

THE ACT MODEL (ANALYZE, CONNECT, TRANSFORM) FOR DEVELOPING REFLECTIVE SKILLS IN FUTURE ENGLISH TEACHERS: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK GROUNDED IN DEWEY, SCHÖN AND BROOKFIELD

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Abstract. *This research introduces the concept of the ACT model (Analyze, Connect, Transform) as a methodological instrument for developing the reflective skills of future English teachers based on the ideas of John Dewey, Donald Schön, and Stephen Brookfield. The article provides an explanation of the interrelations between three phases of the ACT model and the theories of John Dewey, Donald Schön, and Stephen Brookfield respectively. In accordance with the theory of reflective thinking of John Dewey, its three phases and the attitude of wholeheartedness, open-mindedness, and responsibility, the first phase of the ACT model is presented to assist future teachers in examining classroom problems in an active, persistent, and attentive manner. Reflecting in action, reflecting on action, and knowing in action are introduced to analyze the role of the second stage of the model in helping teachers to formulate tacit knowledge and differentiate between problem setting and solving. The four lenses of Stephen Brookfield (autobiographical lens, lens of students' eyes, lens of colleagues' experience, and theoretical lens), together with assumption analysis proposed by the author, enhance the effectiveness of the CONNECT and TRANSFORM phases.*

Keywords: *ACT model, reflective practice, future English teachers, teacher education, Dewey, Schön, Brookfield, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, critical reflection, knowing-in-action, four lenses, assumption analysis*

Dewey says that reflective thinking is active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends. He is regarded as the founding father of reflective practice. In his book *How we think*, he defines reflection as a systematic, disciplined process of thinking. The above definition includes three factors that will have a direct impact on the ANALYZE phase of the ACT model. The first is the word "active," which refers to the fact that reflection needs to involve thinking and not simply observing. The second factor is the word "persistent," which implies that reflection needs to happen consistently rather than being temporary or shallow. Finally, the word "careful" suggests that reflection needs to be organized and deliberate, not haphazard or spur-of-the-moment. Dewey outlined five stages of reflective thinking, and these correspond exactly with the three stages of the ACT model. First, there is the experience of felt difficulty or problem. Second, there is the identification and definition of this problem. Third, there is the making of suggestions to solve this problem. Fourth, there is reasoning on these suggestions. Fifth, there is observation and experiment to test the solution. The first two stages of Dewey's model can be seen to correspond with the first stage of the ACT model, ANALYZE, since they involve the teacher identifying and defining the problem in his or her classroom setting. The third and fourth stages can be seen to correspond with the CONNECT stage of the ACT model because they involve making possible solutions and connecting them to theory or previous learning. Finally, the fifth stage of Dewey's model, as well as the fifth phase of the ACT model,

involve implementation of changes and experimenting with solutions. Another important link between Dewey's theory and the ACT approach is his emphasis on three critical attitudes that are necessary for reflective practice – wholeheartedness, open-mindedness, and responsibility. Wholeheartedness involves being genuinely interested in learning and developing oneself. Open-mindedness means being willing to look at different viewpoints and embrace novel ideas. Responsibility means taking responsibility for one's actions and outcomes of learning. It is critical to implement the ACT approach successfully. One can hardly be committed to the demanding process of reflection without having wholeheartedness. One cannot see connections between theory and practice and examine different explanations for classroom events without open-mindedness. One cannot make changes in one's teaching practice without showing responsibility. Hence, the ACT approach embraces Dewey's attitude-based perspective as a necessary condition of reflective practice. A third critical link that exists between Dewey's approach and the ACT model involves the attitudes that Dewey considered as indispensable for reflective practice: wholeheartedness, open-mindedness, and responsibility. The term "wholeheartedness" represents an attitude involving genuine desire to learn and develop. Open-mindedness stands for an attitude entailing readiness to examine alternative viewpoints. The attitude of responsibility means taking personal ownership of one's behavior and learning process. All of the aforementioned attitudes are necessary conditions for the success of the ACT model. Without wholeheartedness, a teacher will not be able to make the necessary efforts for reflection. Open-mindedness is important for being able to integrate theory and practice, as well as alternative explanations of what occurs in class. Responsibility implies making all necessary steps to change one's teaching practice. Thus, the attitudes mentioned above are implied in the ACT model as well.

