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## English Language Teachers' Reflective Practices for Understanding Their Teaching Processes

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore English Language teachers' self-ratings of their use of reflective practices in the language classroom. The participants are teachers who are currently teaching English in the state schools in the Muğla province of Turkey at levels ranging from primary to high school. It is a descriptive study and The English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI) developed by Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010) was used to gather data for the study. The results showed that English teachers who participated in the present study are actively engaged in reflective teaching. The results also indicated that English teachers mostly reflect on the learner and meta-cognitive components when compared with other dimensions in the questionnaire. It can be concluded that those aspects of reflective teaching that each teacher pays the closest attention to are those that are also the most visible in their teaching practice.

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Professional development is a key component to remaining current, addressing potential problems, building teacher confidence and properly serving student needs in teaching. Murphy (2001) presents some of the ways that English teachers can grow professionally such as "gaining teaching experience, participating in teacher-development courses, thinking about and discussing published scholars, attending conferences, consulting colleagues, and getting to know about students" (p. 499). Reflection is one of the ways to accomplish or discover the need to participate in these activities.

Being referred to as the current grand *idée* (Webb, 1999), it is accepted that reflection plays a significant role in teacher education (Schön, 1987; Valli, 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). However, the concept of reflection is still ambiguous and is not clearly defined. Moreover, it is even more difficult to

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teach reflection (Jay & Johnson, 2002) as research in this area shows variation. For example, according to Jay and Johnson (2002, p. 73) some studies take “the content of reflection or what teachers reflect upon (Brubacher, Case, & Reagan, 1994; Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Valli, 1997; Zeichner, 1994; Zeichner & Liston, 1996)”, while “others have studied the process of reflection, or how teachers think about their practice (Richert, 1991).”

It is further claimed that teaching reflection in teacher education is difficult due to the lack of agreement about what to be taught precisely. “First, reflection is an ambiguous term and its use does not always connote the same understanding (Zeichner & Liston, 1996)” and “second, the complexity of the concept can be difficult to articulate in a way that helps preservice teachers learn the skill’ (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 74). For that reason, before delving into the study, an understanding of the definition of reflective teaching and instruments to practice and measure this technique is necessary.

As it is noted above, researchers adopt different approaches to reflection. For example, Van Manen (1977) utters that reflection comprises three elements of “technical rationality”, “practical reflection” and “critical reflection.” “Technical rationality” deals with the time course of reaching to an aim, in fact to an end, and at the same time, individuals are expected to make use of their existing educational knowledge to accomplish this aim or end. “Practical reflection” focuses mainly on the assumptions that stay behind the practice. “Critical reflection” is concerned with the ethical and moral values of practice. Although moral aspects are covered by the item of “critical reflection” in Van Manen (1977) taxonomy, Valli (1990) adds moral reflection as an additional and individual item to the list. In relation with the previous taxonomies of reflection, Korthagen (2001) presents reflection as organized, rational, language-based decision making processes that also include non-rational gestalt type operations (cited in Akbari et al., 2010, p. 213).

In a different classification Jay and Johnson (2002, p. 77) propose three crucial steps of reflection as description, comparison and criticism. For them descriptive stage involves the intellectual process of setting problem, while the comparison stage reframes the matter for reflection in light of alternative views. The last stage is the critical stage at which the reflective practitioners take the different choices and alternatives into consideration and establish a renewed perspective. As a result, a reflective teacher is someone “who critically examines his or her practice, comes up with some ideas as to how to improve his/her performance to enhance students’ learning and puts those ideas into practice” (Akbari et al., 2010, p. 212).

It is obvious from the above explanations that many processes are involved in teacher reflection. These processes include “describing the situation, surfacing and questioning initial understandings and assumptions, and persisting, with an attitude of open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness” (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983; Valli, 1997 cited in Jay & Jonson, 2002, p. 75). Moreover, according to Dewey (1933), “reflection does not consist of a series of steps or procedures to be used by the teachers. Rather, it is a holistic way of meeting and responding to problems, a way of being as a teacher” (in Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 75).

