



Secondary School English Teachers' Applications of Reflective Teaching Strategies to Improving Students' Writing Skills

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Abstract

Reflective teaching is regarded as one of the key pedagogical approaches to improve teachers' professional practices. This approach is not only an opportunity for teachers to learn from experience but also essentially an approach that helps students to develop their language skills including the writing skill. Accordingly, this study explores English language teachers' implementation of reflective teaching strategies that aim to improve students' writing skills. To achieve this, the study employed the exploratory sequential mixed design and it involved 39 Grade 11 English language teachers from ten schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In collecting the data, the study used classroom observations and questionnaires as the major data collection tools. Analysis of the qualitative data generated through classroom observations was made using observational qualitative data analysis method whereas the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that while the English teachers acknowledge the importance of reflective teaching in improving students' writing, a significant number of them were found reluctant in applying the reflective approach in their writing classes. These, in turn, make it difficult for the teachers themselves to infuse effective writing skills in students at the secondary school level. The main reasons were teachers' gaps in understanding the theories related to reflection, lack of practical skills to implement the reflective teaching approach effectively, teachers' gaps in empowering students to undertake self and peer-reflections, poor practice of keeping records of teaching practices and limitations in conducting action research.

Keywords

Feedback, Reflective Teaching, Reflective Strategies, Writing Classes

1. Introduction

These days, professionals in various disciplines including those in the education sector are interested in applying reflection and reflective practice as part of their professional development undertakings (Lyons, 2010; McIntosh, 2010). Reflective teaching practice is one of the key ingredients for teachers at pre-service as well as in-service level. It helps them to develop various skills such as decision-making, meta-cognition, and logical thinking (Goodley, 2018). Based on this premise, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are expected to be reflective, autonomous, and transformative practitioners who play the role of change agents and act on information about learners, context, and pedagogical goals (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Richards & Lockhart, 2007).

One of the major purposes of language teaching should be enhancing learners' abilities and competencies in all areas. If the goal of teaching is to prepare learners at a higher level of cognitive thinking, teachers should primarily 'emulate higher level thinking in their instructional practices' (Ball & Garton, 2005). In relation to this, Ghaye (2011) argues that teachers should accept responsibility for making sincere, transparent, systematic and convincing efforts to try

to live their values out as fully as possible in pursuit of their profession. It is imperative that a teacher who employs activities that require students to think critically motivates students to examine theories, ideas, views, and opinions from different vantage angles. In doing so, students learn not only to recall information but also to create and co-create knowledge to find a solution to problems (Rodgers, 2002). Therefore, English language teachers must explore and utilize various strategies of language teaching that help learners develop their meta-cognitive skills (Willingham, 2008). These skills help them to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

Studies have found that practitioners receive benefits from engaging in the reflective approach. As to Pollard et al. (2014), for instance, reflective teachers can get the best out of working, experimenting, talking, and reflecting with their colleagues. Similarly, critically reflective teachers will be in a good position to communicate to colleagues and students the rationale behind their practice (Brookfield, 2017). Teachers who regularly participate in reflective practice can develop a deeper understanding of their teaching, assess their professional growth, develop informed decision-making skills, and become proactive and confident in their teaching (Farrell, 2018). When seeing critical reflection as part of the continuum of teaching, it creates a viable environment for teachers to feel more confident in trying different options and assessing their effects on teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 2007). It is anticipated that a reflective teacher will engage in reflection in all stages of a lesson and decisions will have been made at three stages namely, planning, preparation and evaluation stages (Davison & Dowson, 2009).

Reflecting allows practitioners to identify the goals, values, and beliefs that support classroom practices and the school's educational processes (Davison & Dowson, 2009). Teachers can also engage in their own reflective practice by utilizing such reflective tools as writing, classroom observations, action research, narrative study, and/or lesson study (Farrell, 2021). Moreover, teachers may be required to make several decisions in their day-to-day professional lives by exploring problems and finding relevant solutions (Olaya Mesa, 2018). In spite of this, Ghaye (2011) believes that there must be a shift towards talking about strengths rather than merely discussing 'problem finding and problem solving'.

