Article

Operationalizing reflective practice in second language teacher education (SLTE)

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Abstract

Reflective practice in the field of TESOL has been warmly embraced in many teacher education and development programs worldwide. However, one of the important issues that is still not clear to many educators is how reflection should be implemented. In this article, I argue that one of the reasons for the confusion about operationalizing reflective practice is that most of the existing approaches that have blossomed since the 1990s are restrictive. Thus, a more holistic approach to reflection should be adopted through the framework for reflecting on practice in SLTE.

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1   Introduction

The capacity of being able to reflect is now seen as an important part of a language teacher's education and training. Indeed, in one extensive review of the literature on second language teacher education (SLTE), Wright (2010, p. 267) points out that the goal of SLTE is to produce 'reflective teachers, in a process which involves socio-cognitive demands to introspect and collaborate with others, and which acknowledges previous learning and life experience as a starting point for new learning'. A flurry of different typologies and approaches of encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice developed in the field of general education and many have been embraced by the field of TESOL. However, I believe that most of these existing approaches are very narrow and, as such, a more holistic approach to reflection should be adopted through the framework for reflecting on practice in SLTE (Farrell, 2015). In this paper, I outline and discuss the holistic framework and how it can be implemented successfully in the field of TESOL. I also illustrate some research findings that highlight each stage of the holistic framework.

2   Operationalizing Reflective Practice

Reflection is now widely acknowledged as an essential component of many second language teacher education programs worldwide because, as Freeman (2016, p. 208) maintains, reflection offers a way into the less 'accessible aspects of teacher's work'. Over the years, many different approaches and methods have been proposed as to how teachers can reflect, yet most of these restrict reflection to a retrospective role focusing on what works or does not work in the classroom while all the time overlooking the inner lives of teachers. Although these approaches may offer a structured way into reflection especially for some novice teachers, I believe there is a danger that we are confining reflection in a bubble to a 'fix-it' approach or a repairing of some perceived deficit in teaching that separates the teacher from the act of teaching. As Freeman (2016, p. 217) pointed out, SLTE needs to move away from such an emphasis on 'post-mortem reflection' and 'reflection-as-repair' that confines reflection to problem solving and only the technical competencies of teaching that ignores the inner lives of teachers. If we continue to ignore the inner lives of teachers as we always have in the field of TESOL with the push to follow mandated curriculum and the like, we will not be able to counteract teacher burnout, which is why reflective practice was originally developed and reinstated in the 1980s. Pre-service (and inservice) teachers need to be encouraged to think about themselves and their teaching that includes activation of their feelings,

emotions, or the affective side of reflection, so that they can develop the inner resources to meet future challenges in the profession. Implementing a holistic approach to teacher reflection produces more integrated second language teachers with self-awareness and understanding to be able to interpret, shape, and reshape their practice.

One such promising holistic approach for TESOL teachers is Farrell's (2015) *framework for reflecting on practice*. This framework is different from many other approaches because it encompasses a holistic approach to reflection that focuses not only on the intellectual, cognitive, and meta-cognitive aspects of practice that many other approaches are limited to, but also on the spiritual, moral, and emotional non-cognitive aspects of reflection that acknowledges the inner lives of teachers (Farrell, 2015). Teacher educators can encourage preservice (and inservice) teachers to use the framework as a lens through which they can view their professional (and even personal) worlds, and what has shaped their professional lives as they become more aware of their philosophy, principles, theories, and practices, and how these impact issues inside and beyond practice. Each of these stages is explained as follows:

2.1 Philosophy

Philosophy, the first stage/level of the framework, can be considered a window to the roots of a teacher's practice because having a philosophy of practice means each observable behavior has a reason that guides it even if the teacher does not articulate this reason. This first stage of reflection within the framework examines 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. Thus, to be able to reflect on our basic philosophy, we need to obtain self-knowledge and we can access this by exploring, examining, and reflecting on our background – from where we have evolved – such as our heritage, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background, family, and personal values that have combined to influence who we are as language teachers. 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.

Because of this basic level of reflecting on philosophy to gain self-knowledge, we must become more self-aware through telling our autobiographical stories: these include accounts of who we are and how and why we decided to become teachers. At this first stage, it may be an idea for teachers to write their reflections (reflective journal writing) first before sharing them orally or in writing. The act of writing itself has

a built-in reflective mechanism where teachers are forced to stop for a moment and consider what they will write and after they have written they can consider again what is in print on the page. As I have written previously, over time such reflective writing can lead to a clarification of the teachers' understanding of their philosophy, values, ethics, and assumptions that underlie their practice. When teachers 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, they will then be able to critically reflect on their practice because they will become more mindful and self-aware of their past.

