



## Exploring the Role of Reflective Practice in Activating Novice EFL Teachers' Noticing

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### Abstract

Reflective practice and noticing can be regarded as two essential concerns for novice teachers' survival and development in their first practices. Therefore, this study was an attempt to explore how reflective practices activate novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' noticing. To that end, we conducted an instrumental case study to explore the role of reflective practice among Iranian novice EFL teachers in activating their noticing. An inductive-deductive thematic analysis of the data collected through teachers' portfolios and semi-structured interviews indicated that novice teachers' noticing could be activated and sharpened through teachers' personal, cognitive, and professional developments addressed by reflective practice. Furthermore, the findings showed that there are relationships among novice teachers' personal, cognitive, and professional developments and the components of teacher noticing, including framing, perceptual activities and exploration, and interaction, leading to sharpening novice EFL teachers' noticing. Hence, it can be concluded reflective practice can activate novice EFL teachers' noticing, impacting their professional development through framing, interaction, perceptual activities, and exploration. The study has implications for EFL teacher education programs, where teacher educators can help teachers develop critical reflection skills to address problems in their classrooms.

**Keywords:** Novice EFL Teachers, Noticing, Reflective Practice, Teacher Education

Although the initial years of teaching can involve interesting and exciting experiences and feelings for novice teachers, teaching can be an uncertain and changeable activity for them during their first years of experience since they may undergo numerous personal, social, and technical challenges (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) and mental and affective conflicts (Kubanyiova, 2012). Furthermore, novice teachers lack sufficient experience in their teaching to justify and predict what can happen in understanding and

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making sense of teaching situations in a professional style (Carter et al., 1988; Richards, 2015). Mainly, it can become more difficult for EFL teachers as they are working in a foreign language context in which cultural, social, and professional practices can be demanding for them. Moreover, the way novice teachers can find solvable answers to these problematic factors independently during their first practices is not given sufficient attention in teacher training programs (Farrell & Baecher, 2017). Furthermore, novice EFL teachers might fossilize unsound teaching practices in the early years of their teaching practices if they do not receive feedback about their teaching practices and how to align them with the appropriate and standard frameworks. It might create a teaching context full of frustrations, challenges, and tensions for them (Farrell, 2007; Sali & Kecik, 2018), where they become unable to make sound pedagogical decisions.

To tackle such frustrations, challenges, and tensions, novice teachers should be trained with tools and practices to recognize related teaching situations and moments, understand the phenomenon in depth, possess vivid and detailed awareness, and examine the comprehensive and all-inclusive perception of teaching situations (Van den Bergh et al., 2014). To this end, novice teachers need to learn how to notice, detect, and perceive their teaching and learning contexts, actions, and consequences, primarily when it can be difficult to notice the specific situation due to the complexities of the initial teaching experience (Jacobs & Spangler, 2017). Noticing can help teachers understand students' thinking, make sound pedagogical decisions, and provide a more holistic view of teaching and learning for the teachers (Amador et al., 2021; Jacobs et al., 2010), which can develop teachers' professionalism. When addressing noticing concerning EFL teachers, it is defined as the awareness of teachers of language aspects, interpersonal interactions, teaching factors, and personal, social, and professional features that may affect teachers' teaching and students' learning (Jackson & Cho, 2016). Many researchers (e.g., Amador et al., 2021; Jacobs et al., 2010; Sherin, 2001) have conducted various studies to develop noticing among teachers in different fields, understanding that constructing meaning socially through collective noticing and knowing how to evaluate particular instructional moments and contexts using a specific professional tool can be helpful to develop teachers' noticing. One of the most frequent concepts to develop teachers' noticing is reflective practice.

Reflective practice is a professional instrument (Faghihi & Anani Sarab, 2016) to make sense of teaching situations by identifying concerns, responding to challenges, checking the consequences, and examining knowledge or beliefs seriously and deliberately (Dewey, 1933; Farrell, 2015; Schon, 1987). Moreover, "teachers are systematically gathering data about their teaching and using this information to make informed decisions about their practice" (Farrell, 2007, p.12–13). As a result, it is vitally important for novice teachers to develop their professionalism continuously through reflective practices (Jamil & Hamre, 2018) since they can "stop, look, and discover where they are at that moment and then decide where they want to go in the future" (Farrell, 2012, p. 7). More than that, they can reach self-understanding and -realization as a

substitute for remembering the issues and problems (Freeman, 2016; Farrell, 2018). As stated by Farrell (2015, p. 13), the ultimate goals of reflective practice for teachers are to “develop their own individual theories” and “allow for any correction of distortions and errors in beliefs related to practice so that [they] can recognize and discontinue practices, not in the best interests of their students.” However, still, the unknown point for us is to see the role of reflective practice in developing EFL teachers’ noticing. When it comes to novice EFL teachers, it is more critical to know how their reflective practices can be facilitative or detrimental to their noticing regarding the challenges and tensions they have in their classes, involving classroom management, assessment, materials development, etc. (Sali & Kecik, 2018).

