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A reflective continuum: Development of reflection

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Abstract

Reflection is often described to be an abstract and ambiguous concept with diversified interpretations. Levels of reflection, however, seem to have been agreed upon with some consensus among scholars, which comprises of the following three levels: reflection on one's practice, reflection on one's assumption and beliefs, and reflection on one's teaching and its context through one's historical, societal, and political embedment. The last level, which is generally called critical reflection, is often regarded to be the ultimate level of reflection. In this chapter, which is based on my study, I argue that reflection should be understood comprising not of different *levels* but *types* and its process as a reflective continuum, which is not sequential or formulaic, but is recursive and arbitrary. I also argue that critical reflection should not simply be incorporated and posited as the ultimate level of reflection in teacher development in the Japanese context without taking into consideration of the context. First, I will present a brief summary of the three levels of reflection which are often discussed in the literature. Then, I will present my definition and the types of reflection generated from my study followed by descriptive examples. I will conclude with a discussion of importance of researchers to be mindful of reflexivity in their engagement in reflective practice.

Key words: reflective continuum, types of reflection, levels of reflection, critical reflection

1. Introduction

After the seminal books (1983, 1987) by Schön, reflective practice, as a professional development endeavor, has been incorporated in various professional fields. In the field of education, reflective practice has established itself as a major underlying philosophy of teacher development. In spite of its acknowledgment as a means of professional development, what is meant by the concept of reflection is often pointed out to be diversified (Day, 1993; Farrell, 2001; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Heilbronn, 2008; Jay & Johnson, 2002; LaBoskey, 1993; McLaughlin, 2007; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991), vague and ambiguous (McLaughlin, 2007; Roberts, 1998). Levels of reflection, however, are regarded to have gained some consensus among scholars in their discussion of reflective practice which categorize reflection into three levels (Farrell, 2015; Larrivee, 2008). The first level is associated with a rather simplistic and superficial reflection which focuses on practice of teachers in classrooms, the second often refers to the reason or belief which underlines the practice of the teachers, and the third focuses on one's teaching practice, ideas, and context through social, historical, ethical, and political context that one is situated. In this chapter, I present my definition and framework of reflection and argue that reflection is developed through arbitrary manners which cannot be prescribed into stages. In an incorporation of reflective practice in the Japanese context, I also present my concern of simply introducing the three levels of reflection which places critical reflection as the ultimate goal of reflection for teacher development. This chapter first introduces the three levels of reflection which are often referred to in the literature of reflective practice for teacher development. It will then introduce my definition and framework of reflection, a reflective continuum (Watanabe, forthcoming 2016), followed by descriptive examples.

2. The three levels of reflection

As pointed out by some scholars (Farrell, 2015; Larrivee, 2005), the review of the literature shows that the three levels of reflection are regarded to be commonly agreed upon in the field of education. However, there are differences in the terms employed and slight variations in the meanings assigned.

The three levels of reflection have its origin in the work by Van Manen (1977), who classifies “reflectivity of deliberative rationality” (p. 226) into three levels. The underlying concept of Van Manen’s model has been adapted to various models of reflection put forward by a number of scholars (Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Larrivee, 2008). The first level is technical reflection which takes the empirical-analytic approach aligned with the behaviorist approach. In this level, the best choice in teaching is described to be based on “economy, efficiency, and effectiveness” (p. 226). Van Manen states that teachers face limitations with such a focus, and a higher level of rationality will eventually be required. In the second level of reflectivity, an educational choice of teachers is based on individual and cultural experiences, perceptions, assumptions, and prejudices. Van Manen argues that there is a need for a higher level of deliberate rationality, that is, to take the political-ethical orientation of a critical approach which involves a constant questioning of education one provides in terms of its domination, institution, and authority.

In their book, *Reflective Practice: An Introduction*, Zeichner and Liston (1996) introduce and discuss three levels of practice, practice 1, 2, and 3, which are described to be an integration of teachers’ practical theories and actual teaching practice. Zeichner and Liston employ the term, ‘levels of practice’, but they seem to accord with what are currently regarded as levels of reflection. The first level, P1, is focused on a level of action, such as giving assignments, asking questions, and monitoring students’ work. The second level, P2, is planning and reflection, which involves teachers to think of the reasons for their actions in the classroom. In the third level, P3, teachers reflect on their reasons behind their own actions, that is, the ethical and moral considerations of their actions to see how it would be possible to achieve the enhancement of a more caring classroom or to justify their actions in the classroom.

