



THE NATURE, CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The following article discusses the characteristics and nature of reflective skills in foreign language teaching and learning. The formation and development of reflective abilities focuses on planning, analyzing the educational process, working on mistakes, and working on difficulties and problems that may arise in the future process of education.

KEYWORDS

Reflective behaviour, non- reflective level, comparative/pedagogical reflection, active experimentation, abstract conceptualization.

INTRODUCTION

A crucial component of the educational process is reflection, which gives instructors useful tools to recognize and address issues pertaining to a variety of facets of their line of work.

In the context of education, the idea of reflection dates back to definition. Dewey attempted to draw comparisons between routine and reflective behaviour. He characterized reflection as deliberate, active, ongoing, and careful consideration of one's views as opposed to routine activity that is derived

from basic principles and regulations. In contrast to passive knowledge transmission through standard processes evolved over years, reflection is characterized as a methodical approach to inquiry that stresses the constructivist teaching approach and creative problem solving as a tool that employs critical thinking.

Reflective teaching provides English language teachers with a very vital tool suggesting helpful ideas to deal with demanding teaching situations. Expanding knowledge of the teaching-learning process,



increasing one's capacity and strategic alternatives as a language instructor, and improving the calibre of learning chances for students in language classrooms are the three functions of reflective teaching for educators. In addition, it aids students in realizing their current level of knowledge, identifying gaps in their knowledge, and obtaining feedback on their progress.

Mathew conducted a study on the role of reflective teaching in creating an effective learning environment for English language skills in the classroom. The study's findings included improved academic achievement for students (through the collection of detailed information about English language classroom situations, such as individual/group tasks and the selection of appropriate content) and enhanced professional development for teachers. Reflective teaching offers a rich language learning environment and resources for realizing mastery of English language skills. Reflective teachers consider their instruction critically and seek out examples of successful instruction. This critical analysis can draw on a variety of sources: Brookfield (2017) lays out four crucial sources: “students’ eyes, colleagues’ perceptions, personal experience, and theory and research.” Teachers can learn from these sources and reflect on their instruction using a variety of tools and techniques, from informal to formal, personal to inter-collegial. Reflective teaching, for instance, can involve investigating educational research, evaluating student assessments, observing in the classroom, and self-evaluation. Reflective teaching is an ongoing practice that enhances efficient and student-centered teaching because every semester's students and their needs are unique. In order to do this, instructors must possess the necessary abilities and competencies, such as subject-matter knowledge and communicative competence, in order to teach using appropriate methodologies, improve their students' social

interactions, and be effective in their roles. Similarly, reflective teaching helps educators make wise decisions by guiding them through a methodical process of thinking, writing, and discussing their work while considering how their own instruction and that of their colleagues affect students' learning. Therefore, the main goal of reflective education is to identify significant events through experience and collaborative observation. Reflective practice can also be defined as the process of consciously analyzing one's theoretical and practical experiences in order to comprehend one's current activity. Reflection can be understood as an intellectual process that involves using learners' minds to realize sustainable and lasting learning in the face of relatively difficult and uncertain learning tasks or experiences for which there is no right or wrong answer. As a result, additional processing of the students' cognitive and affective domains is required. In order for practitioners to enhance their reflectivity on learners' thinking, understanding, and interest through analyzing their teaching from other perspectives beyond their "egocentric" view, they must be trained to reflect on the content and the application of specific teaching approaches, according to numerous researchers who affirm that reflection is essential to understanding the flexible classroom environment.

According to Brookfield, instructors' decisions on which teaching methods to use and how to implement them are greatly impacted by the ideas, models, and images of teaching that they have internalized from their own experiences as students. Because of this, the majority of teachers continue to rely mostly on talk and chalk, possibly because they lack the skills or the motivation to create and implement a variety of cutting-edge teaching strategies, according to research findings. This in turn shows how little creative instruction is supported by the educational system.



According to Farrell and William and Grudnoff, inexperienced teachers could not benefit from instructional reflection to the same extent as more seasoned teachers because they lack the experience that more seasoned teachers have gained. In an investigation of how novice and experienced teachers perceived instructional reflection, Lee found that while teachers initially did not see the advantages of educational reflection, they eventually came to understand its value and the ways in which it could be applied to improve their teaching abilities. Because of this, it's important to assess how well instructors understand, conceive, and apply reflective education in order to assist students acquire higher-order thinking abilities that will help them compete globally. More precisely, analyzing experience, taking a step back, repeating, being more honest, being clear, improving understanding, and drawing conclusions are all steps of reflective practice, according to a research by Rodgers. In terms of complexity, reflective levels can be divided into three categories: low (surface), middle (pedagogical), and high (critical). The efficiency of teaching strategies and remembering theoretical details of learning experiences are covered at the lower/first/surface/descriptive stages of reflection (e.g., Shall I do it again and in a better way?). At this level, educators are expected to employ a range of tactics to the curriculum and the teaching-learning process in order to efficiently and successfully accomplish predetermined educational objectives. Reflective practice has developmental features that range from low reflection levels that deal with technical aspects of teaching to higher reflection levels that focus on achieving educational goals. Additionally, there is a level known as the “nonreflective level” where teachers fail to take ownership of the risk that students take on, viewing themselves as victims of circumstances, taking things for granted without questioning them, and failing to modify their