It is believed that novice teachers can use reflection as a professional tool to gain a professional vision, examine the situations, notice and make sense of interactions in class, and perceive and enhance the teaching quality by noticing (Sherin, 2001). Concurrent use of noticing and reflection can help novice teachers recognize vital moments and situations, link previous knowledge and experience, change their practices and beliefs, and gradually move from novice to experienced ones (Sherin, 2001). Although teachers’ noticing has been widely investigated in hard disciplines, such as mathematics and science teachers (Schack et al., 2017; Sherin et al., 2011), it has not been explored sufficiently by L2 researchers to address the EFL novice teachers’ perspectives (Jackson & Cho, 2016; Jackson & Shirakawa, 2020; Jackson, 2021). When it comes to teacher development, it is critical to understand how teachers’ noticing may play its role so that teachers, including EFL teachers, can develop their professionalism to pave the way to becoming experienced teachers. Moreover, when considering teacher development as teacher learning, we can understand the crucial exploration of teachers’ noticing in helping them reach such development.

Furthermore, one way to help novice EFL teachers become adaptive teachers (Anani Sarab & Mardian, 2022) is to help them become reflective teachers. By so doing, novice teachers will be able to make sound pedagogical decisions. Moreover, although research studies have been done to address different aspects of reflective practice in EFL teacher education programs, there still exists a gap between theory and practice (Anani Sarab & Mardian, 2022), asking for further thorough examinations of different approaches, methods, and techniques of reflective practice (Farrell, 2019) to reduce the gap between theory and practice. Doing studies in this regard would help develop the necessary frameworks for using reflective practice in EFL teacher education programs by understanding the role of noticing in novice teachers’ reflective practice. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to probe the role of reflective practice in activating novice EFL teachers’ noticing.

### Literature Review

In the following paragraphs, we review the key concepts of the study, including reflective practice and teachers' noticing. Then, we report the framework of the study, which is based on a currently proposed model of teachers' noticing by Scheiner (2021).

#### Reflective Practice

Reflective practice helps novice teachers learn to move from being impulsive and unconscious teachers who make actions based on trials and errors in an unmindful manner (Griffiths, 2000) to active and conscious individuals (Barjesteh, 2019; Duffy, 2007) who examine their practices critically and gain deeper learning cognitively (Moon, 2004). This dynamic complexity controls thoughts and feelings that can shape actions and experiences in order to enhance the acquired skills and foster the undeveloped ones. Since reflections guide novice teachers' contemplation and application of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs (Beard & Wilson, 2006), reflective practices can be the appropriate potential source of teachers' learning. Knowing what, how, and why novice teachers are doing a particular action not only has advantages for understanding students' learning and needs, but also for teachers' self-awareness, self-directedness, and self-assessment. Hence, novice teachers can evaluate and analyze their situation, investigate the potential options and choices, make wise actions, and identify the best practices when they face an issue or controversy.

Reflective practice can occur individually and collaboratively. By reflecting individually, novice teachers can promote their awareness and understanding of classroom experiences through data collection and analysis, like writing and keeping a journal, doing action research, examining critical incidents, recording audio and video, having case studies, reporting narration of lessons, and making a portfolio (Kavoshian et al., 2016; Murray, 2010; Richards & Farrell, 2011). On the opposite side, when novice teachers reflect collaboratively, they can express their ideas and experiences with other experienced teachers in order to receive constructive feedback and guidance; activities like peer mentoring, peer-coaching, support groups, writing journals, reflective papers, and reports together, and participating in conferences, associations, and communities (Murray, 2010). Significantly, self-directedness includes "skills, knowledge, and confidence to direct their learning without guidance" (McGarrell, 1996, p. 496). Therefore, novice teachers can be self-directed to use strategies to develop their skills through daily practice. Moreover, learning by reflection can be a cyclical process of concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and assessment (Kolb, 1984). Reflection can make learning experiential, which is very important for learning to teach and interpret the experiences by connecting them to their references of meaning.

Having engaged in reflective practice, novice teachers can connect the experiences to the ideas by thinking deliberately (Dewey, 1933). It can offer more opportunities for noticing by cogitating practices, experiences, and attitudes during reflections. Novice

teachers can improve their self-awareness, problem-solving, and noticing skills by implementing the technique in their regular practices (Jackson & Shirakawa, 2020; Jackson, 2021). According to the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 2001), students cannot learn input and exposures unless they are noticed and attended to change in the intake (Blommaert, 2013; Leung & Wu, 2012). It can also be true for teachers when teaching students by noticing different experiences, teaching conditions, learning processes, and professional practices (Jackson & Cho, 2016).

### Teachers' Noticing

The way teachers perceive different aspects of their classrooms refers to their noticing. Thus, noticing is interrelated with seeing which is a learnable skill (Scheiner, 2021), such as attending to, interoperating, and responding to teaching and learning problems (Kaiser et al., 2015). By using this skill, teachers can examine and evaluate their practices in classrooms. Mason (2002) believed that teachers' noticing is about the degree of teachers' sensitivity toward their teaching, which leads to creativity in their teaching and takes them away from routine teaching. It can refer to mental processes in teachers' minds that can bring about educational changes. Moreover, it leads to active use of metacognitive strategies". Moreover, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) found the importance of metacognition as teachers "without metacognitive approaches are essentially those without direction or opportunity to plan their learning and teaching, monitor their progress or review their accomplishments and future directions" (p. 8). For this reason, novice teachers must learn to be responsible for their teaching and students' learning, share their ideas, emotions, and experiences with other colleagues, and analyze the outcome of actions made in response. To learn from practical experiences, novice teachers should pay close attention to their noticing to make sense of the natural, psychological, and collective practices (Falkenberg, 2014). Hence, teachers' cognition has received scholarly attention.

