

## **"REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER" AS A MEANS OF EFL INSTRUCTORS' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

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**Abstract:** Modifications to the educational system, especially in the area of foreign language instruction, necessitate creativity, fresh teaching proficiency, and familiarity with cutting-edge pedagogical and instructional tools. This article discusses the idea of a reflective practitioner, including its history, relationship to the idea of action research, impact on education and other fields, and essential elements. In addition, it clarifies the notions reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Furthermore, it provides an example of how it functions in real life.

**Key words:** reflective practitioner, professional development, action research, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, rationale, lesson plan, reflection, observation, etc.

Makhmudova mentions being a reflective practitioner involves experimenting with your class, trying new things, developing your own method or technique, choosing your teaching style, making materials, inventing, and changing. This is an additional means of gaining relevant experience and professional growth (2024).

Prior to delving deeper into the notion of reflective practitioner, it is imperative to distinguish between reflective practitioner and action research, as there is a possibility of confusion between the two.

While action research and the reflective practitioner are closely related concepts, they are not the same. While they have a common emphasis on the need of reflection and inquiry in professional practice, their approaches and areas of attention are different. The concepts of action research and reflective practitioner have different approaches and focuses, but both place a strong emphasis on reflection and inquiry in professional practice. While action research is a specialized study approach meant to solve real-world problems or challenges through a collaborative inquiry process, reflective practice is more widely about learning and growth through individual or communal reflection. Nonetheless, as they critically evaluate their experiences and actions during the research process, practitioners who engage in action research frequently exhibit the traits of reflective practitioners.

The work of well-known American author, organizational theorist, and educator Donald Schön served as the main inspiration for the idea of the reflective practitioner. Since their introduction in the late 20th century, Schön's theories on professional practice and reflection have had a big influence on a variety of industries, including management, professional development, and education.

In the context of education and architecture, Schön explored professional knowledge and expertise before beginning his major work on the reflective practitioner. The two seminal

publications written by Donald Schön on the reflective practitioner are "Educating the Reflective Practitioner" (1987) and "The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action" (1983). Schön examines the notion that practitioners should incorporate both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action into their work in these pieces.

The ability of professionals to think quickly and make decisions while taking action is known as "reflection-in-action." They use their intuition, expertise, and knowledge to react to events as they develop in a flexible manner. On the other hand, reflection-on-action takes place after the fact, when experts evaluate what went wrong, think back on their experiences, and suggest different approaches for similar circumstances in the future.

Schön highlights that reflection is a very personal and placed activity rather than merely a technical one. Professionals understand and react to situations differently because they bring their distinct viewpoints, values, and implicit knowledge to their work. As a result, cultivating self-awareness, critical thinking abilities, and the capacity for experience-based learning are necessary for becoming a reflective practitioner.

**Reflection and Practice-Based Learning:** According to Schön, conventional approaches to professional education frequently prioritized theoretical knowledge and technical proficiency at the expense of experiential learning and reflection. He promoted the adoption of practice-based learning strategies that place an emphasis on the development of reflective skills and the integration of theory and practice.

**Impact on Education:** As a result of Schön's theories becoming more widely accepted, educators started investigating the possibilities of integrating reflection into professional development programs and teacher preparation courses. The idea of reflective teaching has gained more traction. It calls on educators to continuously reflect on their methods in order to enhance the learning results for their students.

A reflective practitioner is someone who actively uses reflective thinking to continuously reflect on their experiences, decisions, and presumptions in order to better understand, assess, and enhance their own work.

**Critical thinking:** Critical reflection is a key component of reflective practice, and it entails giving careful thought to one's own experiences, decisions, and environments. They challenge their presumptions, convictions, and methods in an effort to get a deeper understanding of their work.

**Experience is a Rich Source of Learning:** Reflective practitioners acknowledge that experience is a valuable source of learning. In order to derive lessons and insights that guide their future practice, they reflect on their accomplishments and shortcomings in addition to the difficulties they face.

**Professional Development:** According to reflective practitioners, one of the most important components of professional development is reflection. Through continuous analysis and improvement, their goal is to become more proficient in their field and to increase their knowledge and effectiveness.

**Action and Reflection:** Reflective practitioners understand the interplay between action and reflection. They recognize that reflection should not be a passive activity but should inform action. They use reflection to inform decision-making, problem-solving, and planning for future actions.

**Openness to Feedback and Dialogue:** Reflective practitioners are open to feedback from others and actively seek out opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. They value diverse perspectives and use feedback as a catalyst for growth and learning.

**Ethical and Values-Based Practice:** Reflective practitioners consider the ethical implications of their actions and decisions. They reflect on their values, beliefs, and ethical principles, ensuring that their practice aligns with their professional and moral commitments.

The areas of education, management, and professional development have all benefited greatly from Schön's work, which has encouraged practitioners and educators to use reflective techniques in their work. As professionals tackle difficult problems and work to continuously improve their practices via learning and reflection, the idea of the reflective practitioner is still relevant today.

### **Putting theory into practice**

#### **Rationale (planning a change)**

We have chosen the book “Critical reading” by Tania Pattison as the main reference because it can be a good source for the “Reading and Writing” course which is studied a whole year at Samarkand state institute of foreign languages. The target students are undergraduates of the faculty “Literature and language of a foreign language” majoring in Pedagogy. The book presents a systematic approach to the reading and analysis of written text. It is intended for higher intermediate to advanced students and contains authentic texts, which are taken from academic journals, professional and general-interest magazines, opinion columns, websites, etc. Based on Krashen’s theory of Second Language Acquisition we decided that the level of the book is appropriate according to the Affective Filter Hypothesis [Krashen, 1982]. However, we added some glossary to the text of the reading practice task in order to save time and assist students.

