

Book reviews

Reflectivity in Pre-Service Teacher Education: A Survey of Theory and Practice

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The most recent publication by Danuta Gabryś-Barker, *Reflectivity in Pre-Service Teacher Education: A Survey of Theory and Practice*, concerns the nature of reflection and the development of reflectivity among preservice teachers. Despite all the novelties that have found their way into the foreign language classroom and the shift of attention from the teacher to the learner, teachers still remain an indispensable element of the educational mosaic. The extent to which teachers may exert a positive influence on the learning process undoubtedly depends on their ability to develop "reflective awareness" of themselves, and to communicate openly and empathetically with their learners. As the French writer Ernest Dimnet once said: "The object of reflection is invariably the discovery of something satisfying to the mind which was not there at the beginning of the search" (1930, p. 24; translation MD). It seems warranted to say that it is essential to introduce prospective teachers to the practice of reflection as early as possible in the course of teacher training.

In the light of the above, the publication under review provides an inspiring opportunity to learn how effective instruction in reflective teaching can

be successfully implemented in various teacher training programmes. The additional value of the book comes from the fact that its content can be inspiring not only for novice teachers, but also for experienced practitioners who are at any stage of their professional development, assuming that they are still willing enough to develop their personal and professional reflectivity.

The book is divided into five chapters, followed by an epilogue and an appendix containing unedited sample diary entries. The opening chapter (Chapter 1), "Teachers as a Professional Group," depicts teachers as a unique group of experts, with a specific focus on preservice teachers. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on teachers' motivation, attitudes and beliefs, all of which have a direct influence on their perception of the roles they perform in the classroom. In addition, the chapter discusses the issue of teachers' professional development at different stages of their career. Chapter 2, "Reflectivity in Teacher Development," offers a more theoretical approach towards teacher professional development, with the main emphasis being placed on the construct of productive reflectivity, which can be developed through various teacher training programmes as well as through action research applied in the classrooms. Chapter 3, entitled "From Critical Incidents to Critical Events in Classroom Practice," provides a theoretical background necessary for in-depth understanding of the concept of a critical incident, which is the main unit of analysis in the empirical part of the book. Moreover, the chapter takes a closer look at the impact of teachers' perceptions of themselves on the process of language instruction. The additional value of the chapter lies in the inclusion of selected examples of critical incidents from various published empirical studies, which enables the reader to gain insight into the research data presented in the consecutive chapters of the book. Chapter 4, "Diary Studies in Developing Teachers' Reflectivity," introduces the teacher diary as an effective tool that can be employed during the process of reflection. Furthermore, the author includes a number of examples of diary use taken from various educational projects. Additional reflection on diary writing by preservice teachers paves the way for the ultimate, empirical chapter of the book (Chapter 5) entitled "A Study of Pre-Service Teachers' Development Through Diary Use." It contains a discussion of diary entries collected from preservice teachers who identify and analyze almost 300 critical incidents over a period of one academic year. The study focuses predominantly on trainee teachers who are still involved in the process of developing their professional qualifications. As a result, a question arises whether more experienced teachers will find this publication worth reaching for, since it describes experiences which they may find difficult to relate to.

"Epilogue," the final part of the book, discusses classroom-based research and focused diary writing as effectual means of developing productive reflectivity in training programmes for teachers, as well as highlighting the significance of teachers' personal involvement and their personalized approach to professional devel-

opment. Teachers' personal involvement may be difficult to observe among teachers in the Polish educational context, since there seems to be a problem of personal identification with the teaching profession among them. Furthermore, Polish educators are often not willing to involve themselves in any form of professional development, mainly due to their instrumental approach to teaching practice.

Gabrys-Barker states that "teaching is a learning process and insofar as it is a process it is longitudinal" (p. 11). Some experienced teachers may believe that they have already developed a sufficient set of teaching practices and they do not need to become more reflective. Such an attitude may lead to undesirable routine behaviors or even professional burnout. No matter what their teaching experience is, educators should never stop learning, reflecting and modifying their behavior. Therefore, this book should not only be considered as a perfect tool for reflection among preservice teachers, but it can also help other, more experienced educators to improve their teaching practices and rediscover their enthusiasm for teaching. The study presented in the book undoubtedly proves that diaries may serve as a valuable source of information to be analyzed and reflected upon, under the condition that pre-service teachers are willing to remain systematic and honest in their diary writing. Furthermore, pre-service teachers, despite their eagerness, may not be experienced enough to reflect upon important educational issues and they will either give up writing, or focus mainly on survival techniques, unless supported by an experienced mentor, someone who will aid them in going through their process of reflection.

