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REFLECTING TEACHING STRATEGIES: AN APPROACH TO ENRICH THE ENGLISH

TEACHING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE


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Research Report submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in English Language Teaching for Self-directed Learning


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Abril

2016

Declaration

I hereby declare that my research report entitled:

*Reflecting Teaching Strategies: An Approach to Enrich the English Teaching Professional*

*Practice*

- Is the result of work done individually  as declared and specified in the text;

- Is neither substantially the same as nor contains substantial portions of any similar work submitted or that is being concurrently submitted for any degree or diploma or other qualification at the Universidad de La Sabana or any other university or similar institution except as declared and specified in the text;

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- Has been submitted by or on the required submission date.


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## Abstract

*Reflecting Teaching Strategies: An Approach to Enrich the English Teaching Professional Practice* is an exploratory study which considered studies on the field from 2008 until 2016. The study provides an overview and exploration of twenty three reflective teaching national and international research reports. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent that reflective teaching could become a strategy for language teaching professional development. Based on content analysis four main topics emerged: 1) reflective teaching as an approach to improve English teaching professional practices, 2) strategies that facilitate the achievement of Reflective Teaching, 3) reflection to enhance language teaching education and 4) in-service teacher training to facilitate reflection. Results indicated that reflective teaching as an alternative to raise awareness about English language teaching, and as a means to encourage teachers to open their minds, update their teaching methodologies and make adjustments to their lessons. The findings highlight significant improvements of development of professional practices through the implementation of reflective teaching strategies as a daily process. When reflection becomes habitual, crucial changes are perceived not only within the academic community, but especially in the classroom. Additionally, based on the findings, a reflective teaching protocol is proposed in order to promote reflective teaching. Finally, some implications for further research are also discussed.

Key words and expressions:  Reflective Teaching (RT), Reflective Teaching Strategies (RTS), English teaching professional practices (ETPC), professional development

**Resumen**

*Reflecting Teaching Strategies: An Approach to Enrich the English Teaching Professional Practice* es un estudio exploratorio que tuvo en cuenta estudios realizados entre 2008 y 2016. El interés principal de este estudio es explorar la enseñanza reflexiva para contribuir con el mejoramiento de las prácticas profesionales de los profesores de inglés. Este estudio exploratorio se centra en la identificación y explicación de las estrategias de enseñanza reflexiva y la comprensión de veintitrés informes de investigación llevados a cabo en ámbitos nacionales e internacionales. Basado en un análisis de contenido cuatro áreas de exploración emergieron: 1) las contribuciones y los usos de la enseñanza reflexiva como enfoque, 2) las estrategias que pueden facilitar el logro de la enseñanza reflexiva, 3) la reflexión como oportunidad de mejoramiento profesional y 4) el entrenamiento de profesores en prácticas reflexivas. Los resultados indicaron que la enseñanza reflexiva parecía ser la mejor alternativa para crear conciencia y como un medio para animar a los profesores a abrir sus mentes, actualizar sus metodologías de enseñanza y hacer ajustes a sus lecciones. Estos resultados destacan la importancia de un enriquecimiento de las prácticas profesionales a través de la implementación de estrategias de enseñanza reflexiva como un proceso diario, que cuando se convierte en un hábito, cambios importantes se dan no son sólo dentro de la comunidad académica, sino sobre todo en las aulas. Adicionalmente, se propone un protocolo para promover la reflexión en la enseñanza. Finalmente, algunas implicaciones sobre posibles oportunidades de investigación se presentan.

**Palabras claves** y expresiones: enseñanza reflexiva (RT, por sus siglas en Inglés), estrategias de enseñanza reflexiva (RTS, por sus siglas en Inglés), Prácticas Profesionales en la Enseñanza de Inglés (ETPC, por sus siglas en Inglés).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The strengthening of teachers' professional development in Colombia has become an important concern for the Ministry of Education (MEN) within the bilingual educational policies and programs developed so far, for example the Program Colombia Bilingüe 2014-2018 which is focused on three main strategies: pedagogical design, English language teachers professional development and English language teaching materials.

Improving English language professional practices requires training teachers in materials and curriculum development, teachers´ evaluation, and English language proficiency skills as MEN has appointed. Therefore, teacher training becomes one of the key actions to fulfil the program goals.

The Colombian Ministry of Education assessed English language teachers in 2005 with the Quick Placement Test (QPT), designed by University of Cambridge; then, results showed a very low level of language proficiency. However, many concerns about the validity of the assessment analysis rose from Colombian language teachers, since the test mode familiarity could have an impact on test results. The fact that English language Colombian teachers had a low English language level persuaded the national government to start implementing the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) and the cascade model as the main professional development strategies for language teachers. However, as the model was conceived, and following what Hipkemoi (2016) stated "the cascade model [could be] founded on the notion of an "expert" delivering valuable ideas to often "inexperienced" or "ignorant" teachers. [Fact which may not consider that] teachers have unique needs and experiences and when these are ignored or rubbished at the altar of perceived superior advice, the process is set to fail from the start"(p.4). Not in vein,

Gonzalez (2009) argued that "the ICELT model favors the adoption of a top down model in which teachers do not have voices, are not invited to teach reflectively, and are not agents of their own development" (p. 317). Gonzalez also stated "The ICELT model does not advocate the need to have autonomous reflective practitioners that participate in networks. Its most notorious limitation is probably the failure to recognize and value teachers' expertise and knowledge outside the dominant discourses" (p.319). Cárdenas et al. (2010) "proposed considering teachers' development, not training, which would imply an ongoing process" (p.54) (author´s translation); it means that professional development programs which consider teachers´ experiences, interests, and work collaborative are more effective.

Considering Gonzalez and other researchers' reflections on the program proposed by the MEN, it can be said that the implementation of ICELT stated by MEN is inadequate as the main option for professional development for language teachers because it does not take into account the real teaching Colombian context. According to Castro and Martinez (2016) "Teachers' professional development is an ongoing process in which teachers engage to transform some of their conceptions and practices around pedagogy, methodology, and didactics in order to find new roads that allow them to meet the needs and interests of their own contexts" ( p. 40). From that sense, language training programs should strive to improve language competence and teaching methodologies that meet the standards of excellence in education.

Consequently, there is a need for appropriate professional development programs for Colombian language teachers that meet real requirements of the constant changing Colombian educational system. What implies that English language teachers become more reflective in such a way that their practices improve as a direct consequence of a conscious

application of government guidelines. From that sense, the purpose of this study is to explore how the inclusion of reflective teaching into the teaching practices may enhance professional development process for English language teachers; since reflective teaching involves going beyond teaching instructional techniques. Teachers who explore their attitudes towards the teaching profession through critical reflection can benefit their professional practices as well as the improvement of their students' learning education.

Considering what was said above, this exploratory study "Reflecting Teaching: an Approach to Enrich the English Teaching Professional Practice" considered the need for teachers to be engaged in a reflective process that at the end is going to truly impact their classrooms and the students;  to think about their teaching and analyze what could be improved becomes a fundamental component of their professional growth to provide learners with a better language teaching process, not only to achieve the requirements of MEN, but also to improve English language teachers  professional practices in a reflective way.  English language teachers may monitor their own teaching instruction as a continuing improvement of language education. Teachers could analyze difficulties or new trends in their classroom and look for different teaching alternatives. Moreover, teachers can expand their teaching knowledge-based, and promote effective language acquisition to have a positive learning environment to be able to understand their learners' needs and interests. From that perspective, the researcher embarked in this exploratory study to find out practical possibilities to benefit the professional development programs that facilitate the English language teachers' improvement in the Colombian city of Sogamoso, Boyacá; consequently, reflective teaching was found as a possible and effective strategy to be implemented by the local governments. Reflective teaching, then, become as the strategy that could encourage teachers to be more critical and reflective about their performance in

class, and be able to identify the need for a change not only in their language proficiency level, but also in their teaching methodology. In order to achieve that reflective stage, teachers require a continuous professional development through different reflective teaching strategies in the classroom as evidenced in this exploratory study.

Camacho et al. (2012) supported the idea that English language teachers need training to comprehend what has to be changed in a classroom to benefit learners. He considers that "reflection gave teachers the opportunity to analyze how and why they acted as they did and how they could think of changes or new ways of teaching, when thinking took place during teaching, trainee teachers adapted their actions whilst the class was being taught" (p. 56). This idea suggests two important facts: first, the process of reflection is necessary to raise teachers' awareness. Educators should revisit the development of their practice and have the opportunity to reteach in a better way. Second, reflection allows a better understanding of how students actually learn a foreign language.  Understanding how students learn provides a better quality of language learning processes by incorporating different strategies. All in all, reflection allows a language teacher translate students' needs into actions that would facilitate their learning.

In this study, the researcher concentrated her efforts on a careful exploration of some existing national and international literature to determine how reflective teaching has been interpreted and implemented in these contexts. In that sense, twenty three research studies were considered: eleven national reports and twelve international reports published between 2008 and 2016.  This exploration supported the idea that reflective teaching helped language teachers to raise their perceptions about their teaching and open their minds for making a change in their classrooms.

In this exploratory study, the researcher focused on four aspects. First, reflective teaching as an approach which is focused on the contributions of reflection and the uses of reflective teaching in language education. Second, strategies that facilitate the achievement of reflective teaching such as journals, self-monitoring methods and lesson reports proposed as facilitators of the incorporation of reflection to enhance English language professional practices. Third, reflection to enhance language teacher education appeared as the process of improving teaching skills and envisioning them in the future as a means of a change into the language education. Fourth, in-service training emphasizes updating the teacher's knowledge base and teaching skills to keep up with a society in constant transformation.

This research study is divided into seven sections: The first part outlines the justification, research question and objectives. Then, the literature review focuses on reflective teaching (RT) and reflective teaching strategies (RTS). Readers would also find how RT has been implemented in the Colombian and international contexts. Then, the research design explains how the research process was done to obtain data for the content analysis. Then a reflective teaching protocol is presented as a tool that may facilitate the reflective process. The final chapter offers the conclusions and implications of the study.

### 1.1   Research question

The researcher explored twenty three research studies focused on reflective teaching strategies into the English teaching process to enhance English language professional practices. The author attempted the following research question:   To what extent can reflective teaching become a strategy to enrich the English teaching professional practice?

## 2   Research objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe how the incorporation of reflective teaching may help language teachers to improve their professional practices.