2. Statements of the Problem

In Ethiopia, the former education and training policy issued in 1994 and the recent one produced in 2023 state that the English language is to be taught from Grade 1 upwards as a subject (Ministry of Education, 1994, 2023). Both policy documents further state that the English language is the medium of instruction for secondary schools (Grade 9 up to Grade 12) and higher learning institutions. Some regions start using the language as a medium of instruction as early as Grade 5 and others in Grade 7. Given its dual functions, the English language plays a colossal role in the Ethiopian educational system.

Though the current Ethiopian General Education Curriculum establishes high standards for teachers and suggests the reflective approach as an essential approach to be used in teaching all subjects in Ethiopian schools (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, its implementation at the grassroots level has not yet been well researched. A number of scholars (Burton et al., 2009; Hyland, 2004; Lee, 2017; Lyons, 2010) confirmed that the approach is very essential and effective in teaching writing as it promotes active learning, problem-solving, and student-centered teaching methods mostly in the form of reflections.

Previous studies in Ethiopia by Amara (2016) and Gudeta (2022) have predominantly focused on teachers' implementation of the reflective approach in general context often overlooking its applicability in writing sessions. In addition, as indicated in the current curriculum framework for general education, reflective practice should be promoted in all Ethiopian secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2020). Teachers of English language are no exception.

The rationale for conducting this research is that the present researchers repeatedly hear that several grade 11 English language teachers emphasize teaching about writing and giving direct corrective feedback. This approach to teaching writing does not lead students to critical thinking and self-assured learning styles. Furthermore, the researchers observed certain writing classes and found out that English teachers did not make use of modern teaching strategies while teaching writing. Because of this, most students did not have a chance to learn writing and thereby improve their analytical and logical thinking skills. Consequently, the researchers decided to study whether English teachers are applying the reflective teaching approach when they teach writing to grade eleven students.

3. Research Questions

The study attempts to find out answers to the following specific research questions:

- How do Grade 11 English language teachers implement reflective teaching in their writing classes?
- What is the perception of Grade 11 English language teacher about reflective teaching in writing classrooms?
- What reflective practice strategies do grade 11 English language teachers use to improve students' writing skills?

4. Literature Review

4.1 The Concept of Reflective Teaching

Among several approaches to teaching different subjects, reflective teaching is the one that has received special place in developing teachers' rational thinking about why they use some teaching strategies to improve students' learning. Dewey (1933) is behind the theories and practices of reflection. He holds the view that reflection requires active and persistent

efforts to explore, identify the nature of the problems, the generation of several potential solutions, and a means-end analysis of the alternatives. From this notion, it is obvious that true reflection must engage the practitioners in real problems and attempt to resolve them rationally and logically.

Donald Schön is another notable figure who contributed enormously for the contemporary knowledge of reflection or reflective practice. Schön (1987) claimed that reflection should be seen from the point of view of reflecting on one's spontaneous ways of thinking and acting that should be carried out during action to guide further action. Schön (1983) also makes a clear distinction and draws a line between what he termed reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. His main aim was to investigate how practitioners use their experience to analyze their practices. He identified reflection-in-action as the iterative approach of considering the chain of actions during an activity for continuous improvement. On the other hand, he described reflection-on-action as thinking about the overall outcome of the activity in a logical way. Ghaye (2011) re-defined reflection-on-action as a reflective inquiry process. In addition to this, reflection can be used by practitioners as a way of processing experience in order to learn from it and improve future action (Jordan et al., 2008).

At the heart of reflective thinking is 'thinking' itself. Hattie (2009) argues that thinking consists of information gathering, building understanding, productive thinking, and strategic and reflective thinking. Kumaravadivelu (2003) believes that the concept of reflective teaching evolved partly in response to the archaic and fixed beliefs of the traditional view of teaching.

In summary, reflective teaching is in alignment with critical self examination and reflection can be seen as a profound foundation for decision making, planning, and taking actions (Richards & Lockhart, 2007). Therefore, teachers as reflective practitioners need to enhance their reflective thinking skills as a result of which they can defend their own teaching practices (Moore & Whitfield, 2008).