instruction based on the needs and preferences of their students. The second level, which he refers to as "comparative/pedagogical reflection," consists of theoretical and practical teaching approaches in which educators work to achieve consistency between their "espoused theory"—what they say, believe, and value—and their "theory-in-use," or what they actually do in the classroom. This involves backtracking, exploring, and taking various assumptions into consideration in order to verify the associations of experiences. The most advanced kind of reflection, referred to as critical reflection, involves analyzing causes within a more comprehensive experiential context by analyzing an incident and situating it within more significant moral, social, ethical, or historical contexts. Here, educators are required to address more general moral and ethical issues related to teaching (the social and political aspects of education), either directly or indirectly going beyond the question of how well a lesson is taught with the only goal of accomplishing educational objectives. Teachers can learn about the moral and ethical consequences of critical reflection for both their career as lifelong learners and their teaching practices.

In his 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner*, Donald Schön presented ideas like reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action, which clarify how professionals approach work-related issues with a practice-improved improvisation. The ideas of reflective practice, however, date back far further. John Dewey was one of the early authors of reflective practice earlier in the 20th century, with his examination of experience, interaction, and reflection. Soon after, pertinent ideas of human learning and development were being developed by other researchers, including Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget.

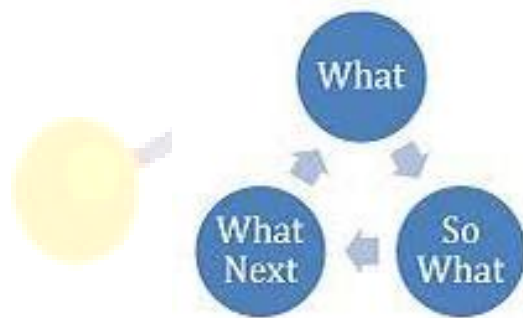
According to some academics, ancient writings like the *Meditations* of the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius



and Buddhist teachings include the first examples of reflective practice. Interest in the cyclical pattern of experience, the integration of theory and practice, and the deliberate application of lessons learnt from experience were central to the development of reflective theory. Since the 1970s, there has been an increase in the amount of literature and attention devoted to experiential learning, as well as the creation and use of reflective practice. "Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over, and evaluate it," adult education professor David Boud and his colleagues noted. Working with experience is what makes learning so crucial. It is possible for someone to be subconsciously learning while they are experiencing something, but it can be challenging to connect feelings, experiences, and ideas into a logical flow. Rethinking or recounting events allows one to classify

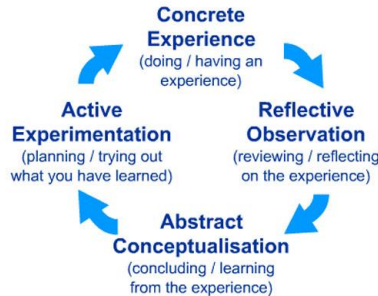
experiences, feelings, concepts, and so on. It also allows one to contrast the expected outcome of a previous action with its actual outcome. Taking a step back from the action allows one to critically analyze a series of occurrences.

Reach, Touch, and Teach, written by Terry Borton in 1970, popularized a basic learning cycle based on Gestalt therapy. It consists of three inquiries that ask the practitioner: What, So what, and Now what? This analysis begins with a situation's description, which is followed by a close examination of the circumstances and the creation of knowledge gleaned from the experience. Practitioners then consider how they might better themselves and the effects of how they reacted to the encounter. Later, practitioners in fields other than education—like nursing and other helping professions—adapted Borton's concept.



The earlier work by John Dewey and Jean Piaget had a significant influence on learning theorist David A. Kolb. Kolb's reflective model, which is based on the conversion of information into knowledge and emphasizes experiential learning, is derived from Kurt Lewin's writings as well. This happens after a situation has happened and involves a practitioner thinking back

on what happened, grasping the concepts that were encountered in general, and then putting these broad understandings to the test in a different scenario. In this method, a practitioner builds on their past experiences and expertise by consistently applying and reapplying the knowledge that is formed from a situation.



Learning scientist Graham Gibbs talked about how Kolb's experiential learning cycle's reflection step can be facilitated through the use of systematic debriefing. The following is how Gibbs outlines the phases of an elaborately planned debriefing.

- (Initial experience)
- Description

"What happened? Don't make judgements yet or try to draw conclusions; simply describe."

