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Reflective practice framework for TESOL teachers: one teacher’s reflective journey

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ABSTRACT
Just as in the field of general education, scholars within the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) have also struggled to come to a consensus as to how reflective practice should be operationalized with many different approaches suggesting a retrospective approach to questioning about practice. As a result, many of these approaches have led to a type of routinization of reflection. Worried about such routinization of reflection, Farrell developed a more holistic approach to reflective practice that recognizes the spiritual, moral, and emotional aspects of reflection, as well as the usual retrospective questions about practice. This paper outlines a case study of the reflections of one experienced TESOL teacher teaching in South Korea using Farrell’s framework for reflecting on practice that included reflections on his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. The results revealed three common themes of approachability, art-oriented conceptions, and curiosity that emerged in all aspects of his reflection as uniquely influential parts of a larger whole. Thus, Farrell’s holistic framework for teacher reflection employed in this study provided multiple filters through which these various parts could be viewed.

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Introduction

There is growing recognition within the field of language education that individual teachers must constantly reshape their knowledge of teaching and learning throughout their careers, and that this knowledge informs much of the knowledge-base of language teacher education (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Recent research has indicated that, for language teachers, this reshaping is best undertaken under the umbrella of reflective practice (Farrell, 2018). Reflective practice generally means that teachers take the responsibility of looking at their professional practice, such as what they do, why they do it, and how they do it, be these actions inside or outside the classroom, so that this practice can become personally meaningful to them (Farrell, 2015). Adopting a holistic approach to teacher reflection (Farrell, 2015), this study follows one teacher’s reflections on his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and critical reflection. In exploring this teacher’s reflections, the purpose of this study is not to uncover so-called ‘best practice’, but to discover what emerges through such an in-depth process of reflection, so that the
teacher can decide the appropriateness of each aspect of practice for a particular context.

**Reflective practice in TESOL**

While reflective practice now enjoys prominence in many teacher education programs worldwide, its adoption into the field of TESOL is relatively recent (Farrell, 2007; Freeman, 2016). As one second language teacher educator put it, reflecting offers a way into the less ‘accessible aspects of teacher’s work’ (Freeman, 2016, p. 208). However, just as in the field of general education, scholars within TESOL have also struggled to come to a consensus as to what constitutes reflection, and how it should be operationalized (Farrell, 2007, 2013, 2015, 2018; Freeman, 2016; Wallace, 1996). Out of this struggle, many different approaches (too many to cover in this article) to reflective practice have emerged, some which only favor brief contemplations on their work mostly based on teacher intuition, while others have promoted a more systematic, evidence-based inquiry of teaching practice that holds teachers accountable for what happens in their classrooms (Wallace, 1996). In a recent review of some of these approaches in second language education, Freeman (2016, p. 217) has noted the mainly retrospective role that has been taken with reflection that focuses mainly on ‘reflection-as-repair’, rather than reflection to achieve self-awareness. Freeman (2016, p. 217) maintained that, within TESOL, such an emphasis on ‘post-mortem reflection’ limits reflection to ‘a process of problem-solving aimed at improvement’ of teaching, rather that reflection to achieve self-awareness and understanding.

In other words, in many approaches the teacher (or person-as-teacher) has been separated from the act of teaching, and the act of reflective practice has become ‘routinized’, as teachers are encouraged to only answer retrospective questions about their practice (such as what happened, why did this happen, what comes next) in order to ‘improve’ their teaching. In some instances, engaging in reflective practice has become routinized, as teachers are provided with checklists of ritualized questions to answer related to practice ‘working’ or ‘not working’. Worried about such routinization of the practice of encouraging teachers to reflect, Farrell (2015) recently developed a more holistic approach to reflective practice, that not only adopts the stronger evidence-based approach mentioned above, but also a recognition of the personal, spiritual, and emotional aspects of reflection. Thus, Farrell (2015) argues that such a holistic and comprehensive model for reflective practice must include an examination of not only the technical aspects of one’s practice, but also the internal aspects (i.e. the teacher’s philosophy, principles, and theory), as well as the external aspects (i.e. the social, cultural, and political settings in which they teach). Farrell (2015) calls this the *framework for reflecting on practice* for TESOL teachers.