Jay and Johnson (2002) categorize reflective thoughts into descriptive, comparative, and critical. Descriptive is a description of a matter, such as a classroom concerns, feelings, or interesting theory. They regard description as a problem setting dimension. The second type of reflection in their typology is comparative reflection, which means to look at a matter from a variety of

perspectives that may be incongruent with one's own, such as through the views of students or findings in research. The third dimension of their typology is critical reflection, which involves teachers to make a judgement or a choice, or integrate what one discovered into their problem after consideration of various perspectives. In the third typology, Jay and Johnson (2002) note the importance of gaining a broader perspective in "historical, socio-political and moral context of schooling" (p. 79). They argue that critical reflection is crucial as it leads the teachers to be agents of change who examine what teaching should be as well as what teaching is.

Farrell's (2015) framework comprises descriptive, conceptual, and critical reflections, with which he states questions pertinent to each level. Descriptive reflection refers to one's description of teaching practices, which focuses on one's actions. Questions pertinent to descriptive reflection are "What do I do?" and "How do I do it?" (p. 10). Conceptual reflection explores the reasons behind one's practice. The question pertinent to this level of reflection is "Why do I do it?" (p. 10). The third level is critical reflection which engages the teachers to look at teaching through different perspectives not only through teachers themselves but also through students, the school, and the community. Critical reflection shifts the focus of reflection to the context outside the classroom and examines the practice through its social, political, ethical, and moral aspects. Farrell states, "critical reflection involves a process of unearthing and identifying previously unquestioned norms in society, the community, the school, and the classroom within the contexts in which they are practiced" (p. 96).

In addition to the slight variation in the terms and concepts of the three levels, there are differing views in terms of how reflection is developed. Jay and Johnson (2002) illustrate the process of reflection to be flexible and cannot be prescribed into stages stating "the process is not as linear as the typology might suggest; rather, it involves contemplation, inspiration, and experience. Reflection should not be constrained to a formula, but allowed to evolve in its own loops and leaps over time" (p. 80). In contrast, even though acknowledging the non-linear development of reflection, there are others who suggest that the levels of reflection proceed from trivial to more profound (Larrivee, 2008; Van Manen, 1977).

The review of the frameworks seems to suggest that the third level of reflection, critical reflection, is considered and agreed upon, in the literature of reflective practice, to be the essential and ultimate goal of teacher development. Critical reflection has its roots in critical pedagogy which has its origin in Paolo Freire's (1970) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he argues that transformation of the oppressed requires the oppressed to become aware of oppression through reflection and taking action (Smyth, 1989; Suzuki, 2014; Van Manen 1977). In the application of critical pedagogy into English language teaching, Canagarajah (1999) explains "the realization that education may involve the propagation of knowledges and ideologies held by dominant social groups" (p.3) has inspired the paradigm of critical pedagogy, which expects teachers to have ethical responsibility to negotiate and interrogate "the hidden curricula" (p. 14) of the courses that they teach and to situate learning to the socio-political realities, and promote students to adopt critical perspective in learning in order for them to "make pedagogical choices that offer sounder alternatives to the living conditions" (p.14). He contrasts between *the center* (italics in the original), the technological advanced countries of Anglo-American communities and *the periphery* (italics in the original), communities that are post-colonial and also those consist predominantly of non-native speakers of English. Learning is regarded to vary according to socio-cultural contexts of different communities, thus, pedagogical approaches, tasks, and materials introduced from *the center* are scrutinized to the socio-cultural contexts of *the periphery*.

The concept of critical pedagogy which was developed in *the periphery* has been adopted in *the center* and has given rise to an idea of critical reflection which seems to have been regarded by scholars as the ultimate level of reflection. Larrivee (2008) describes necessity of critical reflection for teachers:

Many advocates of reflective practice take the position that teachers should not only reflect on behaviors and events within the confines of the classroom but should include the influence of the larger social and political contexts. They deem teaching as ultimately a moral pursuit concerned with both means and ends and therefore consider critical reflection to be imperative for teaching in a democratic society (p. 344).

Smyth (1989) depicts critical reflection be the hallmark of teaching:

Being able to locate oneself both personally and professionally in history in order to be clear about the forces that have come to determine one's existence, is the hallmark of a teacher who has been able to harness the reflective process and begin to act on the world in a way that amounts to changing it (p.7).