The concept of second-language teacher cognition highlights various features that may have an influential impact on teachers' thoughts and practices while teaching (Borg, 2006). The framework proposed by Borg categorized practices during teaching, professional roles and tasks, and situational context-related aspects that can, in general, influence teachers' cognition and thinking. Hence, by studying these aspects mentioned above, it can be inferred that novice teachers' cognition is affected by contextual factors. When considering novice teachers' ability to observe, evaluate, and inform their first practices critically, one crucial aspect can be their noticing ability. Teacher noticing was seen as awareness of factors of language-classroom interaction that may affect teaching quality and student learning. For different disciplines, such as math and science, teachers' noticing ability during teaching practices has been investigated through the lens of diverse methods (Sherin et al., 2011).

It can be noticed that teachers' psychological matters related to novice teachers' noticing are different from those of noticing by language learners (Schmidt, 2001;

Bergsleithner et al., 2013; Robinson, 2003). Thus, the influence of novice teachers' noticing can shed light on conscious, reflective practices (Borg, 2006) related to promoting teachers' professional development. By engaging in reflective essays, journal writing, observations, action research, team teaching, observing, and other individualistic or collaborative reflective methods, novice teachers can learn independently and collaboratively from noticing and researching their practices individually and engaging in the social environment (Crookes, 2003). Although the previous literature has examined some aspects of teachers' noticing, the significance, process, and development of EFL teachers' noticing with the help of reflective practices have not been extensively studied for EFL teachers (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Jackson & Cho, 2016). The study was an attempt to address the following research questions:

1. Which aspects of teacher development are addressed by reflective practices to activate novice EFL teachers' noticing?
2. How different aspects of teacher development are related to the components of teacher noticing, including framing, interaction, perceptual activities, and exploration?

### Method

To understand the role of reflective practice in activating novice EFL teachers' noticing, we followed a qualitative case study that helped us to examine the cases in our study of novice EFL teachers within a real-life setting (Yin, 2014), where EFL teachers used reflective practices. We employed a bounded system (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in which Iranian novice EFL teachers teaching English as a foreign language in high schools participated in reflective practices. Consequently, we had some parameters in this study that bounded the case for us, including the experience of teachers (novice teachers), the time of their teaching career (during their initial teaching years), the ability to do reflective practice, and the teaching settings (high school).

### Research Design: Instrumental Case Study

We followed an instrumental case study design in the current study to address the research questions. An instrumental case study is a type of case study used to find insight into a particular research issue or phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Stake (1995, p. 3) believed that researchers need to use an instrumental case study when they have "a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case". Therefore, in the instrumental case study, the roles and relationships among the research concepts are sought. In the current study, we followed an instrumental case study to explore the role of reflective teaching in activating teachers' noticing. To conduct this qualitative case study, we adapted the procedures provided by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 159-160) that were based on various available suggestions, such as Merriam & Tisdell (2015), Stake (1995), and Yin (2014).

- *Determine if a case study approach is appropriate for studying the research problem:* Since our study aimed to explore the role of reflective teaching in activating teachers' noticing among novice EFL teachers and there was a puzzle for us to find an insightful understanding of the novice EFL teachers, the cases, it was an appropriate qualitative typology to follow.
- *Identify the intent of the study and select the case:* As stated earlier, this study intended to explore the role of reflective teaching in activating novice EFL teachers' noticing. To such an intent, we select our case purposefully from among the EFL teachers. To do so, we considered the parameters bounding our case study, including teaching experience (novice EFL teachers), the time of their teaching career (during their initial teaching years), the ability to do reflective practice, and the teaching settings (high school).
- *Develop procedures for conducting the extensive data collection drawing on multiple data sources:* In the current case study, we collected teacher documents (portfolios). Moreover, we conducted semi-structured interviews with them.
- *Specify the analysis approach on which the case description integrates analysis themes and contextual information:* First, we followed a holistic analysis through which we explored the entire case inductively (Yin, 2014). Then, to delve deep into the collected data to answer the research questions, we conducted a thematic analysis to find the case themes.
- *Rigor and report:* Finally, we address the rigor of the study by checking the credibility and dependability. We reported the case themes and discussed them.

### **The Framework of the Study: A Model of Teachers' Noticing**

A model of teachers' noticing proposed by Scheiner (2021) was used as the framework of this study (Figure 1). The model is a dynamic one addressing the interrelationships among framing, perceptual activity and exploration, and interaction. It is critical to note that Scheiner (2021) modified the model proposed by Neisser (1976). The model has three main parts, including framing of classroom events, perceptual activity and exploration, and interaction with the classroom world. Based on this model, the teachers frame their classroom events through their experiences. Therefore, framing a classroom event has a relationship with the activity of seeing. It has its effects on the approaches that the teachers use as the focus of attention toward the events. Consequently, they can understand the reality of their classroom events. The critical point of the framing aspect is that it is related to the cultural and historical atmosphere of the classroom, created by the previous events in the classroom.