Lim (2011), using autobiographical essays, reported how pre-service TESOL teachers reflected on their own personal histories in relation to their professional identity origin, formation, and development in a Korean context. Lim (2011, p. 979) concluded that teacher identity formation is an ongoing process of 'identification and negotiation of self-images, prior experiences in learning and teaching, and the roles and credentials of teacher promoted by institutional and broader social practices'. In addition, Liu and Xu (2011), using a process they call 'restorying', outlined how one novice teacher became aware of an identity gap between what the teacher felt she was expected to become (i.e. 'designated teacher identity') and how she realistically identified herself (i.e. 'actual teacher identity'). Being encouraged to reflect and thus becoming more aware of the possibility of shifting identities helped the teacher close the gap between her 'designated' and 'actual' identities. As Liu and Xu (2011, p. 596) observed, 'identity is not static and fixed but negotiated and shifting' and the very noticing of this shifting of her identity 'has indeed helped shape her professional life'.

In summary, reflecting on one's philosophy of practice can not only help teachers flesh out what has shaped them as human beings and teachers but can also help them move onto the next level of reflection, reflecting on their principles.

2.2   Principles

Principles, the second stage/level of the framework for reflecting on practice, includes reflections on teachers' assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning. Assumptions generally refer to what we think is true, but that we do not have proof of, as they have not been demonstrated yet; however, we accept them as true for the time being. Assumptions are thus sometimes difficult to articulate for a teacher. Beliefs, in contrast, are somewhat easier to state, and there is a general acceptance of a proposition; in other words, it is accepted to be true by the individual who holds it. Conceptions are more of an overall organizing framework for both

assumptions and beliefs and they can mediate our response to situations involving both. All three are really part of a single system, and thus difficult to separate because they overlap a lot, and, although I treat them separately in the framework, I see them as three points along the same continuum of meaning related to our principles. Teachers' practices and their instructional decisions are often formulated and implemented (for the most part subconsciously) on the basis of their underlying assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions because these are the driving force (along with philosophy reflected on at level/stage one) behind many of their classroom actions. One of the many means that teachers have at their disposal when accessing their principles (assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions) is by exploring and examining the various images, metaphors, and maxims of teaching and learning. The images these metaphors and maxims produce become powerful introspective tools for teachers because they can be used as a lens to gain insight into their principles of practice.

Abednia, Hovassapian, Teimournezhad, and Ghanbari (2013) used reflective journals to encourage preservice TESOL teachers in Iran to foster awareness of their beliefs about teaching and learning English as a foreign language and especially how their TESOL teacher education program course-content related or not to their real-life classroom teaching experiences. As a result of such reflections, Abednia et al. (2013, p. 507) observed that the pre-service TESOL teachers were able to 'construct their own understanding of issues covered in the class in light of their personal experiences of teaching' as they became 'more aware of their implicit beliefs' about English language teaching in their particular context. Articulation of their implicit beliefs, according to Abednia et al. (2013), allowed the teachers to gain heightened awareness of their assumptions and beliefs and this awareness allowed them to evaluate and, in some cases, re-evaluate those beliefs in terms of their appropriateness. The pre-service TESOL teachers reported that they were then better able to identify their teaching strengths and areas needed for improvement and to gain the overall freedom to be able to continually modify their existing beliefs whenever appropriate.

Wan, Low, and Li (2011) also found that, when inservice TESOL teachers in China were encouraged to articulate and then reflect on their beliefs, but this time through metaphor analysis, it was a transformational experience for them because they were not only able to reappraise them in light of their current practices, but also make modifications to suit their new insight about themselves as TESOL teachers. Wan et al. noted that when these inservice TESOL teachers had articulated their beliefs about teaching and learning, they then began to modify their original metaphors especially if these did not match their newly articulated beliefs. Wan et al. observed that when these inservice TESOL teachers were encouraged to

reflect on their beliefs through the use of metaphor analysis, this activity enabled them to clearly identify and then clarify their teaching beliefs as they began to reject some of their initial metaphors for teaching because they noted that in reality they diverged from their beliefs.

