

## Perspectives on Professionalism “Reflection-In-Action” And “Reflection-On-Action” Practice in Foreign Language Teaching



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**ABSTRACT:** This work is divided into two main parts: the first discusses the term ‘professionalism’ in general, with particular focus on the idea of professionalism in education and teaching. The second part discusses my own use of a type of professional practice called “reflection in and on action”, where I reflect on my teaching practice in lessons on morphology, and on my practice in creating a website for students.

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### INTRODUCTION

A professional is an individual trained and skilled in the aspects of a particular area of specialization. Profession in itself is the actual area of specialization that involves a particular vocation for human consumption, to aid humanity or make life better (Carr, 2010). Professions have been known to include formal and informal sector work, thriving from personnel who are experienced in what they do and are skilled in these areas (Pollard and Hawkins, 2009).

In the field of education, to become a professional teacher or educator and enhance learning effectively, whether for young or adult learners, or in work-based settings, requires high levels of experience, skill and training. Professional development is regarded as the backbone of a successful educational system, where successful learning appears. Professionalism has become an important feature for most occupations, and not, as it may have been previously, exclusive to certain domains like the field of medicine.

Recent rapid changes and improvements in education have raised the importance of high-quality, effective teachers and teaching methods. There are increasing demands for teachers to undertake continuing professional development, as it a well-trained, up-to-date teacher can be key to learners’ achievement.

This paper addresses the issue of professionalism from an educational perspective, focusing on reflective practice at university level. I will reflect on my personal experience as a language teacher at a university and show how I use reflective practice to improve my own teaching skills. I believe that teachers need the time and space to reflect on their practice, research findings and new teaching methods if they are to improve professionally and provide the best learning experience for their students. As Dewey (1974, cited by Schön, 1987: 312) put it:

It requires candor and sincerity to keep track of failures as well as successes and to estimate the relative degree of success obtained. It requires trained and acute observation to note the indications of progress in learning, and even more to detect their causes – a much more highly skilled kind of observation than is needed to note the results of mechanically applied tests. Yet the progress of a science of education depends upon the systematic accumulation of just this sort of material.

In this paper, I will try to prove the effectiveness of reflective practice as used by teachers to improve their professional development. Quality of teaching is one of the most effective factors in the learning process: Barber and Mourshed (2007) state that the quality of education system cannot be greater than the quality of its teachers.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several definitions of the term ‘professionalism’, and what it means to be a professional. One such definition of professionalism is “the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or professional person” (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition, 1993 [Merriam-Webster Incorporated]: 930), and another, more in-depth one from Evetts (2012:3) reads:

Professionalism was initially interpreted as an occupational or normative value, as something worth preserving and promoting in

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work and by and for workers. Then later four developments interpreted professionalism as a discourse, and to an extent this has combined the occupational value and the ideological interpretations. Certainly there are real advantages in the analysis of professionalism as the key analytical concept in explanations and interpretations about professional knowledge-based work, occupations and practitioners.

During trying to find a exact definition for the term 'professionalism', I discovered that people perceive professionalism in different ways. In his work, Evans (2015: 3) broadly examined the meaning of professionalism, and summarized the various definitions and views:

In the literature a range of views (Evetts, 2013; Freidson, 2001; Gewirtz et al., 2009; Nixon, 2001; Noordegraaf, 2007, 2013; Ozga, 1995; Troman, 1996) represent professionalism variously as, *inter alia*: a form of occupational control; a socially constructed and dynamic entity; a mode of social co-ordination; the application of knowledge to specific cases; the use of knowledge as social capital; a normative values system that incorporates consideration of standards, ethics, and quality of service; the basis of the relationship between professionals and their clients or publics; a source of specific identity/ies; and a basis and determinant of social and professional status and power.

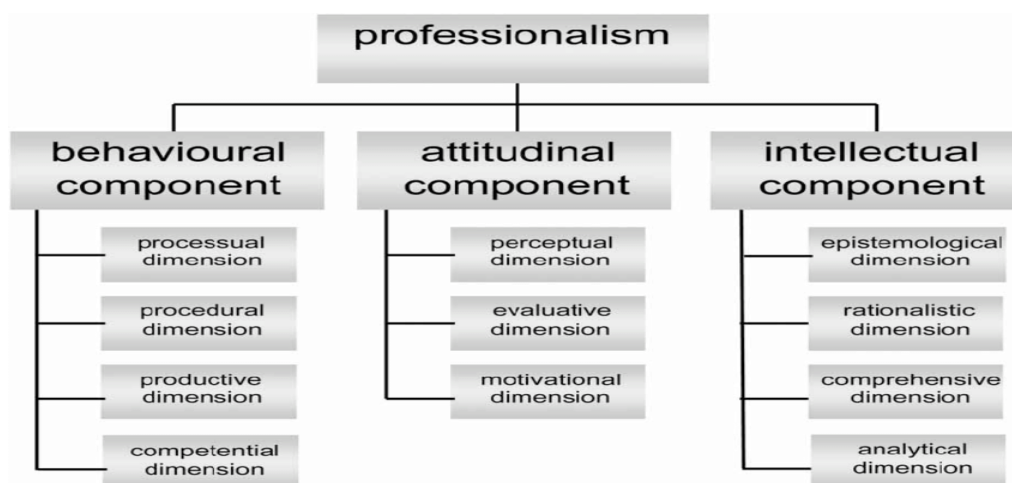
So, according to Evans (2015) we can realize that that professionalism is linked to what individuals do in their lives or work, in which way they accomplished things, how do they obtain their knowledge and what approaches do they use to get this knowledge, how they perform, what their role is, and what their objectives are.

