

# TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE USING AFL SKILLS IN ENGLISH TEACHING CLASSROOM

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness levels of the AfL strategies in teaching practices and explain how the reflective teaching process on AfL strategies improves the teachers' development. This research used a mixed method involving six English teachers in several Subang, West Java, Indonesia, high schools. The participants consisted of two males and four females. The data collection instrument used was questionnaires. The questionnaire items were adopted from a previous study by Pang (2020) because it consists of nine elements of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies that can measure the reflective practice in the classroom. The questionnaire explored teachers' practices to reflect their English teaching and learning development. The finding shows that all teachers have implemented all strategies in their teaching practices. Most of the teachers assumed that self-assessment, collection of learning evidence, and reflecting and revising teaching progress/content are the effective strategies in assessment with a percentage of 66,7%, followed by Learning objectives, Success criteria, Questioning techniques, Feedback, Observation, and Peer assessment at 50% among the others. This study had some limitations. First, it only used a questionnaire to collect data; second, the present study involved only a few participants. Future research should use additional instruments such as interviews to provide richer information on enhancing teachers' development and recruit more consumers from different geographical areas.

Keywords: *Assessment for learning, English classroom, Reflective teaching, Teachers' development.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher development is a natural process by expert teachers to improve their quality as educators. Teachers are expected to be the ones who know the way toward the goals. Therefore, they need to be well-developed in terms of professionalism. The teachers need to develop themselves not for their profession but as individuals. Johnston (2003) stated that the commitment to growth and personal development is valuable. "Care of the self"—is not a narcissistic or selfish enterprise but reflects a profoundly held belief in the value of individuals.

Typically, when something goes wrong in life, people take the time to understand why it happened, how it can be prevented, and how it might affect future outcomes. This process of introspection is often referred to as "reflection," and it can lead to personal growth. However, only some engage in reflective thinking. In professional contexts, such as education, reflection is a form of critical thinking that involves examining past or current experiences in the classroom. By reflecting on their teaching practices, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) professionals can react, evaluate, and make decisions about necessary changes to improve their attitudes, beliefs, and teaching methods.

Reflective thinking has a long history in education and is a concept that has been introduced previously in teaching. It can be traced

back to the work of various educational theorists and practitioners over the past 50 years. Dewey (1933) discussed the idea of reflective thinking as early as 1909 when he suggested that treating professional actions as experiments and reflecting on their consequences is a characteristic of a moral individual. Leitch and Day (2000) further explained Dewey's ideas, stating that being an effective reflective practitioner requires more than improving one's practice and developing additional competence. It involves attitudes toward teaching practice based on broader understandings of self, society, and moral purposes. These attitudes involve slowing down, noticing, examining, analyzing, and inquiring about various aspects and complexities encountered in different situations.

Assessment is necessary for the students and the teachers to measure how far the English Teaching and Learning objectives are accomplished. Hermer (2007) claimed that teachers need to be evaluated at the end of the classroom to plan their upcoming lessons better. The evaluation can be conducted in many ways; one is journaling what they got through in the classroom, which is connected to reflective teaching.

Numerous studies have investigated the implementation of reflective teaching as a means of teacher development. One such study was carried out by Pang (2020) in Hong Kong, where 34 teachers were examined on how they self-assessed their work using nine Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies and provided suggestions for improvement. The findings revealed that teachers in kindergarten and primary schools placed different emphases on the nine AfL strategies. Furthermore, their recommendations for improving their AfL skills provided valuable insights for enhancing teaching effectiveness.

Postholm (2012) reviewed studies that examined teachers' professional development after they completed their initial teacher training. The review concluded that individual and organizational factors influence teachers' learning. Cooperation among teachers is crucial for their development, and some teachers can take the lead in organizing such learning activities themselves. Furthermore, a positive school culture, characterized by a good atmosphere and understanding of teachers' learning needs, as well as collaboration with external resource persons, can significantly impact the professional development of teachers. Overall, the article suggests that school is the ideal setting for the ongoing development of teachers.

