a set of routines based on tradition, habit, institutional norms, and expectations. They tend to be rigid and unresponsive although they may be reasonably effective in covering the course. As to me, this is not right way. We need to update our knowledge of subject matter, methods of teaching, and assessing through continuous inquiry and looking for practical solutions.

Researcher: Welcome to this interview session. I'd like you to provide your genuine reflection for the following interview question: What does reflection, reflective practice, and reflective teaching mean to you?

Instructor 3: I see reflection as thinking and processing about what we see, hear, and touch evaluating usability and applicability of the contents/course material we teach instead of taking that for granted. It is seeing things from different angles rather than taking what the theory/the book says as it is considering practical applicability of the learning content.

Researcher: Thank you in advance for the information you provide. Coming to the question, what does reflection, reflective practice, and reflective teaching mean to you?

Instructor 4: Reflective practice is an approach/means or tool helping learners' vigorous engagement in critical inquiry learning through linking their past experience with current learning practice and a reflective practitioner is the main actor of teaching by exploring problematic classroom contexts and being responsible for one's own actions, so as to improve performance in teaching. In short, reflectivity encourages critical and reflective engagement in live experiences, logical interpretation of what we have experienced to arrive at sound understanding.

B. Open/Initial Codes Derived From Instructors' Interview on Their Perception of Reflection and Reflective Teaching

Open/initial code	Sample responses taken from the participants words/expressions
(1) Seeing things from different dimensions. (2) Facilitating thinking and processing about what we see, hear, and touch. (3) Means of arriving at deeper understanding. (4) Connecting experience with psychological, emotional, or intellectual need. (5) Giving an opportunity to expand understanding of self and teaching learning situations. (6) Way of exploring situations occurring in day-to-day work.	(1) Reflective teaching comprises many things for me. It must be seen as an opportunity to deepen understanding of self and teaching learning situations. (2) Possibly, the process of reflection becomes habit of mind, which is stimulated by environmental conditions allowing us to focus, experiment, and feel safe from uncomfortable influences by identifying and solving problems. (3) It is seeing things from different angles rather than taking what the theory/the book says for granted by enhancing usability and applicability of the learned content.
(1) Continuous process of monitoring, evaluating, and revising one's own teaching practice critically reframing live experience. (2) Providing teachers with professional decisions in situations where there is no single "right" answer. (3) Updating knowledge of subject matter, methods of teaching, and assessing by way of continuous inquiry and looking for answers. (4) Way of critical and reflective engagement in live experiences, logical interpretation of what instructors have experienced to arrive at sound understanding.	(1) Reflective teaching practice is a continuous process in which teachers monitor, evaluate, and revise their own teaching practice continuously and critically reframing of lived experience. (2) Indeed, since teaching is a complex activity, it requires professional decisions in situations where there are no "right" answers. You know, there are teachers who only follow a set of routines based on tradition, habit, institutional norms, and expectations. (3) They tend to be rigid and unresponsive although they may be reasonably effective in covering the course. As to me, this is not right way. We need to update our knowledge of subject matter, methods of teaching, and assessing through continuous inquiry and looking for practical solutions. (4) In short, reflectivity encourages critical and reflective engagement in live experiences, logical interpretation of what we have experienced to arrive at sound understanding.

C. Open/Initial, Axial Codes, and Major Themes Derived From Interview Held with Instructors' Perception on the Concept of Reflective Teaching

Initial/open codes	Axial codes/subthemes	Major theme
(1) Means of arriving at deeper understanding connecting experience with psychological, emotional, or intellectual need. (2) Giving an opportunity to expand understanding of self and teaching learning situations. (3) Way of critical and reflective engagement in live experiences, logical interpretation of what instructors have experienced to arrive at sound understanding. (4) Strategy to link personal experience, theory, and actual context.	Way of understanding self and teaching context using one's live experience, critical thinking, reflection, and analytical interpretation	Instructors' perception on the concept of reflective teaching
(1) Way of exploring situations occurring in day-to-day work. (2) Seeing things from different dimensions. (3) Facilitating thinking and processing about what we see, hear, and touch.	Evaluating things from different dimensions to find alternative ways of reacting and responding to challenges	
(1) Continuous process of monitoring, evaluating, and revising one's own teaching practice critically reframing live experience. (2) Updating knowledge of subject matter, methods of teaching, and assessing by way of continuous inquiry and looking for answers. (3) Professional decisions in situations where there are no "right" answers. (4) Moving forth and back linking the theory and the practice looking for solutions. (5) It is an engaging learning tool.	(1) Continuous critical learning to build practical knowledge of subject matter and to find solutions through monitoring, evaluating, and revising teaching practice.	

D: Sample Journal Entry Data under the Theme of Instructors' Level of Reflectivity.

Instructor 1: Today's lesson focuses on teaching paragraph writing. In doing so, first I highlighted the basic concepts of writing a paragraph (its definition, components, quality, types, etc.) to the students. Next to that, I tried to discuss the basic stage of writing a paragraph (planning stage to final drafting stages). After that, the students were guided to write a paragraph on debatable issues like "Women should stay at home and work on household work." I guided the students to collaborate and generate idea in group, but majority of students were not volunteer to take part in the group discussion instead they were trying to write independently. Two groups of students were arguing that the girls should work at home because household work is females' specialty.

Instructor 2: The lesson I taught today deals with a reading passage entitled "Reading for Study" which is found in Unit 1, page 9 of the new Communicative English Skills-I module. In preparation stage of my lesson, I introduced the topic of the lesson to the students and I provided them with the concept of scanning and skimming strategies of reading shortly; then, I made the students read silently and individually with the objective of guessing the contextual meanings of the new words and answer comprehension questions. My lesson was not completely successful or did not go well as the students did not finish the exercise on time. That is, I could not finish my planned lesson on time and majority of the students did not participate in the question answer sessions because of the time I consumed teaching reading strategies.

Instructor 3: The students were guided to write a paragraph on a given debatable issue/topic: "University students should/shouldn't pay cost-sharing." I identified a problem from their paragraph. That is, although I gave them a topic that makes them write an argumentative paragraph, they wrote it in a plain expository paragraph rather than presenting in a debatable form trying to convince other opponents/ the reader. This, in turn, indicates that they had less awareness about organization, word selection, and providing concrete details and logics to convince the reader.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Additional Points

Limitation of the Study. We have faced time and financial constraints at the course of conducting this study, but we managed the challenges and accomplished the study successfully.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Nigatu Habtamu, a Ph.D. student, designed this case study and conducted the analysis and interpretation of the data and wrote the report. Dr. Badima Belay, supervisor and co-author of the current research work, contributed a lot to the writing of the paper providing constructive comments and scientific reviews.

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