

Andrzej Cirocki, University of York, UK

Thomas S. C. Farrell, Brock University, Canada

One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form.

(Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J. K. Rowling, 2000, p. 518)

1. INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice and professional development are recent buzz words in the field of TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages). As the literature shows (e.g., Crandall & Christison, 2016; Farrell, 2013a, 2015; McGregor & Cartwright, 2011), reflective practice contributes to enhancing the quality of language instruction and it offers support to the personal and professional development of teachers. Researchers have suggested a strong link between the concept of reflective practice and the professional development of teachers, especially on the practices of encouraging TESOL teachers to reflect (Cirocki & Farrelly, 2016; Farrell, 2015). For example, Farrell (2016a) analysed research in fifty-eight academic journals on the practices that encourage TESOL teachers to reflect over a five-year period (2009–2014), and the results from all the articles in the review were overwhelmingly positive; clearly, teachers, whether reflecting on their identities, beliefs, theories, or their own teaching do recognise the developmental value and transformative potential in the activities of reflection. Thus, TESOL teachers are encouraged to engage in professional development through the lens of reflective practice.

The present article is written with the field of TESOL in mind. It is meant to discuss not only how teachers can effectively reflect on their practice, but also how teachers can pursue their professional development through reflective practice. This article is divided into five parts. At the outset, we explain what the concept of reflective practice involves. We consider why it is vital for teachers to reflect and what type of reflection teachers should engage in. Then, the argument revolves around various tools teachers could use to reflect on their practice. The notion of teacher reflective identity and its construction are also introduced. The article concludes with a discussion on how to sustain continuing professional development through reflective practice.

2. WHAT REFLECTIVE PRACTICE INVOLVES

Reflective practice is a complex construct. It has been defined in various ways in the literature. For example, for Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, p. 3), reflective practice is “a generic term” that includes “intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation”. Lyons (1998, p. 252) equates reflective practice with “ways in which teachers interrogate their teaching practices, asking questions about [the] effectiveness [of their teaching practices] and about how they might be refined to meet the needs of students”. Zwozdiak-Myers (2012, p. 5) perceives reflective practice as “a disposition to enquiry incorporating the process through which (...) teachers structure or restructure actions, knowledge, theories or beliefs that inform teaching for the purpose of personal professional development”. Finally, Farrell (2015, p. 123) refers to reflective practice as “a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically 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”.

The evolution of the concept in question signals two things. Firstly, confirming Jasper’s (2013) observation, the definitions clarify that the notion of reflective practice has three component parts: (1) *experiences* that teachers go through, (2) *reflective processes* that provide a platform from which teachers can learn (3) and *action* that materialises from the new prospects that come into being. This “action”, though, may be cognitive as in a greater level of awareness rather than behavioural. Secondly, the definitions indicate that reflective practice is multidimensional in nature in that it includes the political, social, moral and spiritual. No matter whether they are engaged in individual or collective deliberations, reflective practitioners (1) guide their teaching with different types of knowledge, including theoretical, empirical and practical; (2) examine their own teaching through different lenses and (3) incorporate the novel or alternative into their pedagogical practice to (4) optimise learning in the classroom as well as (5) develop their own teaching.

The first dimension is related to combining theory, research and practice in teaching. It is vital that classroom teaching is supported by recent theories of teaching, current research in Applied Linguistics, and a broad understanding of a classroom situation. According to the second dimension, reflective practitioners analyse their own teaching to detect their strengths and weaknesses. The latter then undergo further analysis. Optimal solutions are subsequently found and put into effect. It is also important that teachers incorporate creativity into their practice by using varied instructional methods, employing educational technology or offering complex tasks that promote different types of interaction (Cirocki, 2016; Hallet & Legutke, 2013). Original ways of reflecting on practice also need to be given close attention. All these aspects are included under the umbrella term of the third dimension. Dimension four relates to creating conducive conditions for learning. A safe and supportive classroom context in which students share knowledge and create new meanings and understandings through social interaction is necessary (Hopkins & Harris, 2000; Wedell & Malderez, 2013). The last dimension is about improving pedagogical performance. Reflective teachers strive to enhance their teaching through engaging in critical reflection, for example, on various components of their lesson plans (e.g., lesson aims,

materials, activities/tasks, etc.), instructional methods they use and their student learning experiences. It is critical reflection that enables teachers to assess the efficiency of their classroom performance and take the necessary steps to make it better (Farrell, 2015; Waring & Evans, 2014).