2.3   Theory

Following on from reflecting on our principles, we are now ready to reflect on our theory, the third level/stage of the framework. Theory 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. Influenced by their reflections on their philosophy and their principles, teachers can now actively begin to construct their theory of practice. Theory at this stage/level means that teachers consider the type of lessons they want to deliver on a yearly, monthly, or daily basis. All language teachers have theories, both 'official' theories we learn in teacher education courses and 'unofficial' theories we gain with teaching experience. However, not all teachers may be fully aware of these theories, and especially their 'unofficial' theories that are sometimes called 'theories-in-use'. Reflections at this stage/level in the framework include considering all aspects of a teacher's planning (e.g., forward, central, and backward planning – see below) and the different activities and methods teachers choose (or may want to choose) as they attempt to put theory into practice. As they reflect on their approaches and methods at this level, teachers will also reflect on the specific teaching techniques they choose to use (or may want to choose) in their lessons and if these are (or should be) consistent with their approaches and methods they have chosen or will choose. In order to reflect on these, they will need to describe specific classroom techniques, activities, and routines that they are using or intend to use when carrying out their lessons. Another means of accessing our theory is to explore and examine critical incidents (any unplanned or unanticipated event that occurs during a classroom lesson and is clearly remembered) because they can be a guide to a teacher's theory building.

In order to access reflections on theory, teachers can reflect on all aspects of lesson planning such as setting lesson objectives, implementing and assessing the lesson, as well as consciously reflecting on the functional roles they and their students perform or should perform during the lesson. In order to access theory at this stage or level of the framework, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their theoretical orientation to planning from among three main theoretical approaches: forward planning (teachers identify the content of the lesson first and then teaching methods that will be used to teach the content), central planning (teachers decide on

teaching methods before choosing the content of lesson), and backward planning (teachers decide on their desired lesson outcomes first and then decisions about lesson activities). Another means of accessing our theory is to explore and examine critical incidents. Although critical incidents are situations that actually occur during practice, the next stage/level in the framework, I include them now because they can be used to guide a teacher's theory building.

Tan (2013), for example, explored the written reflections of pre-service TESOL teachers in Brunei in a teacher education program where the pre-service TESOL teachers were required to observe teaching and then reflect on what they had observed in light of lesson planning and other aspects of teaching as they attended classes weekly on campus. Tan (2013, p. 823) reported that reflective dialoging (through writing) seemed to help the pre-service TESOL teachers to not only reflect and 'talk through' their own reflections on planning and teaching, but also to 'understand and see other perspectives' rather than just their own. These other perspectives included an acknowledgement of their students' needs rather than their own needs.

Luo (2014) reported the positive effects of collaborative lesson planning to help strengthen the connection between theory and practice for inservice TESOL teachers, both 'local' English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and native English speaking teachers (NEST) EFL teachers in elementary schools in Taiwan. As Luo (2014, p. 406) noted, the inservice TESOL teachers reported that of all the inservice TESOL training they had, the 'sessions on collaborative lesson planning [preferred by NESTs] and English language enhancement [preferred by local EFL teachers or NNESTs] were deemed most useful for the teachers'. Overall, such collaborations on lesson planning were perceived by all the inservice TESOL teachers according to Luo (2014, p. 406) as 'a context where they could share experiences and learn from other teachers'.

2.4   Practice

Up to now, the framework has emphasized reflecting on philosophy, principles, and theory, or the 'hidden' aspect of teaching. Thus, we are now ready to reflect on the more visible behaviors of what we do as teachers, our practice, and what actually happens in the classroom. Reflecting on practice begins with an examination of our observable actions while we are teaching as well as our students' reactions (or non-reactions) during our lessons. Of course, such reflections are directly related to and influenced by our reflections of our theory at the previous level and our principles and philosophy. At this stage/level in the framework, teachers can reflect while they are teaching a lesson (reflection-in-action), after they teach a

lesson (reflection-on-action), or before they teach a lesson (reflection-for-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. When teachers engage in reflection-for-action they are attempting to reflect before anything has taken place and anticipate what may happen and try to account for this before they conduct the lesson.

Teachers have several different methods of accessing their reflections of practice. For example, teachers can engage in classroom observations (self-monitoring, peer critical friendships, or group observations), and they can record (audio and/or video) their lessons and later transcribe the recordings for more accurate recount of what occurred. Teachers can also consider conducting action research on specific aspects of their practice if they think they need to improve some aspect of their teaching or their students' learning. Action research is classroom specific and involves entering a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on an issue or problem within practice in order to improve such practice. Thus, the findings of the action research are carefully analyzed and there is some kind of follow-up action implemented and monitored (which usually involves entering a new cycle of refection).