Nowadays, among the skills that employers look for, leadership is the top attribute with the 80.1% respondents according to statistics given in “Ed-tech and Teaching an Introduction” presentation done by teacher trainer Penny Mosavian for PDELT course (Warwick University, UK). For this reason the topic “Top Ten Qualities that Make a Great Leader” which has been chosen from “Critical reading“ was considered to be of great interest to students whose profession also requires the very skill.

As EAP learners, all undergraduates will need to handle different reading texts for their research. No matter what discipline is, they should be able to analyze and critique whatever they read. The ability to recognize facts and opinions is another skill they should learn. Orienting on these skills we have chosen “Critical reading” and decided to focus on teaching how to differentiate facts from opinions particularly. To achieve our main aim we have used inductive approach and techniques such as scaffolding and guided discovery.

According to Gollin, in Inductive Approach learners induce from carefully graded exposure to and practice with examples in situations and substitution tables without teacher’s explicit explanation of the meaning and grammar. In “discovery” or “guided discovery” technique, which is in between the grammar –translation method and audiolingualism, explicit focus is combined with inference from examples. (Gollin, Key concepts in ELT). We found this process applicable to the target students taking into account their background knowledge of not only the topic of interest but also their language proficiency.

The last but not the least important technique used in our teaching is scaffolding. For example, in pre-teaching part a teacher leads students to the understanding of the fact and opinion by questioning and elaborating. As Kayi-Aydar states that classes should be design so that learning is a socially mediated process and includes communicative activities. The process, in which supportive dialogue takes place between a student and a teacher or a more proficient peer who may help or prompt the learner through the steps of a problem or task, is called scaffolding. She also mentions several conversation strategies such as questioning, reformulation, repetition, or elaboration to provide scaffolded instruction and which are helpful for language learners to co-construct content knowledge. For example, we used peer check to support the idea of developing experiences where students learn from each other through collaborative talk. (Kayi-Aydar, Scaffolding language learning in an academic ESL classroom)

As we wanted to develop students’ autonomy, we decided that after they have worked in

groups and in pairs it would be practical to make them work individually. One of the competency statements given in BALEAP article “Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes” is to develop students’ autonomy, which is important in academic contexts and will employ tasks, processes and interactions that require students to work effectively in groups or independently as appropriate. (BALEAP, [www.baleap.org.uk](http://www.baleap.org.uk) )

### **Lesson plan for a 1-hour lesson (taking action to enact the change)**

The lesson covers the main aim of differentiating fact from opinion as well as subsidiary aims including; analyzing published texts, learning topic based vocabulary, agreeing or disagreeing, developing an autonomy and practicing reading, speaking and listening skills. Lesson has been planned based on the template given by PDELTA course teachers Miriam and Lynnette. It has several stages which gradually lead to the achievement of aims.

The lesson starts with “Warm up” activity whose aim is to activate students’ schemata. Several questions are asked to engage students to group discussion. In order to save time teacher does not give any feedback. Also, since the aim of the stage is to activate the schemata, there is no need to conduct as the group discussion will satisfy this aim.

Pre-teaching part is based on guided discovery i.e. instead of presenting information a teacher will lead student to comprehend the topic by questioning, reformulating and elaboration during the group discussion. The stage starts with an activity in which they should share some ideas about the sources they are going to use in order to develop an essay on the topic “What qualities, skills and personal characteristics should successful leaders have”. They will then receive some recommendations about categorization of information found in different sources into: “Fact which cannot be argued; fact but needs some proof; and opinion”. In the next task some examples will be given to read by using skimming strategy and then analyze. The purpose of the next task is to check students’ understanding of fact and opinion. Online worksheet based on the topic is used to work in groups.

While-teaching part is based on pair work and individual work to raise their awareness of the topic, and develop self-confidence and autonomy. The first task is done in pairs. The answers will be checked by peers and a teacher will observe and elaborate. Before doing the next task a teacher recalls the categorization of information which has been discussed in the pre-teaching stage. And then a reading task is given to do individually. Again answers will be checked and discussed by students themselves.

Post teaching is just revision of what they have learnt. The after-lesson task is to find published text, analyze and decide whether given information a fact or opinion.

### **Reflection (reflective observation)**

I have never reflected formally on my own lesson before, though I always ask myself “What was wrong?” especially when I feel that students were not attentive and engaged enough. I am always concerned whether my students have learnt something useful.

When I make my lesson plan I think over and over each task. I pay attention to the flow, content, level and other many aspects of tasks. So, on paper the lesson always seems flawless, perfect. But there is always “But”.

That “But” happened again in microteaching on the topic “Top Ten Qualities that Make a Great Leader”. As a team we decided to teach “While –teaching” part as it is the most important part of the lesson. It is because we can check students’ comprehension of the topic, fill the gap in understanding and prepare them for any kind of output or further development of the topic.

The first task of “While – teaching” part was an online worksheet taken from “Kahoot”. It was chosen for a group work. Though it was engaging, level and content of the task should be revised which was revealed during teaching. It would be good to make a worksheet by myself to have a

proper level and content. I failed giving appropriate instruction and introducing the task. I should have explained the purpose of the task which would set their expectation. Students struggled with the time given in an online worksheet as it did not allow them to work as a team. And this is another aspect which is worth considering.

The second task was taken from Tania Pattison's book "Critical reading". The importance of the content and instruction of the task was proved once again while teaching. I was suggested to avoid any confusing sentences. On the one hand, it is a good remark if your students' language proficiency is low. On the other hand, I think we should give them these sentences but should be ready to clarify and explain them because they might come across these sentences anywhere.

Mistakes make us grow. We develop and improve through mistakes. And we should know those mistakes.

(Based on the observation and feedback of teacher trainers of PDELT course)

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