2. To analyze the incorporation and impact of reflective teaching strategies   on the progress of English teaching professional practices

3. To propose a reflective teaching protocol that assists teachers to reflect individually and cooperatively.

## 2. JUSTIFICATION

Reflective Teaching should be recognized as a continuous learning and developed routine that requires teachers to think critically about their teaching practices to incorporate changes into their classrooms. After the exploration of eleven national and twelve international research reports, it became clear to the researcher that teachers require professional development programs in areas such as curriculum development, new educative approaches, learning styles, English language re-training and a reorganization of English language policies. The participation in professional development programs could be addressed through the incorporation of reflection into teaching as Iqbal et al (2015) revealed "involvement of teachers in reflective practices affected their professional teaching practices and helped them out to construct professional knowledge" (p. 377).

Teachers need opportunities to implement different strategies to have an impact in their classrooms, to motivate students and to demonstrate their expertise in their daily teaching practices. It is imperative that teachers examine what happens in their classrooms to implement a variety of strategies to solve problems or improve the way they have been teaching for many years and then analyze the benefits of incorporating reflection in their daily teaching practice. According to Johnson and Huwe (2003), "Reflection and mentoring expand more opportunities for teachers´ professional development as compared to traditional ways of professional growth" (as cited in Iqbal et. al, 2015, p. 377).

Exploring the incorporation of reflective teaching to enhance English language teaching professional practices requires an understanding of the Colombian bilingualism context and how the government has incorporated a variety of programs including the last one: Colombia Very Well! 2015-2025. The MEN has regional offices in each department along the country and certified local authorities which have more than 150.000 inhabitants. These

regional offices have the aim of implementing and incorporating training programs for English language teachers. Among the activities that regional offices are administering there is a collection of educative content in English which "is a set of strategies to strength learning environments of foreign language in the country, implying an impact in every aspect of improving the quality of the educational cycle (Colombia, Very Well! Programa Nacional de Inglés, p. 37) (author´s translation).

The aim of Colombia, Very Well! Program is to empower English language teaching and learning in the country; the program is divided into four imperative axes which promote English skills within students and teachers to reach at least B1 level. The first axe is the pedagogical academic content is focus on training English language teachers in teaching materials; the second one is training and supporting teachers, this is a special axe because training is conceived in four different teaching levels: for trainers, tutors, teachers and beneficiaries. The third axe corresponds to institutional management, which provides every regional office with enough economic resources and promotes appropriate institutional conditions for English projects to become effective and sustainable; the last one is the assessment and monitoring stage which ensures an analysis of every teaching context; its needs, strengths and weakness (See Figure 1). The Colombia, Very Well! Program is also intended to measure the impact of the bilingualism projects implemented in the different regions of the country.

However, as the Colombia, Very Well! Program  2015-2025  and other strategies implemented by the national government run, such as the ICELT or the cascade training model, it can be said that English language teachers may not play an active role in the programs, and therefore, their professional growth could be affected by the government change those polices. According to Gonzalez (2009) "The model [implemented by the

government] does not allow for the presence of theory produced by the teacher through exploration. Moreover, the content presentation takes up most of the course time, thus limiting the space for reflection on the action taken" (p. 322). The English language teaching and learning policies have been set with an absence of discussion and language teachers' voices have not been heard. From that sense, there is a need of a construction of a professional development program based on the understanding on local needs and the teachers' active participation to foster an adequate English language educational change.

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Figure 1.   Taken from Proyecto de fortalecimiento al desarrollo de competencias en lenguas extranjeras. Illustrates the four axes by "Programa Nacional de Inglés Colombia, very well!!  Copyright, MEN July 2014.

Considering the need to explore the incorporation of reflective teaching to enhance English language teaching professional practices, and following a personal interest of the

researcher, a preliminary exploration online survey was designed to be used with nine English language teachers out of the 40 in the city of Sogamoso, a small town near the capital, Bogotá DC (See Table 1). It was implemented in December, 2014 to determine whether English language teachers practiced any type of reflection as a daily practice. The survey also permitted an initial exploration to find out if English language teachers had participated in any professional development activity on their own or held by MEN (See Appendix A).   The participants of this preliminary exploratory survey were English language teachers who voluntarily accepted to participate.

| Preliminary Participants/ characteristics | Teacher A | Teacher B | Teacher C | Teacher D | Teacher E | Teacher F | Teacher G | Teacher H | Teacher I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 35 | 40 | 35 | 38 | 42 | 41 | 44 | 37 | 36 |
| gender | Male | Female | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Female | Male |
| Years of teaching | 10 | 15 | 10 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 16 | 12 | 11 |
| Language proficiency | B1 | A2 | A2 | A2 | A2 | A2 | A2 | A2 | B1 |
| Hours of weekly teaching instruction | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Table 1.   Preliminary participant's background illustrates the language teachers in the initial exploration.

Results showed that none of the nine teachers surveyed had participated in any professional development program stated by MEN or on their own. It means that English language teachers from Sogamoso require being involved in activities or programs to improve their teaching and to grow professionally. Under those antecedents, the relation between the preliminary survey and this exploratory study strived on how the incorporation of reflective teaching could help English language teachers enhance their professional practices, especially in the city of Sogamoso because some of them have not been engaged in professional development programs. From that perspective, reflective teaching is an

effective strategy for professional growth because reflection prevents language teachers to settle down in traditional paradigms and plays an imperative role for the professional development.

This study may have some impact on the language teachers in the city of Sogamoso, and may become a new exploration to support further studies that consider reflective teaching as a strategy to improve professional practices. The incorporation of reflection will positively impact language teacher's education and will provide them with opportunities to grow professionally because it is adequate for real teaching needs. Additionally, the incorporation of reflective teaching strategies into the daily practice will benefit students from having an updated and motivating classroom in the sense that teachers would understand how learners learn a second language more effectively.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is divided in two parts. The first provides a review on reflective teaching significant definitions, its benefits and challenges. Then, the process of incorporating reflection which includes reflective teaching strategies. The second part outlines the definition of professional development including reflective teaching as a professional path.

### 3.1 Reflective teaching: significant definitions

The purpose of this section is to show that the integration of reflection into teaching has many benefits including making English language teachers aware of the need for a change in the classroom. Therefore, developing reflection into the English language teaching in Colombia becomes a key alternative for professional practice enrichment that can give solutions to specific classroom issues. This section is organized in two parts; first, the literature review provides a summary of what RT is; its benefits and challenges and how RT has been interpreted and implemented, and then how the incorporation of reflection serves as professional development to enhance English language teaching professional practices.

RT applied in the classroom is an imperative interpretation of how language education may improve. Reflective Teaching or becoming critical of oneself has gained importance in the professional practice of English language teachers as a result of the benefits it can have on teaching practices and on teachers' professional life. Dewey introduced the term reflective teaching in 1933: He considered it to be

"an active and deliberative cognitive process that involves sequences of

interconnected ideas that take into account underlying beliefs and knowledge.

School's actions became routine and needed to change. Reflection is considered as a thinking process, resulting in creating alternatives of teaching. He further stated that teachers who are unreflecting about their teaching often uncritically accept this everyday reality in their schools and concentrate their efforts on finding the most effective and efficient means to solve problems" (as cited in Pedro, 2006, p. 130).

In this regard, the idea that teachers need reflection not only to change their everyday routines within a classroom, but also to realize what problems are arising must become a current belief for language teachers. It is common to recognize that teachers tend to implement routinized teaching methods, perhaps because of their teaching beliefs or lack of professional development.

Dewey´s theory allowed the researcher to understand that this process of reflection is not an easy process. Being reflective requires an understanding of why certain actions appear in the way teachers teach, where knowledge-based comes from, their language skills, and the will to change. It means that reflection should involve more than a simple reflective session or training. A teacher must be able to accept and consider other current teaching ideas which can be found by reading recent research reports or by participating in any professional development program.

Zalipour (2015) defined "reflective practice for teaching is for those teachers who are disposed to think about their teaching practices, and are willing to put reflective practice into action. Reflective practice challenges teachers who have unquestioned assumptions about good teaching, and encourages them to examine themselves and their practices in the interest of continuous improvement" (p.4). It implies teachers' commitment to study their

teaching practices to make changes based on weaknesses and develop action plans to improve the quality of their education instruction. Impedovo and Malik (2016) stated that

"To be a reflective practitioner, a teacher can implement different strategies. They could, for example, analyze and question happenings within the teaching–learning context; show consideration for feelings and behaviors; keep a regular or daily record of significant events; share stories about students' learning; ask colleagues and students' families for their insights; or read professional literature to learn more about changing the environment and materials to support students' learning" (p.102).

Zalipour, Impedovo and Malik contributions are at a certain point similar to Dewey's. They all agree that reflection is a process of rethinking and analyzing certain actions in class so students and teachers reach their teaching and learning objectives.

Additionally, MacKinnon's reflective cycle which consisted of three phases: initial problem setting, reframing and resolution (as cited in Tairab, 2003, p.3) was derived from Schön´s conception of reflection: framing and reframing. The previous contributions on reflecting teaching enable teachers to analyze their actions in the sense of providing outcomes. Al- Issa & -Bulushi (2010) argued "for reflection on teaching and learning to be effective, it has to be systematic and public (making one's teaching and work accessible for critical peer review and use)" (p. 42). It means, the incorporation of reflection has to be a daily process, a vital part of the English language teaching profession to see effective changes in the classroom. Further, Al-Issa & Bulushi (2010) stated that "trainers have the important task of educating themselves in depth about reflection and reflective teaching, which should have positive implications for their trainees' performance"(p. 60).

In the Colombian context reflective teaching appears as the ability to think about the teaching performance in the classroom. According to Trujillo (2015) "it is not only to reflect about the everyday doing as a teacher, it is to make a decision and implement this decision to really improve teaching actions and acquire knowledge from experience as a teacher and promote students learning" (p.29).

At this point, it is necessary to add that reflection has been contemplated in the national context as a way to create a learning environment to motivate teachers not only to examine their classroom performance, but also to foster their research practices. In addition to this, supporting teachers by training programs is an open door for the improvement of English language teaching and learning in Colombia. Reflective teaching, by international researchers, has been considered as an essential component of teaching and learning a language. According to Ahmad et al (2013) "Reflectivity is one of the characteristics of effective teachers" (p. 73) in that sense reflection encourages languages teachers to be more competent because they develop critical thinking and problem solving skill that play a vital role in the effectiveness of language education.

## 3.2 Challenges and benefits of reflective teaching

Surely teachers are required to make hundreds of decisions in a single class day as they observe their students´ learning as well as each student's style of learning. Therefore, they may keep observing problems and issues of education in the same way; as part of their daily classes and do not find any other way to address problem issues. The challenge here is to provide language teachers with the opportunity to start analyzing themselves as educators. According Ditchburn (2015) "Creating opportunities for pre-service teachers (PSTs) to critically reflect on and theorize about their practice is frequently regarded as an

essential component of professional experience" (p.94).This quote suggests that language teachers need chances to analyze the way they have been teaching and notice they do not have to make a decision just because a problem appears. Instead, there has to be an action plan to uncover possible issues and to have a second plan. In other words, teachers should implement continuous phases of reflection to identify what is going on in the classroom as an opportunity to improve their professional practices.