Based on the explanation above, this research formulates two research questions:

1. What are the effectiveness levels of the AfL strategies the teaching practices?

2. How does the reflective teaching process on AfL strategies improve the teachers' development?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Teachers' Development

The growth and development of teachers are viewed as multifaceted processes that encompass both professional and personal growth. Teacher development goes beyond simply improving teaching practices or becoming a better teacher. The preparation of competent teachers is a worldwide concern, as education is regarded as a means of addressing social problems and promoting national development (Buchberger et al., 2000, as cited in Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013)

While improving one's teaching is an important aspect of teacher development, it alone cannot drive this process forward. Teacher development involves continuous learning and growth, as reflected in Edge's (2001) and Johnson and Freeman's (2001) views that teachers need to keep learning to be effective in the classroom. This theory suggests teacher development is rooted in values emphasizing ongoing learning and growth.

A significant number of educators focused on improving their teaching methodologies by addressing their perceived weaknesses or introducing innovative ways of teaching. This form of teacher development highlights the fundamental value of ensuring effective learning outcomes for students. Therefore, pursuing high-quality education is a critical driver of teacher development.

However, other values are also important in teacher development. Some teachers focus on understanding what happens in their classroom rather than making changes to it. This drive to understand is a significant value in education. It is one of the attitudes teachers aim to instil in their students, such as curiosity about the world around them. By modelling a desire to understand their classroom, teachers also encourage their students to value understanding. Lastly, the commitment to personal and professional growth is also valuable to their development

### 2.2 Values and Teacher Research

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for teachers to investigate their classrooms and share their findings in conferences and publications. This approach, known as Teacher Research (TR), is guided by values in two important ways. Firstly, the act of examining one's classroom is rooted in values. Secondly, TR provides a suitable framework for exploring the ethical dimensions of the classroom. Different forms of TR strongly emphasize the teacher's abilities, interests, and capacity to gather and analyze information, thus acknowledging the teacher's role as a proactive contributor to the generation of knowledge and comprehension.

The practice of TR recognizes and emphasizes the independence of the teacher or teachers involved. It assumes that teachers can make informed and autonomous decisions about their classroom practices. This approach is based on the belief that teachers should be granted a certain level of autonomy rather than viewed solely as technicians who implement practices and materials prescribed by external sources. This source is also a moral viewpoint regarding the priorities in teaching.

### 2.3 Reflective Teaching

Teachers typically exhibit qualities consistent with the ideas put forth by Dewey (1993) in his foundational works. Dewey's philosophy emphasized that reflection is associated with redness, accountability, and sincerity (as cited in Tompkins, 2009, p. 224).

"Open-mindedness implies looking for and listening to multiple viewpoints, even if an alternative stance challenges deep-seated belief. Responsibility entails searching for the truth, considering any unintended consequences."

Commitment to whole-heartedness involves a willingness to reflect on values, actions, and consequences to gain new knowledge. Dewey (1993) believed that reflection is an active cognitive process that involves analyzing underlying beliefs and knowledge instead of routine activities. (Pollard, 2002). Schön's (1983, 1987) writing, especially *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, has significantly impacted the study of reflection. Schön (1992) categorized reflection into three levels: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-about-action. Schön (1992) encourages teachers to become "researchers in practice" who can develop new theories based on their day-to-day teaching activities. Pedro (2006) talks about Valli's (1993) perspective; he also emphasizes the value of practicing reflection for teachers to exercise professional judgment and adapt their skills to meet students' needs and curriculum goals.

According to Pollard (2002), reflective teaching involves a cyclic or spiraling process in which teachers constantly monitor, evaluate and revise their practice. This reflective process comprises several stages, as pointed out by Pollard (2002). Initially, practitioners plan their teaching, including their pedagogical strategies. Then, they put their plans into action. Subsequently, they collect data, which will be used for further reflective processes. Finally, they analyze and evaluate the data to reflect on their practice. This cycle is a continuous, iterative process that may need repeated multiple times.

### 2.4 Assessment for Learning

Historically, assessment has been utilized to compare and rank students' learning achievements competitively (Connell et al., 1982). This approach invariably creates academic victors and losers from the beginning of children's elementary education. Those students who perform well early on are more likely to continue succeeding as they grow older, while those who struggle early on often fall further and further behind (Stiggins, 2007).

Nisbet (1993) believes that assessment plays a significant role in education, affecting both the learning process and teaching practices. The effects of assessment are widespread, including the washback effect and cramming. Rote learning, to the extent that learning for the sake of assessment is often as important as the actual learning the assessments were created to evaluate. This notion challenges the original purpose of assessments, which was to measure genuine learning (Nisbet, 1993).