4.2 Reflective Teaching in the Writing Classrooms

Learning, by its very nature is reflective and it should not be something that is dictated by teachers (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Taking into consideration the benefits of reflection for academic and emotional development of students, it is imperative that teachers create an atmosphere conducive to students to exercise in reflective writing (Samway, 2006). Reflecting enables practitioners to fully understand and implement the aims, values and beliefs that are concerned with classroom practices and the overall learning-teaching processes of the school (Davison & Dowson, 2009).

Reflective writing has been found useful to students who use English as a foreign language (Samway, 2006). Reflective classrooms are places where teachers teach writing reflectively by using reflection as a means and an end (Yancey, 1998). Apart from having the advantage in fulfilling teachers' professional development, reflective teaching should play a part in ensuring the provision of quality education for students (Pollard et al., 2014). In the classroom setting, reflective writing occurs when students express themselves on paper of some of the mental processes of reflection (Moon, 2004). A reflective teacher needs to constantly practice reflection in all stages of a writing lesson and decisions should be made at the planning, preparation and evaluation stages.

In the writing classroom, one of the central elements is providing feedback to students in the form of reflection. Samway (2006) asserts that feedback given in the form of written reflection creates the opportunity to use writing as a tool to think about, clarify, explain, and internalize information, experiences, insights, beliefs, and learning processes. Feedback also plays an immense role in improving students' writing skills.

In EFL writing classrooms, reflections occur in the form of feedback. In this regard, teachers play a prominent role in being the provider of feedback (Lee, 2017). Peer feedback, though is carried out by students, is also another important aspect of reflection in writing sessions. One of the advantages of peer feedback is the active participation of students in the process (Hyland, 2004). It is hoped that the more teachers engage students to reflect on one another's work, students can produce better written texts. Bolton (2010) noted that students' reflective writing can be used as an input for course evaluation and material for teacher reflexivity. Consequently, teachers of writing need to have a clear understanding of how students use the knowledge they bring to the classroom (Taczak & Robertson, 2017).

4.3 Reflective Practice Strategies

I. Learning Journals

Learning journals are one of the most commonly used and the backbones of reflective practice as well as critical reflexivity and they are considered as a pretty standard requirement for teachers (Bolton, 2010; Hinkel, 2011). They play a pivotal role especially for teachers to practice reflective practice (Boud, 2001). In this regard, Richards and Lockhart (2007) argue that teachers' practice of keeping journals is prominent in meeting two main objectives: recoding ideas for later reflections and generating ideas as part of the writing process taking place in the journal.

II. Video Recording

Video recording is the other tool that is commonly used for self-reflection. It can be used by teachers to evaluate their sessions (Zeraatpishe & Azarnoosh, 2018). Teachers have the discretion to video-record their lessons so that they will have a chance to reflect upon it (Ghaye, 2011). Therefore, teachers can also do analysis of their teaching from the video they have recorded.

III. Observation

Classroom observation can be used as an important reflection tool for the EFL teacher observed. Richards and Lockhart (2007) uphold the view that observation should revolve around the orbit of collecting information about the various classroom practices of the teacher rather than making judgment.

IV. Self-Assessment Tools

Teachers, as reflective practitioners, can use various self-assessment tools to see whether they are in the right direction or not. These tools can serve as mirrors. Zimmerman (2002) pointed out that there are two major classes of self-reflection phase processes: self-judgment and self-reflection. When teachers engage in conducting self-assessment, they relate their evaluation with their beliefs about the elements of good teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 2007).

V. Portfolios

As part of their continuous professional development program, EFL teachers are required to keep professional portfolios on individual basis. In Ethiopia, teachers mainly prepare portfolios to demonstrate their professional development (Ministry of Education, 2009). Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000, as cited in Hyland, 2004b) pointed out that portfolios strongly support teaching strategies that involve multi-drafting, revision, peer review, collaborative learning, and reflective writing (Hyland, 2004).

VI. Reflective Written Feedback

Reflective written feedback is one of the fundamental tools used by EFL writing teachers in order to help students achieve their learning outcomes. Lyons (2010) argues that the feedback provided to students should be constructive so that it paves the way towards helping them become critical thinkers and reflectors. In addition to this, such type of written feedback supplies teachers the data they use for assessment purposes (Samway, 2006).