Recently, reflective practice has gained importance in language teacher education (Pennycook, 1989; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001; Crandall, 2000; Pica, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2002). Although the correlation between the post method era and reflective practice is not investigated, talking about them will be better as they have occurred simultaneously. It can be argued that this paradigm shift in language teaching has caused a positive change in the field. Due to rapid change resulting from the complexity of learning and teaching processes in the language classroom, reflective practice can be seen as a new model of teacher education by language teacher educators (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Halliday, 1998; Akbari, 2007). This model of teacher training enables teachers and teacher educators to engage in reflective practices. As Lee (2007, p. 321) notes, ‘reflective practice has become a paradigm that dominates teacher education around the world’.

More studies are needed to suggest that reflective practice is an effective model in language teacher education. At this point Akbari et al. (2010, p. 212) mention gaps in the area by stating that “the construct of reflection has not been defined in its operational terms to allow for its quantification, mainly due to the absence of any instrument for measuring teacher reflection.” With this in mind a research study was conducted by Akbari et al. (2010) with two motives behind: “first come up with a model of teacher reflection in applied linguistics, and second, to design an instrument to allow for the quantification of the construct and consequently, its empirical investigation” (p. 212). As a result an instrument was developed to measure teacher reflection in language teacher education. It is also suggested in the study that the true test of this instrument’s relevance and validity can be achieved through the results of the empirical studies which will be conducted in different pedagogical contexts (Akbari et al., 2010, p. 223).

It is notable in the literature that choosing one particular style of reflection may not be necessary. According to Burton (2009, p. 498), a wide range of available materials about teacher research and reflective teaching show that “teacher reflections in different forms can be considered central to the teacher learning process.” Moreover, Murphy (2001) lists the three purposes of reflective teaching as 1- “to expand one’s understanding of learning and teaching process”; 2- “to expand one’s repertoire of strategic options as a teacher”; and 3- “to enhance the quality of learning opportunities one is able to provide in language classroom” (pp. 499-500).

It is obvious that reflective practice has held an important place in teacher education. Considering the benefits of reflective practices, the present study used the English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI), which is regarded as a multi-dimensional tool (Akbari et al., 2010), to assess reflective practices of English language teachers in connection with five dimensions of the instrument such as “practice”, “cognitive”, “learner”, “meta-cognitive” and “critical” and understand their preferences and tendencies in reflective teaching.

## 2. Research Questions

The study seeks answers to the following research questions;

1. Which reflective teaching approaches are commonly practiced by the English teachers who are currently teaching English in a Turkish context?
2. To which dimensions of reflective teaching do the English Teachers attach more importance in their teaching contexts?

## 3. Method

This study is a descriptive study which aims to explore English Language teachers’ self-ratings of their use of reflective practices in language classroom.

### 3.1. Participants and Setting

The present study was conducted with thirty-seven English teachers who are currently teaching English in the state schools in the Muğla province of Turkey at levels ranging from primary to high school. All teachers voluntarily participated in the study, and they were requested to respond to the questionnaire and open ended questions regarding reflective teaching in an in-service workshop organized within the framework of cooperation between university and state schools. Primarily, fifty-four English teachers took part in data collection procedure, but seventeen of the instruments were not included in the study since they were not complete. In the end, out of fifty-four English teachers thirty-seven were included in the study. Twenty-five of them were female and twelve were male English teachers. The participants’ experience ranged from one to nineteen years.

### 3.2. Data Collection Tool

The inventory (ELTRI) developed by Akbari et al. (2010) was used in order to gather data for the study. The participants were asked first to give information about their genders and years of teaching experience and then to respond to the items in the questionnaire. After having completed the questionnaire, the participants were also requested to write which items they attached the most importance.

The questionnaire consists of 29 items and five components. These components are practical, cognitive, learner, meta-cognitive, and critical. Practical component (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) aims at dealing with the tools and actual practice of reflection. The cognitive component (items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) highlights teachers' attempts at professional development. The learner component (items 13, 14, and 15) inquiries into a teacher's reflection on his/her students, how they are learning and how learners respond or behave emotionally in their classes. On the other hand, the meta-cognitive element (items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22) aims to discover teachers' reflections on their own beliefs and personality, the way they define their practice, their own emotional make-up, etc. The critical component consists of items (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29) that refer to the socio-political aspects of pedagogy and reflection upon those. In the present study, the reliability of the instrument was tested and the alpha Cronbach was found to be .91. The construct validation of the ELTRI (Akbari et al., 2010) in Turkish context was conducted by Yeşilbursa (2013) to measure teachers' reflection in the field of ELT, with a group of Turkish university EFL instructors. The findings of Yeşilbursa's (2013) study show similarities to those of the original study (Akbari et al., 2010), which suggests that the instrument can be used as a valid instrument in the context of Turkish higher education (p. 35).