Literature sometimes uses the terms of reflection and critical reflection interchangeably. We consider them as separate entities. Reflection is an act every individual can undertake. It consists of both thoughts and emotions, and is purposeful in nature (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Not every instance of reflection is critical, though. Critical reflection, as opposed to reflection, requires critical reason, critical memory and creative imagination (Groome, 1980). The first one is necessary to evaluate the present. The second assists in uncovering past situations in the present, while the last one visualises the future in the here and now. Given this evidence, it can be inferred that critical reflection enables teachers not only to reconstruct practical knowledge by identifying presumptions underpinning their actions (Baldwin, 2004), but it also gives practitioners the means to recognise possibilities for personal and social change (Fook, 2002). It is through critical reflection that teachers compare theory with practice, ask probing questions about the teaching-learning process, analyse cause-effect relationships between teaching and learning, and seek optimal solutions for classroom dilemmas.

Another distinction needs to be drawn between critical reflection and reflexivity as these two notions tend to be equated. The latter is nothing more than one way of being critically reflective (Bassot, 2016; Fook & Gardner, 2007). Reflexivity involves deliberations about the ways teachers contribute to the teaching-learning process and recognition of a teacher's own influence, and the influence of the sociocultural context on classroom instruction (Fook & Askeland, 2006). In other words, reflexive practitioners stand back from their routine thinking and see themselves and their practice from a new angle. Following McGregor and Cartwright (2011, p. 236), such practitioners are capable of: (1) identifying and describing critical incidents or happenings, (2) explaining why they did something the way they did or why a particular critical happening occurred, (3) recognising that there were different ways to act in the critical happening, (4) devising a way of finding out whether one approach was better than another leading up to that kind of critical incident, and (5) comparing evidence to not only decide which approach worked best, but also to avoid such an incident occurring again, and why this should be so. Given this evidence, it can be inferred that reflexive practitioners simultaneously question their own beliefs, experiences, decisions and actions, and the immediate impact of these on classroom members or processes. Or, as Moore (2004, p. 148) puts it, reflexive practitioners not only reflect about what has happened and what they have done about the new situation, but they also consider how they have reflected on this new situation. These lines of reasoning are fully supported by Bolton (2010, p. 13), who states that reflective practitioners are engaged in:

(...) an in-depth consideration of events or situations outside of [themselves] (...). [They attempt] to work out what happened, what they thought or felt about it, why, who was involved and when, and what these others might have experienced and thought and felt about it. It is looking at whole scenarios from as many angles as possible: people, relationships, situation, place, timing, chronology, causality, con-

nection, and so on, to make situations and people more comprehensible. This involves reviewing the experience to bring it into focus.

As a result, reflexivity requires that teachers are cognizant not only of their contribution to the construction of meaning in the classroom, but also of the diverse tools they have at their disposal to construe new knowledge and understandings. Additionally, the complexity of classroom contexts and the situations that occur in them require that reflective practitioners approach them from sociological, psychological and pedagogical frames of reference (Cartwright, 2011). The first of these refers to teachers' social behaviours within the context of the school they work for. The second deals with emotional-behavioural aspects of the individual teacher or a group, for example, the classroom community made up of the teacher and language learners. The third is linked to the teaching practice and how this impacts on learning. Consequently, the questions a reflective practitioner can pose in relation to these three perspectives include: Do I know the philosophy of my school and its expectations about teaching and learning?, How much do I know about my students' prior learning, their successes and failures? and How well did I explain the reading task today?, respectively.

In light of the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that reflective practice is a spiral process where teachers systematically monitor, evaluate and modify their teaching. It is based on teacher conviction, informed by evidence-based inquiry and strengthened through collaboration with others. Finally, reflective practice requires open-mindedness and engagement on the part of teachers to endorse promoting high-quality language instruction and deep reflection on this instruction.

3. WHY ENGAGE IN REFLECTION AND WHEN?

Reflective practice is based on critical reflection, described as a process of "contemplation with an openness to being changed, a willingness to learn, and a sense of responsibility for doing one's best" (Jay, 2003, p. 1). There are various reasons why it is good for teachers to reflect on their practice (Farrell, 2015; Pollard, 2005). For example, through reflective practice, teachers develop their own theories of teaching English or advance existing ones. Additionally, teachers make various links between theory and practice while exploring their own beliefs about teaching. Teachers also engage in evidence-based teaching practice, solve problems through inquiry and enhance their own teaching self-efficacy and professionalism.