- Feelings

"What were your reactions and feelings? Again don't move on to analysing these yet."

- Evaluation

"What was good or bad about the experience? Make value judgements."

- Analysis

"What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you."

"What was really going on?"

"Were different people's experiences similar or different in important ways?"

- Conclusions (general)

"What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?"

- Conclusions (specific)

"What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or way of working?"

- Personal action plans

"What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time?"

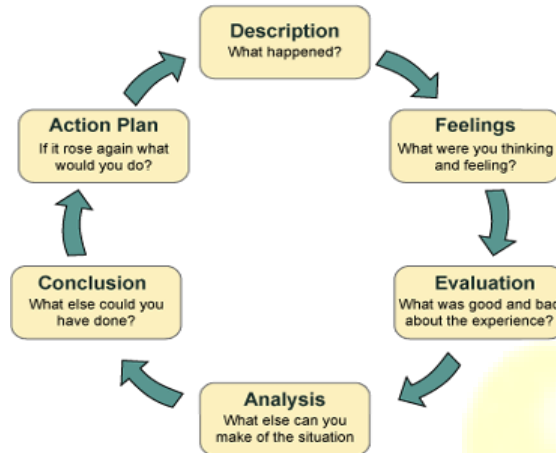
"What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?"

To help with structuring reflection on learning events, Gibbs' recommendations—often referred to as "Gibbs' reflective cycle" or "Gibbs' model of reflection"—can be broken down into the following six separate stages:

- Description
- Feelings
- Evaluation
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Action plan



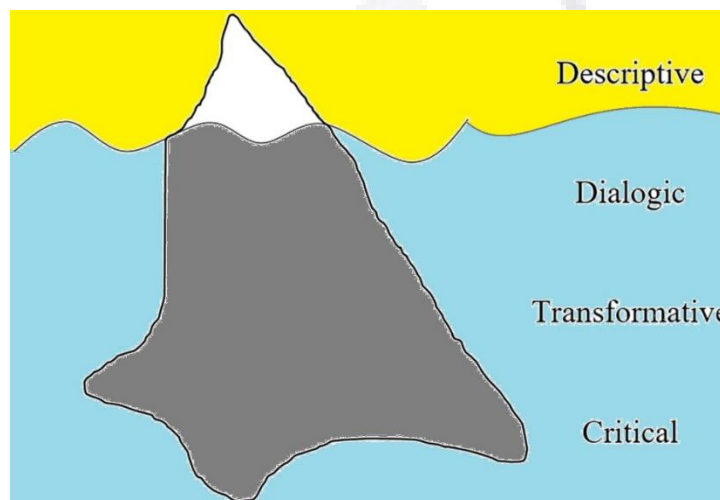
Gibbs Reflective Cycle



Moreover, professor of nursing Christopher Johns developed constructed mode of reflection that practitioners have supplementation of a guidance to obtain deeply understanding of their practice. It is intended to be implemented by sharing with a mentor or colleague, which allows the experience to be turned into learned information more quickly than it would be through reflection alone. Johns emphasizes the value of practical experience as well as a practitioner's capacity to obtain, comprehend, and apply knowledge obtained through empirical methods. "Looking out" at the circumstance encountered and "looking in" at

one's own thoughts and feelings are the two ways that reflection happens. Johns elaborates on the idea of "looking out" at a situation by referencing Barbara Carper's work. The guided reflection incorporates five patterns of knowing: the situation's aesthetic, personal, ethical, empirical, and reflexive components. Johns' model is thorough and permits thought on a wide range of significant topics.

Reflection is neither a linear, uniform, or homogeneous process. Nguyen Nhat Quang (2022) builds an iceberg of reflection using Fleck (2012)'s taxonomy of reflective practices.





In other words, reflection is made up of several layers that correspond to four stages. The tales of reality that descriptive reflection presents, devoid of any multilateral descriptions or analyses that might advance a shift in individual viewpoint, are merely the top of the iceberg. Submerged under the surface, dialogic reflection reflects the connections and interdependencies of experiences through cyclical cycles of self-questioning in search of justifications for actions. This procedure can provide the reflectors several meanings after determining these causes. transformational reflection, which comes after multiple cycles of dialogic reflection, enables reflective practitioners to return to problems with new approaches that might produce outcomes that are more welcome and transformational than those from previous cycles. The deepest level of reflection, known as critical reflection, looks at what, why, and how an incident or sequence of episodes transpired using an ecologically comprehensive lens that takes into account social, historical, political, and cultural variables. This goes beyond the reflection-on-action process.

To conclude, it is crucial to remember that not all reflective activities can penetrate all four levels because the depth of reflection depends on the cognitive and metacognitive abilities of the reflectors as well as their sociocultural upbringing. In order to better their practice, teachers cannot examine their acts objectively or consider the feelings, experience, or results of their actions without reflecting first.

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