## 4. Data Analysis

In this study, the reflective practices of English teachers were analysed in the form of frequency and percentages. As a second stage, which reflective components (among five components) English teachers preferred most was analysed as means and standard deviations. For the analyses, SPSS 18 was used.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

The questionnaire of ELTRI completed by English teachers in Turkey to collect data about reflective practices is composed of five main dimensions and 29 individual items. Each item is handled under its dimension and frequency and percentage rates are given for never, rarely, sometimes, often and always options in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. After obtaining the frequency and percentage rates of all items individually, the points for each dimension are presented in Table 6. Lastly, teacher-rated importance of reflective practices towards each item under their dimension title are given in Table 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and examined properly. The findings of the first research question 'Which reflective teaching approaches are commonly practiced by the English teachers who are currently teaching English in a Turkish context?' are presented as follows:

Table 1  
 Reflective practice results of English teachers towards practical component

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
1. I have a file where I keep my accounts of my teaching for reviewing purposes.	-	-	3	8.1	5	13.5	16	43.2	13	35.1
2. I talk about my classroom experiences with my colleagues and seek their advice / feedback.	-	-	-	-	3	8.1	18	48.6	16	43.2
3. After each lesson, I write about the accomplishments / failures of that lesson or talk about the lesson to a colleague.	3	8.1	12	32.4	15	40.5	6	16.2	1	2.7
4. I discuss practical / theoretical issues with my colleagues.	-	-	-	-	10	27.0	19	51.4	8	21.6
5. I observe other teachers' classrooms to learn about their efficient practices.	6	16.2	4	10.8	11	29.7	10	27.0	6	16.2
6. I ask my peers to observe my teaching and comment on my teaching performance.	8	21.6	12	32.4	11	29.7	3	8.1	3	8.1

When the items in Table 1 belonging to the practical component of the questionnaire are examined, it is found that 43% of the English teachers in the study reported that they keep a file for their accounts of teaching for reviewing purposes (Item 1). Similarly, nearly all the teachers have a practice of talking about their classroom experiences with their colleagues and ask advice and feedback (Item 2). It is also interesting that they 'rarely' or 'sometimes' take notes about their accomplishments/failures and talk about lessons with colleagues following each lesson (Item 3). When it comes to Item 4, it is obvious that most of the English teachers discuss practical and theoretical issues with their colleagues. More than half of the teachers have a desire to observe other teachers to learn about their efficient practices (Item 5) and ask their peers to observe their teaching and comment on their performances (Item 6).

Table 2

Reflective practice results of English teachers towards cognitive component

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
7. I read books /articles related to effective teaching to improve my classroom performance.	-	-	4	10.8	15	40.5	10	27.0	8	21.6
8. I participate in workshops / conferences related to teaching / learning issues.	1	2.7	6	16.2	13	35.1	8	21.6	9	24.3
9. I think of writing articles based on my classroom experiences.	8	21.6	8	21.6	13	35.1	6	16.2	2	5.2
10. I look at journal articles or search on the internet to see what the recent developments in my profession are.	1	2.7	4	10.8	9	24.3	13	35.1	10	27.0
11. I carry out small scale research activities in my classroom to become better informed of learning / teaching processes.	1	2.7	9	24,3	16	43.2	7	18.9	4	10.8
12. I think of classroom events as potential research topics and think of finding a method for investigating them.	2	5.4	6	16.2	13	35.1	13	35.1	3	8.1

Analysis of the cognitive component of the questionnaire shows that 40.5% of the teachers sometimes read the recent publications regarding effective teaching to make improvements in their classroom performance; while 27% often and 21% always do (Item 7). Although most of the teachers state that they participate in workshops/conferences related to teaching and learning issues, 24.3% said that they always join them (Item 8). Nearly 80% of all teachers gave one of the following answers ‘sometimes, rarely or never’ when it is asked about writing articles based on their classroom experiences and the highest rate belongs to choice ‘Sometimes’ with 35.1% (Item 9). Additionally, 35.1% of the teachers state that they often look at journal articles or search on the internet to see what the recent developments in their profession are (Item 10). It is interesting to note that 43.2% of the teachers sometimes carry out small scale research activities in their classroom to become better informed of learning/teaching processes (Item 11). Sometimes and often choices have got the same percentage of 35.1% (Item 12).