Hight (2006) wrote that, regardless of the vocation, everyone should strive to show a sense of professional acumen. Massey and Vineyard (2011) believe that in as much as society expects the best out of every individual that serves them, they ought to offer the best service as well. Rogers (2012) also shares similar sentiments in his book *Practical Teaching in Emergency Medicine* by stating that “due to the extreme demands placed upon physicians, students should quickly learn positive traits in health such as communication skills and professionalism. Indeed, many job environments demand professionalism and traits such as due diligence and hard work”.

Professionalism and professional practice in the field of education is seen as an area where educators’ knowledge is improved with skilful teaching qualities that reflect successfully on the teaching profession. It is seen as a reflection that involves the clear documenting and understanding of the learning practice (Farrell, 2012).

### PROFESSIONALISM IN EDUCATION

We can indicate from the parts above that the concept of professionalism (in teaching or elsewhere) can prove challenging to pin down, with no reliable, fixed definition as the concept is subject to change over time (Evans, 2015) due to the changing nature of the world (Hargreaves, 2000). Evans considers professionalism to be a combination of different components, illustrated in Figure 1 (below).



(taken from: Evans, 2015)

For some researchers, such as Ibrahim (2012), the main element of professionalism (in teaching, particularly) is having an academic degree. This stems from the belief that qualifications are the most important concern for teachers, as their acquisition improves expertise and knowledge. Other researchers (Calvert and Tirima, 2016) consider both expertise and experience to be vital to professionalism.

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Sachs (2003: 185) stated that professional standards for teachers have significant potential to “provide the necessary provocation for teachers to think about their work, classroom activities and professional identity”, which emphasizes the need for a basis and direction during training in order to improve self-motivated professional development.

In my own case, after completing my Master’s degree and returning to my position in Saudi Arabia, I was involved in the teacher training program, which included observing teachers’ first time in practice. Fortunately, the university provided a list of standards that were to be covered by trainees, making it easier for me, as an observer, and for them, as trainees, to follow a basic foundation. The experience made me aware of the importance such published standards for teachers’ professional development. In Saudi Arabia, standards of this sort need also to be applied not only for trainees but for working teachers to assist their continuing professional development.

In education, the term ‘continuing professional development’ indicates that educators and teachers develop their practice through critical thinking in order to present the best services. Burant (2014) argues that anyone can be a teacher. Some researchers define the word ‘teacher’ simply as one who teaches, others believe that a ‘teacher’ focuses on curricula and assessment while an ‘educator’ is someone skilled in teaching and focused on development and evaluation. With this distinction in mind, I would consider anyone in charge of a class’s education to be a professional educator. A ‘teacher’ may focus on ideas of right-and-wrong without emphasizing cognitive thinking and independence, and concentrate on finding answers to set questions rather than their students’ critical thinking (considering *why* correct answers are so). An educator focuses on encouraging students to become interested in both theory and practice. Being professional in the classroom involves learning, developing, and presenting new materials or ideas so students can improve their fundamental knowledge of and ability with the subject (Bullough, 2005; Swennen & van der Klink, 2008).

The distinguished professional in teaching, therefore, can be referred to as ‘professional educator.’ Morrill and Spees (2012) argue that a professional educator has to be trained in child psychology and pedagogy in order to understand the subjects they teach. However, even as teachers train in the handling of students, it is their ability to educate that sets them apart (Rogers, 2012). A teacher must set themselves apart from the rest in terms of ability to inculcate morals and set an example. Stinnett (1962) argues that misconduct among professionals in the teaching fraternity is not acceptable: teachers ought to be those members of the public held in the highest moral esteem.

Education can be carried out professionally in a classroom setting with an instructor and resource materials. Indeed, the actual study may not need the setting it gets, but for purposes of professionalism, there are protocol issues to be adhered to (Hurst and Reding, 2009). There are also the various syllabi that need to be followed as well as the requisite classes, testing and course actualization requirements that ought to be met before one can be considered to have completely gone through a course. Trainers thus have to ensure that they offer the students the right skills, and in a manner that they can understand, in order to make the knowledge applicable and relevant to them (Cruess, 2009). It is especially difficult to train students on the necessary content-retention skills unless they have an ability to practice and apply the knowledge they get from class. There is also the issue that even in the design of the syllabi, at times there are irrelevant classes included in the course that may not impact on a student’s professional life. Instructors have a role to root out these classes and revise them for the betterment of society (Firestone and Bader, 2012).

According to Massey and Vineyard (2011) the teaching profession is quite influential in the sense that it invokes certain passion and desire in whatever one teaches. It is meant to be done passionately, as at times it involves certain roles and duties that are not reserved for the teacher. Teachers also determine how well a student is performing by evaluating various distracters within the students’ environment in order to ascertain that they are living up to their potential. Distractions such as negative influence, drug abuse and premature sexual encounters are also handled by teachers while their students are at an elementary level (Hurst and Reding, 2009).

When defining professionalism, it is important to clarify the difference between a ‘profession’ and an ‘occupation’. Lester (2014: 2) described the term ‘occupation’ as:

drawing on the Latin root ‘occupare’ (to occupy), [...] an activity that takes up time: more specifically in the sense under discussion here, a (normally remunerative) role that occupies a person’s working hours. An occupational perspective therefore has no special claims to make, in terms either of self-actualisation (as might a vocational standpoint to use can simply be concerned with how the time is spent and therefore with that word in its correct sense) or of the need for commitment to any particular ethos (as might be the case from a professional viewpoint); it factors such as quality and efficiency.

