

Reflective Practice in Language Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Language teachers have been interested in reflecting on their teaching and learning practices to improve their professional skills. This study aims to locate, analyze, and synthesize the current state of research on reflective practice (RP) specifically related to English language teaching and learning. Using a set of rigorous criteria that encompassed the quality, content, and types of articles, the researcher selected and reviewed thirty-seven scholarly articles published in fifteen international journals between 2012 and 2022. Employing the holistic approach, the researcher examined the body of RP-related literature, including research goals, methods, contexts, participants, and RP practices. The analysis identified five main themes: collaborative reflection, teaching and learning experiences, reflection techniques, self-study, and written reflection analysis. Each theme was further sub-categorized into different research strands and discussed in light of the relevant literature. As a result, this study has detailed how various forms of RPs were implemented, along with their potential implementation challenges and weaknesses, which should be of interest to language teachers or practitioners who plan to operationalize RP in their pedagogical practices. Methodological implications, empirical voids in RP-related studies, and directions for further research are presented.

KEYWORDS:

EFL teaching and learning;
Language teaching;
Literature review;
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Introduction

Reflective practice (henceforth referred to as RP) is defined as activities in which teachers systematically gather data about their teaching, either inside or outside classroom walls, and use the data to inform their pedagogical decisions (Farrell, 2014) or to draw implications for their teaching (Gün, 2011). In addition to collecting data about teaching, RP involves examining teachers' (or student teachers') attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices (Machost & Stains, 2023; Martínez, 2021; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). RP can be exercised individually through introspection, looking at the inner lives of teachers, or through retrospection activities (i.e., focusing on what works or does not work in the classroom) (Farrell, 2022), without any involvement from other parties or done collaboratively with

different individuals, emphasizing the values of learning from each other (Moradkhani, 2019). Further, in RP, teachers might also dwell on classroom events, recall dialogues with their students or colleagues, or critique their teaching plans based on students' learning outcomes (Tuğa, 2013). Importantly, RP is now recognized as a crucial component of a language teacher's education and training (Farrell, 2022), and it can provide valuable tools for teachers' professional development throughout their teaching careers (Machost & Stains, 2023; Pang, 2017).

Previous studies have reported various benefits that language teachers have experienced after reflecting on their language teaching and learning practices. RP helps teachers monitor, make real-time decisions, plan future pedagogical practices, and respond more effectively to the changing needs of their students than those who are less reflective in their teaching practices (Hyacinth & Mann, 2014; Zulfikar, 2019). RP helps the teachers avoid "burnout" (Farrell, 2004). Additionally, RP helps teachers develop professionally by learning from their classroom-related experiences (Cirocki & Farell, 2017; Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Mali & Salisbury, 2022; Ong et al., 2021), which leads to more productive and satisfying teaching performances (Orlova, 2009).

Now, the questions are: "How can information about teaching be collected? What criteria do teachers use to evaluate their teaching?" (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). "Is it enough to ask the teachers to go and 'reflect' on their teaching? Are they just 'reacting' rather than 'reflecting' when they are asked to do that? What is the appropriate method of reflection?" (Gün, 2011). Moreover, some of the challenges teachers face now involve identifying, formulating, and sharing reflective tools that can facilitate dialogic, engaging, and evidence-based RP (Walsh & Mann, 2015).

These inquiries suggest the need for a literature review of more recent RP studies; therefore, this article aims to locate, analyze, and synthesize the current state of research on RP, specifically related to teaching and learning English. Following similar directions to Li's (2012, 2018) literature review, the present study aims to address the following inquiries about the RP-related literature: research goals that have been addressed, research methods that have been applied, research contexts that have been investigated, research participants that have been involved, research strands that can be extracted, and the synthesized findings regarding these strands.

The findings aim to demonstrate how language teaching and learning-related information and evidence can be collected, the relevant criteria used to evaluate language teaching, ways to ensure in-depth research beyond mere reaction to teaching and learning experiences, appropriate methods for conducting research, and potential gaps in Research-Related literature. Thus, this article should be of interest to language teachers or practitioners who plan to operationalize RP into their pedagogical practices. The identified gaps in this paper should also benefit researchers interested in studying RP in language classrooms from various perspectives and directions.

Method

The researcher employed a systematic literature review method, as described by Li (2012, 2018). It included searching databases and journals, identifying relevant studies, locating articles, and creating annotated summaries.