The framework for reflecting on practice has five different stages (or levels) of reflection: *philosophy; principles; theory; practice; and beyond practice*. The framework is summarized as follows: the first stage, philosophy, explores the ‘teacher-as-person’ and suggests that professional practice, both inside and outside the classroom, is invariably guided by a teacher’s basic philosophy and that this philosophy has been developed since birth. As such, teachers talk or write about their own lives and how they think their past experiences may have shaped the construction and development of their basic philosophy of practice.
Principles, the second stage, include reflections on teachers’ assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning. Assumptions are those principles which appear to be unconsciously held, beliefs are often reported in the form of a value statement and not assumed to be accepted by all, while conceptions are statements which describe overall approaches and decision-making in the classroom. All three are considered part of a single system, and thus difficult to separate because they overlap a lot, and three points along the same continuum of meaning related to our principles.

Theory, the third stage, explores and examines the different choices a teacher makes about particular skills taught (or they think should be taught) or, in other words, how to put their theories into practice. At the practice stage, teachers reflect while they are teaching a lesson (reflection-in-action), and after they teach a lesson (reflection-on-action). When teachers engage in reflection-in-action, they attempt to consciously stand back while they are teaching, as they monitor and adjust to various circumstances that are happening within the lesson. When teachers engage in reflection-on-action, they are examining what happened in a lesson after the event has taken place, and this is a more delayed type of reflection than the former. The fifth and final stage, beyond practice, takes on a sociocultural dimension to teaching and learning, and entails exploring and examining the moral, political, and social issues that impact a teacher’s practice both inside and outside the classroom. As Farrell (2015, p. 25) suggests, when teachers reflect about their own lives and how ‘their past experiences may have shaped the construction and development of their basic philosophy of practice, they will then be able to reflect critically on their practice because they will become more mindful and self-aware’.

Subsequently, using Farrell’s (2015) framework for reflective practice, this study explores one teacher’s reflections on his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and critical reflection. Moreover, as relatively little research of this type has been conducted with teachers of young language learners, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining one experienced teacher’s reflections with regard to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in South Korea.

**Methodology**

To fully capture the teacher’s reflections in regard to teaching EFL in South Korea, this study employed qualitative research methods for the collection and analysis of data (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982). As research into the reflections of EFL teachers in South Korea remains rather sparse, this study utilized an exploratory case study method (Merriam, 2009) to reveal basic information (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982). As this study required the researcher to examine and describe complex details of the participant’s life, case study research represented the best method of inquiry to accomplish this task (Stake, 2003; Yin, 1989). Such methods have also been fruitfully employed by other TESOL scholars studying teacher reflection (e.g. Farrell & Ives, 2014).

**Participant and context**

Richard (a pseudonym), is an African-American male English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher working in a public *English Experience Centre* in rural South Korea. He
Richard was teaching in an *English Experience Centre* which catered to elementary level students in Korea. Lessons taught in accordance with school mandates emphasize English as an experience, and pedagogical tasks are performed with the use of specialized theme rooms. Much like film sets, these rooms are decorated to give students a more immersive experience and include such settings as a post office, an airplane, a hotel, a bank, a store, and a kitchen.

**Data collection and analysis**

Data were collected over a month-long period and included interview data, classroom audio-recordings, and Richard’s written reflections. Richard’s reflection was facilitated by following the steps outlined in Farrell’s (2015) framework for reflective practice. A total of six interviews were conducted for this study via internet video-conferencing, including one pre-interview in which Richard’s basic information was collected before beginning his reflections, and five post-assignment reflection interviews: one for each of the five stages of Farrell’s (2015) framework. While lists of open-ended questions were developed prior to interviews, following a semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to use the questions flexibly, and to ask follow-up questions to obtain further details on a potentially relevant subject (Merriam, 2009). All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data were also collected through audio-recordings of four lessons over a span of 1 week. These recordings were also transcribed.

Following Merriam (2009), data analysis was dynamic and recursive. Once the data were collected, coding was used to categorize the information recovered, and to establish categories as they emerged. For example, when establishing Richard’s theory of practice, a statement regarding task-based approaches would be coded as ‘teacher’s knowledge’, which would be further subsumed under the category of ‘approaches and methods’. Finally, data triangulation was a strategy used to enhance the validity of the findings and to provide a deep, well-rounded understanding of the social phenomena being studied (Mathison, 1988).