. Lester (2014: 3) went on to describe ‘profession’:

In the English-speaking world the term ‘profession’ is sometimes used synonymously with ‘occupation’ (as is the case in much of continental Europe), though its traditional usage is to refer to occupations associated with high levels of education and training and sometimes with well-developed systems of governance and self-regulation (e.g. Millerson, 1964). However, the word’s Latin root

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(‘profiteri’ , to declare publicly or make a vow) points to a more meaningful distinction in that being a member of a profession requires a formal commitment both to acquiring the relevant knowledge and skills and to the ethos and way of working of the profession, in a way that simply working in an occupation does not.

It can be understood, therefore, that ‘occupation’ indicates regular activity, requiring little or no specialist knowledge or training, performed by workers in order to earn money – the basis for remuneration is simply the offering of time. A ‘profession’, on the other hand, is a vocation that requires a high degree of knowledge, expertise and training in a particular field – the basis for remuneration here being the offering of knowledge and skill.

Millerson (1964, as cited in Whitty, 2009: 2) listed the criteria for a profession: “The use of skills based on theoretical knowledge, education and training in those skills certified by examination, a code of professional conduct oriented towards the ‘public good’ and a powerful professional organization.” While Lester’s definitions suggest teaching is indeed a profession, Millerson’s criteria do not fit well with it. Faced with this definitional problem, Etzioni (1969) stated that teaching can be considered a “quasi- or semi-profession” which I think is more appropriate term for teaching .

### **THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

The teaching profession is a lucrative white-collar vocation that requires a lot of training and skill to master. The reason is that while most professionals simply apply the skills they garner from their vocation and years of academic study, teaching is preceded by mastery of content and appropriate delivery methods to train learners in any academic level not only on the content they consume, but the art of imbibing knowledge as well (Stinnett, 2012). Often, it is associated with discipline and it is expected that learners be disciplined even as they learn what they have to know. Being an effective teacher is thus not just about knowing what to teach and how to do it; it is more about understanding who you teach and making them better members of society. The actual intention is to guarantee society that the students in any academic level who end up becoming professionals actually practice the right methods and skills. The importance of this is that there is an order established between one generation of students and another (Ashwin, 2011).

The main consequence of teaching is advancement of education and elimination of illiteracy in order to enlighten society (Stanley and Bayles, 2014). It has been proven by many researchers that an educated society makes better decisions, has greater impact and is more civil. Literacy levels also reduce the incidence of crime and irrational behavior. Teachers therefore ensure that they have targets and meet them in line with government policy. Teaching transmits vital information, historical or contemporary, which makes those taught more enlightened and able to make better decisions in the future (Sachs, 2013). Often, some of the situations society finds itself in recur as precedents that existed in the past. By remembering how it was handled, everyone avoids having to leave loopholes. Education is nonetheless not the only consequence of teaching, neither is teaching the only contributor to education. These aspects are nonetheless intertwined and reliant on each other (Rogers, 2012).

### **Reflective Practice as a Model of Teacher Development**

#### **MODES OF REFLECTION**

When we start a new job or profession, we usually know that we possess the skills required to perform tasks and responsibilities, and at the same time, we usually know that some of these skills need improvement or development. For instance, in the field of English language teaching, we might have the skills to teach college students “the passive voice”, but that same skill might need some improvement if we were planning to teach the same grammatical rule to other students between the ages of 10 and 14. This indicates that just because we have knowledge of something, we will not necessarily be capable of using that knowledge in the most effective way, as things constantly change, particularly in the field of education.

One of the first to describe this was the educational philosopher John Dewey. He claimed that due to rapid changes and development in society and the economy, traditional education is inadequate, and was convinced that there was a need to evaluate our own practice in order to fully understand how to take it a step forward and improve it in a way that can keep up with the different changes in this society. One of the best ways, according to him, was what he called “reflective practice”.

When it comes to reflective practice, there are two common modes of reflection: ‘reflect on action’ and ‘reflect in action’. Before explaining the difference between the two, I will define the notion of reflective practice itself, specifically in the field of education. The idea of reflective practice was suggested by John Dewey when he first recognized that there was a need to change teaching practice from a traditional routine cycle to an active reflective practice. This idea was based on the fact that the skills we might develop or improve and use in one tutorial session may be significantly different from those required in another, or while demonstrating, or in a lecturing environment. Because there is no ‘teaching template’, competent academics continually reflect on their teaching, critically analysing and evaluating their own practices, taking the opportunity to learn from each teaching session.

Some people tend to think about reflective practice as simply thinking about their “classroom lessons” before, during and after delivery. Yet this is not really the case, as it is a process that involves much more than that. Reflective practice is about

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examining what we do as teachers in the classroom and why we do it. We must understand that reflective practice can also be conducted outside the classroom in many different ways, not least by exploring the teaching materials and textbooks used for teaching. It is based on principles that require exploring practices and involving dialogue.

Reflection in action involves participation in a particular area of concern in order to better it or influence the outcome of a result. Often, people who participate do so silently and only hope to observe in order to learn. For instance, a medical attaché might want to reflect silently in action by only following instructions in an operating room rather than practicing what they know, for the stakes are high (Rogers, 2012).