The reflection of Dewey which is probably most popular is probably also one of the best justifications for the whole ACT process. As he writes, "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience". The single line summarizes everything that makes the use of ACT essential for the development of the teacher education program. It is the lack of reflection which makes experiences of teachers ineffective in terms of further improvement of professional skills. If a teacher delivers a lesson dozens of times, but does not make any effort to reflect on his or her practice, there will be no changes at all. What the ACT framework does is that it turns experience into knowledge. The ANALYZE phase enables teachers to analyze their experience; the CONNECT phase allows teachers to understand the reason for some particular events; the TRANSFORM stage helps to apply new knowledge to practice. A practical example can illustrate how Dewey's theory connects to the ACT model in the context of future English teacher education. Imagine a future English teacher who has just taught a lesson on giving directions, using the materials from your course. The teacher notices that some students were confused during the pair work activity. This is Dewey's first phase – a felt difficulty. In the ANALYZE stage, the teacher actively, persistently, and carefully examines what happened. The teacher asks: What exactly occurred? Which students were confused? What did I say? What did students do? The teacher gathers evidence from observation notes, student work, and perhaps a video recording. This systematic analysis reflects Dewey's second phase – defining the problem clearly. In the CONNECT stage, the teacher generates possible explanations and solutions. The

teacher recalls Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding and wonders if the instructions were not sufficiently modeled.

Whereas John Dewey established the theoretical basis for reflection, Schön has further developed the ideas of Dewey through two essential concepts of reflection in action and reflection on action. The two concepts are very relevant and powerful when discussing the ACT framework (Analyze, Connect, Transform). Schön made a distinction between two different kinds of reflection in professional practice. Reflection in action means reflecting on what one is doing in the course of doing it. This kind of reflection takes place during action; it is spontaneous, immediate, intuitive, and reactive. On the other hand, reflection on action implies looking back on what one has done in order to gain new insights and learn from the experience. This kind of reflection takes place after action and is more deliberate and systematic in nature. Schön contended that the most reflective practitioners reflect in both ways. The first direct relation between the Schön's theory and the ACT approach is seen in the relation between the reflection-in-action and the ANALYZE stage. Though it is known that the ANALYZE stage in the ACT approach is linked to the systematic reflection by Dewey, there is an element of Schön's reflection-in-action in the ANALYZE stage. During the lessons, a future English teacher must make rapid decisions whether he or she should repeat his or her instruction, change the student who is going to answer, or alter the activity. This is done with the help of the reflection-in-action. During the ANALYZE stage, a future English teacher learns to pay attention to his or her reflection-in-action. The second and perhaps the most immediate link between Schön's framework and the ACT approach lies in the relationship between reflection on action and the CONNECT phase. The process of reflection on action entails reviewing an experience that has taken place already and trying to make sense out of what has occurred and why. Exactly the same applies to the CONNECT phase. Following the delivery of a lesson, prospective English teachers reflect on action by posing questions such as the following: What happened in the lesson? Why did the students react in that manner? What theories account for the occurrence? Schön introduced another key term called "knowing-in-action." It pertains to the implied knowledge possessed by professionals in their activities, which cannot be explicitly communicated. An experienced teacher may have an instinctive sense of what should be done in a particular case within the classroom environment, even though he or she may not know how to justify it. The CONNECT phase allows prospective teachers of English to translate their knowing-in-action into communicable professional knowledge by posing questions such as "Why did I choose to act in such a way?" and "Which theory justifies this action?" The last concept proposed by Schön was called knowing-in-action. It means that professionals know things in their action without being able to say about them. Skilled teachers frequently act based on the principle of just knowing something, yet unable to give reasons to their decisions. The process of CONNECTING helps future teachers articulate their knowledge and thus develop professional knowledge that should be shared with others. Through questions such as "Why have I chosen this approach?" and "What theory underlies my decision?", knowing-in-action becomes knowing-in-public. Another key contribution of Schön was his differentiation of problem-solving and problem-setting. In problem-solving, solutions are sought for pre-existing and well-defined problems. In problem-setting, however, the task is to recognize and define the problem itself. Reflective practitioners are better at problem-setting rather than problem-solving, according to Schön. ACT