Table 3

Reflective practice results of English teachers towards learner component

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
13. I talk to my students to learn about their learning styles and preferences.	-	-	1	2.7	8	21.6	11	29.7	17	45.9
14. I talk to my students to learn about their family background, hobbies, interest and abilities.	-	-	1	2.7	3	8.1	14	37.8	19	51.8
15. I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.	-	-	3	8.1	5	13.5	16	43.2	13	31.1

There are three items in the learner component of the questionnaire. Results showed that nearly all the teachers talk to their students to learn about their students’ learning styles and preferences (Item

13). Moreover, they reveal that 45.9% of them always talk to students to learn about their family background, hobbies, interest and abilities (Item 14). It is also interesting that nearly half of the teachers often ask their students whether they like a teaching task or not (Item 15).

Table 4  
Reflective practice results of English teachers towards meta-cognitive component

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
16. As a teacher, I think about my teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting my teaching.	-	-	-	-	1	2.7	22	59.5	14	37.8
17. I think of the ways my biography or my background affect the way I define myself as a teacher.	1	2.7	1	2.7	4	10.8	19	51.4	12	32.4
18. I think of meaning or significance of my job as a teacher	-	-	-	-	5	13.5	13	35.1	19	51.4
19. I try to find out which aspects of teaching provide me with a sense of satisfaction.	-	-	1	2.7	7	18.9	13	35.1	16	43.2
20. I think about my strengths and weaknesses as teacher.	-	-	2	5.4	1	2.7	10	27.0	24	64.9
21. I think of the positive/ negative role models I have had as a student and the way they have affected me in my practice.	-	-	1	2.7	11	29.7	9	24,3	16	43.2
22. I think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in my classroom practice.	-	-	1	2.7	16	43.2	15	40.5	5	13.5

In the meta-cognitive component of the questionnaire, 59.5% of the teachers often take into account their teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting their teaching (Item 16). More than half of the teachers state that they think of the ways their biography or their background affect the way they define themselves as a teacher with the percentage of 51.4 (Item 17). Item 18 is answered more than half of the participant teachers as yes with the 51.4% again. 43.2% of teachers express that they try to find out which aspects of teaching provide them with a sense of satisfaction (Item 19). From the responses, it is clear that more than half of the teachers (64.9%) always think about their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher (Item 20). It is also notable that most of them think of the positive and negative role models they have had as students and the way they affected them in their practice (Item 21). Additionally, the teachers (29.7% selecting sometimes, 24.3% often and 43.2% always) think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in the classroom (Item 22).



Table 5  
Reflective practice results of English teachers towards critical component

Items	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
23. I think about instances of social injustice in my own surroundings and try to discuss them in my classes	1	2.7	8	21.6	15	40.5	6	16.2	7	18.9
24. I think of ways to enable my students to change their social lives in fighting poverty, discrimination and gender bias.	1	2.7	2	5.4	16	43.2	12	32.4	6	16.2
25. In my teaching, I include less-discussed topics, such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women, minorities, and poverty.	4	10.8	9	24.3	12	32.4	9	24.3	3	8.1
26. I think about the political aspects of my teaching and the way I may affect my students' political views.	14	37.8	10	27.0	7	18.9	4	20.8	2	5.4
27. I think of ways through which I can promote tolerance and democracy in my classes and in the society in general.	-	-	-	-	7	18.9	14	37.8	16	43.2
28. I think about the ways gender, social class and race influence my students' achievements.	3	8.1	5	13.5	10	27.0	8	21.6	11	29.7
29. I think of outside general events that can influence my teaching inside the class.	2	5.4	4	10.8	13	35.1	11	29.7	7	18.9