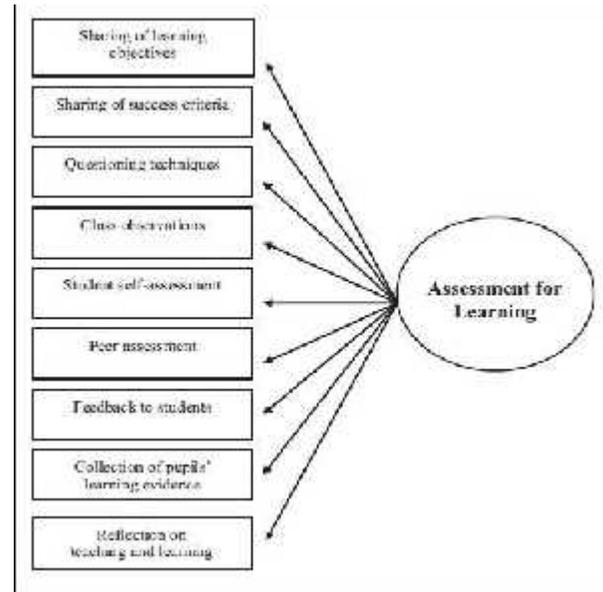
The role of education has transformed from a means to categorize and separate students to a process that bridges classroom learning gaps. As educators, we aim not to let students who have yet to meet standards fall behind and become hopeless but to assist them in learning at their own pace and achieving success (Nisbet, 1993). This result is why assessments are incorporated into the curriculum to verify and support learning (Connell et al., 1982, p. 200).

Assessment for Learning (AfL) is an approach that focuses on learning, helping students understand where they are and what they can do next in the learning process. As Stiggins (2007, p. 22) states, rather than labeling students as winners or losers, AfL helps put all students on a path to success. Researchers Black and Wiliam (1998a, 1998b) analyzed 250 papers on formative assessments and found that this type of assessment could substantially enhance students' learning through:

- 1) Provision of effective feedback to students;
- 2) Active involvement of students in their learning;
- 3) Adjustment of teaching after taking account of assessment results;
- 4) Recognition of the profound influence of assessment on students' motivation and self-esteem; and
- 5) The need for students to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

Black et al. (2004) described AfL as any assessment that places greater importance on promoting student learning by providing valuable information to modify teaching and learning strategies. Schools are advised to prioritize AfL as an integral component of the learning, teaching, and assessment to foster better learning outcomes. The curriculum defines what students should learn through learning targets or objectives. At the same time, assessment evaluates the learning product (i.e., the content and learning targets students are expected to achieve) and the learning process (i.e., how students learn). Teachers must use the information collected through assessment to enhance teaching and learning and inform students of their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, students' motivation and interest in learning will be reinforced if teachers recognize their accomplishments and provide feedback for improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Curriculum Development Council, 2001). AfL also encourages students to self-evaluate and become independent learners in the future.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) combines teaching and learning with an assessment to bridge the distance between students' learning and the intended outcome. AfL aims to clarify what students are expected to learn, enabling teachers and students to collaborate to evaluate student learning and ultimately enhance learning performance through informed feedback. Thus, self-evaluation and formative assessment are important aspects of AfL, which can be integrated at different stages of the learning process.



**Figure 1. The theoretical framework for AfL in classroom teaching. AfL (Assessment for Learning)**

It is widely accepted that every student has unique abilities and potential. Assessment for Learning (AfL) has been introduced to promote better learning (Education Bureau of Hong Kong, 2010b, para. 2). This approach is now an integral part of the curriculum and teaching process to bridge the gap between student learning and desired goals (Curriculum Development Council, 2001, pp. 80–81). In the AfL project, teachers are encouraged to share their learning goals, use effective questioning and feedback strategies, and promote self and peer-assessment to improve student learning. Evidence collection and self-reflection are other essential components of AfL (see Figure 1). Teachers use various sources of information to collect evidence of students' progress and then provide feedback to enable learners to reach their full potential (Jones, 2005). With formative assessment, teachers can make necessary adjustments, try different instructional approaches, and offer more practice opportunities to enable students to set their own goals (Boston, 2002).