It is vital that teachers remember that they do not teach in a vacuum. Classrooms are complex living spaces and their members are "products of complex social and personal circumstances" (Hillier, 2009, p. 6). Any action undertaken and any behaviour displayed are individual in nature and strictly related to a particular moment in time. For this reason, constant reflection is required so that teachers can adequately respond to certain classroom situations, provide good solutions to specific problems and make adjustments so that the teacher's delivery is more successful.

Reflective practitioners engage in three types of reflection: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action. Reflection-in-action is closely related to teachers' theories-in-use, defined as the theories that guide teacher actions (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

This type of reflection combines thinking, knowing and doing. Teachers think about what they do and how they do it, making use of the practical knowledge on which their teaching is based. As a result, reflection-in-action concerns the teacher's ability to deal with classroom dilemmas when they occur. Its main objective is to successfully respond to student learning at a particular moment. It should be clarified that, in general, reflection-in-action is related to both positive and negative surprises that come about in the teaching-learning process. When surprising situations happen, teachers experiment with a number of on-the-spot solutions until the best one is found. In such situations, the process of reflection tends to focus on three aspects: the action itself, the instinctive knowing in the action and/or the results of the action taken (Pollard, 2014).

The second type of reflection is reflection-on-action. It is "the retrospective contemplation of practice" (Burns & Bulman, 2000, p. 5). Its purpose is to reveal what has been employed to solve a particular classroom situation by first making sense of, and then explicating recalled information. As such, reflection-on-action contributes to both creating a repertoire of experiences and making teachers hypothesise, for example, how they would deal with particular problems were they to encounter them again. As a result, reflection-on-action links theory with practice. It is through retrospective thinking about their teaching that teachers create new meanings, also referred to as theories of practice. These theories are based on reflective talks that teachers have with other colleagues, and on teaching episodes.

Unlike the previous two, reflection-for-action refers to the knowledge and skills that teachers use to plan future action (Chien, 2013). This planning requires that teachers re-examine what has so far been achieved and establish guidelines to be followed to ensure success in future endeavours.

4. TOOLS THAT FOSTER REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

With this understanding of reflective practice, it is time to briefly discuss the various tools teachers can employ to reflect on their teaching. There are a number of such instruments, and some of them will be presented in various parts of this volume. In this section, however, we will concentrate on teacher journals, collaborative blogging, post-observation conferences, peer sharing and action research. They are described individually below.

4.1 TEACHER JOURNAL

Teacher journals are widely used in the field of Education (Stevens & Cooper, 2009). They appear to be more often used as research tools to collect qualitative data than useful instruments for reflective practice. Journals also tend to be equated with logs and diaries. We, however, follow Holly's (1989) perspective, according to which reflective journals, be they written or online, combine the features of both logs and diaries. Teacher journals contain objective data recoded in logs (e.g., attendance, lesson plans), as well as the description and interpretation of classroom experiences recorded in diaries. Journals also promote critical reflection, systematic analysis, thorough evaluation and both short- and long-term planning.

Reflective journals allow teachers to keep account of what is happening in their practice (Bassot, 2013). For example, they enable teachers to explore and document their teaching. Through writing, teachers become more aware of the teaching-learning process and see its strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, teachers can come up with new ideas, connect the already existing ideas and link theoretical concepts to classroom experiences.

Apart from being a discovery process where teachers can explore various concepts, writing is also a social and cognitive activity (Flower, 1994). The social aspect is essential with regard to discussing reflective practice. Writing about their own practice, teachers construct educational discourse that is shared with other reflective practitioners. As a result, teachers use journals to both reflect on their practice and look into various ways employed by other professionals in educational discourse (Burton, Quirke, Reichmann, & Peyton, 2009).

Teacher journals have recently been used in research on reflective practice. For example, Lee (2008) looked into what information pre-service teachers include in their journals, and whether their entries show signs of developing reflectivity. She also investigated what pre-service teachers' reactions to the journal writing experience are. Thirteen female English major undergraduates from Hong Kong were involved in this project. They were enrolled in a Diploma in Education programme and all wished to become English language teachers. The study indicated that journals are useful instruments that give pre-service teachers a voice as well as assist in the process of constructing their professional identities. For instance, through their active involvement in journal writing, pre-service teachers developed a number of professional characteristics. Some of them were: questioning their own practice, seeking and testing alternatives or self-evaluating their own practice.