Reflection on action is “the retrospective contemplation of practice in order to uncover the knowledge used in a particular situation, by analyzing and interpreting the information recalled. The reflective practitioner may speculate how the situation might have been handled differently and what other knowledge would have been helpful” (Burns and Bulman, 2000: 5). Reflection on action in terms of teaching can be conducted in several ways, including the maintaining of a teacher diary, in which the teacher records what happened in their class and his/her reaction, and taking student feedback. Student feedback can be collected through questionnaires or learning diaries, for example, and may add valuable perspectives. Reflection on action can be carried out by peer observation, which can be conducted by inviting one or more colleagues to attend your class to collect information (through and observation task or note-taking) about your lesson. The colleagues can be asked to focus on one particular aspect of the class (like student interaction), for more specific information to be gleaned. Recording lessons and watching them back (or showing others) is also a form of peer observation, and of course teachers often learn by watching videos or lectures by others in order to emulate them (Pollard and Hawkins, 2009). According to Sherin and Van Es (2005), videos have been used in teacher training since the 1960s. Coffey (2014: 88) stated that:

this tool has been regarded as having the potential to provide a means by which the complexities of teaching might be captured, thereby enabling teacher education students to observe and reflect upon what they are seeing (Wang and Hartley, 2003). Sherin and Van Es (2005) discuss the concept of a teacher’s ability to “notice”. Video is regarded as a tool that can help teacher education students develop the ability to notice what is occurring in the classroom.

Videos can be used to reflect on a specific element of a lesson, learn a new teaching style or reflect on which teaching style is more appropriate for a specific lesson.

In my university, we are required to maintain a portfolio for each subject we teach, and lesson reflections constitute part of this portfolio. Such reflective practice is designed to improve teacher skills and methods of teaching. Whether we choose to reflect on or reflect in, we need to recognize that reflective practice is a powerful means to professional development for teachers. It allows them to understand their own practice in a way that shows them what makes a certain practice successful and others unsuccessful. It helps teachers to make sense of their teaching experience, and eventually enables them to make informed decisions about teaching practices.

Education encourages the creation of qualified teacher learning. However, we need to acknowledge that “there is one quality above all that makes a good teacher, the ability to reflect on what, why and how we do things and to adapt and develop our practice within lifelong learning. Reflection is the key to successful learning for teachers, and for learners” (Scales and Kelly, 2012: 8). Jenny Moon (2005, as cited in Scales and Kelly, 2012: 8) describes reflection as a form of mental processing that we use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to gain a better understanding of relatively complicated or unstructured ideas and is largely based on the reprocessing of knowledge, understanding and, possibly, emotions that we already possess.

Reflective practice can be considered a type of action research. Elliott (1991: 2) defines action research as:

the process through which teachers collaborate in evaluating their practice jointly; raise awareness of their personal theory; articulate a shared conception of values; try out new strategies to render the values expressed in their practice more consistent with educational values they espouse; record their work in a form which is readily available to and understandable by other teachers; and thus develop a shared theory of teaching by research practice.

This definition shows that action research seeks to raise awareness or allow new strategies to be tried, which can be accomplished within the scope of education in order to discern how effective a material, style, or other aspect of teaching may be, or to reflect on practice to find out how effective it is or to improve certain aspects of it.

Coats (2005: 8) noted that the name for action research has developed over time, but that “[its] most important component [...] is that it include[s] both action and reflection that lead to enhanced practice”.

Action research usually begins with a specific question or observation posed by the teacher or students “about an issue, problem or difficulty experienced by some or all of them in their learning”. It can be employed in an ‘affirmative’ way, which may inspire the teacher to examine actions that achieve successful outcomes with some of their students so this ‘good practice’ can be extended to all students and further improved (Coats, 2005).

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### REFLECTION ‘IN’ AND ‘ON’ PRACTICE

As stated earlier, one of the first people who recognized reflection as a way of thinking is John Dewey (1933), who viewed it as a way to prevent hesitation, doubt and uncertainty in different or unexpected situations.

Dewey claimed that reflective thinking enabled people to move away from the routine way of dealing with things to a more reflective way of thinking about our actions. His ideas revolved around how we need to think about any situation, come up with a hypothesis in trial-and-error reflective situations and test our idea in a plan of action. The concept of reflective practice was based on those ideas, which were then recognized in the work of Schon in 1983, in his book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. The most relevant point (for our purposes) presented in this book was his distinction between two types of reflection: reflection-on-action (after-the-event thinking) and reflection-in-action (thinking while doing) (Schon, 1983). Finlay (2008: 3) summarised:

In the case of reflection-on-action, professionals are understood consciously to review, describe, analyse and evaluate their past practice with a view to gaining insight to improve future practice. With reflection-in-action, professionals are seen as examining their experiences and responses as they occur. In both types of reflection, professionals aim to connect with their feelings and attend to relevant theory. They seek to build new understandings to shape their action in the unfolding situation.

This indicates that the process of reflection in action is more linked to the moment where you experience the problem that you need to think about and solve while it is happening. Such a process is challenging, as we are required to inspect our practice and how we react at the same time, and this is what creates a reflective practitioner inside everyone, as claimed by Donald Schon (1983: 68):

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation.