framework helps future English language teachers address both problem-setting and problem-solving. Problem-setting is concerned in the ANALYZE stage where questions such as "What is going on?" and "What is really the problem?" are raised. Problem-solving starts in the TRANSFORM stage where solutions are actually implemented. Reflection tends to be prompted by elements of surprise, puzzle, and confusion. An unexpected turn in lessons, an unexpected reaction of students, or even the failure of a particular approach becomes an occasion for reflection. Contrary to viewing problems as failures, the ACT model, inspired by Schön, sees them as chances to learn. It is the ANALYZE step that allows teachers to see this. It is the CONNECT step that helps them comprehend what they have noticed. According to Schön, the dominant approach to professional training is the technical rationality paradigm. The key assumption here is that the professionals use scientific theories and technical expertise in order to address concrete problems. Schön pointed out that the real process of professional practice is much less clear-cut and certain than the technical rationality paradigm postulates. The ACT paradigm is an attempt to overcome the limitations of the technical rationality paradigm. In particular, the ACT paradigm does not presuppose that the future English teachers will be able to use existing theories in practice.

Teaching is too complex and too uncertain to allow for such an attitude. A scenario would help to highlight the relationship between Schön's model and the model of ACT within the future teacher education in English. For instance, let us take an English teacher for the future, whose lesson revolves around teaching integrated skills such as listening and speaking. In the process of conducting his or her lesson, he or she observes that some of the learners look lost while conducting the pair work. As per the reflection in action, the teacher finds out that some of the students are not talking in the course of the pair work. The teacher chooses to conduct the pair work with one pair of learners as an illustration. In retrospect, the teacher now realizes that the directions were not explicit enough for the lower-level learners. The teacher recalls the theory of scaffolding by Vygotsky and realizes that the activity would have needed modeling before the students could do it themselves. This is an example of reflection-on-action influencing the CONNECT phase. Furthermore, the teacher understands that there was knowing-in-action involved, as he or she instinctively knew to move about the classroom and assist the pairs individually but did not foresee this kind of scaffold. The teacher is now able to explain that the knowing-in-action involved the understanding that students need examples before they are able to generate their own language. Lastly, the teacher practices problem-setting in determining that the issue is not the students' inability to speak English but rather insufficient scaffolding prior to the pair activity. Schön did not supplant Dewey but built upon and supplemented his ideas. Together, Dewey and Schön provide the theoretical basis for the ACT model. For Dewey, reflection meant active, persistent, and careful thought, concentrating mainly on reflection following experience. For Schön, the act of reflection-in-action was introduced, whereby he emphasized that reflection could take place during experience. Problems were considered by Dewey as a problem to be solved. Schön introduced that there was a need to set or define problems first. Experience for Dewey led to the acquisition of knowledge. Schön further elaborated on the concept of knowing-in-action, which is often tacit and should be made explicit. For Dewey, the objective of reflection was to learn through experience. In Schön's case, the objective was to become a reflective practitioner and lifelong learner.