The other aspect of the model is perceptual activity and exploration. The teachers use their eyes, mind, and their body to move and perceive the events in their classrooms. Scheiner (2021) believed that the whole process is an ecological one since there are always new events in classrooms. Perceptual activity and exploration has also a relationship with the framing aspect in that new events explored and perceived by the

teachers will lead them to change their framing of events and add to the historical and cultural repertoire concerning the classroom events. Therefore, it helps teachers develop their framing when noticing a new event in their classrooms since they “are actors in the institutional scene that they are observing” (Sherin et al., 2011, p. 5).

During the process of noticing, the teachers also interact with their classrooms to project from current events to predict future ones. They create their classrooms through different social and material structuring, and then they explore the resulting events. According to Scheiner (2021, p. 91), “Teachers do not only actively explore the world of classroom events. They actively shape it in ways that afford certain types of classroom activities and certain kinds of observations”. Therefore, it can be stated, based on the model, that teacher noticing is the interplay among the framing of the classroom events, which is perceived by the teachers ecologically and reshaped constantly. Consequently, the model is a dynamic one, showing the dynamicity in teachers’ noticing.

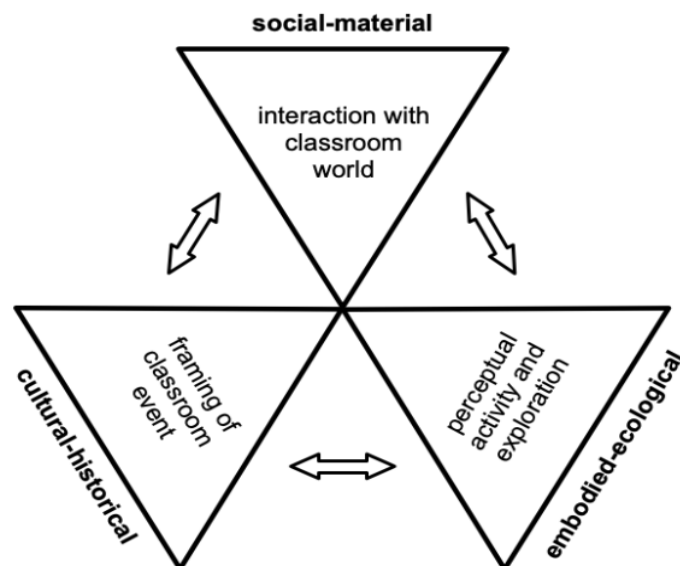


Figure 1. *The Conceptual Model of Teacher Noticing (Extracted from Scheiner, 2021, p. 91)*

### Participants and Setting

To follow the design of this case study in selecting the participants purposefully, we addressed the bounding parameters, including teaching experience (novice EFL teachers), the time of their teaching career (during their initial teaching years), the ability to be reflective in their practice, and the teaching settings (high school). To address the first parameter of the case (teaching experience), we selected EFL teachers whose experience level was between two to four years, as different scholars considered novice teachers’ years of experience between two to four and above four years to be experienced (Gatbonton, 2008; Rahimi & Zhang, 2015). The second parameter of the case (initial teaching experience) was also considered by including teachers who taught in the EFL



context in their initial teaching years. This means that they did not teach before joining high school as an EFL teacher. The third parameter of the case (teaching setting) was also taken into account by including EFL teachers who taught EFL in high schools and not other educational contexts, such as private language institutes. Finally, we purposefully selected the EFL teachers who were reflective in their classroom practices. As part of our efforts to recruit reflective EFL teachers, we asked questions related to their reflective practice in the classroom. Specifically, we inquired about their post-class reflection process, including whether they consider the effectiveness of their methods, activities, and tasks and whether they investigate the reasons behind any challenges that may have occurred during their classes. Additionally, one of the researchers provided the teachers with a debriefing session on the principles of reflection. This session was aimed at helping them understand how to become reflective teachers in their respective classes. Accordingly, we selected 13 Iranian novice EFL teachers to participate in the study. Their ages ranged from 22 to 26 ( $M = 23$ ); all were male teachers. They were given consent to sign, informed about the research process, and assured that the data would only be used for a study and not for any other reasons. All participants voluntarily participated in this study.

The school was a private junior high school in Iran, Tehran; besides their regular curriculum, they have a unique language learning course during an academic year. The Department of English is a separate department that has 25 teachers who teach beginning and elementary classes. They have eight semesters, each taking fifteen sessions, around 90 minutes. Six of them had MA in English-related majors such as English translation, teaching English as a foreign language, and English literature. The rest (seven teachers) held a Bachelor of Arts in teaching English.

### **Data Sources and instruments**

The main data sources collected and used in the current study were EFL teachers' portfolios and semi-structured interviews.

