

# Chapter 10

## The Critical Language Reflection Tool: Promoting Critical Reflection and Critical Consciousness in TESOL Educators

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### ABSTRACT

*Critical reflection is an integral part of the teaching and learning process that requires educators to reflect on their assumptions and practices to promote equity in their classrooms. While critical reflection practices and frameworks have been proposed in teacher education, a TESOL-specific tool that engages with the unique complexities of world Englishes has not been developed. The current chapter, thus, engages in critical praxis by providing an evidence-based, step-by-step reflection tool for TESOL educators to enact inquiry. The reflection tool is called the critical language reflection tool, which offers open-ended questions surrounding assumption analysis, contextual awareness, and reflection-based action. Moreover, it applies a critical lens to the TESOL international teaching standards to help TESOL educators and teacher educators foster critical consciousness in TESOL classroom contexts.*

### INTRODUCTION

To confront the historic inequities and injustices inherent to global English language education, TESOL practitioners should endeavor to become adept at critically analyzing their teaching practices and contexts. This requires engagement in ongoing inquiry that examines personal assumptions about language; situates beliefs and biases about language within social, political, and historical contexts; and challenges TESOL educators to reimagine their practice as emancipatory. To facilitate critical reflection and transformation, this chapter presents the Critical Language Reflection Tool (CLRT). Situated at the intersection of

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Liu's (2015) transformative learning framework and best practices offered by the TESOL International Association, the CLRT acts as a guide to help language instructors and teacher educators participate in critical inquiry. Learning activities and portraits of practice sections will demonstrate applications of the CLRT in a variety of pre-service and in-service TESOL educator contexts. The chapter concludes with a discussion of next steps in the development and implementation of the CLRT.

## CONCEPT

For decades, reflection has been regarded as an essential teaching practice and widely included in teacher preparation programs. Educational theorists and leaders, such as John Dewey, believed that effective teaching entailed a reflective component beyond the scope of technical expertise (Zeichner, 1981-1982). Dewey elaborated that “reflection is an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds supporting it and future conclusions to which it lends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 6). From Dewey's perspective, reflective thinking differed from casual thought in its intentionality. While he considered thinking a natural function, he determined that rigorous reflective thought included processes and practices that could be taught and developed over time (Jones & Jones, 2013). Moreover, Dewey identified three attitudes that are critical for teachers to nurture in order for meaningful reflection to occur: open mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Teachers at all experience levels need to exhibit and develop these three prerequisite dispositions to deepen their reflective processes.

Teacher reflective practice in the context of TESOL has been the subject of recent scholarly discourse (Best, 2011; Cirocki et al., 2014; Farrell, 2015; Farrell, 2019; Gun, 2010; Tinker Sachs & Ho, 2011). Farrell (2015), for example, developed a framework for reflecting on practice for TESOL educators that consists of five different stages of reflection: philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. Practical reflection frameworks such as Farrell's (2015) are helpful in engaging pre-service and in-service TESOL practitioners in reflection that can benefit overall professional development, enhance instruction, and contribute to student language learning.

Yet, reflection on practice alone is not enough because schooling, especially English as an additional language education, occurs within the complexities of diverse, multilingual societies and intersecting narratives. A turn in the field of TESOL that focuses on the development of Freire's (1973) critical consciousness in teachers is necessary to raise awareness of and empower action to confront the injustices inherent in language education and policy. As Chan and Comey (2020) assert, TESOL educators should actively address micro to macro-level inequities by “establish[ing] ongoing processes to be reflexive about their biases and how their positionality affects their understanding of equity. Educators must examine how they welcome, communicate, and value one another's ways of being and knowing” (p. 5). Hence, expanding teacher reflection to include critical internal and external examination could result in more equitable and just outcomes.

Recent scholars have challenged reflective practice to extend beyond the analysis of classroom pedagogical decisions by incorporating aspects of situated *critical reflection* that examine and deconstruct the social and political contexts of schooling. As Smyth (1989) explains:

*Locating or situating teaching in a broader cultural, social, and political context amounts to engaging in critical reflection about the assumptions that underlie those methods and classroom practices. Regarded*

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