VII. Action Research

Action research is one of the most commonly used activities carried out by teachers. It is now customary for teachers to conduct action research that are aimed at addressing classroom problems. In this regard, Reason and Brandbury (2008) argue that action research is a critical element for teachers' reflection. It is a scientific method used as evidence to the importance of data in reflectively improving practice (McIntosh, 2010).

5. Research Design and Methodology

This section presents the research design and methodology used in the study including the research design, sampling, data gathering tools, data analysis and ethical issues.

5.1 Design of the Study

The study employed the exploratory sequential mixed method design. The main purpose of such design is to first collect the qualitative data followed by quantitative data and explain the relationship of the two (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). To this effect, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to ensure triangulation of data generated and used for analysis. Data was gathered mainly from primary sources using data gathering tools involving classroom observation guides and questionnaires.

5.2 Sampling

To determine the sample size of the classrooms for observation, the researchers used the data saturation model. To this end, first, they made a preliminary surveillance when the teaching-learning of writing was being conducted. Having done this, they decided to conduct the observations in four English language teachers' classes in three writing lessons. Accordingly, they observed the writing classes using the observation guides set and validated by senior staff members ahead of the observation sessions.

With regard to the quantitative data, census sampling technique was employed to include all grade 11 English teachers in the ten sample schools. Accordingly, a total of 50 questionnaires were distributed out of which 39 were returned.

5.3 Data Collection Instruments

5.3.1 Classroom Observation

To investigate teachers' implementation of the reflective approach in the writing lessons, classroom observations were used as one means of data collection. To this end, a classroom observation guide, which consists of seven items, was developed to look into the procedures, activities and approaches in the writing classroom. The major focus areas of the observation included: brainstorming activities as a precursor to the actual writing, reflections at different stages of writing, empowering students to provide feedback, evidence of peer-feedback and reinforcing the reflections on students' written works.

5.3.2 Questionnaire

A 5-point Likert scale was used to gather the opinions of teachers. The items were developed based on the literature related to the study and research questions.

5.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data generated through the classroom observations was analyzed using observational qualitative data analysis method. On the other hand SPSS version 26 software was used to analyze the responses of the teachers' questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha of the survey was .86, marking that the instrument had high reliability and good internal consistency.

5.5 Ethical Issues

This study had the priority of meeting the ethical standards to protect the rights of participants and their privacy. Approval was secured from the Ethics Committee of Hawassa University before data collection. Accordingly, the present researchers presented an ethical letter to the schools where the data were collected.

6. Findings

The present researchers collected two types of data: qualitative and quantitative. Results of the qualitative data will be presented first and it will be followed by the quantitative one.

6.1 Classroom Observation

A classroom observation checklist, which includes seven individual items, was used to observe the writing classes. The twelve classroom observation results revealed that the implementation of the reflective approach in the writing sessions was fifty-to-fifty percent. Six of the sessions were characterized as 'fluid' in terms of the implementation of the approach. Most of the teachers attempted to elicit reflections from the learners on what they learned in the previous writing class. The researchers believe that giving such type of opportunities to the students would help them associate the present with the past, identify the similarities and differences and proceed with an already established experience.

As the data indicated, most of the English teachers, did not use brainstorming as a strategy of reflection before the students began to write any text. According to Hussain (2017) brainstorming activities play an important role in the process of writing. In the writing classes that the present researchers observed, however, they did not see the English teachers giving this chance to the students. As a result, the students did not have opportunities to reflect on what they wrote before they developed the text.

Despite the English teachers' efforts to make their classes busy, the observed lessons revealed that the teachers made very little effort to encourage students to express their ideas, employing reflection as a key tool, in English. In some sessions, the students were embarrassed to speak in front of their peers. Ideas were coming from a few students, who were actively participating in the group/class. Hence, it is high time for the English teachers to stop and think about the strategies they use to encourage the students to speak freely in the English language in their groups or in front of the class.