When referring to the reflective teaching processes, responsibility appears as an important component to facilitate the enrichment of English language professional practice. The responsibility of teachers' actions regarding the effects on students´ learning process is considered an imperative component to change English language teaching.  It means the responsibility to offer high -quality instruction and understand students' attitudes towards their language learning performance is a vital component so language learners would feel more confident when trying to produce the English language . The process of reflection might have consequences of teaching on the whole academic community and on teachers themselves. Attitudes, perceptions, emotions and feelings can be modified when involved in re- thinking how they perceive language education. According to Tairab (2003) "reflection was found to be characterized by the nature of reframing which occurred over the teaching practice period" (p. 18). In that sense, certain actions and attitudes would need adjustments; however, there are other actions more spontaneous that are not expressed which cannot easily be explained.

Tairab´s contribution complements Dewey's initial conceptions stated above; mainly because thinking and reflecting on teaching are needed as well as paying careful attention to what needs to be reflected; for example, teaching methods, learning styles and classroom management. By examining how they teach and how they manage a class

through the incorporation of reflection in the classroom, teachers can criticize their beliefs and actions to improve. That examination would be transformed into teaching contributions which allow to a comprehensive awareness of what is possible in reflection and what we can do with those underpinnings.

In that sense, becoming critical about oneself means to analyze classroom outcomes and teaching procedures in a thoroughly and routinized way to reach specific objectives including the improvement of the teaching practices. Besides, by implementing RT, Erginel (2006) concluded that "teachers were open and responsible while giving and receiving feedback. In this process, they accepted guidance wholeheartedly, in a mature manner underlining that feedback helped them raise their awareness towards their teaching and develop themselves professionally" (p.86). Reflection can be interpreted in different ways. It is understood as what the teacher is able to do into the classrooms and what they can adapt to create a new perspective on their classroom actions. It is also evident that every teacher is a different person and her-his concept of reflection to target effective teaching practices is totally different, even when they work in the same context. It means every teacher can reflect on different issues to mark a variety of aims.

Erginel (2006) also stated that "teachers developed self-awareness towards their teaching and own progress. The involvement in a range of experiences enabled self-analysis, and guided them to become aware of changes in their perceptions of teaching and of themselves" (p.87). It means, English language teachers should be encouraged to reflect based on their personal interests, experiences, and kind of learners by themselves because they can develop their full teaching potential. Shaping and facing the several challenges language teachers deal in the classroom require an ongoing process of reflection, examination, and restructuration of the teaching instruction, students ´ learning styles and

interests, the teaching context, the real problems and issues  of the educative system in general.

Back in 2008, Jerez noted that several skills are necessary to implement reflective teaching actions in the teaching profession. She conducted a study called "Teachers' Attitudes towards Reflective Teaching: Evidences in a Professional Development Program," in which she reported that "teachers participation in the program served to allow teachers to raise awareness and question the need to reflect. It meant more thinking and observing their acting and making changes in their practice. It also enabled them to develop particular skills to become reflective such as to start working with colleagues, communicate ideas, look critically at their actions and evaluate the process they were following" (p. 103). In sum, she found out that RT is a process that requires training teachers to be able to assess their performance in class and provide specific action on their teaching practices.

In this respect, reflection as it so far is understood is a broad thinking process that involves not only being critical about one,  but also to evaluate teacher performance. It means to be able to empower them into a society in constant re-creation. It underlines how important reflective teaching is for the transformation of a community and to be more precise for learners specifically, who are becoming more active in their learning process. Following that perspective, Erginel (2006) noted that " reflective teaching on teacher education contributes to pre- and in-service teachers' meaning making processes by enabling them to consider different experiences and by interpreting these experiences in light of theory and own value judgments influenced by social factors" (p.17). These international contributions proved the benefits of the incorporation of reflection into the daily teaching practice which allows the researcher to define reflection as an analytical and

critical process of different actions, attitudes, and decisions to progress more efficiently on the teaching practices by the teachers.

Soisangwarn and Wongwanich (2013) argued that "reflective teaching is effective for professional teacher development in that it encourages the teacher to look at ways of managing the classroom and children from differing perspectives, based on assessment data" ( p.2505). From that perspective reflective language teachers develop their teaching but also and start doing research to gather important data about their teaching

Another international contribution to the discussion is provided by Mathew (2012) who stated that:

> "The practice of reflection involves critical examination of self-motivation and thinking. It is a move towards critical thinking to improve productivity in teaching and students' learning. Learning involves acquiring competence through action and experience while teaching involves engaging the learners in a process of activity that is likely to result in success of intended learning outcomes. Helping learners to understand the reasons for failures and creating awareness in self-correction can improve students' classroom performance" (p.206).

From Mathew´s arguments it is possible to say that reflective teaching as a critical examination of teacher´s performance is mainly determined to the way they self-evaluate because the self-evaluation process requires a deep understanding of how language teachers teach and to try to find reasons of why they teach in certain ways.

## 3.3 Reflective teaching process

In Colombia researchers have proposed different ways of practicing RT. Pardo & Tellez (2015) conducted the research Reflection on Teachers' Personal and Professional Growth through a Materials Development Seminar in which. they concluded that

"reflection raises teachers' awareness of personal and professional growth by enhancing their discipline knowledge, pedagogical practices, and research projects as well as fostering self-confidence, creativity, and self-esteem" (p. 66) what Pardo and Tellez suggested is that the process of reflection helps not only to reinforce the English language instruction in the classroom but also teachers´ personal and professional life. In this process of reflection teachers may start creating their own teaching materials and transforming their classroom into possible research projects.

Another aspect that builds the process of reflection in the Colombian educational system has been also highlighted by Viáfara (2005) "a reflective approach has been satisfactory in order to cope with many of the constraints in terms of time, resources and the difficult social situation of school students that generates concern and anxiety in future teachers" ( p .65). Within this perspective, reflecting on what is actually going on in public schools´ settings (class size, culture background, and social status) should generate the transformation of giving valuable and viable alternatives to meaningful learning.. it is evident that language teachers do not make the policies but they have the commitment to make contribution on their profession. It means that an effective professional development practice should take into consideration the real teachers´ needs as well as learners interest and context.

### 3.3.1  Reflective Teaching Strategies

The main purpose of this section is to show how the process of reflective teaching can be incorporated to enhance English teaching professional practices within a classroom or in a whole academic community. In fact RT helps teachers to be aware of what it has to be changed or modified inside their classrooms. Along this literature exploration readers

would find some strategies - journals, lesson reports, video and audio recording and self-observation methods- that can be used in order to incorporate reflection into the personal professional practice. It is necessary to mention that the researcher found some other important strategies suggested by several scholars such as video recordings, self-observation, peer observation, portfolios, journals, lesson reports, questionnaires, analyzing critical incidents and case analysis. However, the strategies mentioned in this section are selected as options for the implementation of RT in the daily teaching process by in service-teachers. The researcher emphasized on journals, lesson reports, self-monitoring methods that include audio and video. These strategies were selected because first, teachers can implement them either by themselves or with the help of colleagues, they do not need any expert support. Second, they are easy to manage; for example, teachers can write in a journal what and how they feel after teaching a class and they can also have fun because teachers can take advantage of technology devices. Teachers can write their reflections on a blog and receive feedback from other teachers, so that, they can receive advices or suggestions on what they wrote. Third, in-service teachers can evaluate their teaching performance by videotaping and observing themselves after class. Fourth, English teachers develop a deep thinking process to understand what and how they teach. Finally, if teachers are interested, thanks to the results of the implementation of any of these strategies within a classroom may help to improve their teaching practices. It means teachers can collect information, find an issue to be solved and implement any action plan.

The implementation of reflective teaching may consider some important stages that will help teachers become more critical of their performances to improve their English teaching professional practices. However, English teachers are free to implement the

reflective strategy depending on their interests; fact that agrees with what Ma and Ren (2011) suggested: "reflective teaching increases the degree of "professionalism (p. 154).

### 3.3.2  Journals

For many educators journals might be a known or common strategy; however, this precise strategy acts as a reminder of what really happens in the classroom and how teachers perceive themselves as educators.  The purpose of writing journals is to collect information and self-evaluate the performance in class on order to offer students a better instruction and sets of different learning strategies to foster their knowledge.

According to Chennat ( 2014) "journal writing happens in terms of just narrating what happened in the class and school without much reflection, slowly developing into an analytical mode of 'how did I teach', which is more technique oriented to improve practice" (p. 11). It means, this strategy can be applied as a starting point to become reflective teachers because its implementation can be done individually without any expertise. The advantages of keeping a journal were clearly seen along the theoretical exploration which is well summarized by Zalipour (2015), "journals should be able to demonstrate the ability to learn from reflective practice, and the ways practice have developed" (p.12). This strategy is helpful because teachers can attach what they plan for the class to what they do. From that sense, teachers can discover what is missing about their instruction and how it can be improved. This is also an important strategy because it shapes the process of reflection when teachers are asked to write; then, they are forced to think about their performance within a lesson.  Maroof (2007) stated that the implementation of journals helped teachers since "writing a reflective journal helped them in their teaching and learning process and that it assisted them in identifying mistakes or weaknesses in their

teaching" (p. 214). In sum, keeping journals is a strategy not only about writing a description of what occurs in the classroom, but it is also a connection between theory and practice. One of the advantages of using journals is that "through analysis and interpretation of the writings, patterns and themes emerge that assist with future planning" (Rayford, 2010, p. 28). Rayford suggests a meaningful stage of writing journals due to the fact that teachers should first write how they felt in the class, to later on, write about how they dealt with it. Then, the interpretation of that writing is a fundamental key to add changes to the teaching instruction that would finally be considered as professional practice for personal enrichment.

### 3.3.3  Lesson reports

Lesson reports are mentioned by the author to encourage teachers to write and to plan their classes. According to Burton et al (2009) "The reflective writing process begins with a description of, for example, an incident, a phenomenon observed, or an unresolved teaching puzzle" (p. 7). In a lesson report a teacher describes what happened during a lesson, it is usually done right after each lesson. This strategy is very helpful because teachers can self-evaluate their classes every day. However, it is a time consuming strategy. According Christodoulou (2010), "In a lesson report a teacher describes what happened during a lesson, it is usually done shortly after the lesson which means that the account cannot be precise" (p. 26); additionally to that fact, it is important to mention that this strategy can be demanding and exhaustive because teachers must describe their lessons in detail. Widayati (2009) may offer a possible saver to the strategy since he perceives it as "an alternative approach to lesson reporting [which will simply imply] for the teacher to spend a few minutes after a lesson writing answers to questions such as the following: What were the main goals

of the lesson? or What did the learners actually learn in the lesson? What teaching procedures did I use?" (p.203). From that perspective, this strategy is focused on self-examining the way teachers actually criticize all details within a lesson. Finally, Rayford (2010) stated that "when teachers think about their teaching and what improvements need to be made, they grow professionally" (p.30); fact that supports the researcher´s initial statement: that the analysis of the incorporation of reflective teaching strategies is evidenced in the progress of English teaching professional practices.