Brookfield's theory of reflective practice has been further expanded by introducing critical reflection and four lenses for teachers to reflect on their practice. The theory of Brookfield is closely linked with the ACT model (Analyze, Connect, Transform), specifically with the CONNECT and TRANSFORM phases. This aspect makes his theory significantly different from that of Dewey and Schön. Brookfield defined critically reflective teaching as the process by which teachers identify and scrutinize the assumptions that undergird their work. He argued that all teaching decisions are based on assumptions – beliefs about students, learning, knowledge, and the purpose of education. The problem is that many assumptions remain unexamined. Critically reflective teachers make these assumptions explicit and subject them to critical analysis. Brookfield identified four distinct lenses that teachers can use to examine their practice. The first lens is the autobiographical lens, which involves looking at one's own experiences as a learner and teacher. The second lens is the students' eyes lens, which involves seeing the classroom from the perspective of students. The third lens is the colleagues' experiences lens, which involves learning from peers and mentors. The fourth lens is the theoretical literature lens, which involves connecting practice to educational research and theory. The first link between the two concepts is the use of the autobiographical lens and the ANALYZE step in the ACT model. The autobiographical lens necessitates that teachers look at their history, experiences, biases, and assumptions. In essence, that is precisely what the ANALYZE step of the ACT model involves. While analyzing an incident in the classroom, the future English teacher will also be analyzing his or her participation in the process. What assumptions did I hold during this lesson? How did my previous experiences influence my actions? Were any biases present in my teaching? By combining the ANALYZE step with Brookfield's autobiographical lens, one can take the analysis further than just describing the incidents but rather critically reflecting on oneself. For instance, when a future English teacher observes that some students are not engaging in the speaking activity, he or she will reflect on whether there were any implicit assumptions regarding which students should engage in the exercise. Additionally, one will reflect on whether their previous experiences in learning language biased their interactions with particular students. The second link between Brookfield's ideas and ACT framework involves the students' eyes perspective and the ANALYZE and CONNECT stages. According to Brookfield, the most crucial yet least recognized perspective for teachers to consider when instructing others is that of their students. While instructors may think that they are aware of their perceptions of any class, evidence suggests that the teachers' views and those of their students often strongly diverge. The students' eyes perspective involves looking at lessons from the point of view of those taking them. During the ANALYZE phase, it involves gathering information about students' experiences through such means as anonymous surveys, learning journals, or simply exit tickets. As far as the CONNECT phase is concerned, it involves asking such questions as why do students perceive the class in a different manner than I do and what theories can be used to explain students' perspectives. For instance, an English instructor may think that their grammar class was clear and useful for their students. However, feedback from students could make it evident that they found the lesson confusing or stressful. Thirdly, the relationship can be viewed in terms of the colleagues' experience lens and the CONNECT and TRANSFORM phases. Brookfield noted that reflection is not a lonely process. Reflection from colleagues' experiences offers perspectives that cannot be

gained in isolation. Examples include peer observation, mentoring, co-planning, and critical friendship groups. During the CONNECT phase, prospective English teachers link their experiences to those of colleagues. Questions include whether other teachers have encountered similar problems, what approaches they have employed, and how their situation compares to theirs. Finally, in the TRANSFORM phase, colleagues' experiences contribute to the development of action plans. For instance, a prospective English teacher who encounters classroom management problems might conduct peer observations to see how a colleague has managed to handle such a situation. From the observation, the teacher connects the approach used to theories of classroom management and finally transforms his/her practice by implementing and modifying the approach. The fourth similarity is based on the theoretical literature lens and the CONNECT stage. It can be said that the theoretical literature lens is the most direct way to relate Brookfield to the CONNECT stage of the ACT model. Brookfield claimed that teachers should connect their practices to educational theories. Theories help us articulate our practices, understand why certain events take place, and predict the consequences of specific actions. During the CONNECT stage, future English teachers consciously connect their observations in the classroom to theories. They ask themselves: Which theory accounts for the situation? What has the research suggested regarding the issue? What theories have other educators formulated on the matter? If an English teacher observed that his/her students tend to remain silent when speaking in English, he/she would relate this situation to the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Stephen Krashen, Zone of Proximal Development proposed by Lev Vygotsky, and the Output Hypothesis of Merrill Swain. The fifth and most unique link between Brookfield's theory and the ACT model is by linking his theory of assumption analysis and the TRANSFORM phase. According to Brookfield, the primary goal of critically reflective practice is assumption analysis. There are three kinds of assumptions, according to Brookfield. Paradigmatic assumptions are the widest and deepest views of the world, which help us understand reality. Prescriptive assumptions are assumptions about what ought to occur in education settings. Causal assumptions are assumptions regarding the interaction of various factors. Reflectively critical instructors are capable of recognizing all types of assumptions and subjecting them to critical scrutiny. This assumption analysis takes place mainly at the CONNECT phase of the ACT model but also feeds into the TRANSFORM phase.

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