Current debates and issues in reflective practice

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Current debates
Definitions

Dewey (1933: 15): widely credited for turning attention to the importance of experiential learning and reflective thought as the ‘sole method of escape from the purely impulsive or purely routine action’ and is concerned principally with the relationship between experience, interaction and reflection.
RP has achieved the status of orthodoxy. E.g:

‘the best thing any education can bequeath is the habit of reflection and questioning’ (Grayling 2003: 179).

Moseley et al. (2005) see the highest level of thinking and learning in education as ‘strategic and reflective thinking’
The current place of RP (1)
The current place of RP (2)

BUT....
There is little in the way of data-led research on RP
A need for more evidence from the perspectives of both research and professional development.

AND...
RP needs to be taught for teachers to acquire skills and practices for their own self-development.
Understandings of context (up-close and ecological understandings) are best fostered through RP.
Reflective Practice: criticisms

• This is a typical image of reflective person. What do you notice about it?
Reflective teaching means looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works - a process of self-observation and self-evaluation.

Julie Tice

http://www.flickr.com/photos/eiriknewth/141401878/
Balances

• between Narcissus (reflection) and Icarus (action) (Edge 2011)
• Direction and Reflection (Farr 2011)
• Monologic and Dialogic (Mann and Copland 2010)
• Received knowledge and experiential knowledge (Wallace 1998)
Reflective Practice: criticisms

- RP is described in elusive, general, and vague ways.
- Can lead to ‘faked’ reflections (in assessments)
- There is a lack of concrete, data-led and linguistic detail of RP.
- There is a heavy dependence on written forms rather than dialogic ones.
- RP has not, in most cases, been operationalized in systematic ways.
RP: an applied linguistics perspective

• AL’s main enterprise is the study of ‘real world problems in which language is a central issue’ (Brumfit 1995).

• Language and interaction are central to workplace practices (Drew and Heritage 1992)

• AL’s role in RP:
  a) to facilitate understandings of ‘real-world’ workplace practice;
  b) to evaluate the impact of RP on professional practice;
  c) to enhance understandings of how RP ‘gets done’ by studying the language and interactions of RP.
RP: an applied linguistics perspective

By studying the interaction and language of RP, we aim to promote better understandings of the nature of reflection itself. Two elements:

*The language for reflection*: the tools, practices and frameworks for fine-grained understanding of professional activities;

*The language of reflection*: systematic accounts of the language used in reflection.
Current issues and some problems
A lack of data-led accounts

- Many (most?) accounts of reflection use models, checklists and series of questions to be used as prompts.
- Few have examples of reflection; typically those that do describe reflection use self-reports or short extracts from reflective journals.
- Very little evidence of spoken accounts of reflection, most are written.
- We need more emic (insider) views of reflection, using qualitative interviews and transcripts, alongside classroom observation data.
Focus on the individual

- RP is often presented as an individual process; pays inadequate attention to collaboration or participation in a community of practice.
- C.f. Johns (2000): sharing with a colleague or mentor enables new understandings to be established.
- C.f. Zepke (2003: 170): reflection ‘is a process to help us learn from our own or others’ experiences and to turn that learning into action’
Focus on the individual

• Learning from other colleagues is not the same as co-constructed reflection with a colleague (which is much more in tune with Dewey’s original formulation).
• The value of *dialogic* processes of collaborative reflection.
• Dialogue entails discourse with self, discourse with others, discourse with experiential and received knowledge.
Dominance of written forms of reflection

• Assessment and evaluation may distort the kind of reflection that individuals do.
• Focus of attention becomes the actual writing itself (proforma, checklist, self-evaluation form)
• Can result in inauthentic reflection (Roberts 1998) and even ‘faking it’ (Hobbs 2007)
• May be counter-productive; can easily become ‘mechanical’ and ‘recipe-following’ (Boud, 2010: 27).
The individual and the written ...

