

Farrell, T. (2013). *Reflective writing for language teachers*. Sheffield, United Kingdom: Equinox.

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Thomas Farrell's book, *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers*, is part of the series *Frameworks for Writing*, edited by Martha C. Pennington. Farrell makes an important contribution to research regarding language teachers' reflective practice, all the while avoiding the typically rigid prose found in many academic books. This book has reinforced my commitment to the importance of language teachers making reflection an integral part of their professional development.

Each chapter includes theoretical support for reflection via writing, Farrell's personal experiences as a language teacher, and reflective journal questions for the reader. Thus, this book is very hands-on and offers the reader an opportunity to participate actively in the process of reflective writing. This balance between theory and practice offers the reader a clear, unifying link between reflective writing theory and how it has been used by language teachers.

Farrell's book begins with "Acknowledgements", and an "Editor's Preface" that is written by the series editor. In the "Introduction", Farrell clarifies the audience and purpose of his book. The targeted audience includes graduate students of language teaching, language teachers and professional developers of language teachers. The purpose of *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers* is to demonstrate how language teachers can use their writing to enhance their reflective practice in language teaching. Along with providing chapter summaries, Farrell invites readers to examine their own reflective practice as they read his book and not view his suggestions as strictly prescriptive.

The author has ordered the seven chapters of the book thematically, according to varied forms of reflective practice.

In Chapter 1, "Professional Development", Farrell begins by defining professional development and inviting readers to re-examine their own views on this subject. He encourages a *bottom-up approach* to professional development. He also breaks down professional development into five stages.

In Chapter 3, "Reflective Practice", Farrell begins by describing his own quest for improving his teaching practice in South Korea. He then outlines different forms of reflective practice: action research, teaching journals, concept mapping, teacher development groups, classroom observation groups, teacher metaphors, teacher maxims, teacher beliefs, and critical friendships. Though there is some overlap amongst these forms, Farrell does a good job of showing how these types of reflective practice can be used by the reflective practitioner. Conceptions of teaching are also examined via teaching values, and reflecting on teaching philosophy. He reminds readers that they must be ready to reflect and be aware of preferred modes of reflection.

In Chapter 3, "Writing as Reflective Practice", Farrell offers valid reasons for writing as a tool for reflection. He explains how he began to use journal writing as a means to reflect on his teaching practice. Different types of writing are examined, such as autobiographical, dissertation research, and reflecting to gain perspective. The author then goes through the writing process to help teachers get started with their own reflection.

In Chapter 4, “The Reflective Teaching Journal”, Farrell describes the case study he conducted in South Korea, where teachers used journals to reflect. He reminds readers that writing can uncover patterns and key elements in their teaching that otherwise might go unnoticed. Thus, effective journal writing is meant to improve teaching practice.

In Chapter 5, “Narrative Reflective Writing”, Farrell points out how individual teaching stories are important in the process of reflective practice. He suggests ways to write and analyze a critical teaching incident, as well as critical incidents in a teaching career. Finally, writing and analyzing a case study as a form of narrative reflection is described in detail.

In Chapter 6, “Reflecting in the First Year(s) and Beyond”, Farrell explores the various stages of the language teaching experience such as student to teacher, the transition between these two stages, mentorship, novice teacher development, and how teacher reflection will differ among beginning teachers and those with more experience.

In Chapter 7, “Reflecting For Action”, the author compares language teacher research across six continents. He suggests how this research can affect teachers’ reflective practice.

In his final chapter, “The Last Word on Reflection?”, Farrell reminds the reader that he can only encourage teachers to consider writing as a means to reflect on their teaching practice. While some teachers may not be motivated to write as a means of reflection, they may be incited to reflect internally on their teaching practice in order to improve their students’ learning.

Overall, *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers* would be of great interest and value to preservice ESL teachers/graduate students, and practicing ESL educators/researchers. As a language teacher educator myself, I would use this work to support the practice teaching seminars I offer. I would highly recommend Farrell’s *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers*, for it offers a refreshing perspective about how writing can be used for reflective purposes. Not only does the author show how teachers’ writing can be used to facilitate reflective practice, but he also infuses his book with interesting and humorous narratives from his vast experiences as a language teacher throughout South Korea, Singapore and Ireland.

Though Farrell’s writing style is down-to-earth and personal, his book offers a comprehensive look at various ways in which teachers can use different forms of writing to reflect on their teaching practice. What also struck me is the passion with which he critically reflects on his language teaching experiences and beliefs. The only negative criticism is that some of the Reflection Journal questions could be seen as redundant. Nevertheless, *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers* is both an enjoyable and informative read.

References

- Farrell, T. (2013). *Reflective writing for language teachers*. Sheffield, United Kingdom: Equinox.
- Pennington, M. C. (Ed.). (2013). *Frameworks for writing*. Sheffield, United Kingdom: Equinox.