What makes this book a valuable asset to the field of teacher training is the fact that it is not only well-grounded in theory but also touches upon a number of practical issues for further analysis and discussion. What is worth stressing yet again, it has great potential not only as a useful guide for in-service teachers, but also as a valuable tool to be used in training programmes for preservice teachers, whose major concern in the initial stages of their careers is their own teaching performance.

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Learning and Teaching English: Insight From Research

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Luciana Pedrazzini, Andrea Nava

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The volume *Learning and Teaching English: Insights From Research*, edited by Luciana Pedrazzini and Andrea Nava, offers a comprehensive and valuable contribution to an integrated approach to second language acquisition (SLA), corpus linguistics and language teaching. The papers concerning the three different but interrelated areas contribute to opening up perspectives on how they can be fruitfully combined in applied linguistics (AL), both from a theoretical and a practical, language classroom point of view, thus benefiting all agents involved – researchers, teacher trainers, teachers and learners. As the editors highlight in the introduction entitled “Taking Stock of Research in Applied Linguistics: Implications for Second Language Pedagogy,” the volume intends to shed light on current AL research from different European perspectives in the fields of SLA, corpus linguistics and language teaching. These broad areas correspond to the three sections into which the volume is organized, each containing papers “by European researchers investigating the contents, the processes and the tools of language learning and language teaching through different methodological approaches” (p. 10).

The first section, "Second Language Acquisition Research," opens with V. Cook's "Some Issues for SLA Research," where the author analyses five issues central to SLA research: interlanguage, characteristics of L2 learners, and the acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, and writing. It is shown how interlanguage cannot be considered in defective-only terms, but rather as including L2 users "distinctive qualities in their own right independent of monolinguals" (p. 42) and of native speakers. Cook discusses the concept of multicompetence, showing that L2 users think, and use the languages in their repertoires, in ways that are different from those of monolinguals, displaying increased language awareness and greater effectiveness in their L1, too. The author also problematizes the notion of "the earlier, the better," not least in connection to native-like-set proficiency attainment targets. Indeed, in our contemporary societies multilingualism and multilingual children increasingly represent the norm rather than an exception: "A second language is not an afterthought but a core element of human existence" (p. 63). This complexity ought to be dealt with by integrating SLA perspectives with those of language teaching, linguistics and psychology.

In "Researching Grammar Learning Strategies: State of the Art," M. Pawlak provides a comprehensive overview of research concerning language learning strategies, with particular reference to those related to grammar learning (GLS), a field which has recently seen a lively research interest in Poland, too. The author puts forward a comprehensive taxonomy to investigate GLS, which include metacognitive, affective, social and cognitive strategies; cognitive strategies are further subdivided into four subgroups: those "aiding the production and comprehension of grammar in communication tasks," "employed in developing explicit knowledge of grammar," "employed in developing implicit knowledge of grammar" and "applied in dealing with corrective feedback" (pp. 79-80). Findings from the author's study suggest that several variables are at work in GLS use, at times in contrasting ways. This points to the need for further investigation in this area, highly relevant in language teaching, particularly "with respect to the performance of specific tasks focusing on learning and using grammatical structures" (p. 87), communicative tasks in the first place.

A. Nava's contribution "'SLA in Action': Raising Teachers' Awareness of English Lexicogrammar and its Acquisition" focuses on the complex interrelation between SLA research and second language pedagogy and practice. Drawing on findings from the "SLA in Action" research project, a model is set forth and it is arguably suggested that classroom researchers and teacher trainers play a pivotal role in connecting research and practice. The concept of KAL ("knowledge about language and language learning," p. 91) appears central in fostering teachers' ability to interrelate these dimensions both with "a declarative and procedural dimension" (p. 92) and with SLA tenets and pedagogical

cal classroom practices. Awareness of KAL seems to have been so far largely neglected in teacher training courses in Italy; the approach proposed by the author, together with a teacher training package for pre-service and in-service courses, are thus very much welcome. The proposal combines experiential learning, reflection, restructuring and planning, of which the sample module at the end of the chapter indeed provides a valuable illustration. The same perspective is taken by L. Pedrazzini in her contribution "SLA Properties From Practice: The Input Hypothesis." After an exhaustive overview section on input in SLA approaches and on Krashen's input hypothesis, the author discusses the implications of findings from her case study in teacher education terms. The need for a deeper interrelation between knowledge of SLA principles (Krashen's input hypothesis in this case) and consistent actual classroom practices clearly emerges as paramount, with SLA researchers and teacher educators playing an important mediating role.

