
| BOOK REVIEW

Critical Reflection in English Classroom Teaching: A Review of Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms

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| ABSTRACT

Reflective teaching is a new teaching concept arising in the new era compared with traditional teaching methods. It requires teachers to change the previous teaching mode of mechanical reproduction to realize reflection on teaching methods, teaching modes, teaching contents, etc. Through reflection, the most efficient teaching methods are chosen to help students complete the acquisition of complex knowledge with concise thinking.

| KEYWORDS

Reflective philosophy, English classroom, teaching research

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Critical Reflection in English Classroom Teaching: A Review of Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms

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Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms

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Reflective Teaching in the Second Language Classroom, a book by Jack C. Richards and Charles Lockhart, was translated by Professor Timmiao Wang at Peking University in 2017 and published by Beijing Language and Culture University Press in the same year. This book is one of the "Contemporary Second Language Teaching and Research Translation Series", which is a school-level research project of Beijing Language and Culture University. In this book, Professor Timmiao Wang and Charles Lockhart provide a detailed discussion of "reflective pedagogy" as it applies to second language classrooms, providing pre-

service and in-service teachers with classroom materials and activities for language teaching, citing numerous student and teacher perspectives and examples of classroom documentation. The issues are presented and analyzed. The examples provided in this book are from the United States, Brazil, Japan, and Hong Kong, China, and are therefore of great practical and reference value. The authors first present pedagogical issues, followed by ideas, illustrative analysis using examples in each chapter, and finally recommendations.

Reflective teaching and critical self-reflection are considered in this book to complement each other as the basis for classroom decision-making, instructional planning, and classroom behavior. Thus the focus is on teacher and learner beliefs, teacher decision-making, and the nature of the roles of teachers and learners. In addition, the importance of each component is presented about relevant theory and research, and a range of exploratory tasks and activities that teachers can use in second language classrooms are provided.

Each of the nine chapters in the book deals with an important factor affecting language teaching and learning, presenting some of the foundations that form the basis for a variety of classroom observations, investigations, and critical reflections. The small-scale investigative-type tasks recommended in the book can be used by pre-service and in-service teachers in a variety of models of classroom instruction.

The first chapter is on classroom teaching and learning research methods. Six areas are elaborated in detail: teaching logs, course teaching reports, surveys and questionnaires, classroom audio or video recordings, classroom observations, and action research. This book considers the teaching journal as a written or recorded record of classroom instruction; the course report as a written record describing the main features of the course; and the surveys and questionnaires to collect information about a specific aspect of teaching or learning; the classroom audio or video recording as a record of a lesson or a part of a lesson; the classroom observation as a trainee teacher observing the instructor's lesson or a colleague observing a lesson (i.e., a teacher observing his or her Action research is the implementation of an action plan designed to bring about change in a teacher's instruction and follow-up observations of its effectiveness. There are advantages and disadvantages to several of the easy-to-use classroom research methods explored in this chapter, and teachers can decide which methods apply and to what situations as needed.

Chapter 2 deals with teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The sources of teachers' beliefs, teachers' beliefs about English, teachers' beliefs about learning, teachers' beliefs about teaching, teachers' beliefs about programs and curriculum, and teachers' beliefs about language teaching as a profession are elaborated. Looking at teaching and learning through the lens of teacher thinking, there is a greater tendency to explain and understand the teaching process itself, rather than an enthusiasm to reveal the attributes of effective teachers. After all, it is teachers' subjective school knowledge that maximizes what happens in the classroom, and whether or not they can communicate that knowledge. Rather than reducing the complexity of teacher learning situations to a few controllable research variables, we should attempt to identify ways for teachers to cope with these complexities. (Halkes & Olson, 1984:1) Regardless of the type of course they teach, teachers are usually faced with a range of tasks such as selecting learning activities, preparing new learning content for students, presenting learning activities, asking classroom questions, conducting drills, checking students' understanding, providing opportunities to practice new content, monitoring student learning, giving feedback on student learning, reviewing and, if necessary innovative teaching, etc. Therefore, to understand how teachers respond to these teaching issues, it is necessary to explore the beliefs and thought processes behind these teaching behaviors, i.e., the nature of teachers' belief systems.

The third chapter is concerned with the learner. Three aspects of learners' belief systems, cognitive styles, and learning strategies are elaborated. The book states that learners' beliefs are influenced by the social environment and also affect learners' attitudes towards the language itself and language learning. (Tumposky, 1991) Learners' beliefs encompass many aspects that can influence learners' motivation, their expectations of language learning, their perceptions of what is difficult and what is easy in the language they are learning, and their preferred learning strategies. It was also noted that differences in teachers' and students' beliefs can sometimes lead to inconsistencies in their perceptions of what is important in a language course and can cause students to underestimate the classroom activities that the teacher has assigned. Some of the learners' perceptions of language learning and language teaching are related to differences in cognitive styles or learning styles. Cognitive styles can be seen as specific truths for dealing with learning and are closely related to personality types. Knowles (1982) classified learners' cognitive styles into four learning styles: concrete, analytical, communicative, and authority-oriented. Oxford (1990) defined six basic learning strategies: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. He considers learning strategies as "specific actions that learners take to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more autonomous, and more adaptable to new situations.

Chapter 4 is on faculty decision-making. Three areas are addressed: planned decision making, interactive decision making, and evaluative decision making. The essence of teacher decision-making and the impact it has on teaching and learning is analyzed in more depth in this chapter. In the classroom, another level of decision-making is involved, where teachers have to

make real-time decisions about different aspects of teaching and learning, many of which may not be prepared in advance, and these decisions are called interactive decisions. Changes and teacher behavior must change accordingly. The basic problem for teachers, therefore, is having to acknowledge that there is no one best way to behave and then learning to make decisions that keep their behavior attuned to the dynamic, ever-changing complexity of the classroom. At the end of the lesson, teachers must make decisions about the effectiveness of the lesson and the subsequent content of the lesson, and these decisions are called evaluative decisions. Richards, Ho & Giblin (1992) also found that teachers' evaluative decisions inform the planning decisions that follow. Thus, planning decisions, interactive decisions, and evaluative decisions are interrelated.