In the last component of the questionnaire, the critical element, 40.5% of the teachers sometimes think about instances of social injustice in their own surroundings and try to discuss them in their classroom (Item 23); while 43.2% of them sometimes think of ways to enable their students to change their social lives in fighting poverty, discrimination and gender bias (Item 24). It is interesting to note here that nearly half of the teachers rarely or sometimes include less-discussed topics such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women, minorities, and poverty (Item 25). However, more than half of the teachers seldom think about the political aspects of their teaching and the way they may affect their students' political views (37.8% never and 27.0% rarely) (Item 26). Yet, it is observed in the table that nearly all of the teachers think of the ways of promoting tolerance and democracy in their classroom and in the society in general (Item 27). In the last two items regarding the critical element, only 29.7% of the teachers always think about the ways gender, social class and race influence their students' achievements (Item 28); while 35.1% sometimes think of outside general events that can influence their teaching in their classroom (Item 29). These somewhat conflicting statements bring up qualitative questions on how and why the educators reflect on ways to promote tolerance and social justice through teaching while personal reflection on their own tendencies, intent to present examples through less-discussed topics, or reflection on the effects of social dichotomies are not strong factors for them.

The least practiced items among English teachers are 5, 6, 9, 25 and 26. It shows that the teachers do not observe other teachers' classrooms and do not invite their peers to give feedback about their classroom performance. Moreover, it is observed that some teachers do not participate in research activities. On the other hand, items 2, 3, 14, 18, 19, 20, and 21 are the most preferred items by the teachers. When these items are analysed, it is seen that the teachers are willing to talk about their classroom experiences, talk to their students to learn about their learning styles, their family backgrounds, hobbies, interests and abilities. In short, they think about their strengths and weaknesses as teachers, meaning and significance of their job, and ways through which they can promote tolerance and democracy but not as much about the practical application of these reflections.

To understand their reflective practices from a broader standpoint, means and standard deviations were taken for each dimension.

Table 6

The five components of the reflective teaching questionnaire by mean and standard deviation

Components	Practice	Cognitive	Learner	Meta-cognitive	Critical
Mean	3,46	3,30	4,21	4,18	3,31
Sd	.50	.71	.73	.49	.69

When Table 6 is studied, it can be observed that the teachers reflected mostly in the learner component (4.21), followed by the meta-cognitive element with 4.18. The mean value of the practice component is 3.16, the cognitive element 3.30, and the critical dimension 3.31. When all the means are taken into consideration, it can be suggested that English teachers are very willing to reflect on their teaching practices.

In the study, the teachers were asked to respond to the items in the questionnaire and then write the items to which they attach importance in reflective practice. Of the 37 English teachers, 26 made comments regarding reflective teaching based on the items on the questionnaire. In total, the frequency rates of the 221 comments made are displayed in Table 7 for practical component, in Table 8 for cognitive component, in Table 9 for learner component, in Table 10 for meta-cognitive component and in Table 11 for Critical Component. The findings which were obtained from the second research question “To which dimensions of reflective teaching do the English Teachers attach more importance in their teaching contexts?” can be highlighted as shown in the tables below:

Table 7

Teacher-rated Importance of Reflective Practices towards Practical Component

Items	f	%
Item 1	7	3.17
Item 2	10	4.52
Item 3	7	3.17
Item 4	8	3.62
Item 5	3	1.36
Item 6	4	1.81

As Table 7 indicates, Item 2 (4.52%) was preferred by 10 of the teachers who participated in the study. However, Item 5 (1.36%) was given importance by 3 teachers which made this item the least preferred one at practical component dimension.

Table 8

Teacher-rated Importance of Reflective Practices towards Cognitive Component

Items	f	%
Item 7	9	4.07
Item 8	11	4.98
Item 9	4	1.81
Item 10	9	4.07
Item 11	5	2.62
Item 12	3	1.36

Item 8 in Table 8, was also demonstrably practiced by 11 English teachers (4.98%) while Item 12 was preferred by 3 teachers (1.36%).

Table 9

Teacher-rated importance of reflective practices towards learner component

Items	f	%
Item 13	20	9.05
Item 14	15	6.79
Item 15	10	4.20

Item 13 (9.50%) was cited as the most preferred way of reflective teaching by 20 teachers. Additionally, Item 14 (6.79%) is given importance by 15 English teachers. At the same time, Item 15 was preferred by 10 teachers (4.20%) although it was the least preferred item at learner component in Table 9.

Table 10

Teacher-rated importance of reflective practices towards meta-cognitive

Items	f	%
Item 16	13	5.88
Item 17	5	2.62
Item 18	8	3.62
Item 19	8	3.62
Item 20	11	4.98
Item 21	9	4.07
Item 22	4	1.81

As it is indicated in Table 10, the most preferred item at meta-cognitive component, Item 16 was preferred by 13 teachers (5.88%) and the least preferred one, Item 22, was preferred by 4 teachers (1.81%).