The second section of the volume, "Corpus Linguistics Research," opens with L. Pinnavaia's contribution "Learning Idioms With Corpora: The Case of Food and Drink," dealing with the area of idiomatic expressions, which is often problematic for foreign language learners. The author discusses how corpora such as the BNC (British National Corpus) and the BoE (Bank of English) can constitute a valuable pedagogic resource in terms of real language performance. Possible patterns of idiom use and of their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic nature can be explored by means of corpora, and they can provide insights into the textual environment of idioms and their "real," nonstatic and foregrounding use, thus also making learning more memorable and eventually effective. In "How Bilingual Dictionaries Became More Learner-Friendly? A Study on Collocations in Three Editions of a Bilingual English-Italian Dictionary," B. Berti uses the BNC corpus and collocational dictionaries to examine ten English nouns, together with their Italian counterparts, in the semantic field of education. The author looks into their collocational patterns as represented in the three editions (1961, 1990, 2008) of the *Garzanti-Hazon* bilingual English-Italian dictionary. Her findings show that word collocations and their combinatorial properties have not always been fully taken into account, not least in pointing out differences between British and American varieties of English. Indeed, corpora can constitute a privileged source in the compilation of bilingual dictionaries, which represent a relevant reference and didactic tool in teaching and learning. M.T. Prat Zagrebelsky well complements the section on corpora offering a comprehensive view of their potential pedagogic advantages in "Using Corpora to Explore Language and Learner Language." The author points out that corpora can constitute a valuable teaching tool in several ways, from the exploration of "areas of language use not covered in a satisfactory way by grammars and dictionaries," to the creation of ad hoc corpora "to carry

out linguistic projects," as well as the compilation and analysis of "learner corpora in order to reflect on learner language" (p. 188). By illustrating three projects that can be carried out by teachers and students to explore and perceive the complex dynamics of "real language" use, the author convincingly shows how corpora such as the International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English Corpus Collection (ICAME), the International Corpus of English (ICE), the BNC, the BoE or the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), as well as other freely available ones, can constitute invaluable classroom resources to investigate different aspects of language use. The same perspective is adopted by F. Meunier, who, in her contribution "Learner Corpora in the Classroom: A Useful and Sustainable Didactic Resource," illustrates how involving students in learner corpora can indeed facilitate positive, productive analysis and monitoring of their productions. The author, highlighting the need to foster teachers' awareness of the importance of making use of corpora in their practices, also provides practical suggestions to exploit learner corpora in pedagogic activities "as useful and sustainable didactic resources" (p. 214). Several among the resources available on the Internet to support teachers' engagement in taking on this type of approach are illustrated, too. A. Nava and L. Pedrazzini close this section with their contribution "Investigating L2 Spoken English Through the Role Play Learner Corpus." The authors describe an exploratory study carried out at the University of Milan looking into learners' awareness of spoken grammar features, and intended to highlight similarities and differences with native speakers in the use of tails and of discourse markers 'YES' and 'YEAH' in a learner corpus of role-play interactions. The authors discuss implications of their findings in terms of course syllabuses and activities, highlighting the "need for explicit teaching of spoken grammar in L2 curricula," particularly in relation to pragmatic competence (p. 245).

The last section, "Language Teaching Research," is introduced by M. C. Rizzardi in "*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Implications for the Italian Language Teacher. Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice.*" The author digs into the manifold opportunities the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) can offer in planning effective language learning tasks and objectives, which do not seem as yet to have been fully exploited. A series of guidelines stemming from a research project with Italian teachers are put forward, aimed at encouraging language teachers to develop reflective and action-oriented pedagogic practices, not least in a *curricolo verticale* perspective to link aims, practices and outcomes between different school levels. Exemplificatory guidance grids are provided with thorough reflection on the process, where the CEFR constitutes a starting point in the development of learning outcomes, aims (tasks and texts) as well as competences and strategies. Indeed, the CEFR can represent a challenge for

language teachers; however, its “putting into action encourages the teachers to reflect on their daily decision-making practice from the learner’s perspective and from the point of view of performance” (p. 276).

