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# Reflecting on our research: How, when and why?

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**WARWICK**

APPLIED LINGUISTICS

# Overview

1. Defining 'reflection'
2. Self-evaluation (individual)
3. Discussion 1
4. Plenary share 1
5. Tools and modalities (groups)
6. Plenary share 2
7. References / Q&A

Please take these  
ideas and  
discussions back to  
colleagues!



# Defining reflection – a personal perspective

Reflection is conscious, **experientially-informed** thought, at times involving aspects of **evaluation, criticality, and problem-solving**, and leading to **insight, increased awareness, and/or new understanding**.

(Anderson, 2020a, p. 1)

**i.e. 3 key elements** (Anderson, 2020b)

1. it draws mainly upon personal experience (not ‘received knowledge’)
2. it involves conscious, careful appraisal (not just ‘thinking’)
3. it leads to learning (a change in ‘cognitive architecture’)

We might separate this from more general use of other understandings of reflection by calling it either ‘critical’ or ‘formative reflection’.

# Stimulating formative reflection

- Dewey (1910) and Schön (1983) both argued that the most useful reflection typically originates in events of **thought-awareness** caused by doubt, puzzlement, questioning, confusion, perplexity.
- This is less likely to be caused by ‘procedural recollection’ (a different way of understanding reflection), because this typically doesn’t **rock the boat** of our current cognitive architecture. There is some support for this from research (e.g., Anderson, 2019; Farrell, 2008).
- Without thought awareness, formative reflection may never happen. That’s why forced or regimented reflection can be tedious and unhelpful and many of us end up faking it: ‘display reflection’ (Anderson, 2020b).
- So it may be useful to intentionally vary how we stimulate reflection:
  - for ourselves
  - with the help of others
  - with the help of ‘tools’ and strategies
- And we may need to be ready to challenge, to question, to ‘rock the boat’, both for ourselves and others.

# Discussion 1: Mapping our reflective processes

- Consider the full range of (potentially) reflective processes you engage in.
- Identify those that do seem to be useful, those that are less so, and why.
- Discuss! Pairs?

## Mapping our reflective processes: PhD students

### Self-evaluation form

I have...	Yes	Not really	No	Don't need
1. a way to <b>record my own thoughts</b> and concerns about my work				
2. somewhere to quickly <b>record new ideas</b> that I can find again in future				
3. a means to <b>deal with areas of difficulty</b> so that I don't ignore them, but address them				
4. someone who I can <b>open up to</b> (fully) about my research and challenges				
5. someone who is keeping an eye on my <b>mental wellbeing</b>				
6. someone who can <b>give useful feedback on puzzles</b> (excl. supervisors)				

# Discussion 2: Tools and modalities

- Read in small groups.
- Discuss and critique as required!

## Possible tools and modalities for reflection

### Self-reflection tools:

- An ideas document
- A 'distancing' strategy
- Notepad by bed
- Whiteboard with 'mess' (puzzles, questions, to do list, etc.)
- Slow walks and park benches
- Visuals – list of my codes on walls, pictures of frameworks, guiding authors, etc.
- Use of a diary/journal (?)
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

(Share 1 way that you do 1 of these)

### Other-reflection tools:

- Another PhD student (research related discussions)
- Personal friend (wellbeing related discussions)

*Please personalise! :)*



## Mapping our reflective processes: PhD students

### Self-evaluation form

I have...	Yes	Not really	No	Don't need
1. a way to <b>record my own thoughts</b> and concerns about my work				
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3. a means to <b>deal with areas of difficulty</b> so that I don't ignore them, but address them				
4. someone who I can <b>open up to</b> (fully) about my research and challenges				
5. someone who is keeping an eye on my <b>mental wellbeing</b>				
6. someone who can <b>give useful feedback on puzzles</b> (excl. supervisors)				
7. someone who is willing to <b>read my writing</b> and give <b>critical feedback</b> (not just encouragement)				
8. at least <b>two</b> (ideally three) <b>different people</b> for activities 4-7				
9. a group with whom I can <b>be honest</b> about my research (esp. methodology)				
10. a <b>secret weapon</b> for reflection (you decide what this means)				

- Which of these is helping best?(Choose 3-4) Why?
- Which is not helping much? Why?
- Can anyone here at the summer school help you?



Brian just couldn't seem to get the hang of reflection

## Possible tools and modalities for reflection

Please personalise! :)

### Self-reflection tools:

- An ideas document
- A 'distancing' strategy
- Notepad by bed
- Whiteboard (puzzles, emerging frameworks, questions, to do list, etc.)
- Slow walks and park benches
- Visuals – list of my codes on walls, pictures of frameworks, guiding authors, etc.
- Use of a diary/journal (?)
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

(Share 1 way that you do 1 of these)

### Other-reflection tools:

- Another PhD student (research related discussions)
- Personal friend (wellbeing related discussions)
- PhD research group (with regular meetings)
- Generative AI avatar (doesn't really work; just wanted to include something techy)
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

(Share 1 way that you use 1 of these)

### Modalities for reflection:

- Contemplative: E.g. searching for disconfirming evidence
- Visualisation: E.g. mind maps, free drawing, board 'mess'
- Critical reading: E.g. distancing and re-reading, journal reviewer role
- Dialogic: E.g. catch up chats (e.g., over coffee), 'mirroring' (see Julian Edge's Cooperative Development; 1992), challenging, critiquing and interrogating (good before viva), role plays (with role reversals)
- Group: E.g. present and discuss, planned debates, elevator pitch
- Structured writing (?): E.g. SWOT analysis, goal achievement
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

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# References / Q&A

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