The Article Selection Process

To find related articles on RP, the researcher strategically searched databases that index educational research, such as Google Scholar (i.e., the same database that is used by Li, 2018; Teng, 2024; Utami & Santosa, 2023 used in their study), EBSCO, and SAGE. When searching in these databases, the researcher used the following keywords (adapted from Farrell, 2016): reflective teaching, reflective practices, teachers' reflections, reflections in English language classrooms, L2 teachers' reflections, and teachers' reflections in classrooms. In the databases, the researcher also selected advanced search options to narrow the scope of the exploration (e.g., to education), publication date (e.g., from 2012 to 2022), and to retrieve fully accessible content.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles retrieved from the advanced searches were then carefully selected using the following criteria to ensure the quality of the review presented in this study. First, the articles focused on reflective practices in EFL/ESL settings. Second, the articles were written in English and published in peer-reviewed academic journals indexed in SCOPUS. Many researchers (e.g., Bond et al., 2024; Imran & Almusharraf, 2023; Lashari & Umrani, 2023; Mao et al., 2024; Zain, 2022) also reviewed articles published in SCOPUS-indexed journals, given the articles' quality and impact. If not indexed in SCOPUS, the selected articles must be cited at least ten times (i.e., informed by Google Scholar) by previous studies. Lastly, the articles could be empirical or non-empirical.

Table 1. *The inclusion and exclusion criteria in selecting the articles to be reviewed*

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Year of publication	2012-2022	Before 2012 or after 2022
Documents	Journal articles	Non-journal articles (e.g., conference proceedings, theses, online newspaper)
Article types	Peer-reviewed articles	Non-peer-reviewed articles
Content	Discussing reflective practices in EFL/ESL settings	Not discussing reflective practices in EFL/ESL settings
Quality	SCOPUS-indexed or has been cited at least ten times	Non-SCOPUS-indexed or has been cited less than ten times

With these criteria, the researcher selected 37 articles in 15 academic journals. Then, as shown in Table 2, the articles were published in education-related journals. Thirty-five articles were empirical research, while two articles (e.g., Farrell, 2014; Walsh & Mann, 2015) were conceptual. Notably, the researcher acknowledged a potential bias as he also used his professional judgment as an associate professor and researcher at a private university in Indonesia to include those 37 articles for review in this study. That said, other researchers with different backgrounds might have different preferences or professional judgment for reviewing articles in their research.

Table 2. *The distributions of studies reviewed in this article*

Journal Titles	Number of Articles	Authors
ELT Journal	7	Carolan and Wang (2012); Farrell (2015); Mackenzie (2018); Moradkhani (2019); Nguyen and Ngo (2018); Tuğa (2013); Walsh and Mann (2015)
TESL-EJ	7	Baecher et al. (2014); Farrell (2014); Hong et al. (2019); Hyacinth and Mann (2014); Smith (2019); Thompson and Moody (2015); Wyatt et al. (2016)
TEFLIN Journal	6	Astika (2014); Kuswandono (2014); Mali and Salsbury (2021); Ong et al. (2021); Ragawanti (2015); Sari et al. (2021)
The Qualitative Report	5	Bernhardt (2012, 2018); Hunter et al. (2014); Lewis (2018); Zulfikar (2019)
TESOL Journal	2	Andrei (2017); Uştuk and De Costa (2021)
Action Research	1	Nilsson et al. (2018)
English teaching and learning	1	Moghaddam et al. (2020)
Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching	1	Mali and Salsbury (2022)
Georgia Educational Researcher	1	Pellegrino and Gerber (2012)
Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics	1	Nurfaidah et al. (2017)
Journal on English as a Foreign Language	1	Mali (2022)
Journal of Teacher Education	1	Behizadeh et al. (2019)
Qualitative Social Work	1	Probst et al. (2016)
RELC Journal	1	Atai and Nejadghanbar (2016)
System	1	Moradkhani et al. (2017)

Data Analysis

Next, the researcher stored the articles in his reference management software, Mendeley. Essential aspects of the articles (i.e., related to research goals that have been addressed, research methods that have been applied, research contexts that have been investigated, and research participants that have been involved) were highlighted, discussed, and synthesized to provide an in-depth understanding of how RP could be done in EFL/ESL classrooms. To ensure the credibility of the findings presented in this study, the researcher employed transparent and replicable criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies, as outlined in Table 1. The researcher then carefully reviewed all theme development concerning the original studies to maintain fidelity to the source meanings.