More recently, Farrell (2016b) has questioned if writing a journal actually promotes reflection and discovered that for many English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Korea writing was seen as a valuable way to reflect. Farrell (2016a) suggested that writing is ideal for reflection because it has a built-in reflective mechanism where teachers must (a) stop and think about what they write, and then (b) can "see" what they have written and further reflect on their thoughts and look for patterns that can provide more insight into who they are as teachers and what they reflect on. However, Farrell (2016b) also discovered that for some teachers, writing was anxiety provoking that can be associated with the act of writing itself. Thus, writing may not be the best mode of reflection for some teachers, so each teacher should choose whatever mode of reflection that best suits their needs from the many different modes as outlined in this article.

4.2 COLLABORATIVE BLOGGING

Blogs, as opposed to traditional journals, offer more opportunities for teachers to engage in reflection. They extend the one-way written discourse found in journals to interactive exchanges among blog writers. Additionally, blog posts can be labelled and classified according to previously established categories. Teachers can also include video clips in blog posts, for example, recorded parts of lessons that may serve as a springboard for collaborative reflection or professional discussions around topics of shared interest.

As research reveals (Blankstein, Houston, & Cole, 2007; Garrison & Akyol, 2009; Nelson & Slavit, 2008), professional growth is stimulated by teamwork. In other words, teachers develop professionally when they are afforded opportunities to engage as learners in collaborative settings, for example, through the collective construction of pedagogical knowledge, the creation of new instructional practices or the presentation of optimal solutions to classroom issues. All these activities, underpinned by reflective dialogue, can be facilitated by modern technology, and this is where blogging comes into play.

The purpose of setting up collaborative blogs is to provide a platform for teachers, whereby they can engage in critical reflection about various aspects of teaching (e.g., formative assessment, classroom management issues); share knowledge, experience and teaching materials; construct and share new pedagogical frameworks; and raise an increased awareness of the place and role of reflective practice in teachers' professional development.

Being involved in the above-mentioned activities, assists teachers in acquiring professional knowledge, taking control over their professional learning, personalising their professional development and fostering their professional identities. The latter, for example, was examined empirically by Luehmann (2008). The findings in this case study indicated that blogs contribute to the development of teachers' professional identity in that they make teachers more critical, reflective and autonomous. Other studies that focused on teacher learning through blogging include Hou, Chang and Sung (2009); Yang (2009); Yadav (2011) and Ciampa and Gallagher (2015), to name a few.

Successful collaborative blogs, made up of a large number of innovative and inspiring teachers who would like to share their knowledge and experience cross-culturally, could be transferred to the Webheads, described as a world-wide online-community of teachers. More detailed information about the Webheads can be found at <http://webheadsinaction.org/about>.

4.3 POST-OBSERVATION CONFERENCES

Another useful instrument to be used while reflecting on teaching practice is a post-observation conference. The purpose of a post-observation conference is to reflect on the lesson observed so as to provide teachers with constructive feedback that leads to better classroom performance (Bailey, 2006; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). This reflection normally focuses on what happened in the classroom, when it happened, why and how it happened, or perhaps why something did not occur. It is vital that post-observation conferences also consider ideas for the future, for example, what aspects of their practice teachers still need to improve. Ideally, the conferences are based on probing and guiding questions in the form of open and honest focused discussions. The aim of these questions is to take the conversation to the level that goes beyond the teachers' original thinking and beliefs. The constructive dialogue, and ideas generated in it, serve as the basis for teacher growth. It is essential that teachers are encouraged to make conscious efforts to further develop the identified areas of their practice.

The feedback teachers receive is of considerable significance. It provides them with analysis of and judgements about their professional conduct and practice. It affords practi-

tioners the opportunity to find out more about the subject and pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience and the practical wisdom of others (Glendenning & Cartwright, 2011; Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2009). It also offers evidence of teachers' professional learning based on their experiences thus far.