Larrivee (2008) points out that the concept of critical reflection embraces different target focus for change in their social, historical, and political contexts they are embedded, that is, for the teachers to change their practice or views or for the teachers to become agents to change their contexts. The former is described to be self-reflection inwardly at their own practice, beliefs and assumption. The latter is for teachers to focus their attention to outside the classroom, which is "outwardly at the social conditions in which these practices are situated" (Larrivee, 2008, p 344).

These two focus of critical reflection are not necessarily separate but are connected as a continuum. Moore (2004) explains this continuum with a type of reflection that he calls 'reflexivity', that is, reflection that goes beyond the classroom and enables one to look at oneself and events in a classroom with a historical and socio-political perspective. He states that reflexivity, looking inwardly at oneself, may not be an easy endeavor at its onset; however, looking at oneself and students as entities situated in the historical and socio-political perspective liberates one from looking at oneself clinically inwards to looking at oneself politically outwards, which may lead one to bring out changes in the contexts they are situated. Smyth (1989) describes the shift of inquiry or the source of a problem in critical reflection from oneself to the institutional context:

When teachers are able to begin to link consciousness about the processes that inform the day-to-day aspects of their teaching with the wider political and social realities within which it occurs, then they are able to transcend self-blame for things that don't work out and to see that perhaps their causation may more properly line in the social injustices

and palpable injustices of society, which is to say that deficiencies in teaching can be caused by the manner in which dominant groups in society pursue their narrow sectional interest (p.7).

As seen in the quote from Smyth, the focus of critical reflection outward is argued to lead the teachers from navel gazing or self-laceration (Brookfield, 1995; Farrell, 2015) to being an agent for change in the context they are embedded.

In this chapter, based on the study that I conducted, I would like to make an argument about the following two points: the process of the development of reflection is recursive and arbitrary and critical reflection with its target change focused outwardly should not necessarily be posited as the ultimate aim of teacher development.

3. My study

A multiple case study was conducted to seek to find how in-service teachers in Japan engage in reflective practice as a development endeavor. The main research question of the study was ‘what does it mean for the Japanese high school teachers of English to reflect?’ The study was conducted for seven months from September to March with six in-service teachers of English, Ken, Kyoko, Yoko, Sara, Naomi, and Miki (all pseudonyms) from six different public high schools.

3.1 The participants

At the time of their participation in the study, Ken and Kyoko, both in their second years in their teaching career, were teaching at vocational high schools, where the students were not necessarily interested in studying English. Yoko was in her 12th years of teaching; she had experiences in working at a corporate company, a private high school, and a public high school. She was also teaching at a vocational high school with students who were not interested in pursuing higher education. All three were teaching in the same prefecture. Sara, Naomi, and Miki were teaching at a different prefecture. Sara was in her sixth year of teaching career, but was in her second year of appointment at a challenging high school with students with lower levels of English proficiency. Miki and Naomi had more than 20 years of teaching experiences. Thus, they had experienced teaching at various levels and

types of high schools. At the time of the participation in the study, Miki was teaching at a very competitive high school and Naomi was teaching at a high school with the level falling around the middle.

3.2 Design of the study

The teachers engaged in the reflective interventions, that is, weekly journal writing, monthly interviews, and focus group discussions conducted three times during the study. These interventions were called reflective interventions as they were forums for the teachers to reflect as well as for me to obtain data for analysis. The teachers were given a choice of the language, Japanese or English in their engagement in the reflective interventions. All teachers engaged in the reflective interventions in Japanese except for Sara's journal keeping which was kept in English. The study incorporated the following reflective tasks, which were designed for the teachers to look back at their own teaching: 1) in the second focus group (FG2¹), the teachers discussed their feedback and experience in the participation in the three reflective interventions, 2) in the fourth interview (INT4²), the teachers were asked to read the first three interview scripts and discuss any new findings they gained through the reading, 3) in the fifth interview (INT5), the teachers were asked to discuss their reflective themes, that is, recurring interests or concerns in their teaching practices, and 4) prior to the final interviews (INT6), the teachers received via email the entire past journal entries (JE³). After reading them, they were asked to make the final entries in terms of what they found or felt through the rereading including their reflective themes, 5) in the final interviews (INT6), they discussed their final journal entries and their feedback from their participation in the study, and 6) in the final focus groups (FG3), the teachers discussed their feedback from the experience in the participation in the three reflective interventions and the study. All the interviews and the focus group discussions were recorded after receiving the consent from the teachers and were transcribed by me. The data used in this chapter have been translated by a bilingual colleague.