### 3.3.4 Self-monitoring methods

According to Armstrong et al. (1985) "Self-monitoring or self-observation refers to a systematic approach to the observation, evaluation, and management of one's own behavior in order to achieve a better understanding and control of the behavior" (as cited in Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 34). Self-monitoring methods are mentioned as an encouragement of self-reflection too. This strategy enables observation as its main component. Observation can be looked from different perspectives, and it is implemented for diverse purposes. Observation is mentioned as a guide to train teachers to self-evaluate, to train them to be judges of their work. Wajnryb (1992) stated that observation is "a focused activity to work on while observing a lesson in progress and states some main reasons to use it: "as there are a lot of different things to assert in every lesson, the tasks enable the observer to focus on one or two particular aspects of teaching and let the observer concentrate on collecting the data instead of trying to make an opinion in the course of the lesson" (as cited in Christodoulou (2010, p. 25- 29). This specific definition allows teachers to practice peer reflection and collaborative work with colleagues or even students which also helps teachers to build a meaningful working environment.

At this point of the reflective teaching process, English language teachers have to show their commitment and effort for making improvements in their teaching performance, in that way, teachers themselves would diagnose how their professional practices have grown.

### 3.3.5  Audio and Video Recordings

Orlova (2009) stated that audio and video recordings are "observing, analyzing, and discussing classroom performance enhanced by the use of videotaping" (p. 31). This particular strategy is characterized by the collaboration of a colleague. Richards & Farrell (2005) argued that the strategy "shifts the responsibility for initiating improvement in teaching practices from an outsider, such as a supervisor, to the teacher" (as cited in Christodoulou, 2010, p. 26). Jerez (2008) mentioned that it is one of the strategies that generates more anxiety and discomfort in many teachers. It is imperative to train teachers to be observed, to be judged not because they are bad or good teachers but as a means of improvement and strengthening confidence. For the purposes of this study, this strategy is very important because teachers can discover their attitudes, skills, strengths and weaknesses.

In this study the author considered these four reflective teaching strategies as a special form for learning on their own. From that way, teachers can connect their teaching from their real teaching experiences. The implementation of any reflective teaching strategy requires that the teacher think of a topic that is going to be observed, read or analyzed. Then, teachers must decide what they would do with that information. It is important to clarify that reflection requires outcomes; for example, a small project; or a different class. According to Orlova (2009), there are five steps in order to have a successful video

recording session: first, preparation for micro-teaching and videotaping a lesson; second, self-viewing for the first emotional response; third, repeated self-viewing and reflection after a period of time; fourth, viewing the recording with a friend; and fifth, viewing the recording with a supervisor. It is important to take into consideration that teachers may shape their teaching performance, but also they raise awareness about how they were teaching for years and it opens a door for improvements that would be transformed into an effective learning environment.

In general terms, the incorporation of these four reflective teaching strategies suggested by the author let teachers start practicing reflection as natural daily performance. Reflective teaching strategies are considered as important opportunities to grow professionally by taking viable actions in the classrooms that is why they can also gather data every time they consider, so they raise awareness of their real circumstances and teaching contexts.

Basically, these four strategies would help teachers to collect information from their classes. Readers would find that the selected strategies have been mentioned by different researchers and their reasons to be a help for teachers to reflect critically upon themselves are also mentioned. Lesson reports, journals, audio and video recordings and self-monitoring methods are strategies which have been suggested by several theorists cited in Christodoulou (2010, p.20- 25). Despite the multiplicity of definitions and benefits, they all conceive these strategies as powerful tools to uncover classrooms insights, to be aware of right or wrong educative perceptions and to build an extensive knowledge of the teaching profession.

### 3.6  Professional development practices

### 3.6.1 Definition of professional development

The understanding of the term professional development constitutes a "going beyond the traditional teaching", instead, it implies changes in the teaching practices to improve professionally. According to Casteel & Ballantine (2010), "professional development refers to processes and practices that improve the job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of school employees. Ideally, these skills, knowledge, and attitudes should assure the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development and well-being of each student within the school, regardless of their linguistic, cultural, economic, or national background"(p. 5). That means English language teachers must be engaged in practices to improve not only their academic performance but also their social and personal skills that would be clearly perceived by the students.  Back in 2004 Kedzior claimed "professional development should respond to teachers' self-identified needs and interests in order to support individual and organizational improvements" (p. 2).

Attempting to provide a continuous professional development, it is a must to state that reflective teaching requires a constant effort from educators. Mizell (2010) stated that "effective professional development enables educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to address students' learning challenges. To be effective, professional development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators' learning needs" (p. 10). Following Mizell´s perspective, professional development programs should be supported by experienced educators or trainers in order to provide English language teachers with the right assessment.

According to Broad and Evans (2006)" Effective professional development needs to be sustained, ongoing, in-depth, requiring active engagement by the professional. Short term, "one-shot", "pull-out" programs are seen to be ineffective in changing or developing practice" (p. 3). Broad and Evans´s definition highlights the integrity of a continuous professional development giving attention to the teacher´s life as a person and professional considering the effort to provide positives changes and improvements in the teaching experience to have efficient English language education

In regards to the professional development components such as extended and ongoing which is basically a continuous engagement rather than only a training session, coherent and integrated that means professional development should meet English language real needs. There are other important considerations to take into account. For example, the connection between the teaching profession and students´ learning process. Moreover, the inclusion of assessment and reflection into the teaching practice and the requirement of time, support and resources are vital considerations to incorporate reflection to enhance the English language teaching professional practices.

### 3.6.2 Reflective teaching as professional development path

There are different types of professional development programs; for example mentoring, collaborative inquiry, content guided instruction and lesson study. However RT is usually viewed as an alternative to enhance professional development practices because teachers can work collaboratively or individually, they can observe, analyze and improve themselves and their colleague's performance.

In this study, professional development is considered as a way to improve the teaching practices through the incorporation of reflection to enhance the teaching practices bearing

in mind motivation and self-evaluation of teachers' performance in class. "Motivation is thought to be responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it" (Dörnyei, 2001a:8). Dörnyei stated four components of teachers' motivation: intrinsic motivation which refers to the desire to educate people, contextual factors relates to the work environment, temporal dimension which is the decision to be a teacher as a lifelong career and negative influences that are all the elements that destroy the intrinsic motivation for example lack of classroom autonomy, imposition of policies and burnout. From that sense, the engagement of English language teachers into consistent activities of reflection, the understanding of the extent of teachers' motivation including their attitudes and perceptions about language education and self-examination would lead to a better understanding of the English language education, and comply with a broadened understanding of how Colombian students can actually become better language users.

## 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

## DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

This section covers the type of research that was carried out, the context where the study took place, the researcher's role and the explanation of the data collection instruments and procedures.

### 4.1 Type of study

This research project was conducted under the principles and theoretical considerations of exploratory research which according to Burns and Grove (2003) "is a method focuses on new insights, new ideas that increase knowledge of a phenomenon" (p. 313). For this research, a supportable way to carry out the exploration of how reflective teaching may help language teachers improve their professional practices was implemented bearing in mind that teachers may wish to explore this particular area of English language to refine their thinking about teaching and to investigate different methodologies which further can be used in the classroom activities.

According to Ponelis (2015) "exploratory studies are undertaken because the field to be studied is relatively new. Secondly, exploratory studies can be undertaken to define the central concepts and constructs in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 71). Consequently, the author attempted to explore reflective teaching to have a better understanding on how it could actually provide English language teachers with possible solutions to grow professionally.

This research, "Reflecting Teaching: an Approach to Enrich the English Teaching Professional Practice" initiated based on Ashour´s steps (2008. p. 25) for conducting exploratory research. First, the author started to identify the area to be explored which was

the incorporation of reflective to enhance English language is teaching professional practices; it is basically reflecting on the area selected to get an understanding of the issue; it was the exploration of the twenty three research reports on how RT may help language teachers to improve professionally. Second, a constant reflection upon the sources was carried out, at this stage the researcher built the characterization of sources in tables. Third, according to Allwright and Lenzuen, (1997) monitoring became a 'matter of gathering naturally occurring data about whatever [puzzled the researcher]" (as cited in Ashour, 2008) where the content analysis was done. Fourth, direct action to generate data and the categorization of the analysis emerged; finally, the source analysis outcomes facilitated the design of a reflective teaching protocol that would be offered to the community (See Figure 2). Readers would find in the next section the characterization of the study, the context and institutional setting, a brief description of the data collection instruments, the participants, the role of the researcher, the ethical considerations, content analysis and the protocol design.
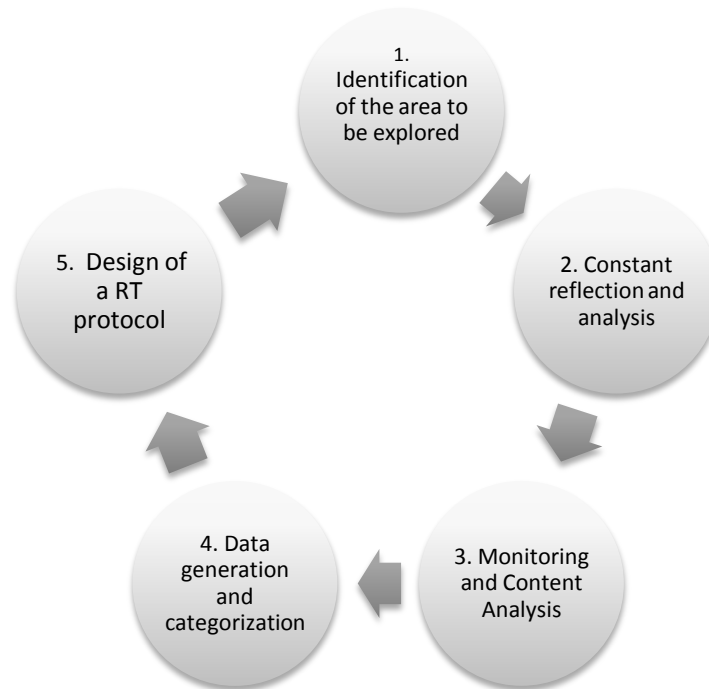
Figure 2. Exploratory research steps. Exploratory Practice: An Alternative Tool for Understanding Life in the Language Classroom. Ashour (2008)

The following section presents the manner in which the exploratory research steps previously explained were conducted.

