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Reflective Practice in ELT, Thomas S. C. Farrell, Equinox, Bristol (2019). vi + 177 pp., ISBN: 978 1 78179 654 2 (pbk)

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Reflective Practice in ELT is the first book in a series entitled *Reflective Practice in Language Education*. As both the author of this introductory volume and the editor of the series, Farrell conceptualizes reflective practice and provides an overall image of the themes which the following books in the series are meant to discuss in-depth. The book is organized into seven chapters.

Chapter one begins with making a distinction between a weak version (commonsense view) of reflection as looking back and thinking about past events and a strong version of reflection defined as adopting a data-driven (evidence-based) approach to the concept which results in informed decision making. Regarding levels of reflection, the examination of the relevant frameworks reveals that reflection mostly happens at an instrumental level (decisions about methodologies and theories), deliberate level (pragmatic translation of theory into practice), and critical level (making judgements about socio-political consequences of knowledge presented to students). Putting all these together, the author defines reflective practice (RP) as “a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systemically collect data about their practice, and, while engaging in dialogue with others, use the data to make informed decisions about their practice both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 28). This definition of RP is both personal and social, and specific (classroom) and general (wider community) at the same time.

In chapter two, interpretations of typologies of RP are presented in illustrative figures which have two important features in common. First, they all begin with sensing a problem. Next, the steps involved in each model are iterative rather than linear and teachers can enter a model at any particular step that best suits their context. The models are, however, different in terms of their focus. For instance, while Dewey and Schön focus on reflection-on-action (after practice) and reflection-in-action (during practice), respectively, Stephen Brookfield assigns significance to the involvement of teachers, learners, colleagues, and theories in RP. In TESOL, Farrell has proposed two typologies. The first one includes the five components of *opportunities* (activities like group discussions through which teachers can reflect on their work), *ground rules* (guidelines for reflection), *time* (the amount of time individuals spend on each reflective activity), *external input* (the results of reflection published in professional journals), and *trust* (a non-threatening environment fostered among members of a group). Farrell's most recent model is similarly

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composed of five levels. The level of *philosophy* refers to a teacher's knowledge of self, including their ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The level of *principles* forms a teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning. The level of *theory* pertains to a teacher's methodological choices derived from their philosophy and principles. At the level of *practice*, teachers engage in reflection *for*, *in*, and *on* action. Finally, at the level of *beyond practice* teachers critically examine moral, political, and social issues. The model is also iterative and can be navigated from any level that fits teachers' current practice.

Chapter three outlines the six principles of RP (Farrell, 2019). Principle one posits that *RP is holistic* and reflection should not focus on practice only but on teacher-as-person and the relevant personal as well as practical matters. Principle two emphasizes that *RP is evidence-based* and teachers should use a variety of sources, including audiovisual recordings of their lessons and their students' and colleagues' opinions to collect evidence to reflect on their practice systematically. Principle three pinpoints that *RP is dialogic*. That is, teachers can join in critical friendship groups in a trusted community to reflect on serious matters. Principle four states that *RP bridges principles and practices* since through constant reflection *for*, *in*, and *on* action, teachers can reconstruct their espoused theories (principles) according to their theories-in-use (practice). Principle five maintains that *RP requires an inquiring disposition*, which means teachers must be really willing to reflect. Finally, principle six proposes that *RP is a way of life*. That is, to fulfill their roles successfully, teachers should adopt reflection as a way of life.

To be able to reflect systematically, teachers need a number of reflective tools (Farrell, 2018), which are expounded in chapter four. The most widely used tools for reflection are *dialogue*, *writing*, *classroom observation*, *action research*, *teacher narratives*, *case studies*, and *concept mapping*. A more recent reflective tool is *lesson study* in which a team of teachers plan a lesson and one of the team members presents the lesson while other members observe it. Then, the weaknesses and strengths of the lesson are discussed and it is presented for a second time. This cycle continues until the problems are all eliminated. All of these reflective tools enjoy some benefits (e.g., improved practice and motivation) while suffering a number of problems such as time management, induced anxiety, limited research skills, and extra workload.

Chapter five tries to operationalize reflection by providing an example of a language teacher's reflection. Richard is an African-American who teaches English in South Korea. Regarding his philosophy, Richard, who feels very shy as a child, is forced to live with multiple families because of his parents' divorce. His family, however, values education, success, and curiosity. When he decides to move to South Korea, he adopts approachability (establishing rapport) and fostering learners' curiosity as his principles, which are rooted in his philosophy. Regarding theory, Richard prefers a task-based approach with some degrees of teacher intervention to give structure to the tasks. In his practice, Richard establishes rapport with his students and uses a variety of activities to make language learning fun for his learners. At the level of beyond practice, Richard is a good friend of his students at the classroom while he himself enjoys a great deal of freedom and job security at school level. At the sociocultural level, however, Richard is tired of the extra workload as a result of teaching night classes because a cultural norm limits teaching time for those teachers who are originally from South Korea to daytime only.

Chapter six suggests some strategies on how to cultivate RP among individual teachers and schools. Regarding individuals, the chapter explains the cultivation of RP through open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole heartedness in detail. As to promulgating RP at schools, it is suggested that schools can borrow the technique of self-reflection from the individual end of the reflection continuum and the techniques of mentoring, team teaching, peer coaching, and critical friends from the collaborative end. The collaborative techniques entail conducting reflection in a group although they are different in terms of their internal power relations. For instance, while team teaching reflects almost equal power positions among team members,

mentoring and peer coaching indicate the authority and minimal superiority of one team member over the other(s), respectively.

In a final attempt to address practical considerations of conducting reflection, the author in chapter seven answers ten serious questions about RP. These questions interrogate whether RP has become another bandwagon, whether TESOL has embraced RP, how RP can be made workable for all TESOL teachers, the possibility of teaching RP to pre-service teachers, the risk of faking RP, the possibility of assessing reflection, the potential use of RP in teacher evaluation, the criticisms leveled at RP, the benefits of engaging in RP, and the future of RP. The answers to all these questions are then derived from the previous chapters, the RP literature, and Farrell's personal experience as a teacher and RP researcher.

In conclusion, *Reflective Practice in ELT* has one aim and one concern. The aim is to clarify that adopting a view of RP as a means to fix problems is too narrow and shortsighted. Accordingly, the whole volume tries to show that reflection is an ongoing, systematic, and evidence-based approach which begins with teacher-as-person, moves into day-to-day practice, and extends into moral and socio-political levels beyond practice. The concern of the volume centers around practical operationalization of RP. Hence, the first four chapters of the book are devoted to the theoretical and conceptual demarcations of RP while the final three chapters exemplify reflection and offer strategies on how to cultivate RP. The book enjoys an accessible style (although there are a few typos such as *why* for *when* on page 18, *though* for *through* on page 97, *have to cultivated* for *have to be cultivated* on page 128, an extra *from* in the phrase *can consist of from* on page 141, and *refection* for *reflection* on page 143) and can find a wide range of leadership in general education and TESOL. More specifically, it is a necessary companion of any language teacher who values his/her own professional development and his/her learners' achievement and overall growth.

References

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