The benefits of formative assessment mentioned above can lead to better academic outcomes for students, especially when the feedback and evidence collected are utilized to adjust teaching and learning approaches that cater to their needs. Therefore, adopting AfL is advantageous to both teachers and students.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

The methodology chosen for this study was the mixed research method, which combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect and analyze data. This approach has philosophical assumptions and a method of inquiry that provide a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the research questions (Creswell & Plano, 2007). The mixed-method design was

selected to offer more interpretation and insight into the research aims and questions.

In addition, to address the initial research question, the authors employed a quantitative approach to gauge the effectiveness of AfL strategies in teaching practices. Furthermore, a qualitative method was utilized to elucidate the reflective teaching process on AfL strategies to improve the teachers' professional growth.

### 3.2 Research Participants

In this study, six English teachers from several high schools in Subang, West Java, Indonesia, were chosen as research participants. Four female and two male teachers were selected based on their minimum of three years of experience as English language teachers.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection method used in this study was distributing questionnaires to the participants. A questionnaire is a survey design form that the study participants fill out and return to the researcher to collect data (Creswell, 2012). The questionnaire items in this research were adapted from Pang's (2020) previous study, which contained nine Assessments for Learning strategy elements to assess reflective practices in the classroom. While Pang used the questionnaire for Kindergarten teachers, it was adapted for High School teachers in this study.

Furthermore, the questionnaire explored teachers' practices to reflect their English teaching and learning development. The questionnaires were distributed to six experienced EFL High School teachers in Subang. Eighteen question items are divided into the list of strategies and participants' suggestions for each strategy.

## 4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 The Effectiveness Levels of the AfL Strategies in the Teaching Practices

Researchers quantify and analyze the data collected from the English teachers' practices to reflect their English teaching and learning development. The questionnaires were distributed to six experienced EFL High School teachers in Subang. Eighteen question items are divided into the list of strategies and participants' suggestions for each strategy. The data analysis technique for qualitative data was gained from the questionnaire.

**Table 4.1 The effectiveness level of AfL strategies based on Teachers' Responses**

| AfL elements        | Effectiveness* |                |                      |           |                |         |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|---------|
|                     | Ineffective    | Less effective | Moderately effective | Effective | Very effective | Unknown |
| Learning objectives | -              | -              | 33,3%                | 50%       | 16,7 %         | -       |

|   |   |        |       |               |        |   |
|---|---|--------|-------|---------------|--------|---|
| Success criteria                                  | - | -      | 33,3% | 50%           | 33%    | - |
| Questioning techniques                            | - | -      | 33,3% | 50%           | 16,7 % | - |
| Observation                                       | - | -      | 16,7% | 50%           | 33,3 % | - |
| Feedback  | - | -      | 33,3% | 50%           | 16,7 % | - |
| Self-assessment                                   | - | 16,7 % | 16,7% | <b>66,7 %</b> | -      | - |
| Peer assessment                                   | - | -      | 50%   | 50%           | -      | - |
| Collection of learning evidence                   | - | -      | 33,3% | <b>66,7 %</b> | -      | - |
| Reflecting and revising teaching progress/content | - | -      | 33,3% | <b>66,7 %</b> | -      | - |

First, those responses were categorized based on the types of AfL strategies. Second, those categorizations are counted to know the percentage of each category. Third, the percentage becomes the data to know the effectiveness of the AfL strategies. Lastly, the researchers analyze whether the teachers' suggestions for the AfL strategies represent their reflection practices.

### 4.2 The Reflective Teaching Process on AfL Strategies that Improve the Teachers' Development

#### 4.2.3 Learning Objectives

The participants gave their suggestions for the effective implementation of this strategy. T1 and T2, and T5 argue that this strategy could be more effective if the teachers explain the learning objectives at the first meeting to understand why there is such a topic and why educators use this method or strategy. T3 and T5 believe that the teacher should first analyze the needs of each student. Thus, the teachers should be able to relate the learning objectives to real-life situations. Another suggestion is to present the learning outcomes using PPT, and the last suggestion is to give the students a brief overview of learning objectives.