As the observed sessions indicated, the English teachers frequently asked the students to work in small groups while they were drafting the different stages in the process of their writing tasks. However, they looked like plenary sessions. The researchers could not observe students who were fully engaged in the discussions, debating, asking questions, agreeing to premises, reasoning, etc. Such an approach can inhibit the students to equally learn from their group mates through the reflections they forward to others.

The other important part of the observation was that the English teachers did not empower the students how to conduct self and peer reflections. Furthermore, the practice of self and peer reflections on the part of the students was at a nascent stage. Consequently, the reflections some students give on some papers are not up to standard or sometimes they are confusing. Hence, the feedback-receiving students had little chance to learn from such reflections. Thus, first, it is up to the English teachers to think about the type of grouping they use in their classes. In fact, the type of seats makes the hurdle to implement the type of grouping that mitigates such a problem. Nevertheless, the problem can be curbed if discussions are held with the school management because using this approach effectively has a strong connection with the students' overall academic success including the English language.

One of the problems observed in writing classes was connected with the student's experience in thinking reflectively which leads to critical thinking. The students develop this skill when they are exposed to judge or evaluate problems or situations presented in the content. In this regard, some efforts were exerted by the teachers. The English teachers' classroom practices disclosed that their devotion to such lesson deliveries is not as frequent as it should have been due to different reasons.

In conclusion, the classroom practices show that the teachers have some gaps in utilizing reflective teaching as a strategy to improve students' writing skills.

6.2 Questionnaire

Although the teachers' questionnaire was answered on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale, the analysis considers one or two most responses. In addition, these keys are also used: SA=Strongly Agree (5), A=Agree (4), UD= Undecided (3),

D=Disagree (2), SD=Strongly Disagree (1). Furthermore, the Mean and Standard Deviation (SDI) results are included for each item.

Table 1 Perceptions about the theoretical and practical aspects of reflective teaching

No.	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	SDI
1	I am well aware of the theoretical foundation of the reflective teaching	- -	12 30.8%	1 2.6%	26 66.7%	- -	2.64	.931
2	I am well aware that reflective teaching is informed by research and teachers' experience.	3 7.7%	21 53.8%	5 12.8%	10 25.6%	- -	3.43	.967
3	I am well aware of how to implement the reflective approach to teaching of writing	- -	10 25.6%	1 2.6%	28 71.8%	- -	2.53	.883
4	I often give opportunity to my students to reflect on the writing lessons that they learnt previously before they begin to learn the new one.	10 25.6%	19 48.7%	2 5.1%	8 20.5%	- -	3.79	1.05
5	I have the belief that my students learn and improve their writing skills better if the reflective approach is used frequently	5 12.8%	23 59.0%	2 5.1%	9 23.1%	- -	3.61	.989
6	I have the belief that reflections on students' writing should be conducted when they are at different stage of their writing	8 20.5%	20 51.3%	4 10.3%	7 17.9%	- -	3.74	.992

As shown in table 1, the first item indicates that the vast majority of the respondents (66.7%) replied that they are not well aware of the theoretical foundation of reflective teaching. With regard to item 2, those who agreed and strongly agreed (61.5%) claimed that reflective teaching (RT) is informed by research and teachers' experience. Item 3 shows data about whether teachers are well aware of how to implement the reflective approach (RA) to teaching writing or not. The result shows that a significant number of teachers (74.4%) lack the knowledge to put it into practice. Item 4 deals with whether or not the teachers give opportunities to students to reflect on the previous writing lessons, the vast majority of them (74.3%) answered positively. Item 5 is about teachers' beliefs whether the implementation of the RA helps their students to improve their writing skills, majority of them (71.8%) replied the positive side. The last item also asks teachers about their beliefs whether reflections on students' writing should happen at different stages or not. The result reveals their agreement and strong agreement by a combined percentage of (51.3%) and (20.5%) respectively.