Results

Following the holistic approach (Li, 2012, 2018), the researcher reviewed 37 articles from 15 peer-reviewed international journals, first describing the research goals, methods, contexts, participants, and instruments used in the articles. The descriptions should provide valuable

information for readers to see how previous studies implemented RP practices; later, readers might adapt that information to implement RP practices in their own classrooms. Due to the journal's word limit, the researcher has placed the matrix of the studies reviewed in this article on an open-access Google Drive (<https://bit.ly/Matrix-of-the-previous-studies>). The researcher then extracted the research strands analyzed from the current body of literature. The research strands were then discussed to provide an in-depth understanding of how RP could be implemented in EFL/ESL classrooms, and to offer a critical evaluation of the RP practices employed in previous studies. When presenting the findings in the following sections, the researcher did not aim to make any generalizations, considering the limited number of articles reviewed in this study (see Table 2). Therefore, teachers teaching students in classrooms with different contexts and cultural backgrounds from those examined in this study should read the findings thoughtfully.

Research Methods of the Previous Studies

The majority of researchers approached their study qualitatively, drawing on multiple data sources. The qualitative research “aims to explore and interpret behavior, relies on words, and portrays a natural context” (Ary et al., 2019). For instance, Hyacinth and Mann (2014) explored how Nigerian teachers conceptualized reflection and its importance to them. The researchers employed various instruments, including field notes, post-classroom observation reports, unstructured questionnaires, and interviews, to collect data and achieve the research objectives. Other researchers, Nguyen and Ngo (2018), examined the extent to which a peer-mentoring model among preservice teachers facilitated their reflection on teaching. The data were collected from six focus group interviews. There were only two studies (Moghaddam et al., 2020; Moradkhani et al., 2017) that adopted a mixed method based on quantitative (e.g., a survey and a reflective teaching inventory) and qualitative (e.g., a semi-structured interview and reflective journals) data to study the relationship between reflective practices and self-efficacy as well as to explore the extent to which EFL teachers engage in reflective teaching and to examine the extent to which raising teachers' awareness of reflective teaching changes their reflective practice.

A case study approach was also predominantly used in the previous studies. It is a research method in which a researcher investigates a phenomenon within its real-life settings (Creswell, 2007). A case study also provides “an in-depth description of an individual, a group, a site, or a class” (Ary et al., 2019). For example, the case study by Farrell (2015) examined the perspectives of three experienced ESL teachers on teacher-student relationships. Recently, Hong et al. (2019) conducted a case study to explore the reflections of three veteran teachers on their personal and professional experiences with English language learners (ELLs). Looking at these two studies (Farrell, 2015; Hong et al., 2019), a case study usually involves a small scale of research participants to obtain their in-depth perspectives.

Notably, three researchers (Lewis, 2018; Mali, 2022; Zulfikar, 2019) employed an autoethnographic approach in their reflective practices. Autoethnography enables researchers to draw on their personal experiences to gain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon (Méndez, 2013) and to examine unexplored cultural and social contexts (Chang, 2008). The approach also helps researchers connect themselves to broader social and cultural contexts (Foster et al., 2005). The review indicated that studies using autoethnography to explore teachers' reflective practices remain limited in number. However, one challenge in using this approach was ensuring the reliability of the researcher's personal stories.

Various research instruments were employed throughout the research. The most common instruments were individual interviews, focus-group interviews, (peer) observation reports, written reflections, written journals, self-reflective checklists, questionnaires, and video recordings of classroom sessions. Other tools included course announcements and evaluations. Slightly different from those instruments, some researchers employed an online discussion from the Yahoo group platform (Wyatt et al., 2016), blog posts (Atai & Nejadghanbar, 2016), discussion board posts (Behizadeh et al., 2019), reflective teaching inventory (Moghaddam et al., 2020), reflective video blogs (Ong et al., 2021), and audio diaries (Uştuk & De Costa, 2021) to collect research data. Future researchers might consider using one or some of these research instruments in their studies.

Contexts and Participants

Previous studies have been conducted on various continents worldwide, including the United States, Australia, Asia, Europe, and Africa, as displayed in Figure 1. Among thirty-seven articles, twelve studies were conducted in the United States: two papers were related to middle school settings (Andrei, 2017; Behizadeh et al., 2019), one research study concerned the K-12 context (Baecher et al., 2014), and the others were conducted in university settings. Nine other studies were conducted in Indonesia (Astika, 2014; Kuswandono, 2014; Mali, 2022; Mali & Salsbury, 2021, 2022; Nurfaidah et al., 2017; Ragawanti, 2015; Sari et al., 2021; Zulfikar, 2019), and four were conducted in Iran. The remaining research took place in Canada, Nigeria, Australia, Sweden, England, China, Turkey, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

