

Integrating Teacher Cognition, Reflective Practice and CEFR Principles in The Methodological Preparation of Future English Teachers

Axmedova Nodira Muxtorjonovna

Independent Researcher at the National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan, PhD, Associate Professor, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article examines how teacher cognition, reflective practice, and CEFR-based principles can be integrated within the professional-methodological preparation of future English teachers. The central argument is that high-quality methodology education should develop the capacity to connect beliefs, theoretical concepts, instructional decisions, learner evidence, and professional reflection. A conceptual approach is proposed as the integrating mechanism. It enables pre-service teachers to identify the assumptions behind pedagogical choices, relate them to communicative and action-oriented principles, test them through microteaching or practicum, and revise them on the basis of evidence. Particular attention is given to mediation, learner agency, formative assessment, feedback, and digital interaction. The article outlines a learning cycle consisting of elicitation of prior beliefs, conceptual reconstruction, guided design, enactment, evidence-based reflection, and transfer to new contexts. It also discusses assessment tasks that reveal conceptual development rather than only theoretical recall. The proposed integration supports the formation of adaptive methodological expertise and provides a practical basis for redesigning language teacher education modules.

Keywords: Teacher cognition, reflective practice, CEFR, mediation, formative assessment, methodological preparation, conceptual learning, pre-service English teachers.

Introduction: The preparation of future English teachers increasingly requires more than knowledge of methods and lesson formats. Contemporary classrooms are characterized by heterogeneous proficiency levels, varied learner goals, multimodal communication, digital environments, and a stronger emphasis on learner agency and formative assessment. In Uzbekistan, the national policy context reinforces the need for teachers who possess modern teaching skills and can work with internationally recognized approaches. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 establishes the improvement of foreign language teaching quality and the professional development of teachers as strategic priorities [1]. Within this context, methodology courses in higher education need to cultivate adaptive professional thinking rather than procedural

dependence.

Three bodies of scholarship are especially productive for this task: language teacher cognition, reflective practice, and the CEFR action-oriented perspective. Teacher cognition explains how beliefs, knowledge, prior learning experience, and contextual interpretations shape classroom practice [3]. Reflective practice provides mechanisms for examining and reconstructing these internal frameworks [4]. The CEFR Companion Volume offers an external system of communicative constructs and descriptors that can support goal setting, task design, mediation, online interaction, and assessment [2]. When these areas are integrated, pre-service teachers can move from implicit beliefs to explicit conceptual reasoning and from isolated techniques to principled methodological

action.

The purpose of the present article is to describe an integrative model for the professional-methodological preparation of future English teachers. The model treats the conceptual approach as a bridge between cognition, theory, action, and reflection. It identifies the stages of a developmental learning cycle, illustrates the role of CEFR concepts in methodological reasoning, and proposes assessment formats that reveal the quality of professional decision-making.

Pre-service teachers do not enter teacher education as blank slates. Years of language learning create an “apprenticeship of observation” in which students form beliefs about what teachers should do, what a good lesson looks like, how errors should be corrected, and what counts as successful learning. Borg’s research on teacher cognition demonstrates that these beliefs interact with formal coursework and classroom experience [3]. If methodology education ignores them, students may successfully reproduce theoretical answers while continuing to rely on earlier implicit models during teaching practice.

For this reason, professional-methodological preparation should begin by making prior conceptions visible. Useful tasks include belief inventories, autobiographical language-learning narratives, analysis of memorable lessons, ranking of teaching principles, and prediction of teacher responses to classroom cases. The purpose is diagnostic rather than judgmental. Teacher educators can then connect students’ initial ideas with concepts from second language acquisition, communicative language teaching, classroom interaction, and assessment. Conceptual change becomes possible when learners identify discrepancies between prior assumptions and evidence or theory.

Freeman and Johnson’s reconceptualization of the knowledge base of language teacher education supports such a situated view [5]. They emphasize the teacher as a learner of teaching and the social contexts in which teaching is learned and enacted. Consequently, methodological knowledge should be developed through cycles of explanation, practice, observation, and interpretation. A rule such as “use pair work to increase speaking” is insufficient. The future teacher needs to understand conditions that affect pair work: task structure, information distribution, accountability,

proficiency balance, time limits, linguistic support, feedback, and classroom norms. The concept becomes professionally useful only when these variables are integrated into decision-making.

A conceptual approach therefore treats teacher cognition as both an object and a resource of education. Existing beliefs are not simply removed; they are articulated, compared, tested, and reorganized. Over time, students develop a more differentiated conceptual system in which methodological choices are linked to purposes and conditions. This reduces the gap between espoused theory and practical action.

The CEFR Companion Volume provides several system-forming concepts that can organize methodology education. One is the view of the learner as a social agent. This shifts the focus from practising language items in isolation to performing meaningful actions with language. Another is mediation, which involves constructing or conveying meaning, facilitating communication, and working collaboratively across linguistic or conceptual barriers [2]. Online interaction and plurilingual/pluricultural competence further extend the range of communicative situations that teachers must address.

For pre-service teachers, CEFR descriptors should not be used merely as labels for proficiency levels. They can function as design tools. A descriptor can help clarify the intended outcome of a lesson, determine what evidence of performance is required, and guide the construction of tasks and assessment criteria. When students learn to convert broad goals into observable communicative outcomes, they develop stronger alignment between intention and classroom activity.

Mediation is particularly valuable for conceptual preparation because it encourages integrated skill use. A future teacher may design a task in which learners read a short text, select relevant information, explain it to a partner, negotiate meaning, and jointly produce a summary for a new audience. Such a task requires the teacher to reason about input difficulty, cognitive load, language support, grouping, instructions, success criteria, and feedback. The methodological value lies not only in the final activity but in the conceptual network used to design it.