Table 2 Using feedback as a means of reflection

No.	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	SDI
7	I have the belief that my students bring a substantial progress on their writing when I give them direct feedback on their final product.	4 10.3%	20 51.3%	3 7.7%	10 25.6%	2 5.1%	3.35	1.135
8	I believe that my students improve their writing skills better if I reflect on their writing rather than giving them corrective feedback.	- -	9 23.1%	2 5.1%	28 71.8%	- -	2.51	.854
9	I always motivate my students to familiarize themselves with different strategies to help them practice reflecting on their own writing.	1 2.6%	14 35.9%	1 2.6%	23 59.0%	- -	2.82	1.022
10	I always motivate my students to familiarize themselves with different strategies to help them practice reflecting on their classmates' writing	1 2.6%	10 25.6%	4 10.3%	24 61.5%	- -	2.69	.950
11	I reinforce the reflections that the students provided on their own or their classmates' writing	- -	11 28.2%	3 7.7%	25 64.1%	- -	2.64	.902

Table 2 displays data that are in one way or another related to feedback. Accordingly, item 7 is related to the provision of feedback on students' final writing takes. More than half of the teachers (61.6%) believe that giving direct feedback helps improve students' writing skills whereas (30.7%) believed otherwise. By the same token, item 8 shows that a significant number of teachers (71.8%) have the tendency of giving corrective feedback rather than reflecting on the students' written works. It is evident in item 9 that only (38.5%) of the teachers empower their students to do self-reflections whereas more than half of them (59.0%) do not do so. Item 10 inquires the teachers whether they motivate students to conduct peer-feedback or not. The data shows that a large number of them (61.5%) do not employ such a strategy in their writing classrooms. Item 11 is about whether or not the teachers reinforce self-and peer-reflections of students in the writing session. The data shows that only (28.2%) of them have such practices whereas the vast majority of them (64.1%) do not have such trends.

Table 3 Attention the English teachers give to reflective approach to teaching writing

No.	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	SDI
12	I always attempt to allow my students to learn writing through the reflective approach despite the several factors that challenge me	1 2.6%	13 33.3%	1 2.6%	24 61.5%	-	2.76	1.012

Table 3 reveals that 24 teachers (61.5%) do not make efforts to encourage their students to learn writing using the reflective approach (RA) while 14 (35.9%) of them try to allow their students to do so.

Table 4 Review and analysis of previous lessons

No.	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	SDI
13	As part of my reflection practices, I conduct analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the previous lessons.	- -	6 15.4%	4 10.3%	29 74.4%	-	2.41	.751
14	I always review the writing lessons I conducted in previous sessions so that I can learn from strengths and weaknesses and work hard to alleviate my limitations	- -	18 46.2%	3 7.7%	18 46.2%	- %	3.00	.973

Item 13 in Table 4 discloses that an overwhelming majority of the teachers (74.4%) do not carry out analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the previous lessons. In the mean time, only (15.4%) of them do the job. It is evident in item 14 that equal number of teachers (46.2%) has divergent views regarding review of the writing lessons they conducted in previous sessions.

Table 5 Using strategies of reflective teaching practices

No.	Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	SDI
15	I always record the most frequently observed errors on my students' writing and reflect to the whole class.	- -	5 12.8%	3 7.7%	30 76.9%	1 2.6%	2.30	.731
16	I use my diary to enhance my teaching practices and improve students' learning outcomes.	- -	5 12.8%	5 12.8%	29 74.4%	-	2.38	.711
17	I conduct action research to improve my students' writing skills	- -	6 15.4%	7 17.9%	26 66.7%	-	2.48	.756

As far as item 15 of Table 5 is concerned, a small number of teachers (12.8%) affirmed that they always record the most frequently observed errors committed by students and reflect to the class. Conversely, significant numbers of teachers (76.9%) do not demonstrate such a practice. In a similar vein, item 16 discloses that most of the teachers (74.4%) do not have the practice of using their diary to uplift their teaching practices as well as improve students' learning outcomes. The last item inquires teachers whether or not they conduct action research. The responses disclosed that 13 (33.3%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed while 26 (66.7%) disagreed with the idea that they conduct action research, which is a critical strategy for reflective teaching.

7. Discussion

The present study was carried out to investigate English language teachers' implementation of reflective teaching strategies that are aimed at improving students' writing skills. This section discusses the implication of the research findings in relation to the three research questions.

