

MODULE 5

5.7 – PRINCIPLES OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

In this final video, we will talk about a very important component of the life of a teacher: reflective practice. In the world of language education, teachers are supposed to rethink their knowledge of teaching and learning while reflecting on their practices so as to avoid mistakes and repetitions. This reflection allows them to understand how their knowledge and beliefs intertwine in their daily practice.

According to some scholars we may deal with three different kinds of reflection: reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action and reflection-for-action.

In the first case, teachers are supposed to take the time after their lessons to stop and think about what is happening in their practice to make sense of it, so that they can learn from their experiences.

Besides, reflective practice should happen also during lessons so as to solve problems and situations at hand. This reflection-in-action can be used along with reflection-on-action to direct a teacher's future decisions.

Finally reflection-for-action is used to think about future actions so as to change or modify one's own practice.

In a sense, we might say that reflective practice is a cognitive process thanks to which teachers collect data about their work to be used so as to make informed decisions about their activities in class. In order to collect such data, one can make use of a variety of means such as teaching journals, critical friends, teacher development groups and action research.

Let's start from teaching journals first: these journals allow teachers to record data concerning their work that can be reviewed, interpreted and analysed later. Writing helps explore your own beliefs and actions, become aware your teaching styles and monitor your progress. Moreover, you can share such journals with your colleagues and have them express their opinions. This possibility leads us to our second reflective practice method, that of critical friends.

Critical friends are fellow teachers who can encourage and help you reflect on your actions and your teaching styles in order to gain a deeper understanding of what you are doing. This modality allows you to develop a positive and trusting relationship with your colleagues.

Third, the same group dynamics animate the teacher development groups, i.e. groups of teachers working together on classroom issues so as to generate more ideas and grow together. These groups can work within schools, in school districts or on the Internet.

Fourth, we also have classroom observations, that can help teachers become aware of what is really happening in their classroom and can be carried out alone, in pairs or in small groups, reviewing what is written in observation schedules or in tapes. Five, action research can be associated with reflective practice, as it is connected to a particular issue. Even in this case, teachers can carry out their research to improve their practice, solve a problem and create an action plan to implement and monitor their progress.

As you can see, there are different methods you can use to think about your teaching style and improve your skills. In fact, you surely must remember that there is no end to the learning journey, especially when you are a teacher.

References

Farrell, T.S.C. (2018) Reflective Practice for Language Teachers, The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching, First Edition. Ed. by John I. Lontas, John Wiley & Sons Inc.