Chapter 5 is on the role of the teacher. The nature of roles, teacher roles that reflect institutional factors, teacher roles that reflect teaching methods, teacher roles that reflect individual teaching perspectives, and cultural factors of teacher roles are discussed. The teaching environment has a significant impact on teachers' teaching, and different teaching environments place teachers in different roles. This chapter focuses on the multiple dimensions of the teacher role, i.e., the roles that teachers hold within the teaching institution, the responsibilities that teachers assume in their different roles, the roles that teachers hold in the classroom, and the impact of these roles on teachers' teaching styles. Teachers are often considered to be in a professional role where the nature of the school and the nature of teaching determine their teaching style, which varies depending on the type of school they are in. Thus, teachers will play different roles. In addition, teacher roles can be influenced by the teaching methods used by teachers, their personalities, and their cultural backgrounds. For many teachers, teaching methods are something very personal that teachers arrive at based on experience, depending on the needs of the specific situation. In the classroom, teachers construct their role through their theories of teaching and learning and the ways they believe best support those theories for classroom interaction.

Chapter 6 deals with language classroom structure. Four areas are detailed: classroom introduction, classroom activity steps, classroom progression, and classroom closure. Classroom instruction is an easily identifiable activity that usually occurs in a particular setting, begins in a particular way, and progresses and concludes through a series of teaching and learning activities. This structure or organizational pattern is the result of a teacher's attempt to manage a teaching and learning process that optimizes the amount of time available for learning. Wong-Fillmore (1985) observed that "the way a classroom is organized and the instructional arrangement largely determines the properties of the language that students hear and use in the classroom Two sets of characteristics distinguish whether classroom instruction serves language learning: the first set relates to the way lessons and instruction are organized; the second set relates to the way language is used in the classroom". This chapter is concerned with how to organize classroom instruction in an orderly manner and how to ensure that classroom instruction is effective, that is, how to structure the curriculum. This chapter focuses on lesson structuring in four dimensions: introduction, steps, progression, and closure. The introduction is how a lesson begins; the steps are how a lesson is divided into segments and how the segments are interconnected; the progression is how to make the class dynamic, and the conclusion is how the class ends.

Chapter 7 deals with classroom interaction. It is described in terms of the teacher's area of action, the learner's ability to interact, the learner's interaction patterns, and grouping arrangements. Second language learning is a highly interactive process, with a great deal of time spent in teacher-student and student-student interactions. Ellis (1985) argues that the quality of these interactions can have a great impact on second language learning. Tikunoff (1985a, 1985b) suggests that while teachers need to find a way to engage the class equally, students also need to learn how to make the interactions they are expected to make in the classroom. Good & Power (1976) describe six different modes of interaction: task-oriented, silent, social, dependent, withdrawn, and detached. Although learners may have a greater preference for one classroom interaction pattern, the dynamic interactions in the classroom depend heavily on the teacher's organization of the learning activities.

Chapter 8 deals with the nature of language learning activities. It looks at both the types of language learning activities and the factors that influence language learning activities. This chapter focuses on classroom activities that teachers use to achieve instructional goals, describes the types of language learning activities commonly used in ESL instruction, and discusses the thinking that teachers do when planning and using activities. By activities, we mean tasks designed to achieve a particular instructional goal. Teachers often begin their lesson planning with the setting of an instructional goal and then design activities based on that goal. Nunan (1989) notes that (teachers) tend to view lessons or units as the basic building blocks of their curriculum. Lessons and units comprise sets of more or less integrated tasks and a variety of actionable exercises. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to integrate learning tasks with lessons (or) units.

Chapter 9 deals with classroom language. Four areas are addressed: the teacher's language of accommodation, the teacher's language of questioning, the teacher's language of feedback, and the language of the students in the classroom. A distinctive feature of the language classroom is that language is both the goal of instruction and the means to achieve that goal. Teachers can have many conflicting concerns. Similarly, students are learning language whether they are interacting with the teacher or with other students in the classroom or completing classroom activity requirements. This chapter focuses on the

linguistic features of these processes and the implications of these features for the language use that occurs in a second or foreign language classroom. Examples include: how teachers vary their language; how teachers ask questions; how teachers provide feedback to students; and classroom interaction language, including the language used by students in completing activities.

This book is an important guide to English classroom teaching at the basic education level and is characterized by the following features: comprehensiveness, guidance, and practicality. The book presents many examples of teaching English as a second language from a unique teacher development perspective, as well as "emergencies" that may occur when teachers first start teaching and how they deal with them. The concept of reflective teaching mentioned in this book, like other inquiry-oriented approaches to teaching, makes different assumptions about the nature of teacher development. This process of reflection on one's teaching is identified as an essential part of growing pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical theory and is, therefore, a key element of professional development throughout a teacher's career. To develop a critically reflective approach to teaching and learning, several important issues in language teaching are explored throughout the book, and Freeman (1992) argues that the central challenge facing teacher education is to understand how teachers identify what they do and how they make sense of and act on new approaches. However, the answers cannot be found simply by placing teachers in research or theory, but rather by building on theories of teaching and learning that teachers themselves have developed, using their knowledge, skills, training, and teaching experiences to explore the answers. And the process of critical reflection that is the focus of this book is an effective way to achieve such professional growth.

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