**Richard’s reflective journey**

This section outlines Richard’s reflective journey through Farrell’s (2015) framework of philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice.
**Philosophy**

This section reports on Richard’s reflections on his philosophy of practice, in which different identity traits emerged as having the potential to impact his practice. Many of these aspects can be traced to memorable events or experiences in Richard’s life. Born in Long Island, NY, where he spent his early childhood, Richard recalled being very shy during this phase of his life, stating, ‘I was a very quiet child. I didn’t enjoy talking to strangers as I perceived them; that included people related to me’. Richard soon learned to cope with his shyness, however, when, at the age of 5 years he moved to North Carolina, where he began attending school. Richard had established a core group of neighborhood friends, and he described this period of his life as being rather average, up to, and including, his parents’ divorce when he was an adolescent. While challenging, this part of his life also proved formative by instilling in Richard a sense that transience was a normal part of life.

Within 2 years, Richard had attended three different middle schools and had lived in three different homes. Describing an especially jarring transition in which he had to deal with an entirely new socio-cultural environment, Richard reported:

> I went from growing up in a suburban neighborhood that was mostly middle class and mostly white to going to middle school in an urban area that was completely. I would say that had my friends from the first school had a chance to meet the friends from the second and vice versa, they probably would have been okay.

Richard’s discussions of his mother’s perseverance in getting him into a better funded and better staffed high school indicated that education was valued in his family. However, Richard never felt too pressured; rather, what seemed to be more important was that he set achievable goals and pursued them to completion, as evidenced by both his mother’s insistence that he graduate from high school and college, and by his motivation to pursue a career in education.

Eventually, these values developed into the sense of curiosity and self-improvement that would prompt Richard to try teaching abroad; Richard elaborated: ‘I thought that I could get a chance to see more of the world, so, I wanted to take a job overseas, and I thought that teaching English would be a good way to do this’. When asked if he had achieved his intended goals, he replied, ‘Not only is this [teaching EFL abroad] something that’s unique and special, and I feel good doing it, and so I’ve just kept doing it’. Thus, teaching English abroad not only satisfied Richard’s curiosity, it also allowed him to build a rewarding career.

**Principles**

This section reports on Richard’s personally held assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions. As outlined in Table 1, Richard’s stated assumptions and beliefs appeared to fall into two categories of principles: The principle of approachability; and the principle of fostering curiosity. As conceptions are said to encompass a teacher’s beliefs and practices (Farrell, 2015), this was treated as a separate category.

Subscribing to what could be described as the principle of approachability, Richard’s stated beliefs and assumptions about what makes a teacher approachable largely
originated from his reflections on his own fourth grade teacher, whom he admired as a role model. While Richard described his teacher as having a fun, active, welcoming, and accommodating personality, what differentiated this teacher from all others in his mind was his willingness to make time for interaction outside of the classroom.

Richard’s sense of curiosity was also very evident in his assumptions and beliefs on the importance of fostering curiosity in his students. Specifically, Richard held the assumption that, when learning is interesting, language is more likely to be retained. While Richard believed that creative, hands-on activities made valuable contributions to language lessons, he explained the importance of gaining new perspectives when learning a language:

I think that it’s important to teach them a different way to think about situations and to make them think differently than they are used to. Language shapes the way that we do so many things that we don't really think about, and it's even easier to not think about those things when you’re in elementary school and you just go along with the world thinking that it is one way.

Regarding conceptions, Richard displayed an overall guiding framework in which decisions were most often made based on his extensive teaching experience. Richard even used this to separate himself from other, less experienced co-workers when, in regard to classroom management he said:

Some of them complain like ‘Ah these kids, they’re so talkative’, and I think part of that is that they’re fairly new teachers but for me, I feel like I’m okay, and I can handle the kids, and keep their attention.