Reflective practice in general is recognized in the educational field as a helpful tool for creating a reflective teacher. It enables teachers to critically think about their actions, pause, and look back at the way they do things, and finally consider new and updated practices to serve their students, and ensure the best outcomes. It helps to raise self-awareness, improve personal development and promote an in-depth approach to learning. It must also be realized, however, that reflective practice is not the only answer to our problems, and we need to understand that there are many different approaches to consider. Reflective practice has its own challenges and limitations, and sometimes this practice requires an awareness of different learning styles. There are several theories about learning style, but in general they can be summarized as:

1. Visual: learners who prefer to learn using pictures and spatial understanding.
2. Aural: learners who prefer to learn by listening to sounds, stories, music, etc.
3. Verbal or linguistic: learners who prefer to use words in order to learn new concepts.
4. Physical or kinaesthetic: learners who prefer to learn by using their hands, body, and senses of touch and motion.
5. Logical or mathematical: learners who prefer to use logic and reasoning to understand new concepts.
6. Social or interpersonal: learners who prefer to work and learn in groups, with extensive contact with other people.
7. Solitary or intrapersonal: learners who prefer to work alone.

Knowledge of these different learning styles can help teachers understand their students’ needs and individual differences, which in turn helps them reflect in action more easily and ultimately find the best way to conduct their lessons. (Orey, 2010).

A further challenge of reflective practice is that time and effort may be required to realize what is missing from lessons or what needs to be changed, and quite often teachers do not have time to involve themselves in such determination. It must be understood that in order for reflective practice to be effective, it should be linked to the context that it is to be applied to, as reflection is useless if it has no link to conceptual frameworks (Boud and Walker, 1998). This indicates that we must pay attention to the context that we plan to reflect on/in, otherwise this reflective practice is useless because the context is always changing, and this requires connecting the two together.

One more thing worth mentioning here is that reflective practice came about as a professional idea to improve and develop practice, and help students attain better results. As Biggs (2011: 35) put it, “a reflection in a mirror is an exact replica of what is in front of it. Reflection in professional practice, however, gives back not what is, but what might be, an improvement on the original”.

### My experience with reflective practice

In this section, I discuss my own reflection practice (reflection in– and –on action).

1. First reflection: a morphology lesson given to an undergraduate class.
2. Second reflection: the Yahoo! group I designed for learning purposes.

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1. Course title and code:

**Introduction to Linguistics ENGL 250**

2. Credit hours: **3** Contact hours: **4**

3. Program(s) in which the course is offered.

(If general elective available in many programs indicate this rather than list programs)

### **Bachelor of Arts in English**

4. Name of faculty member responsible for the course

5. Level/year at which this course is offered

**Level 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Year**

## MODULE INFORMATION

### Introduction:

For a number of reasons, it is vitally important that teachers reflect on their teaching, their lessons and their method of teaching on a regular basis in order to effect improvement.

After each of my lessons, I always try to reflect on what I have done since reflecting on yourself and your lesson (in all of its dimensions) can make you aware of what the positive aspects of your lesson were and what mistakes you may have made. This awareness can impact upon the development of future lesson plans and save time. In addition to reflecting on individual lessons, at the end of each semester, it is compulsory to reflect on the module as a whole.

I usually leave a small space at the end of the paper to write my comments after each lesson in order to reflect on my teaching and my lesson as well as to note ideas and points for future lessons. I believe that self-evaluation is one of the strongest tools teachers can use to improve themselves and more effectively achieve their outcomes, ultimately paving the way to becoming better teachers in the future. For example, I sometimes write brief notes on what I need to avoid in the next lesson, which has the potential to positively affect my performance.

In the beginning, when I started to fill out the self-reflection form, I felt spending hours writing about what I had done in the past rather than planning for the future was a waste of time, but I quickly discovered how helpful it was and began to rely on the notes and ideas that I thought up during this reflection.

One particular lesson was on morphology, which formed part of a module called ‘Introduction to Linguistics’: the students between 19 and 20 years of age, at the beginning of their first year of English language specialization in a university level. The students in the class already understood at least the main elements of morphology. The following is my reflection on this lesson.

### Reflection One – Morphology Lesson

The teachers who can be described as true educators are the ones who acknowledge, appreciate and respect their students. Students are different in terms of their intelligence, skills and background, which makes our job as teachers more demanding. Recently, students have been described as being different in other ways, as having LDs, where L stands for learning and D for several possible terms, such as: “*disability, dysfunction, difficulty, diversity, dichotomy, or difference.*” So we recognize that students respond differently to different learning situations (Willis, 2007).

According to Willis (2007), teachers struggle to meet all of their students’ needs, and from this they will recognize that there is no clear, consistent contrast between “special” and “regular” students (special students like students with special needs). Stainback et al. (1989) mentioned that, “the most successful educators will be those who work together and share resources and expertise to meet all students’ needs in any way possible”, so teachers should focus all their efforts to understanding their students and meeting their needs.

During my lesson planning, I decided the main goals of the lesson were to make the students in the class understand:

1. The meaning of the word “morphology”.
2. The main elements of morphology, such as morphemes, and their grammatical functions.
3. The distinction between free and bound morphemes.
4. The distinction between the different types of free morpheme (lexical and functional).
5. The distinction between the different types of bound morpheme (derivational and inflectional).

Before the lesson began, I felt very nervous because I could not be sure that the students in the morphology class would comprehend everything in the lesson, especially the differences between the main types of morpheme. I started to present the lesson,

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and it ran smoothly until the final part, which dealt with the difference between derivational and inflectional morphemes. In this section, the students’ comprehension began to decline.