#### ***EFL teachers' portfolios***

The novice EFL teachers participating in this study reflected on their practices in their classrooms daily and collected their portfolios, including reflective papers, observations, journal writing, and reports. They were asked to collect their portfolios from January to March 2022 and deliver them to the researchers. It is worth mentioning that although the reflective practice was a common day-to-day practice among the participants of the study, and they knew its principles and procedures, prior to starting data collection, one of the researchers administrated a one-session class where he arranged a negotiation session of about an hour for participants to solve their problems, ask about their concerns, and learn more about the process and nature of reflection. The results of the session were that the teachers found a better understanding of the principles of the reflection and their conflicts were solved.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

A series of semi-structured interviews were run by one of the researchers for half an hour to explore the teachers' perceptions of the benefits of reflections for their noticing and the way noticing is enhanced by reflection. The semi-structured interview was prepared by extracting questions from the literature and, at the same time, included flexibility to its process while participants interact (Ary et al., 2010). The interviews were arranged and planned to find a suitable time for the participants. All participants took part in the interviews, except two teachers (NT10,12) who were reluctant due to the heavy teaching load. The interviews were used at the end of the first month of their reflective practices to enhance the recall of noticing events. It is critical to mention that the researchers tried to ask questions about how teachers' reflections helped them address different aspects of noticing, including framing, perceptual activity, exploration, and interaction (Appendix). The interviews were recorded for later analysis, and then the audio-recorded interviews were added to their existing portfolios.

### **Data Analysis**

We analyzed the data in two stages to follow the instrumental case study design. First, to answer the first question, we analyzed the collected data holistically. To that end, we transcribed the data collected from portfolios and semi-structured interviews into one mega file so that by analyzing it we could picture the whole case. To that end, we followed inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by delving into data and trying to find the main themes inductively. This bottom-up analysis helped the researchers understand the major role of the concepts under study within a specific context (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To answer the second question, which was an inquiry to see the role of reflective practice in relation to the components of teacher noticing, including framing, perceptual activity and exploration, and interaction, we analyzed the data by using deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which is a "top-down" approach to do thematic analysis when a theory is used as for the a priori themes. To that end, the dynamic model of teacher noticing (Figure 1), which shows the interrelationships among framing, perceptual activity and exploration, and interaction, was used. The whole data analysis was done through the six procedures of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87). It is also important to mention that MAXQDA 22 was used to go through different phases of thematic analysis. The guidelines and implementation procedures for doing thematic analysis in this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Thematic analysis procedures (adopted from Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)*

Phase	Description of the process	Implementing procedures
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas.	Entering data types (EFL teacher' portfolios and semi-structured interviews) into MAXQDA 22 and (re)reading and (re)listening to the data, taking some initial notes
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.	Searching for the initial codes by putting relevant notes under the same node. Organizing the relevant data to the initial codes.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	Using the conceptual framework (the dynamic model of teacher noticing) to collate codes to possible themes. Using Creative Coding of MAXQDA 22.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	Rechecking the entire data to see whether the initial themes align with all the data. Generating the thematic map using Document Map and Code Map of MAXQDA 22.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	Final checking of the themes through addressing the interrelationships among them, using Code Relations Browser.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis.	Extract the relevant excerpts for each of them to be reported and discussed.

### Rigor of the Study

We addressed the credibility and dependability of this study. We conducted member checking when there were unclear statements in the data provided by the participants to assure credibility. Moreover, member checking was done when we reached the themes to see if the participants agreed with the themes. Moreover, we asked another expert in data coding to follow the procedures so that we could reach a higher level of dependability. The result indicated 90% inter-coder agreement between the researchers and the second coder. Likewise, minor changes were made, like matching the categories or making another broad category to enhance the quality of the coding section.

## Results

### Aspects of Teacher Development Addressed by Reflective Practice to Activate Novice EFL Teachers' Noticing

To answer the first research question of the study, which was about the aspects of teacher development addressed by reflective practice to activate teachers' noticing, we analyzed the data based on inductive thematic analysis, reaching three major themes (reflection as a tool to personal, cognitive, and professional developments), which led to one critical theme: sharpen noticing. Figure 2 illustrates the Code Matrix Browser of MAXQDA 22, including how the participants addressed the main themes. CMB is the combination of symbols showing the coded segments related to a specific code. The bigger the symbols are, the more segments in the data refer to a specific code.

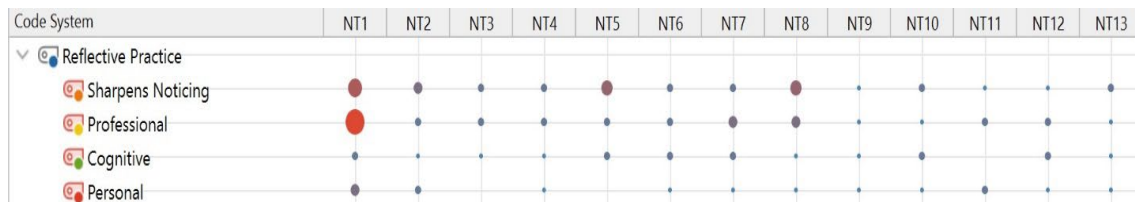


Figure 2. *The Major Role of Reflective Practice in Novice EFL Teachers' Noticing*