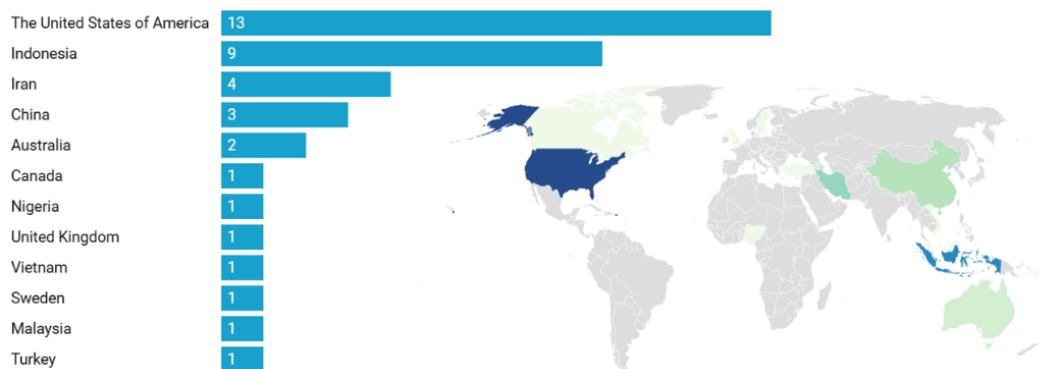


Figure 1. *The geographical locations of the previous studies*

Participants of the previous studies were also varied. They were school teachers (Andrei, 2017; Hyacinth & Mann, 2014; Moradkhani, 2019; Sari et al., 2021), veteran teachers (Hong et al., 2019), master's and doctoral students (Mali & Salsbury, 2022; Probst et al., 2016; Thompson & Moody, 2015). Yet, most of the research involved undergraduate student-teachers who did their teaching practicum either in a university (teaching) course (Kuswandono, 2014; Moradkhani, 2019; Tuğa, 2013) or in real school settings (Astika, 2014; Behizadeh et al., 2019; Nguyen & Ngo, 2018; Ragawanti, 2015). Further, almost all previous studies involved small samples of participants, ranging from one to thirty-five individuals. In some studies, the researchers used themselves as research subject (Lewis, 2018; Mali, 2022; Mali & Salsbury, 2022; Zulfikar, 2019). Involving two to three participants (Andrei, 2017; Hong et al., 2019; Hunter et al., 2014; Mali & Salsbury, 2021, 2022; Sari et al., 2021) or less than ten research subjects (Bernhardt, 2012; Farrell, 2015; Mackenzie, 2018; Pellegrino & Gerber, 2012; Smith, 2019; Thompson & Moody, 2015; Uştuk & De Costa, 2021) were also a typical pattern.

There were only six studies that involved a larger number of research subjects, such as fourteen preservice ESL teachers (Ong et al., 2021), 32 EFL preservice teachers in Vietnam (Nguyen & Ngo, 2018), thirty-five student-teachers of a private university in Indonesia (Astika, 2014), thirty-five teachers of a primary and a secondary school in Sweden (Nilsson et al., 2018), one hundred and two Iranian EFL teachers (Moradkhani et al., 2017), and two hundred and fifty Iranian EFL teachers (Moghaddam et al., 2020).

Different Research Strands

The researcher discovered that the current body of literature employed various research directions. Analyzing the research goals of the previous studies, the researcher revealed five major themes: collaborative reflection, teaching and learning experiences, reflection techniques, self-study, and written reflection analysis. Each theme was sub-categorized into different research strands (see Table 3 below for more details).

Table 3. *Specific research strands in the body of literature*

Research strands	Studies	Number of studies
Collaborative reflection	Among university professor and doctoral students Mali and Salsbury (2022); Probst et al. (2016)	2
	Among instructors or teachers Bernhardt (2018); Carolan and Wang (2012); Farrell (2015); Hunter et al. (2014)	4
	Among student-teachers or preservice teachers Behizadeh et al. (2019)	1
Teaching and learning experiences	Use technology in a classroom Andrei (2017); Mali (2022); Mali and Salsbury (2021); Sari et al. (2021)	4
	Deal with students Hong et al. (2019)	1
	See the essence of reflection Hyacinth and Mann (2014); Moradkhani et al. (2017)	2
Reflection techniques	Videotaped recordings Baecher et al. (2014); Mali and Salsbury (2022); Pellegrino and Gerber (2012); Smith (2019); Tuğa (2013); Walsh and Mann (2015)	6
	Peer-observation Moradkhani (2019); Nguyen and Ngo (2018)	2
	Attitudes Farrell (2014); Nilsson et al. (2018)	2
	Reflective teaching inventory Moghaddam et al. (2020)	1
	Reflective video blogs Ong et al. (2021)	1
	Audio diaries Uştuk and De Costa (2021)	1
Self-study	As a student/educator Bernhardt (2018); Lewis (2018); Mali (2022); Zulfikar (2019)	3
Written-reflection analysis	Identify teaching and learning related issues Astika (2014); Atai and Nejadghanbar, (2016); Kuswandono (2014); Ragawanti, (2015); Thompson and Moody (2015); Wyatt et al. (2016)	6
	Determine levels of reflexivity Mackenzie (2018); Nurfaidah et al. (2017); Ong et al. (2021)	3

Note: The categories in Table 3 were adapted from Li (2012, 2018). The research strands in one group might overlap with those in other groups.