Moser, Harris, and Carle (2012) were successful in encouraging pre-service TESOL teachers in Japan to make some changes in their teaching when as they engaged in a special 'teacher-talk training course' in which they recorded and reflected on their own teacher talk while they were teaching. The pre-service TESOL teachers compared their own teacher talk before and after task performances. According to Moser et al. (2012, p. 86) the teachers reported that 'hearing their performances helped them improve prosodic features of their speaking'.

Fahim, Hamidi, and Najafi Sarem (2013) examined the impact of heightened self-monitoring on Iranian inservice TESOL teachers' reflections on their students' comments about their teaching and their willingness to alter their teaching practices in order to meet the stated needs of their students. Fahim et al. reported that when teachers engaged in self-monitoring and reflected on their teaching methodologies and perceived problems of their students, they said that they became better educators and this was transferred to their teaching practices because it resulted in the better performance of their students (in this case their willingness to communicate more in classes).

2.5   Beyond Practice

The final stage/level of the framework entails teachers reflecting beyond practice. This fifth stage/level of the framework takes on a sociocultural dimension to teaching and learning. This is called critical reflection and entails exploring and examining the moral, political, and social issues that impact a teacher's practice both inside and outside the classroom. Critical reflection moves the teacher beyond practice and links practice more closely to the broader socio-political as well as affective/moral issues that impact practice. Such a critical focus on reflections also includes teachers examining the moral aspect of practice and the moral values and judgments that impact practice.

Teaching is heavily influenced by social forces and political trends as there is the possibility of the presence of different types of discrimination inherent in different educational systems. In other words, no practice is without theory or ideology; every practice promotes some sort of ideology, and it is always best to be aware of this. Reflections at this level can assist teachers in becoming more aware of the many political agendas and economic interests that can (and do) shape how we define language teaching and learning. They can become more aware of the impact of their lessons on society and the impact of society on their practice by consciously engaging in critical pedagogy or critical action research, an extension of action research in the previous level.

Encouraging pre-service TESOL teachers in Iran to use journal writing to encourage reflection, Abednia (2012) for example, examined the ways critical TESOL teacher education contributes to TESOL teachers' overall development. As a result, Abednia (2012, p. 713) noted that the TESOL teachers adopted 'a critical and transformative approach to their career on their own initiative'. Abednia remarked that such a critical stance to language teacher education moved the teachers from a position of conformity to the dominant ideology that was present in language teacher education to a more critical autonomous position about their profession as a whole. As Abednia (2012, p. 712) observed, many of the teachers experienced a shift from thinking of 'ELT as merely aimed at teaching ESL/EFL' to 'going beyond language instruction and fulfilling educationally-oriented promises such as helping people become critical thinkers and active citizens'.

Birbirso (2012) also examined what can be done to facilitate effective critical reflection for pre-service TESOL teachers in teacher education programs in Ethiopia. As a result of journal writing, Birbirso (2012, p. 865) observed that the teachers not only were able to reflect on their own assumptions, beliefs, and theories and how they could use this information to improve their practice, but could also make the shift beyond practice

and take a more critical stance on 'wider school practices and issues and how they relate to classroom behaviors, actions, and interactions'.

3   Reflecting with the Framework

The framework can be navigated in three different ways: theory-into-(beyond) practice, (beyond) practice-into-theory, or a single stage application. Thus, it is a descriptive rather than a prescriptive framework. Teachers can take a deductive approach to reflecting on practice by moving from theory-into-practice or from stage/level 1, philosophy through the different stages to stage/level 5, beyond practice. Some may say that pre-service teachers, who do not have much classroom experiences, would be best suited to take such an approach because they can first work on their overall philosophical approach to teaching English to speakers of other languages and work their way through the different stages of principles (stage/level 2), theory (stage/level 3). When they reach the practicum stage, they will be well placed then to reflect on their practice (stage/level 4) and eventually move beyond practice (stage/level 5).

The following outlines a short case study of how one novice ESL teacher in his first year of teaching attempted to incorporate strategy training when teaching English reading classes to ESL students in a high school (from Farrell, 2015). The teacher attempted to teach reading strategy training in his classes from the start of the semester because he said they were 'taught this idea in my teacher preparation program'. He was especially interested in teaching his students the learning strategies of questioning, clarifying, and predicting as well as vocabulary recognition techniques to less proficient ESL students, many of whom were struggling with their reading comprehension and as a result did not like to read in English.