The analysis of the data showed that, from the perspective of novice EFL teachers and based on their practices, reflective practice could help novice EFL teachers develop personally, cognitively, and professionally. Professionally, they could reflect on their own and others' practices, learn practically, obtain the required experience, become a professional decision maker, construct knowledge, observe others, do action research, and raise awareness. For instance, to deal with the difficulty of adapting new practices in their classrooms, they believed that they *"could reflect on [their] practices and [other] experienced colleagues who offer a professional teaching model for not only enhancing [their] teaching but also making first changes without experience"* (NT1). Moreover, they perceived reflective practice as a critical educational tool helping them bridge the gap between theory and practice where reflective practice *"is a crucial instrument for [them] to learn in practice besides formal learning and gain first-hand knowledge from our professional experience"* (NT13). Novice EFL teachers also asserted that reflective practice could develop their professionalism through processes such as *"... thinking, analyzing, and evaluating [themselves]... [that]improve and change [their] educational approach, turn to be a more successful decision maker ..."* (NT4).

The analysis of the data shows that novice EFL teachers believed that they could develop their cognitive abilities through reflective practices. Firstly, novice teachers became able to link their previous knowledge through which they can link *"the previous presupposition and existing theories with the new and novel frame of reference"* (NT13) so that it would be possible for them to get meaning from experiences via involvement in

reflective practices that helped them “to make sense of experiences” (NT13). Furthermore, novice EFL teachers perceived reflective practice as a tool to raise their consciousness about different aspects of teaching in EFL contexts. For instance, NT12 stated that reflective practices “fostered [his] consciousness by monitoring [his] performance in class, becoming aware of what is happening and why, and taking action to deal with the problems and difficulties and improve learning and teaching”.

We also found that novice EFL teachers perceived reflective practices as beneficial in that they could personally survive from initial practices since they perceived reflective practice as a tool “... to observe [their] practices, analyze with others, plan ahead, make changes, and take actions ... to survive the challenges of initial teaching” (NT10). From their perspectives, this would lead to developing their interpersonal competence in collaboration to be attentive, learn to predict, manage, and change, and be adaptable. For example, NT2 asserted that “through reflective practices, [he] gained valuable experiences by dealing with daily and unusual activities in the self-monitoring process; [he] could also predict problems related to classroom management and student behaviors”.

The analysis shows that a systematic reflective practice process that developed novice EFL teachers personally, cognitively, and professionally activates and sharpens their noticing. Moreover, novice teachers were transformed from unconsciousness to intentionality and mindfulness, meaning that it helped novice EFL teachers to sharpen their attention toward different teaching issues. NT3 mentioned this as a tool to bridge from unconscious teaching to conscious one when he stated, “[he] used to teach some parts of teaching unintentionally and unconsciously because [he] could not simultaneously pay attention to [himself], the context, students, curriculum, and other things”. Moreover, reflective practice sharpened their noticing to give an equal allocation of attentional sources to different aspects that are almost ignored in EFL classes. NT12 stated that “with the help of reflection, [he] could see areas, where [he] did not give attention before ... [it] fostered [his] consciousness by monitoring my performance in class, becoming aware of what is happening and why, and taking action to deal with the problems and difficulties ...”. As teaching is a complex matter, novice teachers need more clarification for their practices to be more certain to take novel actions through reflective practice. Hence, the reflective practice became a noticing tool for novice teachers to sharpen their noticing capacity and activate their attentional sources for noticing the novel occurrences, sudden events, occurring barriers and boosters so that they can address “any inconvenience that can be explored independently in cases where no supervisors are approachable for help” (NT6).

### **The Relationships between Different Aspects of Teacher Development and Teacher Noticing**

The second research question probed the relationships between different aspects of teacher development and the components of teacher noticing, including framing,

interaction, perceptual activities, and exploration. To that end, we conducted a deductive thematic analysis using the framework of the study (Figure 1) and the obtained major themes (personal, cognitive, professional) based on the perceptions and practices of novice EFL teachers about reflective practice. We used the Complex Code Configuration (CCC) of MAXQDA 22 to find the relationships among the codes. The findings provided by CCC are based on the occurrences of segments representing different codes simultaneously. Figure 3 shows the results of segment co-occurrences between reflective practice and teacher noticing.

