

REVIEW

Thomas Farrell: REFLECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE. Continuum, 2007.

Two concepts currently in vogue in language teacher education are collaboration and reflection. Both are related, although reflection is probably the superordinate concept. It is possible to be reflective without collaborating, although I would argue that collaboration can greatly increase the quality of reflection. Without reflection, collaboration is of little value. Farrell covers both concepts in his book. While the focus is on reflection, collaboration also features prominently, particularly in the chapters on teacher development groups, classroom observations, and critical friendships.

I should declare my position at the outset. This is a book that I wish I had written! While it covers some of the same terrain as that traversed by a book I did co-author (Bailey *et al.*, 2001), it does so from a different angle. Additionally, each book covers topics not covered by the other, and is therefore complementary. In fact, I used both in a professional development program that I taught not so long ago. Concepts are presented with admirable clarity, and Farrell's voice as well as his extensive experience in language teacher education and development are evident on almost every page.

Each chapter in the book follows a set pattern, which gives a sense of coherence to the volume: an introduction, review of the literature, a case study relating to the topic at hand drawn from Farrell's own experience, a section entitled *From research to practice*, which sets out practical ideas for getting started on implementing the topic, and a chapter scenario, which is, in effect, another mini-case study based on someone else's experience. Each of the main sections in the book is followed by a set of questions for the reader to reflect on. The book thus becomes a training manual, not only just for developing skills in action research, keeping journals, classroom observation, and so on, but also for developing a reflective attitude on the part of the reader. In this way, the medium becomes the message.

While the substantive focus of the majority of chapters is on classroom management and methodology, that is, on teaching/learning, one chapter is devoted to language proficiency. Given the fact that the majority of foreign language instructors are non-native speakers of the language they teach, this is a critically important issue. In the case of English, the explosion in the demand for English globally has driven many institutions, both public and private, to employ as English teachers, practitioners whose own command of the language may be inadequate. I realize that this begs the question of exactly what *is* an adequate command of English for teaching purposes. Putting that aside, it is good to see books such as this dealing directly with an issue which is too often either ignored or overlooked.

Although the subtitle of the book is 'From research to practice', the focus is firmly on practice, and the heart of the volume resides in the rich array of case studies and scenarios as well as the reflection points that punctuate each chapter. This is a book for practitioners: teachers and teacher educators—a 'how to' volume. I imagine that researchers will be somewhat underwhelmed by the research sections that initiate each chapter and that are intended to summarize what the research has to say about the topic at hand. For me this is not a problem. This book is unashamedly practice oriented. However, enough signposts are provided to the relevant research literature for readers who want to look in greater detail at the empirical basis of particular topics.

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REFERENCE

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