## 4.1. 2 Identification of the area to be explored

### 4.1.2.1 Context

Based on the research question and objectives of this research, the first exploratory stage was developed through the literature exploration of several sources from which twenty three research reports were chosen. The selected studies were academic outcomes related to the reflective teaching strategies incorporation in schools and universities in public or private institutions. To do so the researcher conducted an online search using Google search and Science Direct. The author found around sixty articles, institutional

reports and published journals not only in databases in Colombia but also in databases from Canadian, European, Indian, and Australian universities. The databases presented in Table 2 include the most relevant journals considered for the exploration.

Table 2.  Journals used for the literature review

| |
|---|
| • *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature* |
| • *Profile journal* |
| • *How journal-asocopi* |
| • *Ikala revista de lenguaje y cultura* |
| • *Canadian center of science and education* |
| • *International education journal* |
| • *The journal of modern thoughts in education* |
| • *Social and behavioral journal of teacher education* |
| • *Academic publisher* |
| • *Mediterranean journal of social sciences* |

However, only twenty three were selected based on the research question and objectives, and because of their importance in the English language and teaching community. More specifically, the articles needed to address research on reflective teaching, reflective teaching strategies, professional practices, and professional development. The abstracts, keywords titles, and findings were examined to help the researcher select those to be worked with, the following criteria were taken into account:

1.  Research reports or theoretical papers written in the last decade

2.  Investigations conducted in and outside the country

3.  Research reports in which RT was the main construct and part of the pedagogical intervention

4.      Reports with the participation of in-service language teachers or in some cases pre-services teachers.

### 4.1.3 Constant reflection and analysis

The second exploratory stage was the characterization table that was built to know how these sources were considered, eleven national resources were selected and twelve international ones (See Table 3 and 4). An important characteristic of those research reports was the fact that they used quantitative and qualitative methods for data analysis. In general terms, they explored RT as an approach to improve professional practices. It was found that two of them were action research reports, three case studies; including exploratory and descriptive methods; three theoretical, conceptual and reflective reports. Six of them worked with in-service teachers and two pre-service teachers. Twelve international research reports were also important for the purposes of this study because they showed evidence of the benefits and impact of the incorporation of RT in the teaching practices. Seven of these studies were quantitative, three were reflective documents, one was an action research and other one was a descriptive study.

The selected research reports were published between 2008 and 2015 and they are divided into two groups. The first group is the characterization of eleven national sources. The table starts with the latest study in 2015 until the earliest in 2008. The first contributor is Trujillo (2015) who did a reflective inquiry on strategic reading instruction and the last one is Quintero (n.d) who carried out an action research project with beginning teachers in Colombia. (See Table 3). The second group is the characterization of twelve international sources; it is organized as the national resources table from the latest studies to the earliest. The first contributors are Impedovo and Malik (2016) who investigated the attitudes of

teachers after the incorporation of reflection through an action research. The last contributor is Fatemipour (2009) who did a descriptive study about the effectiveness of reflective teaching tools in English language teaching (See table 4).

Table 3.   Characterization of national sources

| Title | Type of research | Context study | Url link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trujillo, S (2015). *Reflective inquiry on strategic reading instruction* (Doctoral dissertation, Master's in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning). | Reflective inquiry method | Public university in Colombia | http://bibliotecadigital.udea.edu.co/dspace/handle/10495/2801 |
| Giraldo F (2013) The impact of a professional development program On English language teachers' classroom performance. | Action research | a Colombian state university. | http://www.revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/38150 |
| Samacá Y. (2012) On rethinking our classrooms: A critical pedagogy view. | Reflective paper | Colombia | http://www.howjournalcolombia.org/index.php/how/article/view/46 |
| Cote E. ( 2012) The role of reflection during the first teaching experience of foreign language pre-service teachers | exploratory-case study | Colombia In service teachers from a public university. | http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid=s0123-46412012000200003&script=sci_arttext |
| Camacho, D. et al. (2012). How can a process of reflection enhance Teacher-trainees 'practicum experience? | Case study | Colombia Public university | http://www.howjournalcolombia.org/index.php/how/article/view/37 |
| Fandiño, Y. (2011). Reflective teaching in EFL teacher education programs | Research proposal | Colombia | https://www.academia.edu/647444/Reflective_teaching_in_EFL_teacher_education_programs |
| Ojeda, J. (2011). Study of a non EFL teachers role | Case study | In service teachers from a public school | http://revistas.ustatunja.edu.co/index.php/qdisputatae/article/view/248 |
| Cardenas, M. et al. (2010). In service English teachers' professional development: some conceptual considerations for Colombia | Analysis of Colombian education | Colombia | http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0123-48702010000100004 |
| Alvarez, José ( 2009) An exploration of Colombian EFL teachers' Knowledge base through teachers' reflection | Qualitative research | Colombia | https://www.academia.edu/627888/An_exploration_of_Colombian_EFL_teachers_knowledge_base_through_teachers_reflection |
| Jerez ( 2008) Teachers' attitudes towards reflective teaching: evidences In a professional development program (PDP) | Qualitative case study | Colombia | http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1657-07902008000200006 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quintero, J. and Ramirez, O. (n.d ) An action research project with beginning teachers in Colombia –south America | Action research | Colombia | http://margaretfarren.net/pdfdocs/quintero.pdf |

Table 4.  Characterization of international sources

| *Research title* | *Type of study* | *Context of study* | *url link* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Impedovo, M. A., & Khatoon Malik, S. (2016). Becoming a Reflective In-service Teacher: Role of Research Attitude.). | Action research | In service teachers | http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n1.6 |
| Zalipour, A (2015). Reflective practice. Teaching development unit. University of Waikato | Reflective proposal | University of Waikato | http://www.waikato.ac.nz/tdu/pdf/Booklets/2015/ReflectPrac.pdf |
| Chennat, S. (2014). Being a Reflective Teacher Educator. | Reflective document | Internship Program in India | http://www.impactjournals.us/download.php?fname=--1395818905-1.%20Humanities-Being%20a%20Reflective%20Teacher%20Educator-Sailaja%20Chennat.pdf |
| Burton, J  Quirke P , Reichmann C , Peyton J.K ( 2009) R*eflective writing: a way of lifelong teacher learning*. | Book | | |
| Ahmad et al. (2013). How reflective practice improves teachers' Classroom teaching skill | Qualitative | 30 public schools | http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.4(1)/2013(4.1-07).pdf |
| Soisangwarn, A  and Wongwanichb, S. ( 2013). Promoting the reflective teacher through peer coaching To improve teaching skills | Qualitative | Public primary school | http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814006181 |
| Saylag, R. (2012). Self-reflection on the teaching practice of English as a second Language: becoming the critically reflective teacher | Reflective paper | In service teachers | http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812018940 |
| Mathew, G. (2011). Reflective classroom practice for effective classroom instruction | Theoretical paper | International | http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ies/article/download/17231/13526 |
| Rayford, R. (2010).  Reflective practice: the teacher in the mirror | Quantitative content study | 907 public schools | http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=theses dissertations |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Christodoulou, I. (2010). Teacher self-reflection | quantitative and qualitative study | In services teachers from public schools | http://is.muni.cz/th/266245/pedf_m/DPIva_Christodoulou.pdf |
| Al-Issa, A. and Al-Bulushi, A. (2010) Training English language student teachers to Become reflective teachers | Quantitative survey design | private university | http://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1430&context=ajte |
| Fatemipour, H. ( 2009). The effectiveness of reflective teaching tools in English language teaching | Descriptive (non-experimental correlational | Private university | http://www.sid.ir/en/VEWSSID/J_pdf/135020091605.pdf |

## 4.1.4 Monitoring and Content Analysis

In this study, the characterization of sources was the main instrument used to gather data. When the characterization of sources table was built, the author chose the content analysis method for this study as it was the most suitable way to explore the literature and research reports. The researcher did a search in the research reports selected in order to look for meaningful information to make a valid comprehension of the domain.

Weber (1990) indicates that "content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from the text" (p. 9). This study also considered content analysis as appropriate following what Krippendorff (2004) stated (cited in Labelle (2010, p. 18.) "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." The researcher's coding consisted in selecting common topics related to RT and the strategies used to improve professional practices or as part of professional development programs. It was done by reading several times and finding common ideas or words. These words

played the role of indicators in the coding instruments when analyzing a piece of the text for a particular category. The results of this categorization process are shown in Figure 3.

### 4.1.5 Generating data

The main procedure to generate data consisted in establishing main categories that emerged from the content analysis. It is necessary to specify that at this exploratory level the objectives of this research were to describe and analyze how the incorporation of reflective teaching may help language teachers improve their English language professional practices. Then, before explaining the main categories in the results section the readers would find the review of the characterization of the studies selected, it also includes its impact on teachers´ performance and two important considerations such as support, time and effort. Finally, the main categories aims to answer the research question: To what extent can reflective teaching become a strategy to enrich the English teaching professional practice? Figure 3 shows the four main categories: 1) reflecting teaching as an approach to improve English language teaching professional practices; 2) the strategies that facilitate the achievement of RT; 2) reflection to enhance language teacher education, and 4) in service training.

Figure 3**.** Categories that emerged in the content analysis
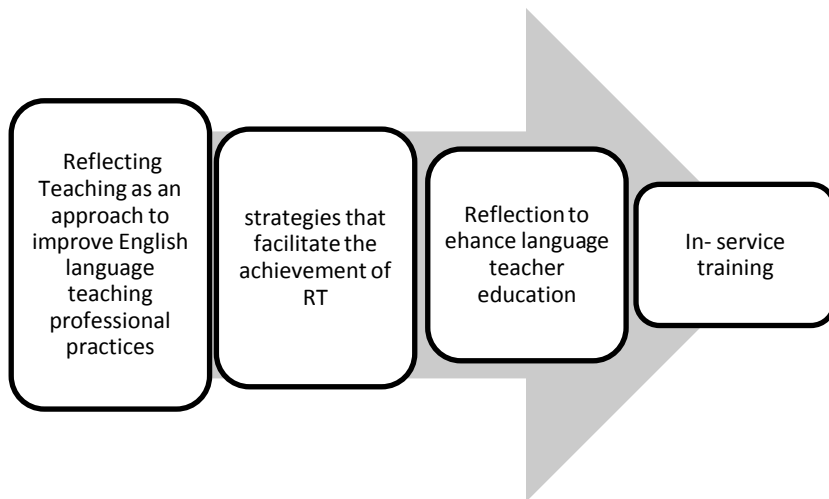
### 4.1.6 Designing a reflective teaching protocol

After completing most of the stages of this exploratory study and as one of the objectives of this study, the researcher decided to propose a reflective teaching protocol in order to enhance English language teaching professional practices. It is explained in the pedagogical intervention section.