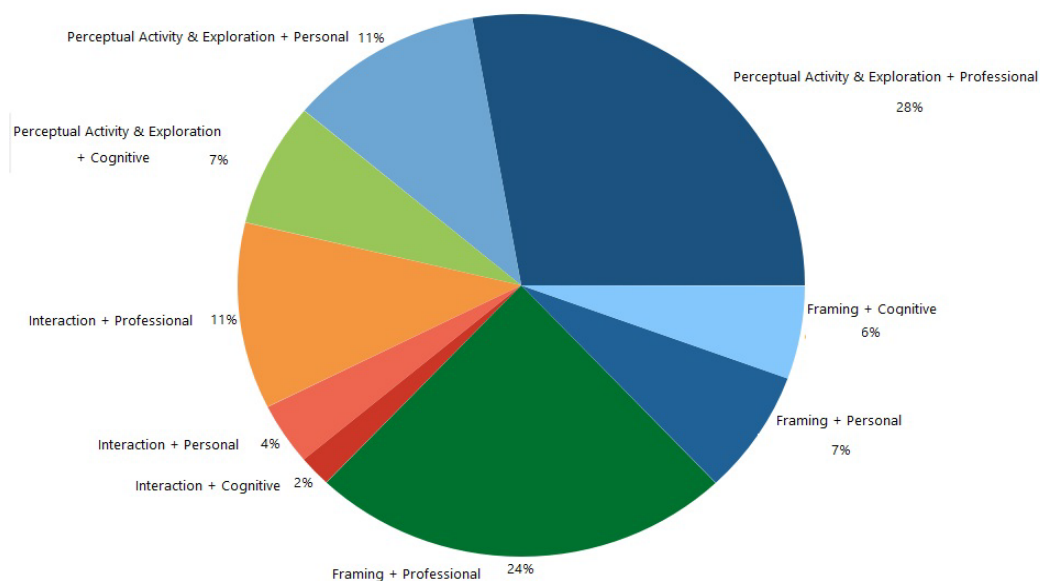


Figure 3. Results of Segment Co-Occurrences Between Reflective Practice and Teacher Noticing

### ***Framing + Personal, Cognitive, and Professional***

The results of CCC show that there are co-occurrences between framing and personal (7%), cognitive (6%), and professional (24%) aspects of reflective practice. Based on the analysis of the data received from the novice EFL teachers, it was revealed that the professional development happened through involvement in reflective practice could help them frame their noticing in their classes "*... so this inquiry tool [reflective practice] can provide the fundamental foundation for development*" (NT6), including professional development. To such end, novice EFL teachers used "*different modes of reflection, like journal writing, case studies, collaborative reflection, critical friends, observation ...*" (NT8) to manage the problems of their classes. Therefore, the reflective practice could develop novice EFL teachers' professionalism to address the framing of noticing through various lenses.

The personal development resulting from reflective practice could develop the framing of novice teachers' noticing. By being involved in reflective practices, novice

EFL teachers "*recorded [their] classes to reflect on, asked others to observe and make comments and did some action research ... leading to making changes in [their personal] practice [concerning teaching]*" (NT10). Finally, cognitive development that happened during reflective practices might help novice EFL teachers develop the framing of their noticing by "*... raising [their] consciousness of their specific contexts*" (NT13) and helping them "*... enhance the teaching quality after reaching self-evaluation and – awareness*" (NT2).

### ***Interaction + Personal, Cognitive, and Professional***

The results of CCC show that there are co-occurrences of segments between interaction and personal (4%), cognitive (2%), and professional (11%) aspects of reflective practice. The professional development resulting from teachers' involvement in reflective practice can help them interact with their classrooms to project from current events to predict future ones so that they could "*... predict problems related to classroom management and student behaviors*" (NT2). Moreover, reflective practices could develop the cognitive abilities of novice teachers, which, in its place, help "*clarify the [teaching] parts that are not vivid for [them] as [they] are uncertain about various aspects of our initial teaching practices*" (NT5), so they could interact with their classes more appropriately to deal with the "*complexity and dynamicity of teaching ..., especially in early years ...*" (NT3). Finally, personal development occurs due to reflective practice contributes novice EFL teachers to interact with their classes in the initial years when "*... any inconvenience can be explored independently in cases where no supervisors are approachable for help*" (NT6), so they can interact with their classes to "*distribute the attentional sources to other learning sites, like learners*" (NT3).

### ***Perceptual Activities and Exploration + Personal, Cognitive, and Professional***

Finally, it was revealed that reflective practices could help novice EFL teachers develop perceptual activities and exploration aspects of noticing through personal (11%), cognitive (7%), and professional (28%) development. For instance, the professional developments resulting from the reflective practices helped novice EFL teachers develop the exploration techniques during their noticing where they followed the principles of "*... thinking, analyzing, and evaluating ...*" (NT4) to "*understand untouched areas for improvement; the parts of advantages could be highlighted, and those of demerits could get refinement*" (NT7). Moreover, cognitive development contributed to the development of perceptual activities and exploration of the novice teachers so that they could "*trigger [their thinking by reflective practices] about reactions, encounters, interactions, and actions in the class*" (NT4). Finally, personal development through reflective practices helped novice teachers "*became more aware of [themselves] and [their] teaching style, so plans were made to*" (NT2) "*fix problems, enhance awareness, and reach a more outstanding quality*" (NT8). This way, they could follow noticing techniques that were more in line with their personal preferences.

### Discussion

Experienced teachers are regarded as ones who can predict (Richards, 2015), recognize, and interpret teaching situations (Carter et al., 1988). They have tools, understanding, and expertise, possess a comprehensive awareness of teaching events (Van den Bergh et al., 2014), and notice teaching and learning factors (Falkenberg, 2014). Moreover, they can precisely analyze the situation, take new actions, and have reasons for implementing actions. However, novice teachers are those who do not possess the attributes mentioned above. Thus, novice teachers must possess a more noticing capacity and be improved personally and professionally through reflective practices (Jamil & Hamre, 2018). This study investigated novice teachers qualitatively to explore how novice teachers' reflective practice boosts their noticing in their first teaching practices.

Accordingly, the study's results revealed that when novice teachers reflected, they could have an awareness of their practices, self-evaluation, awareness of language aspects, interpersonal interactions, an understanding of teaching factors, and modification of their approaches to teaching and learning. To promote professionally, they reflected collaboratively and independently to reconstruct knowledge, learned in an experiential way to gain experience, became conscious of being decision-makers, and did action research to change practices.