As the literature reveals (Glendenning & Cartwright, 2011; OECD, 2014), teachers encounter different types of feedback in their teaching practice. Feedback may be formal, with a designated time and person, or informal, for example, intermittent advice provided by another teacher or IT team. Feedback may be specific, that is, related to a given stage of a lesson, or general, focusing on the overall development of a lesson. Last but not least, feedback may be directive and exploratory. The former provides specific suggestions for improvement, whereas the latter facilitates a conversation with open-ended questions, simultaneously negotiating targets for development (Glendenning & Cartwright, 2011).

No matter which type of feedback teachers receive and how critical or disappointing it may be, it is advisable that teachers learn to appropriately respond to it. They must learn to view feedback as the main avenue for their professional growth. To enhance their teaching practice, and thus become more effective teachers, the best thing language practitioners as recipients of feedback can do is "to be open to listening, accepting, reflecting on, and acting on feedback" (Glendenning & Cartwright, 2011, p. 175). Defence, disagreement or drawing attention to other teachers are some of the common strategies, yet we do not recommend them as they only slow down teachers' progress in learning.

To enhance the learning process during post-observation conferences, teachers could be encouraged to make the most of the reflective skills they have developed to date. For example, one such skill is participating in a reflective dialogue with the observer. The benefit of reflecting on a lesson with another person brings different perspectives into focus and often entails "an exchange of confidences and intense reflection by both parties, leading to the revealing of deeply held, but often well hidden views, beliefs and values" (Chivers, 2003, p.8). Collaborative reflection also contributes to a deepened understanding of teaching and the generation of creative ideas of how to refine or improve it, at the same time providing opportunities to unlearn "some long held and often difficult to uproot ideas, beliefs, and practices" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 9). Given these points, we agree with Donovan, Meyer and Fitzgerald (2007, p. 11), who affirm that "dialogue coupled with reflection, and moved to action, creates the conditions for transformative learning".

Another useful skill teachers are highly recommended to employ during the constructive and reflective conversations in post-observation conferences is self-reflection. For instance, it is vital that practitioners are able to determine and clearly present issues they struggle with. Admittedly, adequate preparation for reflective encounters with others makes the interlocutors get straight to the point, bringing available support networks into play without delay.

The discussion of post-observation conferences would not be complete without linking them to classroom-based research. For example, post-observation conferences were recently used in a mixed-methods study on attitudes, motivations and beliefs about L2 reading in the Philippines (Cirocki & Caparoso, 2016). In fact, there were two reasons to employ the conferences in this project. Firstly, they helped to collect extensive data to answer the research questions. Secondly, their role was to reflect on L2 reading instruction

in Mindanao. The reflective discussions with the Filipino teachers addressed various issues related to the attitudes and motivations for L2 reading. More specifically, the discussions sought to find out the extent to which teachers promote positive reading attitudes and motivate students to read in English. The teachers elaborated on their L2 reading teaching experience, how they taught reading skills in secondary schools and why they did so in particular ways. Finally, future action points were discussed so that L2 reading instruction could become more effective and the identified weaknesses in the teaching-learning process could be improved.

4.4 PEER SHARING

Peer sharing, also known as peer coaching or team teaching, is a strategy that involves two teachers working together (Gottesman, 2009; Lu, 2007; Robbins, 2015). One of the teachers assumes the role of a coach. The coach becomes responsible for providing feedback and recommendations, for example, on a new approach to teaching. Hence, in the peer sharing process, teachers engage in constructive professional discourse (Vidmar, 2006). This meaningful dialogue connects the following five features of Showers' (1984) model of peer sharing: companionship, feedback, analysis, adaptation and support. In particular, companionship relates to teacher conversations about the new model of teaching, its advantages and disadvantages as well as some of the difficulties connected with its implementation. Those conversations and the collaborative work also help teachers to reduce their sense of isolation. The purpose of feedback is to offer teachers opportunities to reflect on their teaching, and then give each other objective comments on how they go about the new model. Analysis helps teachers to collaboratively extend their control over the new model of teaching until it works smoothly and satisfactorily. Adaptation ensures that the new teaching model successfully addresses student needs. Finally, support refers to the coach's professional guidance to a peer teacher who has just begun to apply the new teaching approach.

Although the term "peer coaching" is more popular in the literature, we prefer to use "peer sharing" as the latter does not imply inequality between the teachers involved. There are various reasons why it is advisable that teachers partake in peer sharing activities (Robbins, 2015). For example, some of the activities may focus on current instructional practices or conducting classroom-based inquiry. The activities may relate to co-planning and co-teaching lessons or developing materials, assessment assignments, syllabuses and school curriculum. Other activities may centre on skill building, teaching strategy use or solving classroom problems. As can be seen, the nature of these activities boils down to collaborative development, sharing of professional knowledge and the building of professional relationships.