Fortunately, I had anticipated this since the distinction can be hard to understand, particularly for students attending their very first morphology lesson (as it was for these students). I used scaffolding strategies in order to facilitate their understanding of the difference between derivational and inflectional morphemes, and I have since formulated further strategies and methods to use in this lesson. For example, using the table below to show the difference between the two types of morphemes and to make it easier for the students to understand and memorise the difference.

Inflectional morpheme	Derivational morpheme
”An inflectional morpheme never changes the grammatical category of a word. For example, both <i>old</i> and <i>older</i> are adjectives”	”A derivational morpheme can change the grammatical category of a word. The verb <i>teach</i> becomes the noun <i>teacher</i> if we add the derivational morpheme <i>-er</i> . ”
”Whenever there is a derivational suffix and an inflectional suffix attached to the same word, they always appear in that order. For example, first the derivational <i>-er</i> is attached to <i>teach</i> , then the inflectional <i>-s</i> is added to produce <i>teachers</i> .”	
Table 2: taken from (Yule, 2014).	

In addition, I used the whiteboard and coloured markers to explain the difference, giving examples and allowing the students to decide if the grammatical category had changed after the addition of an affix.

Eventually, I felt that the students understood, as they began to respond to my questions. I gave them some exercises to ensure further consolidation of this knowledge and to check their understanding. From this, I discovered that some students were still unable to understand, although a sufficient number of them showed good understanding of the rules. I decided to give those students who were still struggling more practice exercises to be completed at home, and then we practised them together in the next class.

I began to feel more comfortable after this class, as the students were able to demonstrate comprehension despite the fact it was their first morphology class, and even before practicing, 75% of the students showed a satisfactory level of understanding.

During the class, the students and I started completing the exercises and tasks in the textbook. I tried to illustrate the answers as effectively as possible using **scaffolding** and **error correction** techniques.

Despite the success of the lesson, I felt that I talked too much and spent too much time presenting the content and explaining using the whiteboard.

I decided to give the students another class to practise what they had learned during the lesson. I told them that I would upload some of the handouts onto the website, and I gave them instructions to complete these, advising them to try further exercises from these handouts at home. This prepared them for the next class, in which we practised together and completed further exercises.

In addition, I implemented the technique of **integrating technology** by preparing some websites<sup>1</sup> in order to allow the students to continue their practice at home. These websites are self-contained, giving the students the ability to correct themselves.

This module comprises four contact hours per week, with two hours on Mondays and two on Wednesdays. I used the Wednesday class to give further lesson practice if I felt the material being taught was particularly challenging for the students (as I did with this class). I prepared more of the exercises that had proven to be most effective, and I even included some of those I took during my BA and MA as I had personally found them helpful.

### Action Plan

1 Such as [http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~pxc/nlp/InteractiveNLP/NLP\\_morph1.html](http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~pxc/nlp/InteractiveNLP/NLP_morph1.html)



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While some changes need to be made to this lesson, I would not change very much overall. My students, in general, were engaged and motivated in the further practice class (the follow-up), and they were able to comprehend the key morphology concepts and rules. In this second class, I discovered that all of my students had completed their homework and the given handout.

The changes that I would make are as follows:

1. Try not to talk too much in class and allow the students to discuss and give their impressions on the topic. I think this would have a positive effect on my students’ understanding and their learning outcomes, as letting them talk allows the teacher to glean valuable feedback.
2. Try to manage my time more effectively. The final part of the first lesson was confusing, as the students did not initially understand the material, which made me repeat some of the points in different ways several times, using different techniques, which led to my talking a lot as I checked that they had understood the points.

Other parts of my class were particularly positive, however, such as the website link I gave to the students in the first class; they liked it and found it very helpful.

The handouts, exercises and tasks that I gave the students to help prepare them for the follow-up class had a positive impact on their learning outcomes and understanding.

### REFLECTION IN ACTION

I used the whiteboard and different coloured markers to explain the difference between derivational and functional morphemes, giving some examples and showing how the morpheme affected the meaning or grammatical category of the given word. One example is *old vs older*: the grammatical category (adjective) remains the same but the meaning changes, so the morpheme is inflectional, while adding *-er* to the verb *teach* alters the grammatical category to noun, so it is here a derivational morpheme.

I think the strategies I employed worked well with my students. Using the whiteboard was an idea that jumped into my mind as well as asking the students to give me examples, which were then written on the board, allowing them to share and think about them (applying the **active management** strategy).

This class had an impact on my teaching as a whole because it clearly demonstrated two issues I might encounter in future classes. First, some points that I expect students will understand easily could be problematic and I should be prepared to deal with these. Second, dividing the class into two parts and having an exercise class afterward had a great impact on the students’ understanding, and I could use this strategy in the future with difficult materials. In addition, the online exercises made the materials easier for them, which encouraged me to prepare a website<sup>2</sup> to be used in the future for other lessons.

### Reflection Two - The Yahoo! Group

In this reflection I will describe a website I have used that facilitates the teaching and learning process through the adoption of technology-based learning tools. Educational sites can demonstrably assist the learning process, particularly in terms of scaffolding and learning support (McKenzie, 1999), and as a teacher, I believe they are invaluable. The students in this reflection were at the university level and between 19 and 20 years of age in the English language specialization.

Over the last decade, the use of technology in the classroom has changed markedly from mere word processing (with software such as Microsoft Word) or showing pictures to students on an overhead projector to a sophisticated tool used to facilitate learning and increase student motivation.