Richard used an interesting metaphor for a teacher when discussing his principles when he said: ‘A teacher is like a Swiss army knife’. He went on to explain the meaning of this metaphor in terms of teacher flexibility with young learners; he said: ‘You have to be flexible and nimble. You can't take up too much space. You have to have lots of different tools and abilities within you, ready to spring forth at any moment, and you have to be ready’. This indicated Richard’s adherence to the principle that a teacher must be flexible, versatile, and prepared for any possible situation. Moreover, Richard’s use of this metaphor asserted the notion that a teacher must be ready to use different tools for different types of students, and should not rely on a one-size-fits-all approach.
**Theory**

Richard’s reflections on his theory were divided into two parts: his teaching methodology, and his planning procedures. In terms of methodology, Richard made a distinction between what he considered task-based approaches, and more traditional structural approaches. For Richard, a task-based approach was defined not only by the existence of a problem to be solved, but also by the degree of teacher intervention in solving this problem. In fact, it was the proportion of teacher-led guidance, in Richard’s view, which determined whether an approach would be deemed task-based or structural. While Richard had great appreciation for the emotional connection students make with the language when performing hands-on tasks, he admitted that he felt more comfortable when taking a more traditional structural approach, because it is the most familiar to him. Despite his stated proclivity for more structural approaches, Richard also revealed a strong liking for physical, student-centered activities when recounting his experiences teaching a handball-themed lesson in which students were forced to initiate communication with Richard in English in order to appeal a ruling he had made which they did not agree with.

Regarding planning for lessons, Richard reported that he prefers not to be bound by extensive plans, and that, outside of the worksheets he has created, he does not follow a textbook. While he stated that he must abide by the directives of his supervisors, their only expectation is that he uses the theme rooms effectively. When planning lessons, Richard stated that he usually considers the level of the students with the task level and then he tries to ‘come up with an activity to build the lesson around if it is the kind of situation that benefits from action’. This indicated that Richard’s primary concerns when planning are the activities that will be used, and whether they are appropriate for the students and the theme of the room.

**Practice**

Richard recorded four lessons, and each group was taught one airplane-themed lesson and one cooking-themed lesson. Airplane-themed lessons for all these lessons included a roleplay as its main activity. Cooking-themed lessons, on the other hand, included a hands-on pizza making activity for class 3 and an ice-pop making activity for class 4. Table 2 provides a summary of the practices that were observed in these lessons.

### Table 2. Richard’s practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Practices</th>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Class 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher introduced new vocabulary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher drilled pronunciation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher provided students with a new experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher incorporated cultural information into the lesson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher diverged from original lesson plan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher accommodated students’ unique traits</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher made himself available to students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher included hands-on activities in the lesson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher engaged in informal interactions with students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher exhibited a fun, active, and welcoming personality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities motivated students to practice speaking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key:* O = Observed; N = Not observed.
As shown in Table 2, all four of Richard’s recorded lessons featured the instruction of new vocabulary, accounting for at least half of the instructional time in each. When teaching vocabulary, Richard primarily selected lexical items that students would need to perform the major activity, although new, culturally specific terms were also introduced. Typically, Richard followed a procedure in which a lexical item was introduced using pictures displayed on a screen. The English word and occasionally its Korean translation would then be elicited, followed by pronunciation drills. Richard often reported that what students were most likely to take from his lessons was a new set of English words. However, Richard also felt that, if students learned nothing else, they always left his class with a new experience. Richard’s cooking-themed lessons achieved this goal by introducing students to various international foods, while airplane-themed lessons allowed students to interact with themes they were unlikely to encounter at their regular schools.

Notably, all of Richard’s recorded lessons diverged in some way from the original lesson plans that accompanied them. In our discussions, Richard revealed that most of his quick decisions to make changes, either by cutting out or re-ordering activities, were in consideration of his students’ abilities. For example, in Richard’s third airplane-themed lesson, he diverged from his original plan of having each student perform each role in a dialog, by instead having each student perform only one of the roles while he read out the other. Although he had made this decision in consideration of his students’ abilities, Richard expressed regret that he had not done more in advance to accommodate lower-level students. When asked what he would have altered, Richard stated, ‘I would tone down the control tower dialog. Or, streamline it, is probably a better way to put it because, then it’s easier reading for the students of all levels.’ Richard went on to say that, had the dialog been simpler from the beginning, students would have had time to practice both roles instead of just one. This was one of many examples demonstrating Richard’s constant concern for creating and using activities that would match students’ abilities.

