

**REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES: HOW UZBEK EFL TEACHERS
EVALUATE AND IMPROVE THEIR OWN METHODOLOGY**

Ayyubkhon Tursunboyev

External expert at the Agency for Knowledge and Qualifications

*Assessment under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the
Republic of Uzbekistan*

Abstract: *Reflective teaching has emerged as a vital component of teacher professionalism and pedagogical development. This paper examines how Uzbek EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers apply reflective practices to evaluate and enhance their instructional methods. Using qualitative data from teacher interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals, the study explores teachers' perceptions of reflection, the tools they use, and the challenges they face in applying reflective strategies. The findings reveal that reflective practice not only improves classroom management and learner engagement but also fosters professional autonomy and lifelong learning. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for institutional support and structured reflective training within Uzbekistan's teacher education programs.*

Keywords: *reflective teaching, self-evaluation, teacher development, Uzbekistan, EFL methodology, professional reflection*

Introduction

In the modern era of language education, teaching is no longer perceived as a static act of transmitting knowledge; rather, it is seen as a dynamic process that involves continuous learning, critical thinking, and adaptation. The concept of reflective teaching encourages educators to systematically analyze their own classroom experiences, evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, and make informed decisions for future improvement.

In Uzbekistan, English language education has gained national significance following the country's integration into global academic and economic systems[1].



English proficiency is now considered a crucial component of higher education and professional success. However, many EFL teachers still rely on traditional grammar-translation methods, which often limit communicative competence. Reflective teaching offers a pathway toward innovation and reform in this area. By engaging in self-evaluation, teachers can bridge the gap between traditional and modern pedagogies and better align their practices with international standards.

This study explores how Uzbek EFL teachers engage in reflective practice, what tools and approaches they use, and how reflection contributes to their ongoing professional growth [2].

Literature Review

Concept of Reflective Teaching

The roots of reflective practice can be traced to John Dewey (1933), who defined reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge.” Dewey’s ideas were later developed by Donald Schön (1983), who distinguished between *reflection-in-action* (thinking during teaching) and *reflection-on-action* (thinking after teaching) [3]. These two dimensions of reflection enable teachers to analyze their pedagogical decisions in real-time and retrospectively.

Reflective teaching has become a central concept in teacher education and second language acquisition. According to Richards and Lockhart reflection encourages teachers to examine the underlying beliefs and assumptions guiding their classroom behavior[4]. Farrell argues that reflective practice is essential for professional autonomy, while Mann and Walsh emphasize its role in building teacher identity and resilience.

Reflective Teaching in EFL Contexts

In EFL settings, reflection allows teachers to critically evaluate how language input, classroom interaction, and assessment methods contribute to students’ communicative competence. Various tools—such as lesson journals, peer observation, video recordings, and student feedback—are used to facilitate reflective inquiry.



Reflective Teaching in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, the concept of reflective teaching is gradually being introduced through professional development programs and teacher-training universities. However, many teachers still lack formal training in reflection techniques. Studies such as Akhmedova [1]) and Karimov [5] show that while teachers acknowledge the importance of reflection, institutional support, time constraints, and methodological guidance remain key challenges.

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' reflective practices. The study focused on identifying both the processes and outcomes of reflection in real classroom contexts.

Participants

Fifteen Uzbek EFL teachers participated in the study. They represented diverse educational backgrounds, teaching experiences (ranging from 3 to 20 years), and institutions (secondary schools, lyceums, and universities). Participation was voluntary and conducted under ethical guidelines ensuring confidentiality[6].

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews explored teachers' understanding of reflective teaching and how they implemented it.

Classroom observations were conducted to identify practical instances of reflection-in-action.

Reflective journals provided insights into teachers' long-term reflective processes.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurrent patterns and themes. Three primary dimensions of reflection were identified: self-evaluation, innovation, and professional collaboration.