The peer sharing strategy has often been the subject of research in language education. The researchers preferred to label it peer coaching, though. For example, an interesting mixed-methods project was conducted among grade 5-6 teachers in the Phetchaburi Province of Thailand (Soisangworn & Wongwanich, 2014). This study employed peer coaching to promote reflective teaching and consisted of these three stages: conceptual change, practice in becoming a reflective teacher and enabling teachers to coach each

other. The findings showed that peer coaching enriches teacher reflections on their classroom practice. The study also indicated that peer coaching not only provides teachers with suggestions on how to refine their instruction, but also fosters a community of teachers who are keen on improving their teaching skills.

In another study, Kuru Gonen (2016) involved twelve Turkish pre-service EFL teachers in a reflective peer coaching experience. The mixed-methods study investigated the extent to which such an experience might affect teacher reflectivity. According to the study design, the change in teacher reflectivity was first measured quantitatively using a profile of reflective-thinking attributes scale. The quantitative part was then supported with qualitative data from reflective diaries, video recordings of post-conference sessions and focus-group interviews. The study reported that the pre-service teachers advanced in their reflectivity throughout the peer coaching practice. The pre-service teachers benefited considerably from this experience just before starting their proper teaching careers.

4.5 ACTION RESEARCH

The last tool to be discussed is action research. The idea of teachers conducting classroom-based research, especially action research, has recently received considerable attention in the literature (Burns, 2009; Cirocki & Arceusz, 2016; Mertler, 2008). Action research is a systematic process of self-reflective scientific inquiry conducted by practitioners. Its main objective is to “transform their *understandings* of their practices; (2) the *conduct* of their practices and (3) the *conditions* under which they practise, in order that these things will be more rational (and comprehensible, coherent and reasonable), more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive” (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014, p. 67). As a result, we regard action research as a specific type of applied research which gathers participants who experience problems and seek solutions to these problems. At the same time, the participants acquire reflective ownership of the process and its findings.

The process consists of four overarching stages: *Planning*, *Action*, *Observation* and *Reflection* (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In the Planning stage, teachers scrutinise their teaching context and identify a problem to resolve. They then devise a plan of action to find an optimal resolution. The Action phase integrates interventions into the pedagogical practice. These interventions include new ways of doing things in the classroom that can be adopted if successful. During the Observation stage, teachers systematically collect data to be able to answer their research questions. Finally, the Reflection stage is nothing less than thinking about, analysing and discussing the findings of the action taken. It is in this stage that teachers critically reflect on the action, examine it with the classroom context in mind, and finally make decisions regarding future instruction. To bring further improvement to a particular classroom area, the Reflection stage can become the outset of a new phase in the action research cycle.

A number of action research projects have been conducted in the TESOL context. For example, Sowa (2009) investigated how action research projects can be helpful in socialising teachers to the teaching of English language learners (ELLs) and assist practitioners in developing reflective practice. This was a small-scale qualitative study involving six participants who were pursuing an MEd in Literacy Studies in the US. The

data were gathered using surveys, action research projects and reflection papers. The findings revealed, among other things, that action research helps practitioners to gain a better understanding of their students and teaching practice by introducing them to the complex world of teaching ELLs. Additionally, the very act of conducting action research projects engaged these teachers in a more critical reflection about their practice. This was particularly true regarding the strategies they employed in the classroom to promote successful learning. The action research projects also made teachers more “thoughtful and purposeful” about their teaching (Sowa, 2009, p. 1031).

Sharar (2012), in turn, focused on promoting action research and reflective practice in Pakistan. The purpose of his project was to introduce and refine the reflective practice among secondary school teachers working in a rural part of Chitral. The data were collected using lesson observations with post-observation discussions and reflective journals. Sharar (2012) concluded that reflective practice through action research is extremely important in teacher everyday functioning as it improves their professional capacity. Despite the various challenges the researcher experienced in this project, the participants thought that the experience of reflective writing was an effective way of improving their reflective skills. For example, in their reflective journals, the participants described both positive and negative classroom experiences, considered the underlying causes of these experiences, revisited their own instructional decisions, and questioned and critiqued their own professional practice. Additionally, some of those reflections were shared with teachers from other schools. This was a clear example of high-level professional development activity.