Collaborative Reflection

Teaching is frequently thought of as an isolated profession; therefore, “a more collegial type of reflection with a group of like-minded colleagues can help teachers overcome any feelings of isolation, make more deliberate and informed decisions about their practice, thus taking responsibility for their classroom actions” (Farrell, 2013). A few studies employed these collegial types of reflections. For instance, Bernhardt (2012) engaged in a dialogue with a teacher to highlight the value of commitment to the teaching profession. This dialogue helped him know that “he was committed to teaching, working with teachers, and most importantly, the overall success and development of students” (Bernhardt, 2012). In another study (Hunter et al., 2014), each of the three university professors wrote a reflective essay about their experiences teaching qualitative research online and compared them with their experiences teaching in person. Then, they read each other’s narratives to find ideas about teaching the course online. For instance, they believed that teaching qualitative methodology might be complex in a distance setting; therefore, they highlighted the importance of face-to-face teaching to facilitate “relational concepts” (Hunter et al., 2014) in teaching qualitative methodology. Another collaboration involved three female ESL teachers who met weekly for a group discussion about student-teacher relations (Farrell, 2015).

The transnational collaboration involved a lecturer in China and one in Australia; they recorded each other’s classes to share knowledge about their vocabulary teaching and discussed their practices via email and Skype (Carolan & Wang, 2012). Some of the insights included “the younger Chinese students were required to prepare the text before the class, which would be a strategic idea to be tried (where feasible) with the mature-age Australian group” (Carolan & Wang, 2012). That transnational collaboration was also observed in Mali and Salsbury’s (2022) study, which involved a doctoral student from Indonesia and an associate professor from a university in the United States. The doctoral student observed the professor’s classroom practices and reported various best practices he identified. They shared a detailed protocol for conducting the observation (Mali & Salsbury, 2022).

Furthermore, the literature indicates that group reflections were conducted not only among teachers but also among student-teachers, university professors, and doctoral students. For instance, preservice teachers worked in critical friendship groups of three to five members. They engaged in a collaborative dialogue (via Skype or Google Hangouts) with their peers about educational equity and excellence for all students (Behizadeh et al., 2019). A university professor initiated a collaboration with six doctoral students to reflect on their qualitative research course; their reflections were published as a paper in a peer-reviewed journal (Probst et al., 2016). The following roles were assigned to each individual on the project, which may be helpful to readers who wish to undertake a similar collaboration.

The instructor/first author created a scaffold and timetable, stayed in contact with each coauthor throughout the writing process, organized the sections into a cohesive whole, solicited feedback from the group, and prepared a final version of the paper. Two of the coauthors focused on a critical review of literature, the third undertook a thematic analysis of responses to the questions, another compared key themes from student writing with key themes in the literature, the fifth connected findings to andragogy and differential approaches to learning, and the sixth related findings to the potential role of qualitative research (e.g., in furthering the aims of social justice) (Probst et al., 2016).

Through this project, students gained hands-on experience collecting and analyzing authentic research data, as well as learning multiple ways of knowing (Mali & Salsbury, 2022). Nevertheless, doing RP collaboratively may be a challenge for teachers or students who are not accustomed to working together (Mali, 2021; Vo & Nguyen, 2010; Wachob, 2011), as they often believe that independent reflection fosters a deeper personal understanding.

Teaching and Learning Experiences

Some other studies examined how technology was used in the classroom, experiences with ELLs, and the importance of reflection in teaching and learning. For instance, through classroom observations and interviews, Andrei (2017) investigated how three middle school teachers used technology in their ESL classrooms. One of the findings was the concern that technology malfunctions might interrupt classroom activities and classroom productivity. Using technology for RP might also be challenging for teachers working in schools with limited technology facilities (Boonmoh et al., 2021; Mali, 2023; Mali & Salsbury, 2021). Unlike Andrei (2017), Hong et al. (2019) focused more on the experience of three veteran teachers with ELLs. A research participant, for instance, considered ELLs as "little souls" that need support from teachers and recognized the importance of being flexible and providing differentiated instruction to help ELLs achieve their learning goals more effectively. Several more studies confirmed the substance of reflections. Teachers' reflective practices are said to be "an antecedent of their self-efficacy" (Moradkhani et al., 2017). With that said, Moradkhani et al. (2017) believed that teachers needed to observe each other's classes regularly and provide constructive feedback so that they could accumulate more vicarious experiences; moreover, the promotion of friendly relationships among novice and more experienced teachers was needed so that the novice teachers could exploit more inputs from the senior colleagues to enhance their teaching. Yet, some teachers who live in cultures where they are not accustomed to speaking openly about their thoughts or accepting feedback from others might find it challenging to do what Moradkhani et al. (2017) suggested.