- Traditionally reflection associated with book or paper journaling (see in particular, Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, and Mills, 1997; Calderhead and Gates, 1993; Daloglu, 2002; LaBoskey, 1993) has been used.
Increasingly we need to raise awareness of an online environment (as a vehicle for developing reflective practice)

- High volume of interaction (Galanouli & Collins, 2002; Davis & Roblyer, 2005; Yang, 2009);
- Topic-related discussions (Murillo, 2008; Simonsen, Luebeck & Bice, 2009; Bolton & Hramiak, 2012);
- Salazar et al (2010): further work needed on developing the depth of reflections.

Preferable to traditional individual book journaling?
A lack of appropriate tools and practices

• ‘One size fits all’: tools are not sufficiently tailored to the context of use.
• ‘Too much too soon’: the skills of reflection take time to develop and need to be introduced slowly and over time.
• ‘Variety is the spice of life’: a tendency to use one format for reflection, making reflection an institutional requirement.
• ‘Focus on problems not puzzles’: sets up negative connotations and expectations.
Different teacher training/education contexts

- CELTA /‘practicum’/’TP’ in student-teacher learning? Is there space for reflection...?


  - ‘Major opportunity for the student teacher to acquire the practical skills and knowledge needed to function as an effective language teacher’.

  - But ...:
Possible solutions
• Data-led RP

• Dialogic RP

• Appropriate tools for RP
Data-led RP (1)

- To make RP more principled: we need evidence, data.
- The best kind of data is that generated by teachers themselves: classroom recordings, observation by a colleague, test scores, a conversation with a student, a piece of material or ICT.
- Using teachers’ own data helps them become both producers and consumers of research (c.f. Kumaravadivelu 1999).
Understandings of local context

van Lier’s view of ‘ecological research’: any change in the smallest element of the (natural context of the) classroom will have a knock-on effect.

Ecological research pays a great deal of attention to the smallest detail of the interaction: the reflective teacher can learn to ‘read’ the environment to notice such details.

The advantage of this approach is that practice is theorised (theory from practice), in a process where the smallest details (in the data) can be a prompt for reflection and then changes can be implemented and then evaluated (van Lier 2000).
Data-led RP (2)

A: It was really interesting looking closely at this one (.).
I’m beginning to think it might be useful to look again at the way we use observation and discussion tasks (.)
th- (.)
sometimes think they get in the way of the trainees (.)
too much our agenda maybe=

B: =you mean in the actual feedback sessions

A: yeah (.)
the focus needs to come from them more often (.)
if they were more involved in choosing the focus of the observations they’d get more out of it (.)
I might suggest that they use some of Pebblepad discussions to choose an observation focus (.)

Data led RP (3)

What is interesting about this piece of data is that it not only shows how the teacher-trainer is considering how best to promote engagement and reflection (through integrating Pebblepad discussions) but it gives an insight into how a data-led process (the use of transcripts) can lead to new possibilities in practice.

Data here means any form of evidence which helps address a particular issue or puzzle.
Dialogic RP (1)

• Addresses 2 issues: RP is often written and often individual.
• Dialogic RP draws on SCT, highlighting the value of learning, mediated by language and interaction.
• Professional development occurs through discussion and collaboration with another colleague: a dialogic process of questioning and developing new understandings (‘light bulb moments’).
• cooperative development, which involves a ‘Speaker’ and an ‘Understander’ (Edge 2002).
Dialogic RP (2)

T1: I was struck by how much echoing I did before and sometimes there was a justification for it .... but a LOT of the time.... it was just echo for the sake of echo so I was fairly consciously trying NOT to echo this time

T2: And what effect did that (reduced echo) have on the interaction patterns or the involvement of learners in the class, did it have any effect that you noticed?

T1: I think that it made them more confident perhaps in giving me words because it was only going to come back to them if the pronunciation WASn’t right rather than just getting ((1)) straight back to them. When you’re eliciting vocabulary if they’re coming out with the vocabulary and it’s adequate and it’s clear, there’s no need for you to echo it back to the other students .... you’re wasting a lot of time by echoing stuff back.
SETT (self-evaluation of teacher talk)

interactional features of classroom talk: raising awareness of how they impact on language learning...