We started with a discussion of his philosophy of practice and the novice teacher stated: 'I have a definite philosophy of teaching: I think that all students always come first. If a particular program of course of action will benefit them, I will try to carry it out. If it's not going to benefit the students, I will try to scrap it or play it down'. He said that much of his approach to practice will have this philosophy as an underlying influence although he also realized that he had no real teaching experience and his practicum experience was only him observing others teach, so he said that he did not really get any ideas from that experience.

He was especially interested in teaching reading to struggling ESL students because he said that he felt this was his 'calling' or vocation as a teacher (see for more on 'teaching as a calling'). He said that he was not really interested in teaching students who were excellent as he said that they would probably not benefit much from his knowledge and that was

not why he got into teaching. So, he asked me to observe his teaching of reading rather than any other language skill. He said that his beliefs about learning and teaching reading centered around learner strategy training that he studied about in his teacher education program. He believed that if you teach ESL struggling readers how to use strategies such as prediction, questioning, and clarifying they would become better readers. I observed five of his reading classes: two at the start of the second semester, two in the middle of the semester, and one near the end of the semester. Each observation covered two double periods of 40 minutes for each period except for the final observation which was one 40-minute class. Excerpts from each of the lessons are provided. These excerpts (in the form of episodes) show how the teacher attempted to incorporate strategy training into his teaching of English reading. The teacher authenticated the episodes and the interpretations that follow.

3.1   Observed Lessons Start of Semester

These lessons were conducted at the start of the second week of the semester. The first lesson started with the teacher stating that he was going to review reading comprehension methods. In this lesson the teacher tried to get his students to think and reflect about how they usually read and how they answer reading comprehension questions after reading a text. First, the teacher took the students through what he called 'the traditional steps for answering ten reading comprehension questions' because he noted his students were used to this way of learning to read although he also noted how the students were not able to answer most of these questions. Then he attempted to introduce the learning strategy of prediction (that he learned in his teacher education program) while they are reading.

The following dialogue, as outlined in episode 1, shows how the teacher tried to introduce the strategy of prediction and how the class responded. The teacher makes a reference to 'this usual way on comprehension' in the first line indicating that in traditional English reading classes in his context, the students are asked to read a passage, underline and words they do not understand, and then answer the comprehension questions that follow the passage. The teacher then checks the answers and informs the students whether they are correct or not. He was trying to break this cycle.

Episode 1
T: *Which students don't follow this usual way of comprehension?*
[Most hands went up]
T: *Today another method…try and guess what is going to happen in a story.*
[The teacher writes the title of the story 'The Last Dance' on board]
T: *What is the first thing that comes to mind?* [No answers].

T: *What will the story be about?* [No answers]
T: *Read the first paragraph.*
T: *Now what do you think the story is or will be about?*
[Teacher asks more questions about the first paragraph; no student able to answer].
[The teacher then asked the students about their metacognitive skills]
T: *What happens in your mind? Thinking, predicting.*
[No reaction from any student]
T: *What is the next paragraph going to be about? Read like this.*
[Students read]
Key: **T**=teacher

This short exchange in episode 1 shows how the teacher was trying to get his students to think about their reading strategies and to consider using the strategy of prediction that he had learned during his teacher education program. However, the reality of the classroom and students he was teaching made him quickly realize that it was not going to be easy to introduce this strategy. Indeed, after this class he told me that he felt frustrated that his students were not responding to the idea of predicting while reading in the way he had hoped and that this was different to what he expected from his theory classes while he was training.

Nonetheless, he said that he saw some hope as the students had told him that they had never been asked about how they read (their reading strategies) before. They said they were usually told to read the passage silently (or aloud) and answer the comprehension questions. Thus, the teacher said that at least he got some response and that some of the students were becoming curious about what the teacher was trying to do. Consequently, he said that he would continue with strategy training as the students needed a new approach because they had failed to comprehend passages so often before in classes he had observed while he was on teaching practice and during his first year of teaching.

3.2   Observed Lessons Mid-Semester

These lessons took place in the middle of the second semester. The teacher told me before this class that he had continued with strategy training since my last visit, especially the strategy of prediction for reading lessons. However, he said that he did not incorporate it into every reading lesson since the first set of lessons because he noticed the students were not responding. The class started with the teacher asking the students to read a passage silently. After ten minutes of silent reading, he asked the students to reflect on their learning as outlined in the following dialogue in episode 2.