#### 4.2.4 Success Criteria

For the effective implementation of this strategy, four of six participants agreed that teachers should encourage the students by explaining the success definition and criteria. The teachers could also provide the students with videos and stories of successful people and tell them about the value of a knowledgeable person, as mentioned in the Qur'an. T5 and T6 suggested that the success

criteria should be in line with the learning objectives, which can be in the form of cognitive or affective.

#### **4.2.5 Question Techniques**

Questioning skills are essential in the quality teaching and learning process. The teachers state that they should become effective questioners. They thought they were the role of questioners in front of their students. One of the teachers reflected that the asking strategy is one of the natural parts of the learning strategy. This strategy brings out diversity in each unique student. This method is also expected to be implemented in online learning, but sometimes, the teacher experience signal problems and supporting tools. If the supporting tools are not good or incomplete, the results are far less good than the student's ability to answer questions. Besides that, the teacher suggests checking their understanding and sustainability. The teaching-learning process needs to do this during the teaching-learning process and use applications to be more effective. Furthermore, questions are not always verbal but lured by media images, simple discourse, etc. sug. and gesting triggers the student with a picture, fact, or story related to the learning materials. Lastly, the teacher suggests triggering students with questions related to learning materials.

#### **4.2.6 Observation**

The teacher reflected that the observation process is when a learner performs a rewarding experience. However, a teacher has limited time to observe all the students' holistic observations. Observation's priority scale makes the chastisement process and facilitates later evaluations. Besides that, it seems less effective for class observation because many factors might hinder this activity, such as signal problems, networks, and other supporting tools that may be difficult to obtain, so the activity is less effective. Furthermore, the teacher suggests that fellow teachers should observe the class know and evaluate the development of the teaching process. An astute class could do with a questionnaire and relay the material lattice before the teaching-learning process time. Lastly, the most exciting background is rewarded with honesty, respect, etc.

#### **4.2.7 Feedback**

Quality feedback to students is vital to the teaching and learning process. Teachers thought they could identify students' strengths and weaknesses and give timely and appropriate feedback to students to understand their learning and perform better during the learning and teaching process. Considering the limited time, one teacher reflected that this is very significant to do. It is necessary to evaluate or provide input during the learning process immediately. This evaluation is often done and is very effective for correcting and developing students. Then, a teacher suggests giving feedback directly, but there is also a teacher who suggests being given time to provide feedback. Last, the teacher states a correlation between the material and student's students' ension.

#### **4.2.8 Self-assessment**

Self-assessment is an approach of assessment in the AfL strategy. It involves making judgments about students' work. Students can

reflect on their presentations, reports, projects, etc. It is precious because self-assessment can help students critique their work. However, one teacher states that the self-assessment strategy is rarely done due to time constraints, even though the student's self-assessment is critical. At least, it is not eliminated. There are times when the evaluation of students is done through casual dialogue, as for those who suggest making a mind map of understanding. Also, the teacher can provide an evaluation sheet. A teacher suggests implementation time at the beginning of the meeting, but others suggest it at the end.

#### **4.2.9 Peer Assessment**

In the peer assessment strategy, teachers reflected that the role of the assessor shifts from teachers to students. Peer assessment can be carried out in every teaching and learning process to assess the processes/activities carried out by their friends, so when there is an assignment, other students can assess it. A teacher also thinks this must be done at a different level than the junior high school level. On the other hand, one teacher proposed that student peer assessment is quite good, although this is only sometimes done. Usually, it is just a light discussion. In addition, it can also be given a peer assessment format and correcting a friend's assignment. This is because, according to the suggestion of one teacher, the students can help each other exchange ideas about their understanding of the material.

#### **4.2.10 Collection of Learning Evidence**

Keeping learning evidence is another crucial strategy of assessment for teachers. Teachers reflected that the collective process in the form of a portfolio of student learning activities would need real support from the educators. As a result, as an educator, this is often done. This activity means documenting students' products and motivating and appreciating each student. Qualitative and quantitative data are stored to be easily accessed one day. Documents in files, videos, pictures, descriptions, and other information make learning activities more meaningful and orderly. Another teacher stated that this strategy is a method teacher often use to carry out the assessment process. Still, the weakness is that many students do not collect assignments, so the teacher is tough to do an assessment here. Besides that, the teacher states that the assignment is not stacked at the end, but every assignment is immediately checked and suggests giving a worksheet for each material. Making a collection of assignments into student portfolios and surprising them by choosing the best to present in front of other students can be a good strategy. One result of the task includes the target material being presented.