¹ FG refers to Focus Group and when accompanied with a number, for example, FG1 refers to the first focus group.

² INT refers to interviews and when accompanied with a number, for example, INT4 refers to the fourth interview.

³ JE refers to journal entries and when accompanied with a number, for example, 'JE1/18 Oct,' '1/18,' refers to the number of the entry (in this case the first entry) and the total number of the entries (in this case 18). 'Oct.,' October, is the abbreviation of the month when the entry was made.

3.3 The researcher

I have had about 20 years of teaching experience in various universities at the time I was engaged in the study. I have never taught at a high school, but gave teacher training seminars to in-service high school teachers under the action plan of ‘Japanese with English Abilities’ from 2003 to 2008. I became interested in reflective practice from my involvement as a teacher trainer at the seminars as I felt that I did not think it was my position to ‘lecture’ the teachers as they already have wisdom and knowledge about teaching. I felt my role as a teacher trainer was to draw out knowledge of the teachers. Thus, my role in the reflective interventions in this study was not to judge the teachers’ comments but to pose clarifying questions on their journal entries and interviews.

3.4 The data analysis

I employed theme coding for the analysis of reflection of the teachers. In the initial reading of the data, I read through them without any coding. In the second reading, I coded and took notes in the margins on the parts of data where the teachers appeared to have looked back at their teaching practices or ideas, or changed their views. The coded sections of all of the teachers were combined and made into a document. The compiled list of codes was then analyzed for differences and similarities. The similar codes were put into categories, which formed the preliminary basis of the types of reflection. The different categories, or types of reflection, were applied back to the data to see if they explained the data. If the categories were not adequate, they were modified and revised.

4. Findings

This section seeks to present and illustrate my framework of reflection generated from the data of the teachers in the study. I would like to define reflection as an act of looking back at one’s practice and ideas in order to make their meanings in dialogue with oneself and with others, and identified the following types of reflection: *description*, *reconfirmation*, *hansei*, *reinterpretation*, and *awareness* (Watanabe, forthcoming 2016). I argue that reflective process is non-linear and recursive, which comprises different types of reflection – the process that I call a reflective continuum. The different types of reflection are indicated in italics and are explained through the reflective themes, which are embedded in single quotation marks.

4.1. *Description*

Description refers to a spontaneous written or spoken depiction of experiences, ideas, or feelings. *Description*, thus, refers to all of the data generated from the teachers. It is, however, significant, because what is written or spoken entails not only what is recalled, but also what is chosen to be verbalized, thus, is to be made public. What is verbalized and what is not verbalized has a significant difference, which can be explained with the concept of *kotodama*⁴. What is verbalized, a private thought which is made public, means ideas or practice that are acknowledged by the individual to be actualized (Hara, 2001). Thus, *description* involves teachers' recognition or declaration of ideas or practice to be examined. What is not verbalized is a private thought that will not be made public and, thus, not examined. What was *described* by the teachers in the early phases of the study often developed to be other types of reflection or chosen to be the teachers' reflective themes in the later phases of the study. What was *described* was explored, reviewed, elaborated, and mulled over back and forth through different types of reflection, the reflective continuum. *Description*, thus, bears importance as a gateway to the reflective continuum.

The significance of *description* is also noted in the literature. As introduced earlier, Jay and Johnson (2002) pose *description* as one category of reflection and state that the significance of *description* allows a writer notices what was described to have 'salient features'. Tripp (1993) also points out the significance of *description* stating that *description* reveals writers' thoughts, about which they may not be necessarily conscious when they are writing, but what is entered allows them to objectify their views, stating, "it is only when it is realized that problematics exist that one can set out to expose, understand and acknowledge (or, if necessary, transform) them" (p. 14). *Description* is also explained as a way to identify a problematic (Tripp, 1993), problem definition (LaBoskey, 1993), or problem setting (Jay & Johnson, 2002) and denotes its importance as a gateway to the exploration of routine and tacit teacher cognition. Tripp (1993) illustrates the importance of identification of the problematic in that it leads to an exploration of one's routine, which otherwise is not often challenged. *Description*, a verbalization of a problematic, is a way to examine a part of teacher cognition that otherwise remains unexamined.

⁴ Its literal translation is 'word spirit'. It signifies what is verbalised needs to be actualised.