Reflection Techniques

The other research line focused on techniques to facilitate RP. One common approach in the literature was to videotape teaching and learning activities. Baecher et al. (2014) contended that video afforded teachers opportunities "to see themselves in action, to view a lesson from students' point of view, and to stop, rewind, and replay"; it also made teachers' reflections concretely connected to an observed lesson. The value of videos in promoting reflective thinking was confirmed by Gün (2011), who reported that all participants (language teachers) in her study regarded watching themselves in videos as the most beneficial form of feedback to enhance their pedagogical practices. Videotaping the classroom was closely related to stimulated recalls, in which teachers recorded their teaching practices and later discussed them with critical colleagues or friends (Walsh & Mann, 2015). Nowadays, recording classroom activities can be done with a smartphone or a digital camera (or other video-recording devices) that can be mounted on a tripod.

Another technique was peer observation. Teachers observed and constructively evaluated their peers' teaching performances and later provided feedback based on a peer observation form. Some evaluation aspects included teaching techniques, interaction, student rapport (Moradkhani, 2019), classroom management, and teachers' manner (Nguyen & Ngo, 2018). As evidenced in the literature, observing a peer's lesson helped preservice teachers think constructively about their teaching practices. A teacher said: "When observing her, I

realized that her lesson was more successful than mine. The reason was that she used more interesting games” (Nguyen & Ngo, 2018). Another teacher contended, “I always made the mistake of being in a hurry. However, Tu is different. She taught very slowly and organized all the activities appropriately so that pupils could understand the lesson. I can learn from her” (Nguyen & Ngo, 2018). This peer observation might be followed up with informal chats about the teaching sessions; the observed teacher might request feedback from the observer, who could also ask for clarification on particular techniques used in the teaching session (Moradkhani, 2019). An EFL teacher stated the positive impact of this dialogue: “At the end of all observations, I started a friendly communication with my colleagues [i.e., the observed teachers], talking about the teaching sessions. I learned something new, or I was able to suggest some better teaching alternatives to my colleagues” (Moradkhani, 2019). However, objectively speaking, the pressure of being observed might also inhibit the observed teachers from performing their best during the peer observation session, either facilitated with or without video recording.

In providing either written or oral feedback for the teaching performances, Nilsson et al. (2018) suggested that the inputs should not be judgmental and not show the observer’s intention to be regarded as a more academically knowledgeable individual than the observed teacher. Therefore, they emphasized the importance of reliable, unconditional communication in which teachers and observers could trust each other, share mutual interests in classroom activities, and avoid using terms not commonly used in the local school setting. Other essential attitudes included being open-minded (e.g., having a desire to listen actively to various sides, appreciate different alternatives, and seek students’ input about how and what teachers teach), responsible (e.g., seeing and understanding the impacts of reflections on teachers themselves, students, and a community where they teach), and whole-hearted (e.g., taking a reflection project with a whole heart) (Farrell, 2014). The positive attitudes (discussed by Farrell, 2014; Nilsson et al., 2018) should ensure the success of the RP projects. It is important to note that building trust might take some time. For example, Mali and Salsbury (2022) took around two years to build trust, ensuring that their RP practices went smoothly and benefited each of them.

Three recent studies have employed different reflection instruments compared to those used in previously reported studies. Moghaddam et al. (2020) investigated the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers engaged in reflection through a reflective journal inventory, which categorized participants’ reflections into five main types: namely, practical, cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and critical. The following year, Ong et al. (2021) instructed their research participants to document and present their reflections on their teaching practicum experiences through video blogs (vlogs), which are considered a more expressive way of presenting ideas. Meanwhile, Uştuk and De Costa (2021) used audio diaries to record their participants’ reflective thinking in their lesson study. In future research, it might be beneficial to use the same instruments for exploring RP.