In “Language Issues in the CLIL Classroom: Focus on the Pupils” C. M. Coonan discusses a research project aimed at investigating learner foreign language production in CLIL classes in five high-school contexts. Findings show how communicative competence and collaborative negotiation of meaning appear to be characteristic features of CLIL lessons, above all of group work. Accuracy seems a problematic point, together with the difficulty for weaker learners to capitalise on the experience, and the ability to produce longer stretches of language. Synergy between language and subject teachers thus emerges as a fundamental issue in providing adequate methodological support while planning and carrying out CLIL-based activities, not least in tuning the teaching styles of the content and language subjects involved. Enhanced language learning and the development of language competence in the foreign language can be fostered by several factors, such as didactic modes involving student interaction, focus on form by the teacher, and the provision of language structures prior to lessons.

L. Mariani’s contribution “Researching High School Students’ Beliefs About Language Learning” discusses findings from a 612-participant research study carried out in Italian high schools. By relying on metaphor analysis, the research uncovered how assumptions and beliefs constitute a “hidden curriculum.” The action-research orientation of the study allowed subsequent reflection on findings, benefiting the way in which teachers viewed “talking about learning and teaching,” as well as their relationships with learners. The implications of findings can of course be related to the role played by motivational constructs: instrumental motivation emerges as internally-related (“the perception of the opportunities that knowing a language can offer,” p. 326), and integrative motivation is a strong factor, sometimes connected to an unrealistic, idealized native speaker model. It is also noteworthy that “most students expressed a view of language as a tool for communication and a bridge to intercultural understanding” (p. 327).

The section closes with K. Doro’s chapter “The Importance of Advanced L2 Vocabulary in Academic Contexts: A Hungarian Example.” The contribution is related to first-year English university students in Hungary, with particular reference to issues such as vocabulary improvement, which are well explored in the introductory section. The academic language needs of advanced students of English attending English-medium higher education courses are then discussed, and key research issues which could be further explored in other contexts are highlighted.

The volume tackles a variety of topics, albeit all interrelated, within the fascinating, complex and ever-developing research fields covered in the three

sections. The different perspectives included provide a comprehensive, complementary and intermingling view of contributions made to SLA and language teaching in the different fields of enquiry. The practical implications for teacher education and classroom practices are always highlighted. One possible suggestion for improvement could be the inclusion of more overt references to the developing and vibrant field of English as a lingua franca (ELF) research, for instance to ELF corpora (VOICE¹ and ELFA²), to the problematization of SLA-related issues, as well as to the implications for language teaching (and learning); this could indeed complement the challenging issues presented in the volume, providing an additional and relevant perspective.

It is certainly worth mentioning that the volume stems from the Conference “Learning and Teaching English: What the Research in English Applied Linguistics Has to Say” organized by the University of Milan in April 2010, which was open both to researchers and teachers and thus constituted an extremely valuable opportunity to interrelate research in AL and SLA with classroom practices. To conclude, edited volume represents a stimulating and challenging opportunity for reflection on the significant and relevant contributions that diversified fields of enquiry can provide to integrate research, reflection and teaching practices. The interrelated perspectives emerging from the contributions in the volume constitute indeed a valuable tool, particularly in these challenging times, when foreign language education and all its agents – that is, researchers, teachers, teacher trainers and language learners alike – are faced with increasingly demanding educational tasks.

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¹ <http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/>

² <http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/elfacorpus>

*Language Teacher Education for a Global Society:
A Modular Model for Knowing, Analyzing,
Recognizing, Doing and Seeing*

Author:

B. Kumaravadivelu

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Language Teacher Education for a Global Society: A Modular Model for Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing is another important contribution by Professor B. Kumaravadivelu from the Department of Linguistics and Language Development at San José State University's College of Humanities and the Arts. Just like *Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching* (2003) or *Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Postmethod* (2006), this book is a state-of-the-art, perfect response to the call for providing language teacher education models in the times of rapid economic, cultural, and educational globalization.