### 5.2 Researcher's role

In this study, the researcher´s role was performed based on two positions. As a teacher, the author had the initiative to explore an issue or area and improve its understanding to foster language teaching in the classroom. As an objective of language research stated by Nunan (1997, p.2) "Undertaking structured investigation which hopefully results in greater understanding of the chosen interest area". As a researcher, reflecting on the area selected and collecting information. The role of explorer is to analyze the information deeply to propose an outcome. According to Ellis (2011, p. 31) ", the role of the exploratory practice needs to integrate inquiry into classroom practice". To carry out

this role, the researcher proposes a protocol so that English language teachers could implement it in their contexts to improve their daily teaching practice.

## 5.3 Ethical considerations

In order to ensure respect for literature reports and the reliability of the data gathered, the researcher respected the information analyzed according to APA guidelines. The author acknowledged and protected academic contributions along the study; she also maintained anonymity and confidentiality of the information of the preliminary participants of the study.

## 5. RESULTS

This section draws the findings of this exploratory study. It is divided into three parts. The first part reports an in-depth review that focuses on the characterization of the reflective teaching studies, definitions of RT, how reflection has been incorporated and presents the evidence of the incorporation of reflection, its benefits in the selected studies. The last part is focused on the categories that emerged after the content analysis which is called categorization of data.

### 5.1 Characterization of reflective teaching studies

This first part of the section explains some of the most significant contributions of reflecting teaching found on the literature exploration as the first objective of this study. The compiling of particular international researchers and certain Colombian studies were taken into account.

The contributions on reflective teaching presented in the theoretical framework section have allowed many other international researchers who have been interested in the topic. First, Tairab (2003) carried out a study under the name "The Role of Reflection in Facilitating Pre-service Primary School Teachers' Professional Growth", through an interpretative paradigm using Schön´s (1987) model. His study revealed that "generally reflection was derived and prompted by concerns that changed over the period of teaching practice. If student teachers were able to learn through and from the process of reflection, then the practice of reflection should be seriously regarded as a viable methodology for professional growth and development of pre-service primary teachers and should carefully be considered as an essential element in the training of teachers" ( as cited in Tairab ,2003, p. 19).

The researcher of this report also analyzed Rayford (2010) who conducted a study in which the purpose was to describe the perceptions of elementary administrators and teachers from three states in the West regional area of the United States concerning reflective practice.

> Rayford concluded that "teachers felt that they needed time to reflect and preferred to dialog/collaborate with a peer. Its data clearly suggested that teachers perceived reflection to be relevant in promoting professional practice and improving instruction in the classroom. Reflection helped teachers look back at their teaching and instruction. Much of this reflection was done after a lesson or unit of the study had been taught" (p. 4).

A difference between the previous studies and Rayford´s is that this one was based on open-ended questions without providing any training. This study also explored Christodoulou (2010) who reflected on his teaching in a systematic way in order to (1) find out whether systematic self-reflection will reveal the most problematic areas in teaching; and (2) to compare and analyze the benefits and drawbacks. He felt that even after seven years of teaching there were still many things he wanted to improve and work on. He also knew that most of the reflective work had to be done by himself in the first place, with some help of his pupils and perhaps his colleague. After some months of self-reflection, he concluded that "it helped him to uncover the weak points in his teaching, their causes and give suggestions for improvement" (p. 69).

Mathew (2012) conducted a study in which "he concluded that reflective practices must involve an openness that requires teachers to challenge their assumptions and continue to improve skills needed for effective classroom instruction" (p. 209). It means that English language teachers might develop more skills than teaching after being involved in any reflective teaching training. Self-reflection also appeared as an important component of reflection on the teaching practice of English as a second language. Becoming the critically

reflective teacher was investigated by Saylag (2012), it was highlighted "the importance of personal beliefs and experiences that contribute to critical reflection as the distinguishing attribute of reflective practitioners" (p. 3848). In that sense, reflection serves to improve teaching and academic skills. It is also shaped by back experiences and beliefs that further contribute to learner´s learning process.

Other research that serves as an example of how RT has been implemented was done in Malaysia and conducted by Ahmad, et. al. (2013, p. 1) in which its purpose was "to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the role of reflective practice in improving teachers' classroom teaching skills. Teachers in that study were provided a six months rigorous training in reflective practice". They were involved in an RT training in which the data were collected by a close ended questionnaire. The participants also had the opportunity to understand how they were to reflect on and what topics to select. This kind of study allowed the population under the study to do a deep reflection and then analyze their perceptions after been comprised in that process.

One important finding by Ahmad, et. al was that 90% of the teachers were in favor of the statement that they reflect on their taught lesson after classroom teaching. A conclusion of their study was "despite many challenging, and difficulties; reflective teachers focus on the diverse learners and their needs in the real classroom environment. Reflective teachers are now self-observers and self-evaluators. This characteristic enables them to know their actions and the problems of learners" (Ahmad et. al 2013, p.80). A targeted point the researcher wants to highlight is the fact that teachers understood the importance of RT processes after participating and having training on that process.

The last studies presented above (Ahmad et al 2013, Rayford 2010, Mathew 2012, Saylag 2012 & Christodoulou 2010) concluded that reflection helped teachers look back

at their teaching and instruction for the purpose of making adjustments to lesson, so it is evident that reflection helps to shape teaching instruction and it is an excellent way to improve  professional practice because teachers become self-evaluators and self- observers, critical reflective practitioners and that enable their actions to provide solutions. As it is evident, these studies provide teachers with strategies for doing reflection and in other cases just explore their perception on their own teaching. The researcher of this study also wants to highlight the importance of considering teachers perceptions as part of any training to become critical reflectors. It is also clear that those attitudes and thoughts on education, including their teaching contexts, are totally different from each other student's needs and interest may differ. Based on the previous international studies, it may be concluded that the amount of time invested in encouraging English teachers to do reflection must become daily because it is the best alternative for professional practices enrichment, and it should be an educative goal to achieve for all in-service teachers.

All earlier researchers shown how important reflecting teaching for pre-service and in-service teachers was because they can face many changes on instruction, professional practices and how to become more critical on themselves. These previous authors agreed about the importance of reflecting to improve communication with learners as a fundamental key to a successful learning environment. These researchers have also given the opportunity for further research in Colombia with the aim of teaching raising awareness. The researcher wants to highlight Jerez (2008), Alvarez (2009), Fandiño (2011), Cote (2012), Camacho et al. (2012), and Giraldo (2013) because of their common research conducted not only in public schools but also in private institutions, they all established that reflection becomes imperative when teachers are involved in systematic and reflective activities in which they can be aware of their performance and progress. One of the most

important contributions is the fact that teachers do not feel confident and supported; in that sense, all members of any academic community must be involved in this kind of activities in order to detect changes within English language classrooms.

Based on the previous investigations carried out in Colombia, reflection is as a way to enhance teacher's performance in the classroom. However, it is also important to highlight that to make reflective teaching happen it should be a process in which teachers receive training because the adoption of reflective teaching strategies should become a habit, not an imposed policy by head administrators. Autonomous teachers have many benefits when they start seeing the need to reflect. Among the advantages these previous researches have shown it can be said that teachers increase their awareness not only in instruction but also in the implementation of different methodologies, curriculum development and the most important and the one that is taken into account for the purposes of this study; teachers who had participated in other studies have agreed that becoming aware of what they do in the class and realizing why they do certain actions helped their professional practices to grow increasingly. Teachers also uncover wrong beliefs, shape old perceptions in education, cheer motivation and self-esteem and foster team work.

### 5.2 Impact on teacher´s performance

The strong point when incorporating reflection is how language teachers may benefit. According to Mizell (2010) "The effectiveness of professional development depends on how carefully educators conceive, plan, and implement it. There is no substitute for rigorous thinking and execution" (p. 10); it means teachers have to be committed, dedicate much time in observing, analyzing and setting action plans to actually improve the way they have been teaching for years.

Bailey (1997) offers the following three reasons for practicing reflective teaching: "reflective teaching is extremely valuable as a stance, a state of mind, a healthy, questioning attitude toward the practice of our profession. It creates a context which promotes professional dialogue as we accumulate substance for our stories and it helps to clarify our thinking "(p. 15).

Bonilla and Méndez (2008) stated that "incorporating the aspect of reflection in all the strategies involved in the mentoring for student- teachers may contribute to enrich their experiences in the stage of professional formation. Cooperative work, dialogue, writing to learn, individual conversations, observations, questioning are the spaces to reinforce reflection" (p. 185)

Correspondingly, the aim of professional development is focused on the improvement of teachers' actions to have effective outcomes of English language learners, it means if language teachers are conscious of an effective language education bearing in mind how learners learn;  the results would be easily seen in the classroom. In particular, promoting active and viable professional development for English language teachers in Colombia is essential to provide language teachers with a pertinent professional development where their suggestions, proposals, real needs and reflection of the actions taken will be heard.

However, after considering what the scholars have said, the researcher can conclude that becoming a reflective teacher is not an easy process, it requires support, time and effort

### 5.2.1 Support, time and effort

Within the reflective teaching processes the support for language teachers constitutes a vital factor to enhance the incorporation of reflective teaching to grow professionally. One of the main aspects within this support is the need of training programs

that satisfy Colombian teachers' needs. Gonzalez (2007) proposed a situated model for professional practice for English language teachers. She affirmed that "there is a need for new forms of teacher development programs that respond to the requirements of different teachers, teacher educators, professional development agendas, and methodologies because the ones proposed are not sensitive to our educational needs" (p. 326). Teachers require the support of administrators, colleagues and national and local authorities in order to provide effective instruction and solid results on education. Teachers own their classes, they are experts on learners' problems, student interests and real needs within their teaching contexts.

Geraldo (2013) affirmed that "teachers benefit from having someone help them to make sense of theory and their practice, who can articulate activities that help them reflect on teaching issues and who can guide them to find out what they do well and not as well" (p. 75). However, Rayford (2010) stated that "a reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline" (p. 27). Rayford´s definition integrates an important dimension that constitutes the incorporation of reflection as a daily process to improve the professional practice which is the importance of supporting language teachers with reflective training. It means, teachers are not familiar with the reflective progression, they are not used to be observed and when it happens they can get frustrated or nervous as Jerez (2008) has stated.

Al-Issa and Bulushi ( 2010) acknowledge that "a climate conducive to reflection should be developed through encouraging students to complete these reflective tasks for learning purposes, as they are being asked to write about what they know and do not know" ( p. 48). As it is evident, in -service or pre-service teachers require support to effectively

carry out reflective processes. Clearly the implementation of reflection in the international context have emphasized how reflection actually has an impact on students´ language learning, how language teachers can developed teaching in a higher level and the need of a reflective teaching training as a key alternative to improve professionally.