Self-study

Another research area described researchers’ personal stories as students or teachers and the values they gained for their pedagogical enhancement. For instance, drawing on the multiple data sources, Lewis (2018) presented her stories as a classroom teacher who transitioned to teaching online courses. Although the transition was challenging, Lewis believed it was doable and provided her with opportunities to learn and grow. Lewis also highlighted the importance of balancing her time (e.g., disentangling herself from 24/7 online

teaching), as teaching online can blur the distinction between her personal and professional life. Based on his journals, Zulfikar (2019) described his language teaching and learning experiences as a student and a lecturer and reflected on them. The stories helped him to view that English should be taught in an integrated way, emphasizing four language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, and writing). He also believed that teachers should develop well-structured lesson plans to teach effectively and foster healthy relationships with their students, thereby ensuring successful learning. In a similar vein, Bernhardt (2018) presented his autobiographical account to understand how his life experiences, as a student and then as a teacher, influenced his life as an educator. Bernhardt (2018) learned “how school resources can be used to create opportunities for students to empower themselves and develop a sense of agency to pursue academic opportunities that may have previously seemed unattainable”. These previous studies may indicate a trend in the self-study approach in recent RP-related literature. Methodologically speaking, when presenting his reflective stories on the use of technology in his EFL classrooms, Mali (2022) allowed readers of his reflection to judge if it mainly shows his “individual narcissism” (Walsh & Mann, 2015) or genuinely reflects conscious thinking and deep reflection of his teaching practices using technology in writing classes.

Written-reflection Analysis

Analyzing written reflections of student-teachers or preservice teachers who completed their teaching practicum was a commonly identified approach. For example, Astika (2014) examined the teaching reflections of 35 student-teachers during their practicum in secondary schools in Indonesia. He focused on exploring issues in the (500-600 word) reflections concerning the personal, interpersonal, contextual, and critical domains of teaching. Voices such as feeling nervous on the first day of teaching and worrying about whether they can become a good teacher were found in the reflections. The following year, Ragawanti (2015) analyzed reflective journal entries from ten student-teachers who completed their teaching practicum at a junior high school in Indonesia. The journals informed the researcher about classroom management problems students experienced, such as dealing with students’ noise during class. Atai and Nejadghanbar (2016) analyzed the reflective blog posts of six in-service EFL teachers to investigate how the research participants reflected on and reported critical incidents in their teaching. Written reflections were also analyzed to identify the levels of reflectivity (i.e., low/mid/ high levels of reflection) among the research participants (Mackenzie, 2018; Nurfaidah et al., 2017). Unlike previous studies, Sari et al. (2021) categorized their research participants’ reflection levels into four stages: pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection, and critical reflection.

Discussion

This discussion section interprets the findings and situates them within the broader scholarly discourse. It also discusses research gaps in the reviewed literature and methodological implications for future researchers who wish to explore RP in language teaching and learning practices.

A Conflicting View of the Use of Written Forms of Reflection

Notably, the researcher identified a conflicting view of the use of written forms of reflection. As evidenced in the previous paragraph, the students’ reflective journals helped identify issues the student-teacher encountered during their teaching practicum. This finding contradicts

what Moradkhani (2019) found in the study as what a research participant (an EFL teacher taking a practicum course to obtain an M.A. degree in English Language teaching) said: “we wrote [the teaching journal] in the form of a memory notebook and could not exactly pinpoint what went wrong and what was good [in our teaching]” (Moradkhani, 2019). The study concluded that conducting peer observations was more effective than writing teaching journals in supporting the professional development and teaching enhancement of research participants. Brookfield (2017) believed that one of the best ways institutions can support good teaching is to provide opportunities for people to discuss their classroom practices with one another.

Watching videotaped (teaching) recordings was also a valuable part of a teaching practicum; the student teachers could see their classroom presentations as what a research participant (a senior student taking a practice teaching course) stated: “By the help of taping, I could see my mistakes. It also gave me a chance to evaluate myself more effectively as I couldn’t focus on my performance while presenting the lesson” (Tuğa, 2013). The video also helped another research participant to see her classroom interaction skills: “during the lesson, I didn’t praise the answers effectively. When a student answered [my question], I passed to another one, and I think this discouraged them to participate” (Tuğa, 2013). The peer-observation reports, videotaped recordings, audio diaries, and reflective video blogs, therefore, might supplement the reflective journals (or other written forms of reflection) to enhance practices in future RP studies.

Research Gaps

Although considerable research has been conducted on teachers’ reflections or reflective practices, future researchers may address some gaps identified in this study. For instance, the transnational classroom observation (Carolan & Wang, 2012; Mali & Salsbury, 2022) appears to be a new area of research. A future research study can involve two teachers from two different countries (e.g., other than China, Australia, Indonesia, and the United States); then, they record each other’s class, watch the recordings, clarify what they observe (e.g., through Skype), and discuss cognitive, socio-cultural, and pedagogical insights obtained from the observation.