The action-oriented perspective also changes the teacher’s role. Instead of controlling every linguistic

response, the teacher creates conditions in which learners can act, interact, and reflect. This orientation is consistent with postmethod thinking, which emphasizes context-sensitive and principled pedagogy rather than rigid dependence on a single method [11]. In teacher education, students should therefore compare several possible instructional routes and justify choices in relation to learner needs, context, and evidence rather than search for a universal technique.

Reflection becomes pedagogically powerful when it is structured by concepts and evidence. Farrell's framework links teachers' philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and broader professional context [4]. For pre-service teachers, this means that reflection should include questions about why an instructional decision was made, what assumptions supported it, what learners actually did, and what alternative interpretation is possible. General impressions are replaced by analytical reflection.

A practical reflective sequence can be organized around four questions: What did I intend learners to do? What evidence shows what they actually did? Which methodological concepts explain the difference? What will I change next time and why? This sequence is simple, but it directs attention to alignment and causality. It also encourages pre-service teachers to distinguish between teacher activity and learner learning. A lesson can be energetic and well managed while producing weak evidence of the intended outcome.

Reflection should also occur before and during teaching. Planning conferences can require students to predict learner responses and identify likely difficulties. During microteaching, peer observers can collect specific evidence related to interaction, wait time, task completion, feedback, or learner language. After teaching, the student can compare expectations with observation data. These processes make reflection concrete and reduce the tendency to rely on memory or self-evaluation alone.

Experiential learning further supports this cycle. Kolb conceptualizes learning as a process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation [12]. In methodology education, microteaching and practicum create experience; structured observation supports

reflection; conceptual frameworks support interpretation; and redesigned teaching provides experimentation. The cycle is especially effective when each iteration requires transfer to a new instructional problem rather than repetition of the same task.

Formative assessment is a key area in which conceptual integration becomes visible. Black and Wiliam show that assessment can support learning when evidence is used to adapt teaching [7]. In methodology preparation, future teachers should therefore learn to view assessment not as a separate testing stage but as a continuous process of eliciting, interpreting, and responding to evidence. This perspective connects goals, tasks, questioning, observation, feedback, and subsequent planning.

Feedback is similarly conceptual rather than purely procedural. Hattie and Timperley emphasize the importance of information related to goals, current performance, and next steps [8]. For pre-service English teachers, effective feedback requires decisions about timing, focus, explicitness, learner involvement, and the balance between fluency and accuracy. Methodology tasks can present short learner samples and ask students to choose feedback strategies, justify them, and predict possible effects. Such cases develop judgment because several options may be defensible under different conditions.

Digital tools should be integrated through the same reasoning process. The TPACK framework emphasizes the interaction of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge [9]. A digital platform, chatbot, collaborative document, quiz tool, or corpus resource has methodological value only when its affordances match a learning purpose. Future teachers should therefore evaluate tools by asking what type of learner action the tool enables, what evidence it generates, what scaffolding it requires, and whether a lower-technology alternative would be equally or more effective.

Curriculum design principles also reinforce this integration. Nation and Macalister argue for attention to environment, needs, principles, goals, content, format, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation [10]. These elements can be represented as a conceptual map for lesson and course design. When students repeatedly use such a map to analyse different teaching

situations, their methodological decisions become more systematic and transparent.

The proposed learning cycle contains six stages: elicitation, conceptual reconstruction, guided design, enactment, evidence-based reflection, and transfer. Elicitation identifies existing beliefs and intuitive responses. Conceptual reconstruction introduces theoretical constructs and requires students to reorganize their initial understanding. Guided design asks students to solve a professional problem using explicit criteria. Enactment tests the design through microteaching, simulation, or practicum. Evidence-based reflection compares intention with learner response. Transfer requires application of the revised concept to a different context.

For example, a module on classroom interaction can begin with students' beliefs about teacher talk and correction. After analysing concepts such as wait time, interaction patterns, negotiation of meaning, scaffolding, and feedback, students redesign a teacher-fronted activity. They then microteach it while peers collect evidence on student participation. Reflection focuses on whether the intended interaction actually occurred and which task features influenced it. Finally, students adapt the same principles to an online lesson or a mixed-proficiency group. The concept is thus developed across variation.

Assessment should mirror this learning cycle. Suitable formats include concept maps, lesson rationales, comparative method analyses, case-based examinations, annotated materials, video-based reflection, microteaching portfolios, and practicum inquiries. A high-quality response should demonstrate conceptual accuracy, integration of multiple factors, context sensitivity, evidence use, and capacity to propose alternatives. These dimensions provide a stronger indicator of professional-methodological preparation than recall-based testing alone.

The role of the teacher educator is equally important. The educator must model professional reasoning by making decisions explicit: why a task is sequenced in a particular way, why certain learner responses are elicited, why feedback is delayed or immediate, and how assessment evidence changes the next step. This meta-pedagogical transparency turns the methodology classroom itself into an object of study and allows

students to observe concepts in action.

Integrating teacher cognition, reflective practice, and CEFR principles through a conceptual approach can strengthen the professional-methodological preparation of future English teachers. Teacher cognition identifies the existing conceptual resources and assumptions that students bring to teacher education; the CEFR provides contemporary constructs for communicative, action-oriented, mediation-based, and digitally mediated learning; reflective practice enables these concepts to be tested and reconstructed through experience.

The proposed six-stage cycle—elicitation, conceptual reconstruction, guided design, enactment, evidence-based reflection, and transfer—offers a practical structure for methodology courses. Its purpose is the development of adaptive methodological expertise: the ability to select, justify, evaluate, and revise pedagogical action in response to learners and context. Such preparation is consistent with national priorities for modern foreign language teaching [1] and with international directions in language education [2].

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