Cognitively, they could associate their previous knowledge and the fresh one, infer meaning from experiences, boost consciousness, and foster analytic thinking and social collaboration. Moreover, they could personally survive from first practices, promote interpersonal skills in collaboration, become more attentive, cognizant, and adaptable, and predict and manage critical incidents. The literature has also supported the findings as reflection can deliberately and actively make teaching meaningful through a professional tool by exploration, identification, examination, and experimentation (Dewey, 1933; Farrell, 2015; Schon, 1987). Furthermore, it collects data systematically and leads to informed decisions (Farrell, 2007), develops self-awareness (Freeman, 2016; Farrell, 2018), fosters thoughtful considerations of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs, and makes them flexible in changing them (Beard & Wilson, 2006), and enhances expression of their ideas and experiences collaboratively to receive constructive feedback (Murray, 2010).

More importantly, reflection can provide the basics for novice teachers' noticing. Novice teachers can observe and monitor untouched areas and make them visible, focus their attention on parts that need more improvements and establishment, foster a process of sustained, systematic tools for activating attentional resources, and move from a state of unconsciousness to an intentional condition in which teachers become mindful and allocate attention to different aspects equally. Finally, they have more clarification for their uncertainties and take novel actions by doing reflective practice. Furthermore, the previous research has maintained the findings since novice teachers need to alter the uncertain situation during the first years of teaching experience (Johnson & Golombek, 2011), facilitate the mental and emotional challenges (Kubanyiova, 2012), notice and



make sense of their experience (Jacobs & Spangler, 2017; Sherin, 2001), and generate understanding with others by collective noticing (Amador et al., 2021). Here, reflection and noticing motivated novice teachers to recognize the critical areas, connect the established understanding, modify the practices and beliefs, and, more significantly, gradually transform from the novice to the experienced ones (Sherin, 2001). In this way, novice teachers can gradually learn how to become more experienced; it is not a matter of years of experience but the quality of the valuable and enriching experiences they receive.

The findings also revealed that the novice EFL teachers' personal, cognitive, and professional developments through reflective practices could activate the teacher noticing components, including framing, interaction, and perceptual activities and exploration. When involved in reflective practices, novice EFL teachers would gradually put their steps to become reflective teachers "who critically monitor thought processes and develop systems and methods of inquiry and analysis" (Gudeta, 2022, pp. 10-11). Then, it develops their noticing ability by helping them frame their classrooms based on dynamic perceptual activities and exploration, which they can obtain from their interactions with their classrooms. To put it another way, reflective practices help novice teachers address the ecological nature of noticing (Scheiner, 2021); therefore, they can prepare themselves for unpredicted situations.

From a theoretical perspective, the characteristics of reflective practices, such as making teachers conscious (Duffy, 2007) to self-assess their classes through different tools (Richards & Farrell, 2011), helped novice teachers to develop the components of teacher noticing, including framing, perceptual activities and exploration, and interaction. Different reflection tools helped novice teachers find various ways to interact with their classes and explore critical points. Moreover, reflection tools helped novice researchers to be more autonomous in framing their noticing. Therefore, as a whole, the variety of tools provided by reflective practices for novice EFL teachers helped them follow their preferences to notice the critical issues in their classes. It might be argued that since novice EFL teachers could select reflective practices based on their preferences, they became motivated to notice the teaching and learning issues in their classes.

### Conclusion

The findings showed that through addressing personal, cognitive, and professional developments, reflective practices helped novice EFL teachers to activate and sharpen their noticing of the critical issues in their classes. Moreover, the findings showed that there are relationships among novice teachers' personal, cognitive, and professional developments and the components of teacher noticing, including framing, perceptual activities exploration, and interaction. Therefore, it can be concluded reflective practice might be considered a tool to activate novice EFL teachers' noticing of critical issues in their classrooms through activating their thinking, analyzing, and evaluation. Moreover, it can be concluded the professional development of novice EFL teachers that is brought

about by reflective practice has a major impact on activating framing, interaction, perceptual activities, and exploration which are the components of noticing.

One major implication of the study is for in-service EFL teacher education programs. During the initial years of experience, novice teachers may undergo many challenges and obstacles since they may be unmonitored and lack sufficient experience to take ownership and agency in their practices. The in-service teacher education programs can develop novice EFL teachers' knowledge to conduct reflective practices in their classes so that they can find a more critical lens to address the teaching and learning problems in their classes. Moreover, based on the findings of the current study, it is rather critical for novice teachers to understand how to address the components of teaching noticing, including framing, perceptual activities and exploration, and interaction to notice the problems in their classes, so teacher educators need to provide them with methods and approaches to addressing those components based on reflective practice. Furthermore, future researcher can take an interpretive position in doing the relevant studies to be able to use their own experiences in the process of data analysis and discussion.

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### Appendix

1. How does reflective practice provide a critical lens for understanding classroom problems?
2. In what ways can reflective practice help in interacting with students to solve problems?
3. What approaches for dealing with classroom problems can reflective practice provide?