5. CONSTRUCTING REFLECTIVE IDENTITY

Apart from encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice, the tools described above also contribute to the development of reflective identities in teachers. Humans construct multiple identities throughout their lives (Williams, 2013). Reflective identity, indispensable for teachers, is only one example. The construction of a reflective identity is a complex and continually evolving process. Teachers construe this type of identity through deep reflections on their past and present teaching experiences. Additionally, the reflective identity process formation is affected by the social context in which teachers teach (Cserpes, 2015; Teixeira & Gomes, 2000; Williams, 2013).

In regard to the social context, the importance of social interaction must be emphasised. It is the social interactions that teachers have with their fellow teachers, mentors or school principals that enrich their understandings about themselves as language teachers, their professional growth, and their practice (De Fina, 2006; Richards, 2008). These interactions also foster teacher awareness of their own competences as teachers. Therefore, it must be recognised that the social context, in which teachers gain new knowledge and skills that are directly related to their pedagogical practice, contributes considerably to their professional growth as well as the formation of their reflective identity.

To further investigate the complex and dynamic nature of reflective identity it must be seen through the lens of *identity-in-discourse* and *identity-in-practice* (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnston, 2005). According to Varghese and her colleagues (2005), the former

acknowledges that reflective identity is formed and evoked through language and discourse. For instance, whenever teachers discuss their instructional practices, they not only communicate meanings for the sake of sharing them with others. Through the exchanges of information, teachers also engage in the ongoing restructuring of their reflective identities. This process helps teachers to make sense of who they are as language teachers and what their connection with the social world is. The construct of *identity-in-practice*, on the other hand, views reflective identity as a social phenomenon that is described by means of engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 1998). This phenomenon is operationalised through specific pedagogical tasks, practices and procedures.

The three modes by Wenger are of central importance, specifically with respect to constructing teacher reflective identity. Engagement enables reflective practitioners to establish relations with other colleagues and negotiate meanings related to their teaching practice. Imagination, on the other hand, is described as a creative force which is responsible for generating images of the surrounding reality and seeing connections through time and space by making inferences from experience. By allowing teachers to imagine the classroom setting and to situate themselves in it, imagination appears to be the driving force for new teaching methods and approaches, attractive materials and tasks, engaging assessments and innovative ways of reflecting on and refining teaching practice. Given this evidence, it can be inferred that it is the coalescence of engagement and imagination that calls reflective practice into existence. Alignment, in turn, systematises teacher pedagogical activities within a broader context. It locates these activities in the complex network of social structures and enterprises, thus allowing classrooms and schools to become part of the reflective identity of teachers (Wenger, 1998).

6. SUSTAINING CPD THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Language teachers can approach professional development throughout their careers from many different perspectives, two of which are: top-down or bottom-up (Farrell, 2013b). According to Farrell (2013b), a top-down approach is directed from above as it is usually initiated by school administrators or curriculum developers in a country's Ministry of Education, or Boards of Education members in different school districts/areas. In such an approach, teachers are usually informed about workshops/seminars/professional development days by those in a higher administrative position and these workshops are usually delivered by so-called outside experts rather than in-house teachers. This approach to teacher development is sometimes called a deficit model of professional development because the teachers are seen to have some deficit (defined by administrators and outside experts rather than the teachers themselves) in how they are teaching, with the understanding that this can be "fixed" by having them attend these workshops. The topics covered vary but are generally about changes and developments in the knowledge base and skill areas of language (listening, speaking, writing, grammar and so on) of the profession and they are then told that they should incorporate such changes into their future instructional practices in order to become "better" teachers.

In contrast, a bottom-up approach to professional development is one in which teachers themselves initiate by investigating some aspect of their practices and beliefs so

that they can construct their own theories of teaching and learning. Because development is an evolving process of learning, growth and change, it should be based on individual teacher's personal experiences and reflections of teaching and that is why it is called a *bottom-up* approach to professional development (Farrell, 2007). In such an approach, language teachers take the responsibility for their own professional development and as such decide on aspects of practice that they are interested in rather than the institution in which they work (the top-down approach). Most teachers have their own professional interests, concerns and issues related to their classrooms and outside their classrooms, and these they feel should be addressed in any professional development programme that they attend. It is such grassroots approaches to teacher development where teachers can benefit most from becoming reflective practitioners so that they can achieve their main goal of providing effective learning opportunities for their students in their classrooms. This article has already outlined several different methods that teachers can adopt when engaging in such bottom-up, self-reflective development as they begin to question old habits and explore new and alternative ways of engaging their students in their own reflective learning.