Episode 2
T: *How many used predicting?* [3 students raised their hands]
T: *The rest of you…how many read each word?* [All students raised their hands].
T: *I advise you to try the new methods. I can't force you, but you will find it easier to answer comprehension questions. I know it works. Try it and you have a choice.*
Key: **T**=teacher

Again, this short example in episode 2 shows how difficult it was for the teacher, as he said, 'to break the old habits of traditional reading approaches' especially for less proficient ESL readers. After class, the teacher said he was disappointed again that the students had not used the 'new' technique but he would keep trying. He said that he noticed a degree of resistance and he said, 'Old habits die hard'. He continued: 'It may be that weak readers tend to lock themselves into a pattern or cycle of self-doubt about their inability to read and that they cannot easily break from this'. The teacher noticed that the students were using their fingers to guide their eyes across the page, and he interpreted this physical act as further evidence that they were reading word for word. He also said that the students gave up easily if they encountered vocabulary they did not understand, if they did not understand the first sentence of a passage or paragraph, or if they could not answer the first comprehension question. In fact, they equated failure (and mental pain) with the act of reading. The teacher remarked that the students in his class had always 'groaned loudly' when he had told them that they were about to do a reading in English class.

So, at the mid-semester, point the teacher began to question the validity of his beliefs about strategy training for struggling ESL readers as he said he wondered now whether these strategies would, in fact, be useful for his students. He also worried that his classes may now have become boring for his students because he was trying to teach these new strategies. Up to this mid-semester point, he said that he had attempted strategy training in questioning, clarifying, (he did not give me any examples of how he taught these two strategies and I do not know how much time he spent on this strategy training), and predicting strategies with little success. He said that from this mid-semester on he would slow down and try to reinforce strategies already introduced. By this he said he would try to develop activities and exercises that would reinforce the strategies.

3.3 Observed Lesson End-Semester

I then observed a class near the end of the semester. Before the class, the teacher said he was a bit frustrated with the slow uptake of any of the

reading strategies he had tried to teach the class because he said that the students had resisted many of them even though they could still not answer any of the ten or so comprehension questions that he sometimes asked in the usual, 'traditional way'. However, he pointed out that he was beginning to get them to predict 'a bit when reading' but that it was very slow and also hard work for him to keep pushing them to try to predict while they were reading. Episode 3, below, outlines part of the transcript of his attempts to get his students to predict once at the beginning of his lesson and again in the middle of the lesson.

> *Episode 3*
> **T**: *Today we will try to predict again...Not reading. Here is the title. What do you think the story will be about?* [Nearly all students' raised hands. Teacher then chooses some students to answer, and they give opinions]
> [15 minutes later students read first paragraph of story]
> **T**: *Don't worry about what kinds of words you don't know yet...only what type of passage it is. How many bothered about difficult words?* [Four hands raised – class of 40]
> **T**: *Are all the details important?*
> **Ss**: [Most shout] *No!*
> **T**: *What is important then?*
> **Ss**: [Most shout] *guess what story is about.*
> **T**: *Yes, to predict.*
> Key: **T**=teacher; **Ss**=students

Episode 3 shows how the teacher had to continually remind his students to try to predict what a reading would be about as they read and how this was always trying to remind them how important it was to have some strategy when reading. The teacher realized that it would take time to get his students to implement any reading strategies and so at the end of the semester he noted that he would have to spend time the following semester 'pushing reading strategies' but that it would not be easy.

This theory-driven approach to practice where philosophy and theory have an initial influence on practice is probably a natural sequence of development for pre-service and novice teachers because they do not have much teaching experience. When their early practices are observed, it is most likely that theory can be detected in their practice; however, over time, and with reflection, it is possible that their everyday practice will begin to inform, and even change, their philosophy and theory and they may come up with new principles of practice. Thus, continued reflection can nourish both practice and theory of practice. Of course, more experienced teachers can also choose to begin their reflections at stage/level 1, philosophy, especially if they consider their philosophy as a significant basis of their practice with principles, second, theory third, and so on through the framework.

However, because they will have more practical classroom experience, they may opt to begin their reflections on their practice and work back to their theory, principles, and philosophy and critical reflection.