Scaffolding
Direct repair
Content feedback
Extended wait-time
Referential questions
Seeking clarification

Extended learner turn
Teacher echo
Teacher interruptions
Extended teacher turn
Turn completion
Display questions
Form-focused feedback
1. T1 is reflecting on her use of ‘echo’, a kind of habit.
2. T2 probes (‘what effect did that have?’)
3. T1 ‘light bulb moment’: echo makes learners more confident.
4. Arguably, this realisation may not have occurred without an opportunity to discuss echo and reflect on its effects.
5. Through talk, new realisations and greater insights come about and get their first airing.
悟
Concentrated dialogic energy

Light bulb moments


Cooperative development and ‘Quantum leap’ (Edge 2002)
Appropriate Tools (1)

*Stimulated recall*

- Video-recording plus discussion.
- Allows replay, recap, review and comment.
- Excellent means of raising awareness about specific features of a teacher’s professional practice.
- Can also be used as a stimulus to provide ‘talking-points’ and promote discussion.

(see Lyle, 2003)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1: discographics=</th>
<th>was going to say it’s a false friend but I decided not to because I thought that might confuse her...maybe I misunderstood her now when I look back at it... I understood at the time that she meant that this was a particular industry but maybe she meant a business.... but I wasn’t prepared to spend a long time on that because it didn’t seem important even though there was still a doubt in my mind....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M: =ooh what do you mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1: the people who not the people the (4) the business about music record series and=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: =is this a word you’re thinking of in Basque or Spanish in English I don’t know this word ‘disco-graphics’ what I would say is er (writes on board) like you said ‘the music business’=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1: =the music business? what is the name of of er industry?=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: =the music industry as well it’s actually better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detailed and ‘up-close’

- In order for situated learning to happen tools need to be sufficiently flexible that they can be tailored to specific contexts and facilitate the kind of detailed, up-close, ‘ecological’ (c.f. van Lier, 2000) professional understanding that RP was originally designed to foster.
The language *for* reflection

the aim should be to produce tools and frameworks for fine-grained understanding of professional activities
The language of reflection

the aim should be to produce systematic accounts of the language used in reflection (an analytic challenge for AL)
A way forward?
Reflective Practice: future directions

A need for:

- Better understanding of the processes and impact of RP.
- Data-led accounts in a range of contexts.
- Insights into how RP ‘gets done’.
- A rebalancing of RP towards accounts of spoken, collaborative forms of reflection.
- Appropriate tools for practitioners to embed reflection in their practice.
Innovation in PreSETT

• Edge and Mann (2013)
• 14 PreSETT situations (each focusing one on form of innovation and showing reflection on a particular tool)
• Detail of innovation and evaluation and how this fostered reflection
• On-line grammar use (pre-course)
• Ethnographic notes informing observation (Mexico)
• Portfolio assessment (Bulgaria)
• Pebblepad on-line reflection (UK)
• Workplace shadowing (Northern Cyprus)
• Corpus-driven approach (Northern Cyprus)
改善
Kaizen
改善
To make better
Kaizen [the translation of kai (“change”) zen (“good”) is “improvement”]

• The practice of continuous engagement and quality improvement within one’s teaching.
• Innovation being based on many small changes rather than radical changes.
• Ideas for change and improvement can come from teachers and students themselves.
• Teachers take ownership for their work and related improvements.
Are you looking for ways to use video in language teaching and learning?

The European funded educational project Video for ALL brings together current digital video ideas and innovative practices for teaching and learning languages.

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**Introduction**

Today is the video age, with many possibilities for integrating video in to language learning. Language learning is a multi-sensory process and video allows communicative learning skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, with one resource.

Video for ALL will be the European project that will bring together all current methodologies, ideas and innovative practices to teach and learn.
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