#### **4.2.11 Reflecting and Revising Teaching Progress/Content**

To effectively implement this strategy, T1 states that the teacher should conduct the reflection process after one chapter/material has been completed. T2 suggests recording or evaluating each learning. T3 states to share with fellow subject teachers. T4 and T6 argue that the students should be actively involved in giving suggestions and improvements by expressing things they do not understand. T5 states that reflection is part of the evaluation. Whatever method or

strategy is used should be evaluated so that various findings that need improvement can be anticipated.

The focus of this study was on the reflective practice of teachers as a means of their professional development. This involved collecting data from the teachers through their statements and administering questionnaires designed to assess their teaching practices in the school located in Subang.

Most teachers (66.7%) considered self-assessment, collecting learning evidence, and reflecting and revising teaching progress/content the most effective assessment strategies. 33% of the teachers considered success criteria and observation very effective, while Learning objectives, Questioning techniques, and Feedback were rated as somewhat effective by 16.7%. Self-assessment was the least effective strategy, rated by only 16.7% of the teachers. All of the teachers thought that all of the strategies were effective. Therefore, the conclusion is that these strategies are helpful in their assessment practices.

The results revealed that the teachers had integrated all the AfL strategies into their teaching practices, indicating that they have reflected on their practices and thus developed themselves. This finding aligns with the concept of self-directed professional development stated by Minott (2010), which refers to the acquisition of practical and job-related knowledge under the guidance of individuals. Additionally, this study supports Pang's (2020) findings that teachers at different school levels have varying focuses on the nine AfL strategies. However, this study primarily concentrates on the development of high school teachers.

One of the methods recommended by the teachers for reflective teaching and professional development is to reflect and modify the teaching progress or content. Teacher 3 (T3) proposes peer coaching as a way of sharing with fellow subject teachers. Joyce and Showers (1983) define peer coaching as a professional development strategy that enables educators to consult, discuss, evaluate, and exchange knowledge about each other's teaching practices to ensure high-quality teaching. It is a vital tool for effective reflective teaching. By engaging in conversations with coaches, teachers can reflect on their teaching and refine their practices, learning and growing in the coaching process. This is supported by Postholm's (2012) research that found teacher collaboration to be important in their professional development, with some teachers able to lead such learning activities themselves.

Reflective teaching conveys what they have experienced in their practices. In the meantime, they are improving their professionalism. The suggestions implicitly indicate their effort to develop themselves in learning assessment. According to Diaz-Maggioli (as cited in Bademcioglu, 2016), professional development is an ongoing process that teachers should engage in to review their teaching practices and keep up with the changing needs of students. Neglecting professional development in educational institutions can make it challenging for teachers to update their teaching practices and expand their knowledge in the field. Yildirim and Seker (2013, as cited in Bademcioglu, 2016) emphasized the significance of promoting professional development and fostering collaboration among colleagues in educational institutions to support the development process.

In conclusion, Johnston (2003) emphasized the importance of reflective teaching through teacher research (TR) and how it

reflects a particular set of values regarding teaching and being a teacher. This approach is not only an alternative set of practices in educational research but also represents a different set of values regarding what and who is significant in learning about teaching and learning. Teachers and learners personalize all aspects of educational research, recognizing the humanity, agency, and autonomy of those participating in education instead of considering them objects to be manipulated by outsiders.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness levels of the AfL strategies in teaching practices and to identify the reflective teaching process of AfL strategies as the teachers' development. The findings showed that all teachers had implemented all strategies in their teaching practices. Therefore, it indicates that the teachers have reflected on their practices and indirectly enhanced their development. The result also showed that self-assessment, learning evidence collection, reflection, and revising teaching progress/content are the most effective assessment strategies, with 66,7%. The reflective teaching by the teachers in the form of teacher research (TR) is stated by Johnston (2003) as value.

As with any research, this study had some limitations. First, this study only used a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. Future research should use additional instruments like interviews to provide richer information on enhancing teachers' development. Second, the present study involved a small number of participants. Future research should recruit a more considerable number of participants from different geographical areas. Also, this study focused on the effectiveness levels of the nine elements of AfL Strategies and teachers' suggestions. Further research should also use another approach to investigate the teachers' development.

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