To become reflective teachers they should be heard and their ideas and contributions must be considered within the educative context. On the one hand, it can be accomplished with the help of head administrators and other language teachers. On the other hand, language teachers should be aware of the real needs in a classroom; in that sense, reflection would encourage them to grow professionally throughout their own teaching experience.

Other national contribution has been stated by Cote (2012) who explains that "teacher-trainees have also to be involved in the process of reflective teaching. Student-teachers are expected to reflect on a regular basis in order to draw conclusions that allow them to redirect their future actions or implement necessary changes to improve their teaching" (p. 30). It means reflection helps teachers assimilate what they have been doing for years and accommodate their teaching instructions into new classroom practices. However, reflection also requires time and effort form teachers. According to Kedzior (2004) "teachers may hesitate to commit time to professional development that extends beyond the regular school day and year" (p. 4). For that reason it is very important the support of the whole academic community to enhance the incorporation of reflection in the schools.

In sum, this exploration of reflective teaching in the national and international context provides this research with the helpful contribution that teachers can grow professionally if they are committed, with desire and motivation to acquire and reinforce their teaching skills. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to learn how to be critical,

analytical and to comprehend how attitudes, perceptions, skills, last and present teaching experiences can shape their professional practices.

5**.3   Categorization of data**

After outlining the general characterization of the selected studies, this section provides answers to the question proposed for this study: to what extent reflective teaching can become a strategy for language teaching professional development. Throughout the search of the twenty three research reports, the researcher was able to identify several information that describes RT. The topics found in the literature review include the following: awareness raising practices, critical pedagogy, the transformation of education, collaborative and peer reflection, teacher's perceptions, professional growth, reflective teaching models and strategies, efficient practitioners and RT skills. Many of the studies covered more than one area. However, the author identified and grouped those themes in four  categories included in this study: *reflective teaching as an approach, strategies that facilitate the enhancement of RT, reflection to enhance language teacher education and in-service teacher's training.* In this section the researcher reports on the four main categories found.

**5.3.1   Reflecting Teaching as an approach to improve English language teaching professional practices**

It is significant to say that along the exploration of the twenty three research reports reflective teaching is considered as an alternative to improve the teaching practices; to enhance certain teacher´s competencies as knowledge based, language skills and to reinforce the English language  teaching not only in international contexts but also in Colombian education it was evident through the exploration of these twenty three   research

reports; theoretical and conceptual papers in which reflecting teaching was taken as a different approach to encourage teachers to become more critical to their daily performance. Becoming critical was clearly explained by Ahmad, et. al (2013) where it is stated that "reflective teachers are effective teachers" (p. 80). Teachers open their minds and uncover issues that keep appearing in their daily instruction that is not easily observed and comes up with solutions. It also consists of a process which allows them to provide an active learning environment for learners; it must become a habit to be a critical one, which can be targeted with training.

For the purposes of this study, one of the most important aspects analyzed was how the implementation of reflective teaching has really helped teachers improve their professional practices. Soisangwarn and Wongwanich (2013, p. 2505) concluded in their study that "reflective teaching encourages the teacher to look at ways of managing the classroom and children from different perspectives, based on assessment data." On the other hand, reflective practice in the language teaching classroom involves an openness that requires teachers to challenge their own assumptions and continue to improve skills needed for effective classroom instruction (Mathew 2012, p. 209). From that sense, it can be inferred that there are many possibilities and ways in which reflective teaching helps teachers and fosters students' performance. It means that the RT process not only has helped teachers improve their professional practices but also has supported students´ learning performance in an effective way.

Furthermore, data showed that this process of reflection can be applied in different ways. Reflection without interrupting the actions (in action), to reshape what teachers are doing while they are doing it (on action); at this point, this kind of reflection is also a process, it means, depending on the teacher´s context, and learners' needs both must be

implemented. However, there are different ways of doing reflection that must be taken into account: 1) Technical reflection, the lowest level of reflection, concerns the effective application of skills and technical knowledge in the classroom setting; 2) Practical Reflection involves reflections on assumptions that support teachers' actions and the consequences of such practices, and 3) Critical Reflection, the highest level of reflection that incorporates moral and ethical issues (Camacho 2012). This particular study has provided the author of this study with huge reasons to support the statement that becoming critical on their own  can really be an instrument for the enrichment of the professional practices due to the fact that teachers should be trained on those types of reflection to target teaching classroom objectives. The challenge for language teachers is to translate classroom issues into insights of potential reflection for an effective instruction, and it can be done in many ways as it has been presented above

Along this theoretical exploration, it was also found "collaborative reflection" as a target outcome because of the benefits that in-service teachers can have. The following excerpt confirms this assumption stated by Ojeda (2011) "The teacher obtains useful feedback from the partners, who are participating in that reflection through listening to one and peers" (p. 108). It is relevant to confirm that reflecting teaching provides teachers with sets of key strategies to enhance their professional practices, and most of all, though the collaboration of colleagues as a fundamental step to encourage themselves to practice reflection into their actual teaching contexts.

After analyzing all data, self-reflection has also appeared to be an effective and efficient strategy to foster teaching practices. Christodoulou (2010) supports this finding by stating that "teacher self-reflection is basically becoming aware of teacher's own acting in a certain, e.g. educational situation, followed by asking questions about why the teacher

chose to act the way he did and consequently trying to find solutions and suggestions for approaching the given situation alternatively" (p. 19). According to that statement, it is evident that there are different ways to put on RT as a daily process so teachers can become more critical on what they usually do and not within the classroom. At this point, data showed self- reflection as the act of rethink what a teacher does in the classroom, and show the effectiveness of that process into real classroom outcomes infers how important this process is as a suggestion of improvement.

### 5.3.2   Strategies that facilitate the achievement of Reflecting Teaching

Reflecting teaching strategies extracted from the data confirmed Richards and Farell´s assumptions in relation to what tools enhance the RT processes in the sense that not only describing what has occurred in the classroom is a reflection but also to examine language learning process, students´ attitudes, perceptions towards their learning and the examination of alternative teaching methods. Jerez (2008) showed a clear example of the meaning of the implementation of different set of strategies not only journals, lesson reports, diaries, interviews and surveys; in this particular case, she explores study groups as a successful tool in which "the findings revealed that teachers developed certain skills to become reflective such as to start working with colleagues, communicate ideas, look critically at their actions and evaluate" (p. 110). It means the application of different reflective teaching strategies, a teacher can target specific information regarding their performance in class but also to encounter issues related to the students learning process. Other research report that endorses this category is in Ahmad et al (2013) who affirmed "teachers involved in reflective teaching processes become self-directed practitioners. These teachers demonstrate care, love, and respect for their students" (p. 81). From that

perspective, the researcher assumes that English language teachers are provided with a huge set of strategies and tools to use as a way to become more critical and analytical regarding their performance in class. Contrary to what was expected data showed that teachers to raise awareness and question the need to reflect have to be involved in RT training and make use of a variety of strategies. This statement was found through the exploration of further research conducted by the authors of the research reports that were taken into account for the purposes of this exploratory research. A key fact found was also the need of administrators´ support; it means, within a school the teachers need time, and enough resources so they can provide students with effective instruction. Rayford (2010) provides the author with a key sentence; "teachers needed time to reflect and preferred to dialog/collaborate with peers" (p.76).

### 5.3.3  Reflection to enhance language teacher education

In the field of how language teacher education can be enriched, important components appeared, for example:  critical pedagogy and language teacher education, Awareness raising practices, teacher´s role and classroom teaching skills. Critical pedagogy is directly concerned with social transformation and educational change (Samacá 2012), as she stated, the most imperative issues of RT must be providing English language teaching with outcomes that are directly related to the society; the main objective of education is to provide students with key instruments to improve as individuals, communities and especially as citizens. In that sense, teachers can look for ways in which their English language instruction may help their students to be better people who are part of society in a constant change.

Other important aspect of implementing reflection that data showed was stated by Quintero (*n.d* p. 7) who found on an action research project with teachers beginners that "they can become aware of the importance of research processes which will be applicable to any of their real teaching contexts". As it is evident, in-service teachers, as well as student- teachers may need retraining on the theoretical foundations of second language acquisition to understand why certain actions are done by the students along their English language learning process.

Through this exploratory research becoming a reflective practitioner appeared to be an important issue for English language teachers. A reflective practitioner needs to have wide knowledge and possible solutions to an issue of concern. Mathew (2012)  affirmed that "a reflective teacher identifies what he/she does from as many angles as possible and translates insights interactive change and solves new problems through self-evaluation" (p. 208). From these data results, the aim of becoming a reflective practitioner focuses on helping students too.

The last subcategory regarding the topics revealed through this content analysis is action research as an important outcome of the RT process. Rayford (2010) noted: "reflection can be valuable in improving strategies and methods if you implement the ideas that you gather through reflection" (p.82). This process becomes visible in any teacher´s community or teaching context because it became a solid plan to conduct in which the teacher would come up with the last product and results of the whole RT process.

The researcher considered it as a topic for reflection because teachers also have to be updated in research methods and in order to conduct any action research an issue must appear, and in many cases, it does not appear systematically but through the reflection of beliefs, perceptions, and experience it really becomes an issue to improve.  This statement

can be validated by Quintero (n.d), "doing action research helps to overcome the well -known difficulties of higher educational programs. That is, the educational aim is to gain insights, rather than to master specific predefined tasks" (p.8).

### 5.3.4  In- service teachers training

The last category revealed that in Colombian research reports and theoretical reports RT has been taken as a way to improve the professional practices of English language teachers. "Teachers identified reflective teaching as a way to innovate, update their pedagogy and change their actions" (Jerez 2008). In general terms, involving teachers in any RT training gives them benefits to change their perception and beliefs towards the English language education that will finally reveal a whole transformation of the teacher not only within the classroom but also it will help them raise their self-esteem, confidence, and their competence to create new approaches to education.

Among the aspects found in relation to the importance of retraining in-service teachers, especially the need to reflect continuously to improve as professionals, the following excerpt gives a scope on that presumption;    Ojeda (2011) affirmed "Collaboration became crucial when the participants felt they had reached understanding and new projects were proposed and implemented" (p. 37). Following that Ojeda states, if teachers start working collaboratively, reflection becomes an imperative tool for the academic community which allowed  a significant growth of  their  teaching awareness.