Findings and Discussion

Reflection as a Tool for Self-Evaluation



Most participants reported that reflection allowed them to critically assess their teaching performance. They frequently asked themselves questions such as: *Did my students achieve the lesson objectives?* or *How could I present this concept more effectively?*

Teachers who used self-evaluation checklists or video recordings demonstrated stronger awareness of classroom dynamics[7]. For instance, one teacher stated:

“After watching my recorded lesson, I realized that I spoke too fast and gave limited opportunities for students to speak. The next day, I adjusted my pace and noticed significant improvement in student participation.”

Innovation and Pedagogical Improvement

Reflective teachers tended to experiment with new teaching strategies. Journals and feedback encouraged them to move away from teacher-centered approaches toward communicative and task-based learning. Teachers also reported designing new classroom activities after analyzing previous lessons, showing that reflection inspired creativity and adaptability.

Peer Collaboration and Feedback

Peer observation was another important component of reflective practice. Teachers valued feedback from colleagues because it provided objective insights. Collaborative reflection sessions were found to be more effective than solitary reflection, as they helped teachers view their challenges from multiple perspectives[6].

Challenges and Limitations

Despite positive outcomes, several challenges were identified:

- Time constraints: heavy workloads limited teachers' ability to reflect regularly.
- Lack of institutional support: many schools did not have formal reflection frameworks.
- Limited training: teachers requested workshops on how to conduct structured reflective activities effectively.



4.5 Cultural and Institutional Context

In Uzbekistan's educational system, hierarchical traditions sometimes discourage open self-criticism[1]. Teachers may perceive reflection as a form of judgment rather than growth. Therefore, fostering a safe and supportive environment for reflection is essential.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that reflective teaching is not merely an additional or optional aspect of pedagogy, but a core professional competency that defines the quality and effectiveness of English language education. For Uzbek EFL teachers, reflection serves as both a mirror and a tool — a mirror that reveals the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching practices, and a tool that enables them to refine, reconstruct, and reimagine their methodologies to suit the evolving needs of learners.

Reflective practice empowers teachers to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement: planning, acting, observing, and analyzing their actions critically. Teachers who systematically reflect on their lessons become more aware of the relationship between teaching methods and learning outcomes. This awareness encourages them to adopt more communicative, learner-centered, and contextually relevant strategies, moving beyond traditional grammar-translation approaches that still dominate some classrooms in Uzbekistan.

Furthermore, reflection promotes professional autonomy and teacher identity formation. Through reflective journals, peer discussions, and self-evaluation, teachers develop a stronger sense of ownership over their professional growth. They begin to view themselves not simply as transmitters of knowledge but as active researchers and decision-makers who continuously seek to improve the quality of education they deliver. This shift in perspective is essential for sustaining motivation, creativity, and a lifelong learning attitude among teachers.

However, the study also highlights several barriers that limit the full realization of reflective practice in Uzbekistan's educational context. These include time constraints, insufficient institutional encouragement, and a lack of structured



frameworks for systematic reflection. In many schools, reflection remains an individual effort rather than a collective or institutionalized practice. Therefore, to fully integrate reflection into teacher development, both policy-level support and practical implementation strategies are required.

To address these challenges, the study suggests several directions. First, teacher training institutions and universities should incorporate reflective modules into their curricula, focusing on both theory and practice. Second, regular workshops and mentoring programs should be organized to train teachers in applying reflective models such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle or Schön's framework. Third, schools and educational authorities should create environments that encourage collaboration, peer observation, and open dialogue about teaching practices without fear of evaluation or criticism. Finally, research on reflection should continue to expand, incorporating quantitative studies that link reflective teaching with measurable student outcomes.

In conclusion, reflective teaching represents a transformative approach to education—one that empowers teachers to become self-aware professionals capable of adapting to the changing demands of global language education. In the context of Uzbekistan's rapidly modernizing education system, fostering a culture of reflection among EFL teachers is not only beneficial but essential for ensuring sustained pedagogical excellence, innovation, and learner success.

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