4.2 *Reconfirmation*

Reconfirmation is an affirmation or re-acknowledgement of one's view or interpretation through a restatement. *Reconfirmation* is similar to *description* since it involves an individual to choose and state their ideas or practice. The difference is that whereas *description* is a more spontaneous selection from an open-ended pool of ideas and experiences, *reconfirmation* entails reviewing, choosing and declaring what is important from reading one's past journal entries or interview transcripts. *Reconfirmation* thus entails a process of solidifying what is important for oneself among that which was already *described*, that is, what has already been claimed to be important. *Reconfirmation* constitutes a crucial point in the reflective continuum as it consolidates one's view, reminds oneself of what is important, and brings one back to what one holds important in teaching, which functions as self-monitoring as well as an impetus for other types of reflection. *Reconfirmation* functions as an important aspect of self-monitoring, especially for teachers with fewer years of experiences. Faced with difficulties, they often wondered what they wanted to aim at in teaching. *Reconfirmation* allowed them to remind their initial aspirations of being a teacher. In terms of what she gained in the study, for example, Sara pointed out that it was beneficial for her to *reconfirm* the direction she wanted to pursue through the exchange of the journal with me (JE 26/26 Aug.).

Reconfirmation has not often been discussed as a type or a level of reflection in the literature of reflective practice. However, it was common among the teachers in my study. This may be due to the nature of the reflective tasks which gave opportunities to the teachers to look back at their past interview transcripts and journal entries. Farrell's 'acknowledgement' (2014) is similar to *reconfirmation* as acknowledgement is an affirmation of one's ideas. Even though it is not commonly discussed in the literature of reflective practice, I argue that *reconfirmation* is one important point in the reflective continuum, as it often leads to other types of reflection such as *reinterpretation* and *awareness* and allows one to solidify their teacher cognition.

4.3 *Hansei*

I would like to add *hansei* as a type of reflection as it was a common reference among the teachers and was regarded as an impetus for development. I define

hansei as ‘looking back at one’s view, one’s present or past practice, and recognizing that it was not appropriate or satisfactory, and acknowledging one’s responsibility in its cause and in its improvement’. *Hansei* was often followed by a statement of conscious effort for self-improvement or regarded as an impetus for development. For instance, Naomi regarded *hansei* as an essential part of learning: “I have gained a lot from the participation in the study. I started to look back at my teaching. I look back, *hansei*, and I learn from it” (JE 19/19 Aug.). Also, Kyoko expressed that she could not understand her colleagues who think they are able to “engage in satisfactory educational activities without having an opportunity to *hansei*” (JE 9/12 Jan.).

Hansei is salient in the reflective continuum, as it leads to other types of reflection, and also other cognitive activities such as generating a solution, and gaining various perspectives. *Hansei* often co-occurs with looking at an event through various perspectives. This is similar to comparative reflection which generates various perspectives as explained by Jay and Johnson (2002):

reflective practitioners are sensitive to various perspectives. So a given classroom scenario might be considered from the perspective of another teacher, a student, a counselor, a parent, and so on. When we consider alternative perspectives or varying ways to approach a problem, we discover meaning we might otherwise miss (p. 78).

Examination of a situation through various perspectives also aligns with what Schön (1987) called reframing, that is, a problem is seen or framed in different ways.

4.4 *Reinterpretation*

Reinterpretation means changing one’s view or opinions toward objects, events, persons or self. *Reinterpretation* and *reconfirmation* might seem similar; the difference is that *reconfirmation* is an affirmation of one’s view such as after a review of one’s interview scripts or journal entries, thus the view does not change, whereas *reinterpretation* involves changing one’s view.

Reinterpretation often involves a change in one's view from a subjective, intuitive judgement to an objective, yet compassionate perspective through a gradual process which involves ample *descriptions*, i.e. entries in the journals, discussion on the interviews, and focus group discussions. In *reinterpretation*, the change, which is often the opposite of the view one held, is brought about after one's objective examination of one's views, which may involve looking at a phenomenon through the views of others or through an application of a theory. This is similar to Schön's (1983) concept of reframing, where he explains, "the inquirer remains open to the discovery of phenomena, incongruent with the initial problem setting, on the basis of which he reframes the problem" (p. 268). *Reinterpretation* is similar also to Jay and Johnson's (2002) comparative reflection as both highlight the importance of gaining of an opposite view, which they explain, "Comparative reflection involves seeking to understand others' points of view, which may be incongruent with one's own" (p. 78). It does not mean, however, once one *reinterprets* a phenomenon, one's view is completely and invariably changed and formed. Even after one has *reinterpreted* a phenomenon, the view is and needs to be revisited and reviewed for further development.