Perceptions and attitudes towards the implementation of reflecting teaching came up as a way to improve practices.  According to Jerez (2008) "teachers' responses to the process influenced their professional development" (p.103), she also expressed that teachers felt nervous, anxious when someone is observing them, they think their teaching

could be wrong. However, she also agreed that reflecting teaching helped teachers encounter that enrichment of their practices was possible as long as they wanted to do it. Motivation and commitment are vital when trying to improve what teachers are used to doing for years. Lastly, but not less important, teachers who had participated in any reflective teaching training affirmed the need of including not just them, but school administrators, parents, students and the community in general to promote effective changes in education.

## 6.  SUGGESTED PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION: A PROTOCOL TO FOLLOW

As it was mentioned in the exploratory stages of this research, the last step is the decision on what to do next and it is one of the main purposes of this study: the design of a reflective teaching protocol that English language teachers can implement even on their own or collaboratively**.**

### 6.1  Definition of protocol

A protocol is a document that describes in detail a plan for conducting an action within the classroom. For the purposes of this study, a protocol is a set of actions to assist the teacher in implementing reflection into the daily teaching practice.

### 6.2 Reflective teaching protocol proposal

This protocol was designed based on the exploration of the twenty three research reports, in which the implementation of different strategies contributes effectively to the enrichment of English teaching professional practice. Therefore, it is divided into sections; each section focuses on a different strategy including self-reflection and an evaluation phase.

The researcher of this study conducted a piloting stage, according to Neuendorf (2002, p. 133) "piloting is useful only during training, and revision stages" (as cited in Labelle, 2011). It was conducted via online; with the help of nine English language teachers (public school in-service teachers) in the city of Sogamoso, Boyaca. This group of teachers participated in this piloting stage as volunteers and with the aim of being involved in a future professional development project.  The protocol designed was sent via email as well as their suggestions. They showed their concerns and shared their recommendations with

the researcher; they considered important to involve principals and administrators within the protocol because a school is a community that works as a team. A teacher suggested creating a participating blog so they may share their experiences, problems that they may encounter in class to receive feedback and proposals from different teachers along the city. Finally, the researcher updated the protocol designed based on the clarifications of the group of teachers to implement it in any further study.

## 6.3 Reflective teaching protocol for in service teachers

This protocol was designed according to Rayford´s ideas that suggested that "professional training for teachers must promote reflection into the professional learning environment of the school" (2010, p.39). It assures that English language teachers meet their specific needs and it also facilitates collaboration between colleagues which allows a supportable teaching environment.

### 6.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Reflective Teaching Protocol is to provide teachers with an opportunity to grow professionally on their own by means of a set of reflective stages that can be conducted individually or with colleagues within a school. This protocol is designed to be implemented in a month. However, teachers have to bear in mind that reflective teaching is a process and it must become a habit to provide concrete results. To reach the objective of a protocol the author of this study suggested the following stages based on the literature exploration carried out:

### 6.3.2 Observation stage

1. Plan a 40 minutes lesson on the topic of your interest, do it as usual you are used to do so.

2. Set the classroom in order to videotape your lesson.

3. When you are at home, in a relaxing area; watch the video and answer the following questions:

   a. What were the aims of the lesson? Did you or your students reach them? How do you know that?

   b. What roles did you play as a teacher within this lesson?

   c. What difficulties did you have within this lesson?

   d. How can you improve those difficulties next time? <u>Set a suggesting list</u> e.g. (look for articles or research papers that addresses those issues).

4. After the previous stage;

   a. Ask a friend to watch the video; your friend must tell you your weaknesses and strengths and some suggestions to improve your teaching.

   b. Compare your suggestion list with your friend's advices and update a plan in order to improve the issue you found.

### 6.3.3   Writing stage

1. Keep a lesson report for four days in which you specify aims of the lessons, strategies you used to foster students learning process, your roles as teacher, the assessment and evaluation procedures, the outcomes and the issues you may encounter.

2. Based on the lesson reports, write entries in your journal in which you reflect on; some guide questions are: Are your lessons effective? Why/ why not? Did you find the same weaknesses you found on the videotaping stage? Why do you think the same issues keep appearing?

### 6.3.4 Action plan

After videotaping and writing on your performance in class, set an action plan in order to provide solutions to the issues you encountered and to improve you lessons.

Put your plan in action and keep writing lessons reports daily and a journal weekly.

### 6.3.5 Reflective feedback

You can answer this stage after a month of the implementation of your plan. Ask the following questions:

Are you lessons different? How?

Do your strategies encourage an effective students´ learning process? Explain

Is your role as a teacher different?

Do you consider that this RT process has shaped your professional practices?

### 6.3.6 English teachers meeting with administrative staff

In this part of the protocol you will be free to write about, analyze or observe the topic or particular aspect that calls your attention. You can analyze the students´ needs or issues in your teaching instruction; however, it is recommended to analyze the following criteria which based on Richards, J. C., & Lockhart, C. (1996*). Reflective teaching in second language classrooms* (6th Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press:

- Type of lesson planning

- Learning styles and strategies used to favor students learning

- Communication with students, colleagues and administrative

- Teacher´s needs and interests

# 7. CONCLUSIONS

The content analysis of the twenty three selected research studies shows that there is a significant contribution if reflective teaching strategies are implemented into the daily teaching practice. It also reveals that reflective teaching may become a professional development path that should be implemented according to each particular teaching context. Teachers can apply reflection individually in a way that they feel more confident and do not have the perception that someone is judging their job, or cooperatively if they want to received someone else´s feedback.

It is also important to mention here, that when in-service teachers are aware of the need of challenges, they develop their creativity and start implementing a variety of options to distinguish what is happening in their classroom in relation to the students learning process and set future actions. For example, based on the findings, by reflecting, in-service teachers would benefit in having "opportunities for them to make sense of theory and to criticize and use it meaningfully for classroom contexts" (Giraldo (2013, p. 13).

Through the exploration it was also found that reflection offered the possibility for in-service teachers to interact collaboratively to enhance communication in the classroom and with other members of the school community. The reflective strategies were selected based on the fact that English language teachers are busy making many decisions in the classroom; as a consequence, in-service teachers may perceive a connection between what they face in the classroom and how they can address issues into it.

Based on the research findings, the application of reflective teaching has demonstrated how efficient it can be in the improvement of the knowledge base and English language´s teachers competence. According to Cardenas (2006, p. 63), "the

establishment of standards has opened the door for teachers to get updated as new opportunities for professionalization in the language and methodology".

Other positive aspect to mention in relation to reflective teaching and the improvement of professional practices has to deal with attitudes and perceptions in-service teachers can have at the beginning of a selection of any reflective strategy; it means they can be nervous, anxious when realizing how effective or not their teaching can result from the reflection process. However, it was observed that when reflection becomes a habit, teachers start to    comprehend the constant need to reflect and update challenges in the classroom. In this way and based on Jerez (2008) they also "develop certain skills to become reflective such as to start working with colleagues, communicate ideas, look critically at their actions and evaluate the process they were following" (p. 110). As a consequence, teachers must be encouraged and supported by school administrators and principals in the sense that providing excellent education needs resources and motivation. Based on Rayford (2010) "establishing a supportive environment and developing a shared vision were important to employ reflective practices". In order to become more reflective towards teaching to enrich professional practices, it is necessary to develop common objectives not only among teachers and administrators, but also involving parents to improve students´ English language level which is an way one of the Colombian education authorities´ goals. Also, it is imperative to note that thanks to reflection, a school community can consolidate reflective teaching as a means to create a supportive learning environment within the academic community.

In summary, the uses of different reflective teaching strategies are useful elements to improve the English teaching professional practice. The strategies included in this study - journals, lesson reports, audio and video recording and self-monitoring methods- constitute

an important starting point for in-service teachers who can analyze critically, raise awareness on their performance and become classroom researchers. It is evident that at the beginning of any reflective teaching implementation it could be a challenge because it requires time, effort and support.

The following section addresses some pedagogical implications of this study taking into account the importance reflecting teaching inside a classroom.

## 7.1 Pedagogical implications

First of all, and based on the findings obtained from the content analysis, it is necessary to provide in-service teachers with enough time and an appropriate place so they can meet and talk about their teaching experiences as an enrichment of the academic and professional processes that would allow for the integration of the curriculum into the daily teaching practice.

It is important to take into consideration teachers´ previous experiences. In-service teachers can have certain attitudes and perceptions to teaching based on their past positive or negative experiences. Their knowledge-based, language competence and future expectation will strongly affect their teaching performance in the class by providing it with a new sense and teaching direction. In this process, it is important to note that they would not feel as confident as they should be because someone else is observing their class; for this reason, an individual reflective teaching process may provide them with more confidence and understanding. To carry out a constant reflective teaching process, the reflective teaching protocol becomes a tool that could be useful, so that, they not only analyze their own teaching, but they can also share their insights with colleagues in weekly meetings; it will relase them from the pressure of being observed or controlled.

In-service teachers who would not like to reflect collaboratively or in groups might take advantage of the reflective teaching protocol recommended by the author to set specific exploration plans based on valid sources. The findings of this study can be a help not only to language teachers but for teachers in general.

## 7.2  Limitations of the study

One aspect the researcher considers important to mention is the number of studies analyzed; the literature offers a huge collection of sources that makes the task of choosing the most relevant one difficult. For this reason, the researcher is aware that the selected corpus was not a representative sample to validate this study.

## 7.3  Further research

In the current study, the researcher identified some future options to be considered for future research. First, there is still a need to continue exploring other alternatives to improve the English language teaching professional practice. Second, it is recommended to implement the reflective teaching protocol suggested to validate the benefits of the implementation of reflective teaching strategies.

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## Appendix

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS SURVEY

 Please complete the following information:

*Personal information*

Age:  25 - 35 _____

35 – 45   _____

Over 45 ___            Gender: Female ___ Male ___

Profession: _____

English language proficiency level: _____

How many years have you been teaching English? _____

How many hours do you teach the English language per every course? _____

*Bilingual program*

Do you know what the National Bilingualism Program is? Explain

Have you been trained on the Colombian Bilingualism policies? Explain

*Professional development*

Have you been involved in any professional development activity organized by the Secretary of Education?

Have you attended any academic event in the last 3 years?

Have you published any research report in the last 3 years?

*English language teaching instruction*

How often do you give your students with opportunities to participate in class?

How often do you plan or organize your lesson before implementing it? Explain

Do you have alternative plans if problems arise within your lesson? Explain

After a lesson, do you analyze or ask yourself why did it go like that? Explain

If you have to teach a topic again, would you do it in a different way? Explain

What of the following do you consider teaching issues?  Class size____ discipline ____ lack of materials (text book, dictionaries, lab, specialized classroom etc) ___ bad test results of students' ___ bad students' performance____

Do you analyze issues that you may encounter within your classroom? Explain

Does your principal facilitate language teachers with opportunities to reflect? Explain