As the world has become increasingly technological, individuals have fallen into one of two camps: those who find themselves unable to live without technology and those who struggle to keep up with new developments and become more and more isolated. The former is especially pertinent with regard to the younger generation, who can appear obsessed with technology and usually use it with the greatest of ease. Most modern schools have computer labs or even computers in the classroom, invariably with a connection to the Internet.

It is absolutely clear that the Internet is now considered an indispensable electronic resource that can be used for almost every purpose, including foreign language learning and teaching. It offers practically unlimited free resources for learners that can help them develop both their English language skills and their knowledge in their chosen subjects of study (such as their university major).

Teachers use several tools in order to present new learning materials to students. Educators have classified these tools into two main categories: low tech and high tech. Low tech refers to using basic equipment, such as chalkboards and posters, while high tech includes equipment like tape recorders, PowerPoint and other technology. Technology has offered teachers many advantages in the classroom. New types of computer software have features that allow teachers to design and plan the lesson, and to evaluate the students and give them assignments, which saves teachers time and effort (Johanson, 2006).

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According to Wilson et al. (2002), “technology has changed the way we teach our courses and otherwise interact with students.” Rodinadze et al. (2012) argue that using technology has made teaching materials more effective because students and teachers find them easier to access. This is extremely important and has encouraged me to use technology in my classroom.

Technology is useful to learners for many reasons:

1. It facilitates students’ information access.
2. It can create a good atmosphere for language learners to exchange and practise language.
3. It facilitates student-teacher and student-student communication.
4. It enhances teaching materials and leads to more effective outcomes for the students.

### REFLECTION

Upon finishing my Master’s degree in the UK and returning to Saudi Arabia to work in my college, I discovered that Blackboard, an online tool, had not yet been activated for the students. The university website was almost new, and I was told I was required to register. I decided to look online and search for something to use as an alternative to Blackboard, and I found that Yahoo! groups was a satisfactory alternative as it includes several features that could be used by my students and to improve the module as a whole, especially for them as a university level students.. I found I was able to upload documents, that learners could chat together and ask questions via direct messaging and that learners could even create their own blog. Students could also use direct messaging to ask me (the teacher) any questions regarding the module or materials that I uploaded to the group. In addition to all this, there is a feature that allowed me to send students their marks individually.

I considered it of great importance to design something additional to Blackboard for several reasons. First, I usually give my students a lot of handouts and external materials (e.g. exercises), and it would help consolidate them. Second, the younger generation’s familiarity with and desire to use technology rather than classic paper-dependent materials meant it was highly likely to enhance learning outcomes. Third, I wanted to create an atmosphere in which they could practise English frequently, as they intended to become English teachers in a foreign language situation. The creation of this group would represent a kind of social media in which the students and I could chat in English only. In addition, the increased contact would help improve student relationships, leading to a positive classroom atmosphere that would support the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process. Maynard (2011) found that this kind of environment “provided an effective opportunity for students to reflect on the language learning process”. Fourth, using technology in the classroom would assist me as a teacher as it helps to motivate students and can be used as tool that leads them to success. Finally, it would save time and effort, preventing the situation whereby students rush to my office asking about handouts they have lost or send me emails asking for electronic copies of materials. I would now be able to directly upload all class documents two days in advance, giving students time to read and understand them.

Having created the group, I asked the students to choose one among their number to act as the group administrator, with the authority to manage blogs and comments written therein. I decided to do this as I believe it is easier and more comfortable for students to contact a fellow student than their teacher about such matters. This would not mean having no contact with me (their teacher) as I would still be available through direct messaging. The student chosen to be the administrator (after having volunteered to do so), had a great opportunity to develop themselves as a leader.

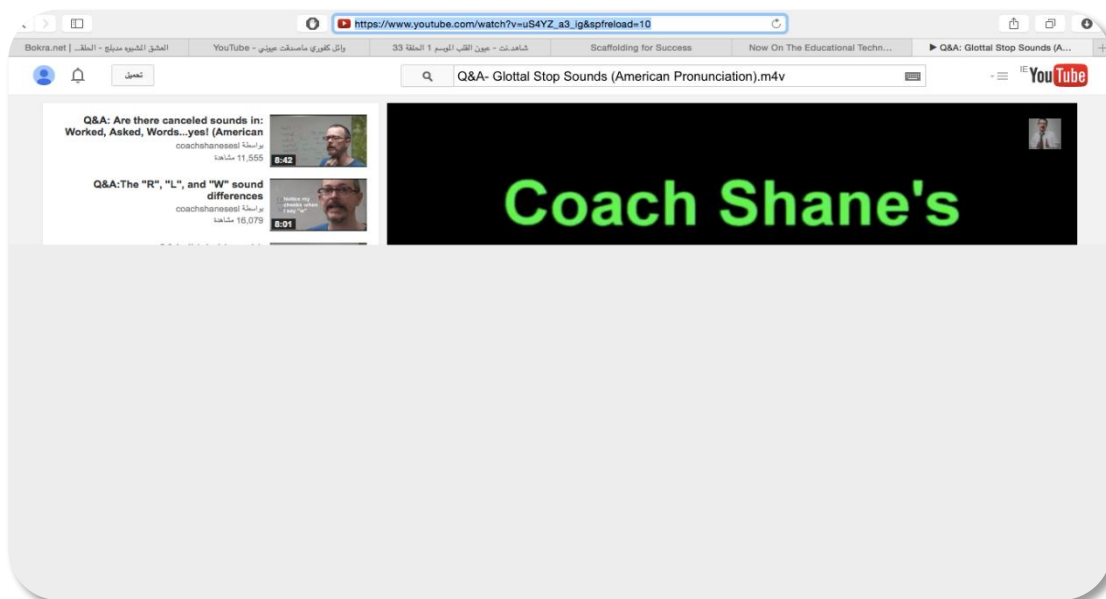
Furthermore, we usually ask students to evaluate the module, the teacher and the materials used for the class. On the course evaluation section, there is a question asking if the provided IT (information technology) was effective in supporting their learning. Students gave me 91%, which means they enjoyed using IT as a part of my teaching style and found it very helpful. Many of them also wrote in the comments section that they liked the use of technology in my class and found it made the learning more effective and easier to access.