7.1 Implementation of reflective teaching in writing classrooms

The first research question seeks to answer the implementation of reflective teaching in writing classrooms. As the findings from the classroom observation and survey questionnaire indicated, almost all reflections on the students' writing were provided by the English teachers alone. Conversely, as several research works indicate, peer reflections also have several benefits in enhancing students' learning including writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hyland, 2004; Lee, 2017). For instance, a study by Liu and Carless (2006) asserts that peer feedback has a great potential to improve students' learning outcomes. Therefore, grade eleven English teachers should organize their students into a mixed ability groups, orient them how to provide reflections and motivate them to practice giving feedback on each other's writing.

The classroom observations had already confirmed that the grade eleven English teachers apply the reflective approach in their writing classes under rare circumstances. Evidence from the survey questionnaire also indicated that English language teachers are not accustomed to reviewing their writing lessons, keeping records of the most frequent errors committed by students, doing analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their lessons and conducting action research. The teacher's responsibility is to support, comment, suggest, evaluate and give directions to students to make improvements on their writing. When such an approach is used in the process of teaching writing, the students begin to

think critically about their writing, for example, when they generate ideas, organize ideas and use the language for communication. Over and above, the reflective thinking approach needs the mind at work, not the mind at rest.

7.2 Teachers' Perception of Reflective Teaching

The second research question was to explore the perceptions of Grade 11 English language teachers about reflective teaching. Findings from this study disclosed that many teachers do not have adequate theoretical knowledge of reflective teaching. The results of the quantitative data corroborate with the study conducted in Ethiopia by Amara (2016) and Gudeta (2022) indicate that secondary school teachers theoretical knowledge of reflection or reflective teaching is at a latent stage.

Although the finding of the survey indicates that many of the teachers had the perception that reflective teaching (RT) is informed by research and teachers' experience, the classroom observations results showed that the teachers were unable to demonstrate in their classroom practice.

Moore and Whitfield (2008) hold the view that teachers as reflective practitioners can reach the highest level of reflection depending on the stimulus provided to them and the feedback they receive. In the writing sessions when teachers assign some tasks, providing clear and constructive comments can contribute a share to improve students' learning outcomes (Davison & Dowson, 2009). In this way, teachers' knowledge and practice of reflective teaching can be enhanced.

7.3 Strategies to Improve Students' Writing Skills

The third research question focuses on the reflective practice strategies grade 11 English language teachers use to improve students' writing skills. In this respect, one of the main purposes of the survey was to check whether they keep records when they implement the approach. Findings from this study depicted that an overwhelming majority of the respondents ascertained that they did not have such a tradition through their professional practices.

We all educators understand that keeping relevant notes that describe different episodes that the English teachers experience during the teaching/learning practices is of several benefits for professional development. Such types of records are essential for a number of purposes. First, they help the English teachers to stop and think about what to continue, what to improve, and what to eliminate. Second, such records are important resources for action research. For instance, Blázquez (2007) ascertained that reflection could be used as inherent indispensable component part of action research. Based on the results of the action research they conduct, the English teachers can analyze them and use the findings to improve their profession. Third, they are important to check the academic status of students in different academic years. This implies that the English teachers had little opportunity to enrich their experience of teaching from year to year because a person is said to be experienced when he/she is able to identify his/her limitations, take remedial actions, and check regularly the improvements he/she has made.

8. Conclusion

The study in general revealed teachers' theoretical knowledge, their reflective practices and the ability to implement the reflective teaching approach in English language classes. As the findings from different tools revealed, Grade 11 English language teachers in Addis Ababa have very little theoretical awareness of the concepts of reflection and reflective teaching. The study has also found out that, although teachers provide feedback for students' written tasks, they do not expose them to various strategies that help them to undertake self-reflection and peer-reflection. Besides, teachers' actual implementation of the reflective approach is rare. This makes it difficult for the teachers themselves to infuse reflective thinking skills in students. The findings of the study also show that it is not customary for teachers to review the pros and cons of previous writing lessons so that they can learn from their limitations. Furthermore, teachers do not keep records of their teaching practices. Most teachers do not conduct action research either, which is one of the obvious strategies of a reflective teacher.

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Declaration of competing interest

We would like to declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this study.

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Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Hawassa University with Ref. No. CSSH/121/24. Furthermore, written consent was obtained from all research participants.

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