4 Reflective Practice in SLTE: The Way Forward

Since its resurgence in the 1980s, reflective practice has mushroomed among the different professions as a mark of professional competence. This fascinating and complex topic has generated many different approaches, models, and typologies that, at times, have resulted in a great deal of uncertainty over the meaning of reflection. Many of the approaches that have proliferated are based on different theoretical underpinnings and some are even used to rationalize existing practices in a rather unreflective manner.

Reflective practice has also gained a stronghold in second language teacher education programs but with many different philosophical under-pinnings and motivations behind the concepts used. Indeed, as Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010) have noted, because reflection as a con-cept has been influenced by these many different philosophies and motiva-tions in its genesis, it makes an exact definition of the term problematic for all situations. The current vagueness associated with reflection and reflective practice poses serious problems for teacher educators, teach-ers, administrators, and teacher education and development programs. In addition, the ambiguity of the concept of reflective practice has led some scholars in TESOL to question the whole value of encouraging teachers to engage in reflective practice wondering if this engagement will improve teaching or lead to better teachers than those who do not engage in any systematic reflection. Some others have dismissed reflective practice as just another bandwagon within a field (education and TESOL) of many bandwagons over the years.

These are all valid concerns related to this concept but I believe they have come about because reflective practice has been operationalized in too narrow and intellectual a manner. Indeed, a persistent issue that has been often cited with reflective practice recently is that the many approaches in TESOL are too narrow because they view reflection solely as an intellectual exercise and neglect the emotional dimension of reflection (Akbari, 2007). The danger here, of course, is that reflective practice has become ritualized – or just 'gets done' (Mann & Walsh, 2013, p. 293) – and mechanical because we reduce this 'reflection' to a set of prescriptive tech-niques and recipe-following checklists teachers must follow as they 'reflect'. Hence, I believe that it is both timely and important to provide an overall framework that operationalizes reflective practice in a holistic manner for TESOL professionals. This overall *framework for reflecting on practice* is

designed so that language teachers can bring to the level of awareness that which usually remains hidden, the interconnectedness of their philosophy, principles, theories, and practice and also their reflections beyond practice. The results of these reflections can be used as a basis for further evaluation and decisionmaking when planning any future actions in and beyond the classroom.

Most recently, Farrell (2018) noted that when TESOL teachers were encouraged to reflect on their *philosophy,* research reported that teachers can better understand their teacher identity origins, formation, and development. When TESOL teachers were encouraged to reflect on *principles*, research reported that, as teachers became more aware of their previously tacitly held assumptions, values, and beliefs about teaching and learning, they were better able to re-evaluate them in light of their new knowledge. When teachers were encouraged to reflect on *theory* research reported that TESOL teachers were able to build repertoires and knowledge of instruction. When TESOL teachers were encouraged to reflect on their *practice* and *theory*, the research reported an overall positive impact of classroom observations because they lead to enhanced awareness of theory and practice connections. When TESOL teachers were encouraged to reflect *beyond practice* in combination with *philosophy*, *principles*, *theory,* and *practice*, research reported that the teachers reflected well beyond their classroom teaching practices on such issues as social justice, teacher roles, and power differentials. Indeed, the results of Farrell's review revealed the global reach and robust nature of the concept of reflective practice research within the TESOL profession. Farrell concluded that TESOL has embraced the concept of reflective practice, but it must be careful to be on guard of others using it as a tool to 'fix' problems because this keeps TESOL teachers down when they are treated as technicians and consumers of research rather than generators of their own research.

5   Conclusion

Although reflective practice has, as Mann and Walsh (2013, p. 292) have noted, 'achieved a status of orthodoxy' in the field of TESOL, mostly it has been operationalized as a one-dimensional intellectual activity that ignores the inner lives of teachers and thus defeats the original purpose of the resurgence of reflection in teacher education to counter such technical rationality. I have thus argued for a more holistic approach to reflection in SLTE and this can be depicted in the framework for reflecting on practice (Farrell, 2015) where teachers examine their *philosophy, principles, theory, practice,* and *beyond practice* in order to better prepare them for the contexts they will teach in. As Farrell (2015, p. 25) states:

> When teachers 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, they will then be able to reflect critically on their practice because they will become more mindful and self-aware.

By outlining and describing the *framework for reflecting on practice* presented in this paper, I have attempted to provide a holistic reflective practice tool that can help teacher educators and teachers navigate and apply the framework in a holistic manner from whatever perspective they think will further their professional development aims in SLTE.

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