### ACTION PLAN

Technology can be a vital asset in the classroom, and it has helped me to develop my teaching in several areas. As a result of some of the changes I have made in implementing technology, the classroom is now a more interactive environment for the students and they are more engaged. For example, rather than using traditional PowerPoint presentations, I created more interactive methods for presenting materials, adding video that my class could watch and discuss before feeding back to both me and their classmates on what they thought of it. Using video in the classroom may not be a hugely innovative step in and of itself, its main use having been in primary school classrooms. Nowadays, however, there are a huge number of educational videos on YouTube and TED, among others, which teachers can make use of at all levels of education. For instance, in my phonology class I have used several videos to help familiarise my students with English native pronunciation patterns and accents, including features such as the glottal stop.

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An example from YouTube can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uS4YZ\\_a3\\_ig&spfreload=10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uS4YZ_a3_ig&spfreload=10)



Using interactive links during class time and getting students to use their personal laptops to access them, for example to practice the exercises on a particular website, has a significant influence on their understanding and motivation. Using technology in this way engages students in the classroom activities and can lead to an more positive learning experience overall.

One problem that I faced while using online exercises was ensuring that students were actually doing the work they were supposed to as opposed to browsing the Internet or using social media. With 35 students, this can be difficult to manage and effectively monitor. I kept an eye on them, walking around and checking regularly, and student adherence to the task was fairly good.

On the positive side, I found that the Internet allows the students to access vast amounts of information and unlimited free resources as well as different library websites, which can support them when they are doing written assignments or homework. I found I was giving the students direction on how to use specific resources for assignments, essays, practice and general use in their major.

A further benefit of familiarising students with educational websites and resources is that they will take this technological knowledge and the skills they have acquired with them into their future teaching careers. Knowledge of technology, including media and software, is rapidly becoming a job requirement for teachers.

Of course, it is important for both myself and my students to bear in mind that while technology is an important new classroom consideration, it cannot be completely depended upon to the exclusion of other teaching strategies, and technology should be used to supplement and enhance existing methods.

As far as the student administrator goes, giving one of the students the responsibility of administrating the group site proved to increase her confidence and organisational skills.

Finally, I mentioned earlier that the increased dominance of technology has created two types of people: those who embrace it and those who fear it, and teachers are no exception. Implementing technology is often frightening for teachers as they are required to learn how to use it fully. I have personally experienced difficulties with those who are unwilling or afraid to learn, including clashes with colleagues, who worried that if I used technology in my classroom, their students would expect them to do so as well, against their wishes as teachers. Once I had established my teaching style using technology, however, and found that the students liked and benefitted from it, I found my colleagues more motivated and encouraged to learn to use it themselves, which in the long run will prove vital to improving students' outcomes.

In addition, I found that using technology in this class was interesting and of great value. The students enjoyed accessing information and materials at home and being able to use them and practise with them. I also found it took half the time and effort that I had spent before to prepare, teach and assess. I will, therefore, use this type of website and IT in all my future classes. In addition, using video clips, interactive websites, etc. during the class made the materials easier to understand and more effective for the learners, which has encouraged me to continue using technology. Hopefully, I will improve my use of technology in the future.

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## CONCLUSION

Aiming to achieve professional standards is not easy, and requires many skills. When we think about teaching, we immediately and mostly refer to the role of teachers, but these come in many forms, including instruction, lecturing and training. Everyone can teach as long as they have some knowledge to impart to others (Morrill and Spees, 2012), but the main role of a single teacher or instructor is limited to a particular speciality that need not be the entire profession. For instance, lecturers at a law school will lecture on different units or modules, with each specializing. This ensures that they continue to advance their areas of specialization and that they are not insensitive to the knowledge they impart, hence making them professionals (Monteiro, 2010). Teaching requires the combined efforts of various vocational trainers, lecturers and instructors to collectively put the learner through a particular course. Each trainer may employ their own methods, but inherently the goal is to educate. Nonetheless, it is critical that no one is impractical with the skills they achieve and learn from the schools they attend (Light and Cox, 2011).

I personally believe in reflective practice as a way to become a more professional educator than to simply teach in a routine cycle. I usually employ action research, as described earlier. Action research helps us reflect on our actions as teachers. I have been using it to improve and develop my skills, thinking and reflecting on/in what I do in my classroom with my students whenever I face a problem. I understand that there are a plethora of ways for us, as teachers, to develop our practice, but I personally feel that reflective practice is the most effective in my case, as it helped me significantly when I embarked on my teaching career. I came to realize that just because something does not work with one class does not necessarily mean that it will not work with another. Different contexts require different methods and strategies to cope with these changes, and reflecting on my performance in the classroom has helped me in myriad different ways.

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