Table 11  
Teacher-rated importance of reflective practices towards critical component

Items	f	%
Item 23	4	1.81
Item 24	6	2.71
Item 25	4	1.81
Item 26	3	1.36
Item 27	11	4.98
Item 28	7	3.17
Item 29	3	1.36

As Table 11 suggests, the most preferred item at critical component, Item 27 was the preference of 11 teachers (4.98%) while the least preferred items, Item 26 and Item 29 were the preferences of 3 teachers (1.36%).

English teachers mainly attach great importance to the items, 2, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, and 27. Of these items, 13, 14 and 20 are reported to be the most practiced ways of reflective teaching among English teachers. Briefly, it can be concluded that the items to which the teachers attach importance are reflected practice the most as well. Likewise, the teachers do not give importance to the items 5, 6, 9, 25, and 26. When Table 1 is compared to Table 3, it can be determined that these reflective items are not practiced as English teachers do not attach importance to them.

Overall, the findings indicate that the English teachers who participated in the present study are actively engaged in reflective teaching. As Burton (2009) suggests, 'being reflective assists teachers' lifelong professional development enabling them to critique teaching and make better-informed teaching decisions' (p. 298). It is a fact that there are new tendencies and approaches in teacher education. In the past, methods provided a framework for novice teachers' initiation into the world of practice in the light of the method of the day. Now, teacher educators should seek alternatives capable of meeting pedagogical and socio-political needs of ELT teachers (Akbari, et al., 2010). Once, research was generally considered a separate activity from teaching "even when reflection was acknowledged as an essential teaching activity and skill by the likes of Dewey (1933) and later Schön (1983). But, the separation has now largely disappeared, at least in the minds of teacher educators" (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Freeman & Richards, 1996 as cited in Burton, 2005, p. 1). This was further demonstrated in this study as shown by the responses to Items 11 and 12 in the questionnaire.

It is evident that the benefits of practicing reflective teaching cannot be neglected (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Halliday, 1998; Akbari, 2007). In this context Meyer (2008) acknowledges the impact of teachers' reflective practices and continues to state the importance of classroom observation. Curtis and Szestay (2005, p. 1) "report on learning outcomes of experienced teachers who attended a program designed to enable them to come together and engage in professional development through structured and systematic reflective practice." As Liou (2001) argues, "critical reflection raises teachers' awareness about teaching, enables deeper understanding of variables related to teaching and triggers positive changes in their practice" (p. 197). So, reflective practice can help English language teachers to build up a better understanding of their teaching practices which can contribute positively to their professional development.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study explored English teachers' tendencies and preferences regarding reflective teaching. For this purpose, the English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI) developed by Akbari et al. (2010) was used to gather data for the study. The results show that all the teachers who participated in the study are actively engaged in reflective teaching and that they were aware of the benefits that can be derived from this aspect of professional development. The results of the study also suggest that English teachers are willing to learn about their students' learning styles and preferences and they think about the strengths and weaknesses of their students.

The English teachers mostly preferred to reflect in the learner and meta-cognitive components when compared with other dimensions in the questionnaire. Furthermore, it can be suggested that the items the teachers regarded most strongly are also those that were reflected more in the practice. In further studies, understanding why some reflective practice items are more highly valued and used more than others could be of interest.

In order to get insight into the sophisticated complexities of teaching, teachers should be encouraged to reflect through such instruments as classroom observations, dialogue journals, and action research. Required information and practices regarding the importance of the components of reflective teaching should be provided in teacher training and in-service programs in order to provide stronger and more self-sufficient educators. Rubrics should be developed in order to clarify 'how meaningful reflection and an emphasis on learning are not incompatible if the focus is placed on the process of learning rather than on outcomes alone' (Ward & McCotter, 2004, p. 243). In addition, engagement in the process of reflection should be considered an important outcome both in pre-service and in-service teacher education.

We need further studies in order to investigate whether or not the reflective skills acquired in preservice education are internalized by the teachers and used to help them to cope with their new role as teachers (Chetcuti et al., 2011). As reflection in teacher education has gained importance in recent years, a broad range of research and projects can be undertaken to make our language educators and language learners more effective.

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