**Beyond practice**

Richard said that he enjoys a great deal of job security because it is difficult to hire foreign teachers in the school. However, Richard made it apparent that a clear divide existed between the five foreign teachers and the three Korean teachers that work at his school when he described what he saw as a great discrepancy in the respective workloads of each group, with the Korean teachers seemingly refusing to teach any of the theme classes at all. According to Richard, this discrepancy had opened a rift between the two groups as the foreign teachers had pleaded with the Korean teachers to take on some of their night classes. While two of the Korean teachers, including the head teacher, appeared to be willing to teach these classes, they said that they were prohibited from doing so according to ‘their culture’. Richard explained culture in reference to a widely followed Confucian ideal in Korean society as follows, ‘I think that the two Korean teachers that are willing to teach are not keen to go against the cultural norms, and tell the third teacher that she just has to teach classes’. Richard reflected that constant discussions seemed to have failed to bring about any resolution to this problem, he foresees some type of job action to be the next logical step; he continued:
Ultimately, I think that they will have to do what we request, because if they don’t, we are not contractually obligated to do these classes. We are getting paid for them, but we don’t have to do them. We are getting paid overtime for them, so we could say ‘no’.

This standoff was not resolved at the time of this case study.

**Evaluation**

The main themes which emerged in Richards reflections detailed above indicated that the aspects of Richard’s reflection, i.e. his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and critical reflections are all linked and mutually influenced by each other. While the themes that emerged in all aspects of Richard’s reflection, they did so in different ways in each stage, indicating that each reflective stage provided a different lens through which to view the factors that influenced Richard’s practice. Three main themes that emerged were approachability, art-oriented teacher, and curiosity.

The first theme which could be seen to link each stage of Richard’s reflection was that of **approachability**. Emerging throughout his reflective journey, Richard displayed a strong attachment to this theme of approachability, beginning with the events that shaped his philosophy. Frequent relocations throughout his childhood taught Richard how to recognize and appreciate approachable people, as indicated by his prediction that his two groups of friends ‘would have gotten along pretty well’, despite their vastly different backgrounds. These values fed into his teaching and, thus, his principles as he affirmed his assumption that being approachable allowed even the most apprehensive students to engage in class. Richard’s assumptions and beliefs regarding approachability could then be seen to inform his theory as Richard embraced the roles that activity-based lessons provided: allowing students to initiate interactions, and allowing Richard to play the role of facilitator rather than transmitter of knowledge.

The second theme, Richard as an **art-oriented** teacher, uses his personal experience and skill rather than any particular teaching method to analyze classroom situations and select appropriate courses of action. Richard subscribed to an art-oriented conceptual framework which, like Richard’s sense of approachability, was apparent in all aspects of his reflection. As part of Richard’s philosophy, art-oriented conceptions influenced how Richard saw himself in relation to others, as indicated by his differentiation of himself from his coworkers in terms of his ability to draw on his experience when managing classes. As these conceptions appeared to run as deep as his own perceptions of himself as a teacher, these philosophies transferred into Richard’s principles, as evidenced by his frequent references to his teaching experience when making decisions, and his beliefs that good teachers are flexible and able to account for learner needs as they are encountered. It was also evident that Richard drew upon these beliefs in constructing his theory. Additionally, Richard’s tendency to use more traditional teacher-led communication patterns during instructional phases may also be linked to his reliance on teaching experience. Art-oriented conceptions also surfaced in Richard’s theory through his planning procedures, which appeared to proceed from the activities to be used, rather than the content, or the outcomes to be expected. This indicated that Richard follows what has been described as a central planning design (Farrell, 2015), with which parallels can be drawn with art-oriented conceptions. As activities developed through a
central planning design are done so according to the teacher’s interpretation of the educational context, as well as the teacher’s expertise in creating materials and managing instructional processes (Richards, 2013), it can be inferred that such a planning design would be well-suited for a teacher whose principles align with art-oriented conceptions.

Like the previous two themes discussed, the third main theme, the notion of fostering curiosity in students, occurred frequently throughout Richard’s reflections, although in slightly different forms in the different stages of reflection. Reflecting on the events that shaped his philosophy, Richard revealed the factors which encouraged his own sense of curiosity to grow, (i.e. comfort in the unknown, a family who pushed him to pursue new goals, and a desire to see the world). As a principle, however, curiosity became not only something to be had, but something to be shared, as Richard explained, ‘I think that one of my main responsibilities is to foster curiosity in English and help it grow through the years that I have the chances’. As this statement demonstrates, Richard not only saw fostering curiosity as his duty, but as an opportunity not to be squandered.