There is also a lack of collaborative teaching reflections among (master’s or doctoral) students and their university professor(s) (Mali & Salsbury, 2022; Probst et al., 2016), which eventually resulted in a published article; therefore, this might be an avenue for further exploration. For instance, the collaboration might precisely address students’ challenges in their quantitative or advanced statistics class, or in their content-related class, such as theories in second language acquisition. Future researchers employing quantitative paradigms might also follow up on the previous study (Moradkhani et al., 2017) by conducting in-depth investigations into the correlation between teachers’ RP and self-efficacy. Also, somewhat limited research has integrated technology into RP, such as analyzing video recordings using V-note software (<https://v-note.org/>) (Smith, 2019), audio diaries (Uştuk & De Costa, 2021), and reflective video blogs (Ong et al., 2021). There is a need to study students’ and teachers’ perceptions of how the software supports the video-based RP. Moreover, the selected articles in this study were confined to research papers or conceptual ones downloaded from academic journals. Future researchers are encouraged to include “conference papers, reviews, editorials, theses, dissertations” (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017), as well as online articles, in their analysis. These more extensive bases of data will help more student-teachers, teacher educators, and practitioners to identify more methods, data

collection techniques, or other RP-related ideas to solve their recent challenges in “identifying, formulating, and sharing tools that promote dialogic, engaged, and evidence-based reflective practices” (Walsh & Mann, 2015).

Other gaps were also identified. African and South American countries were underexplored areas in the RP studies. The studies have not commonly explored the RP done by master’s and doctoral students. Additionally, previous studies have not favored large numbers of participants or quantitative approaches. To gain further insights into the RP, future researchers may need to address the research gaps identified in the literature, conducting studies in African and South American countries, involving more master’s and doctoral students, and approaching their studies quantitatively.

Methodological Implications

The previous studies offered functional methodological implications for future researchers who wish to explore RP in language teaching and learning practices. As the literature indicates, reflection should not be done in isolation; instead, it should involve interaction and collaboration. In that case, observing each other’s classes (also with recordings of class activities) is considered a technique that enables both the observer and the observed teacher/student to learn from each other. Peer evaluation forms by Moradkhani (2019) and Nguyen and Ngo (2018), or the shadowing log by Nilsson et al. (2018), might be adapted and used to guide the observations. During practices, both parties should be responsible, open-minded, and wholehearted (Farrell, 2014), and trust each other.

More specifically, Nilsson et al. (2018) urged that the observer should not ask demanding questions, refer the questions to theoretical literature, and position him/herself as a more knowledgeable person than the observed one. Instead, they suggested that the observer should perform as an equal partner in the discussion, describe what was happening in the classroom, and reason about a particular situation at hand. In essence, to ensure the reliability of personal stories as used by the previous researchers (Bernhardt, 2018; Lewis, 2018; Zulfikar, 2019), a member-checking strategy by Forber-Pratt (2015) might be used; this strategy asked researchers to work with different individuals to answer the following questions:

Does it make sense to me? Does it make sense to someone who knows me really well? Does it make sense to someone in my family? Does it make sense to an academic (both in and outside of the social sciences)? Does it make sense to a non-academic? Does it make sense to someone who does not know me well? (Forber-Pratt, 2015)

Forber-Pratt believed that the answers to these questions helped to ensure the reliability and credibility of a personal account described in a study. Doing the collaborative and interactive reflection as described above should also support the social constructivism theory by Lev Semionovich Vygotsky, a well-known Russian scholar and social learning theorist, who believed that knowledge growth might happen primarily as a result of interactions among one another (i.e., among students, teachers, and the world) (Mali & Salsbury, 2022; Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

Conclusion

The study comes to the following conclusions. First, the body of literature has addressed various goals: (a) reflecting on classroom activities, a research course, experiences with ELLs, essence of conducting reflections for teaching and learning; (b) presenting benefits of different reflection techniques and how to perform reflective practices successfully; (c) exploring teaching-related issues experienced by student-teachers who did their teaching practicum; and (d) describing teaching related values garnered from personal stories as a student and a teacher. Second, the body of research was mainly informed by (a variety of) qualitative approaches; thus, this finding confirms the argumentation that “the majority of published studies evaluating teacher reflection within the ELT context have adopted a qualitative research orientation” (Moradkhani et al., 2017). Next, previous studies collected research data from various sources and involved participants from different parts of the world, including the United States, Australia, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Lastly, the researcher discussed five main research themes that explained the research strands in the literature, which align with Farrell’s (2016) view that “both preservice and in-service teachers are interested in, and feel they benefit from, reflecting on various aspects of their practice.”

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