Regardless of what approach to professional development teachers take (top-down or bottom-up), such moves will not continue on their own unless the development is purposely sustained (Farrell, 2013b). Teachers first set their goals for personal and professional development. Then, as Farrell (2013b, 2015) has suggested, teachers can follow several steps, described below, that can help sustain their professional development.

These steps usually begin with teachers examining their philosophy, principles and theories of practice. Teachers can write about these and document them so that they have something to look at as they begin to examine their actual classroom practices and beyond practice. After these initial self-reflections and their comparison to classroom practices, they can then decide if they need to make any adjustments to their beliefs and/or their practices. Although we always strive for a convergence between our beliefs and our practices, it is always good to have some tension between these so that we are always in a reflective mode in providing learning opportunities for our students.

Once teachers have examined their beliefs and practice, they can expand these reflections to include their students by making specific observations about how they learn, interact and conduct themselves during class. A simple way of including students in the reflective process is to ask them about their learning either after each class or after each week. Teachers can ask students how a particular lesson was – what was easy, what was difficult – and then use this information to inform their future lesson planning.

Now that teachers have self-reflected and included their students in these reflections, the next step is to include colleagues in such reflections. This can be achieved by getting a group of teachers together to discuss their work in a teacher reflection group (Farrell, 2013a) where they can also enter into peer classroom observations, team teaching, peer sharing and mentoring with their colleagues. With such a step, teachers can collectively further their knowledge while at the same time promoting collegiality where resources are exchanged and collaboration encouraged.

In fact, this step can lead to another where the administration is included in the teacher's reflections. In such a step, the school administration is included by integrating

teacher self-reflections into some top-down development initiatives by the administration and as a result everyone in the school benefits: teachers, students, parents and administration.

One final step for language teachers to consider when sustaining their professional development is to consider seeking out other teachers in professional organisations such as TESOL or Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages based in the United States, and/or IATEFL, or the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language based in the United Kingdom. Of course, there are many more local TESOL organisations teachers can join and this is encouraged so that reflective practitioners can share their self-reflections with other like-minded professionals locally and globally.

7. CONCLUSION

In this article, we have attempted to strengthen the link between the concept of reflective practice and professional development of TESOL teachers. We have explained what reflective practice entails and presented a number of useful tools teachers could use when engaging in reflective practice. The purpose of presenting the various instruments has been not only to encourage teachers to try them out on different occasions in diverse contexts, but also to make TESOL teachers aware how these instruments can assist them in constructing their reflective teacher identities. By way of conclusion, we wish to emphasise that we feel that it is essential that teachers sustain their professional development through the lens of critical reflection. For us, critical reflection is a way of being, making reflective practice grounded in the belief that language teachers are whole beings and that reflection and teaching is multidimensional and includes a teacher's philosophy, principles, theories, practice and beyond practice. When teachers engage in such reflective practices, they can strive to become more aware practitioners. With such awareness, teachers are likely to offer more learning opportunities for their students, paving the way for them to become reflective learners.

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Andrzej Cirocki is an Associate Lecturer in Language Education at the University of York, UK, and Editor-in-Chief of *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL*. He has been involved in TESOL since 1996. His main research interests include learner autonomy, L2 reading, classroom research and reflective practice. His latest book, *Developing Learner Autonomy through Tasks: Theory, Research, Practice* has been published by LinguaBooks in the UK.

Thomas S. C. Farrell is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University, Canada. His professional interests include reflective practice, language teacher education and development. His most recent books include: *Reflective Practice* (2013); *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers* (2013); *Reflective Practice in ESL Teacher Development Groups: From Practices to Principles* (2014); *International Perspectives on English Language Teacher Education: Innovations from the Field* (Ed, 2015), *Promoting Teacher Reflection in Language Education: A Framework for TESOL Professionals* (2015), *From Trainee to Teacher: Reflective Practice for Novice Teachers* (2016). His webpage is: www.reflectiveinquiry.ca.