When viewed in terms of Richard’s theory, fostering curiosity in students by way of providing new experiences became a tool for language teaching. Through the course of his reflections, Richard’s formula for fostering curiosity emerged wherein new and positive experiences, introduced through stories, games, food, and other activities, prompted student engagement, attention, and interest. A by-product of this engagement reported by Richard was that higher-level students, excited by what they were experiencing, would translate for their lower-level peers, thus creating more engagement. Another by-product frequently mentioned by Richard is that students would remember their experience and crave more similar experiences, thus starting students down what he hoped would be a path of continued English education.

Curiosity transferred into Richard’s practice as his objective of providing students with new experiences was observed in all of his lessons, and, most evidently, in the cooking-themed lessons. In these lessons, Richard’s efforts to foster curiosity were most visible in hands-on activities. Going beyond his practice, as Richard works at a so-called English Experience Centre, there is an obvious impetus for all teachers at Richard’s school to provide new experiences to students. So much so, as Richard reported, that language instruction may be viewed as an objective of secondary importance. With this in mind, it is entirely possible that what appears to be Richard’s own predilection for fostering curiosity may in fact be what Brookfield (1995) refers to as a hegemonic assumption, i.e. an assumption which is perceived by teachers as something worth working diligently to uphold, when in reality it has been manufactured by higher powers to maintain the status quo. While Richard’s critical reflection did not provide any data to indicate he thought this to be the case, it might be speculated that another result would have emerged had Richard started his reflective journey by looking beyond his practice.

Farrell’s (2015) view is unique, in that it includes awareness of the self at two different levels (philosophy and principles related to teaching and learning), as well as reflection-for-action at the theory level of awareness and it also includes Dewey’s and Schon’s reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action when problems need to be solved at the classroom level within a particular context. Thus, Farrell’s (2015) operationalizing of reflective practice offers a more holistic approach to reflection, as there is no separation...
between reflection on the self, the problem to be solved (if that is a focus), and the context in which the reflection takes place.

The results of this case study indicate that Richard’s reflections on his philosophy, principles, theory, and beyond practice or critical reflection appear to flow, one from the other, with all influencing his classroom practices. However, this apparent blending does not imply that the same insights could have been arrived at had Richard reflected on only one aspect (e.g. principles) in isolation. Rather, the results of this case study speak to the utility of a multi-dimensional approach to teacher reflection, as it allows teachers to see how what is uncovered in one stage may have been influenced by the preceding stage, and vice-versa. Moreover, while one may progress through the stages of reflection in a linear fashion as in this study, the recursive nature of Farrell’s (2015) framework allows teachers to see how even seemingly distant aspects interact, as critical reflection may influence philosophy and theory may influence principles, and so on. Therefore, rather than reflecting in any linear manner, these results show that reflection is better viewed as a wheel in rotation in which philosophy, principles, theory, and critical reflection interact with each other as spokes connected through the hub that is our practice. Thus, for any meaningful reflection to take place it is important not to separate the teacher-as-person from the act of teaching or practice, as all these interact together to make the act of teaching possible.

Envoi

In the spirit of not separating the teacher from the act of teaching, we also did not want to separate the teacher from his reflections, and so we presented Richard with the above analysis for his comments. Richard remarked: ‘Looking back at it now this is a really nice summation of what I feel has made me the teacher I am. Someone that is a bit curious and shy at the same time. I’m not sure that I would change anything in my current position’. In terms of his overall situation, given his critical reflections on his work situation at the beyond practice stage, Richard noted that he had not changed his mind about teaching night classes, as he maintains that ‘night classes come at a cost of time to relax and that wears us down over time. Hopefully this can be changed through mediation’.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined and discussed one EFL teacher’s reflective journey through Farrell’s (2015) framework for reflecting on practice that encompasses a teacher’s philosophy, principles, theory, and practice and beyond practice. The main themes that emerged approachability, art-oriented teacher, and curiosity all seem to be all linked and mutually influenced by each other. Results also indicate that Farrell’s (2015) holistic framework helps TESOL teachers to reflect on all aspects of their practice, and that such reflection that connects the teacher-as-person with the act of teaching shows how teachers develop their own professional paths and thinking about their practice that is based on their students’ needs and the context they are teaching in.
Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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