
Book reviews

RESEARCH ON REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN TESOL

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Research on Reflective Practice in TESOL provides comprehensive reviews of 138 studies in the field of reflective practice in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) which are classified according to the author's theoretical framework of reflective practice.

The book is suitable for researchers who are interested in reflective practice in TESOL, for teacher educators who are engaged in provision of training for pre-service teachers and or professional development for in-service TESOL teachers, and for in-service TESOL teachers who look for a reference to guide their understanding of reflective practice in TESOL.

Farrell starts the book with a crucial issue in the field by inviting readers to thoroughly think about what it means to reflect and what reflective practice is. After mirroring on Dewey's (1933) and Schon's (1983; 1987) tradition of reflective practice, he then introduces a framework that he develops in one of his recent publications (Farrell, 2015). This framework has five stages of reflection, i.e., *philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice*. The book continues with elaboration of each of the studies being reviewed which are classified under these five stages. Toward the end the author provides discussion on the most common instruments used in the reviewed studies. He closes the book with a chapter that provides general appraisal of the reviewed studies discussed using the lens of his framework in the previous chapters.

There are a number of strengths present in this book. One, the author uses a holistic approach that is both *reflective* and *reflexive* where he takes accounts of *reflection-on-practice, reflection-in-practice*; the moral, social, and political circumstances of the

practice; as well as the *self* of the doer (teachers) as a whole person. Two, the five stages of reflection in Farrell's framework are a useful theorization of what he criticizes as the vague and sometimes un-defined notion of reflection or reflective practice in research of this area. It provides a guide for practitioners on what aspect of reflection they want to focus on. Three, the author suggests that researchers, teacher educators, or teachers should be "aware of their own definitions and understanding of what it means to reflect" (p. 14). When attempting to conduct research or practice of reflective practice, they need to include a thorough understanding of whose tradition of reflective practice they are mirroring, so it is clear for everyone what reflection and reflective practice entails. Four, throughout the chapters, particularly in the beginning and at the end of the book, the author warns practitioners, to be careful in order not to fall into a *ritualized* or prescribed reflective practice, which may not represent the actual need of the teachers. Lastly, the author provides reflective questions throughout the book. These questions are useful for readers to think about not only what they have read, but also to relate their own view and experience to the concepts introduced in the sections.

However, a number of clarifications might be needed in this book. First, in the beginning of the book, the author cites Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010) for their framework that outlines six components of reflective practice (*practical, cognitive, learner, metacognitive, critical, and moral*). However, it was rather unclear how the author's framework is influenced by these components. It would be useful if an explanation of how the two frameworks are different had been provided. Second, the term *stages* in Farrell's framework might not capture precisely what he means. Stages might be misunderstood as periods of time, or how one step happens after another. Yet, this is not the case in this framework, particularly because often these stages overlap, and one stage is not leading to another. Perhaps the term *dimensions* captures the five notions (philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice) better than stages/levels. Third, there are quite extensive overlaps particularly in three of the stages, *principles, theory, and practice*. Throughout chapters 4, 5, and 6, the focus of the explanations of the reviewed studies using the lens of these three stages is not clear. It is not evident for example how *principles* and or *theory* are distinct from or perhaps enmeshed with *practice*; or whether *practice* is a bigger umbrella for the other

two dimensions. Fourth, the author has cited a number of the reviewed studies about the importance of feedback in reflective practice. The importance of feedback indicates that many effective reflections happen with the presence of other(s) who provide the feedback. However, the author has not elaborated how others contribute to the effectiveness of reflective practice. Last but not least, there are a few times when the author uses terms *reflection and reflective practice* which indicates that they are distinctive to each other. Nonetheless, he has not provided definitions or clarification on how reflection is dissimilar to reflective practice.

Although readers might be left with questions like the above-mentioned issues, in general Farrell's work is a useful resource for teacher educators, researchers, and TESOL teachers for examining what it means to reflect and for exploring the different dimensions in reflective practice. I highly recommend this book for TESOL practitioners as a reference or guidance for understanding that any reflective practice involves more than deliberating about the *practice* per se, but is also about contemplating who the practitioners are as well as apprehending that practice is associated with the moral, social, and political circumstances in which it is conducted.

References

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