The structure of the book is very clear. It consists of a preface, followed by seven chapters. Although not very long (148 pages), the book succinctly presents a skeleton for second/foreign language teacher education comprising five modules referred to by the acronym KARDS (*Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing*). In the first chapter, the author offers the rationale for his model, resorting to five global "post" perspectives (*postnational, postmodern, postcolonial, posttransmission, and*

postmethod) and three “p” principles (*particularity, practicality, and possibility*). The next five chapters explain in detail the particular modules of KARDS, which signify particular competencies in the contemporary language teacher’s repertoire: “Knowing” – how to build a professional, personal, and procedural knowledge base (Chapter 2), “Analyzing” – how to analyze learner needs, motivation, and autonomy (Chapter 3), “Recognizing” – how to recognize one’s own identities, beliefs, and values as a teacher (Chapter 4), “Doing” – how to teach, theorize, and dialogize (Chapter 5), and “Seeing” – how to see one’s teaching from the perspectives of the learner, teacher, and observer (Chapter 6). The final chapter provides the culmination of the model; Kumaravadivelu discusses possible practical implications of conceiving and delivering language teaching models that are sensitive to local contexts, reminding the reader that his modular suggestion is only meant to provide guidelines that teacher education programmers might take into account.

There are a number of cogent reasons why Kumaravadivelu’s monograph makes an important addition to the literature on language teacher education. First of all, the book references current knowledge of other disciplines affecting language teacher education. The model presented does not favor any one particular module; for example, the teacher’s knowledge about language, traditionally understood as supreme, is given equal footing with her ability to promote learner autonomy or recognize the values underlying her personal approach to language teaching. This makes the model extremely timely, since the positivist paradigm is still dominant in many an educational context, and despite numerous voices arguing for revisiting the roles assumed by language teachers, the traditional role of the teacher as knowledge provider is, regrettably, still popular in school realities.

It should also be added that few language acquisition-related books are so logically and comprehensively written. The language teacher preparation scaffold is very well presented, which makes it easy for the reader to grasp and retain. This advantage cannot be ignored as good understanding of the concept affects its implementation in the sense that what seems a vital element in the interdependent module model is more likely to be considered as realistic and doable, and thus transferred into practice. This is an important argument, because many otherwise viable contributions in the field are frequently regarded as too theoretical for practical application. This ability to write in such a comprehensible and logical way demonstrates the scholarly ingeniousness of Kumaravadivelu, who is able to convey so much in such a straightforward way.

A feature contributing to the “friendly” aspect of the book for the teaching context is a set of tasks presented at the end of each module consisting of “Rapid Reader Responses,” “Reflective Tasks,” and “Exploratory Projects.” Rapid reader responses are four questions demanding of the reader rapid answers about the contents of the chapters, and thanks to them the reader can immediately see what needs rereading or – an innovative step to make readers think about the book – what questions the chapter leaves unanswered. Reflective tasks aim at

eliciting more reflective and less spontaneous responses, and can motivate the reader to look at the familiar issues in a new and more critical way. Exploratory projects, in turn, can make students investigate their local contexts and even initiate larger research studies. It can be said that this approach of presenting theoretical input supplemented by activities prompting readers' responses at both deeper and more superficial levels is a very supportive modern approach to writing a book to serve students, in-service teachers, and teacher educators. Thanks to such a layout, the book enables readers to, using the author's words, "theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize."

The book seems so successful that finding its drawbacks is not an easy task. But however attracted to its content and structure as I am, I cannot resist the feeling that at times all these diagrams, alliterating names of principles, symmetry, well-balanced choices of terminology, and so forth, might be a product of coining the nomenclature for the sake of coining it or going for a good-looking textual structure rather than communicating a first-rate piece of the author's input, be it his knowledge or his experience. On the other hand, Kumaravadivelu presents a modular model, and how can you discuss such a model in a way appealing to the reader without relying upon such devices as regularity, logicality, and symmetry?

I very much recommend this book to all those involved in education who want to see language teacher education restructured in the face of accelerating globalization and the changing role of the teacher. As the awareness of these issues grows, I would suggest that educators read B. Kumaravadivelu's 2012 book, in which his response to these challenges in the form of a modular model of language teacher education for a global society is introduced and presented in detail.

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