4.5 Awareness

Awareness means that one gains a new finding about one's practice or views, which can be manifested in various ways, such as identifying underlying reasons for or contradictions in one's teacher cognition, drawing out one's tendency or pattern, noticing changes in oneself, and identifying avoidance in one's practice. Unlike *reinterpretation*, *awareness* is not changing one's view from one to another but it is finding a new discovery and gaining an additional insight. *Awareness* involves one to be objective and critical about one's practice and views: Morin (2005) writes that one characteristic of being aware is "the capacity to become the object of one's own attention" (p. 359). Just as with *reinterpretation*, *awareness* is often developed as a result of a thorough engagement in the other types of reflection.

5. Types of reflection generated from the teachers: Through the reflective themes

This section introduces three teachers' engagement in reflective practice in order to

illustrate different types of reflection and the reflective continuum through their reflective themes.

5.1 'Bring the world into the classroom'

Sara's reflective theme, 'bring the world into the classroom,' captures how a teacher *reinterpreted* (JE 24/25 Mar.) one's teaching maxim through *description*, *reconfirmation* (JE 24/25 Mar.), and *awareness* (JE 24/25 Mar.). From the first journal entry, 'bring the world into the classroom' was *described* to be Sara's "big theme in teaching", which was informed by her teacher at college, who said: "There are a lot of things going on in the world or around our lives. Why not talk about it in class?" (JE 1/26 Oct.). She elaborated on the theme in a subsequent journal entry:

I think "bring the world into the classroom" means that we can bring any topics to the classrooms; I mean my teacher was trying say that we don't have to stick to the textbooks. He encouraged us to use materials such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, songs, visual aids, or anything at all. We can talk or write about anything related to our daily lives. My topics are not broad enough yet, but I hope gradually, I can stretch a little further as we move on (JE 2/26 Oct.).

Sara's *description* of "bring the world into the classroom" seems to be accompanied with positive and hopeful tone at the onset of the study. She, however, started to feel demotivated and detached from the students, as she was tired from managing a class of unmotivated and disruptive students which was indicated in one journal entry, "I wonder that the students' low motivation would demotivate teachers', or vice versa... Maybe it works both ways, with some differences in the ratio..." (JE 11/26 Dec.). Sara felt fundamental differences with the students, whom she could not understand and described as "people with different values that I cannot empathize with" (INT6). The weariness led Sara to abandon incorporating new ideas and activities because they may have posed a risk of making the students even more uncontrollable. She did not want to look for supplementary "good stimulating materials" for the students stating, "we often don't have the books at hand nor have time to prepare for using them, unless we do it on

weekends...Maybe that's what enthusiastic teachers do to make their lessons exciting and inspiring for their students" (JE 7/26 Nov.), which indicates that Sara was distancing herself from "enthusiastic teachers." She even *described* herself "a cold teacher", as seen in the second interview:

S: What I really want to do is to teach English in English. However, in this school, I spend a lot of my energy disciplining the students, so I am often wondering what in the world I am doing here. The other day I told you that I am considering changing my job. If I go to a different school, I think I can take a different approach. In my mind, the teacher's job should be mainly to teach English rather than discipline the students. For students, a teacher like Mari⁵ (pseudonym) who care about the students is precious. I think I am cold in that aspect.

A: Is that so?

S: I don't see myself as being that passionate and pushing the students no matter what just like Mr. Kimpachi⁶. I can't go that far, and I draw a line at a certain point between my students and my private life, between what I do here and when I go home after work (INT2).

(S: Sara, A: Atsuko)

However, in the final phase of the study, Sara *reinterpreted* her view toward the students and teaching, which is manifested in her reflective theme of 'bring the world into the classroom'. Sara *reconfirmed* that 'bring the world into the classroom' was still her big theme in teaching English (JE 25/26 Mar.). However, she *reinterpreted* the meaning of the reflective theme after she developed *awareness*, which can be seen in the following entry:

'Bring the world into the classroom' is still my big theme of teaching English. Maybe using the Internet in class, *The Student Times*, songs or DVDs, would bring the world much closer to the classroom. Once I talked

⁵ Mari is Sara's friend who was also a high school teacher.

⁶ Mr. Kimpachi is a junior high school teacher of a very popular TV drama, "Mr. Kimpachi." He is an extremely passionate teacher who devotes his time and effort in helping students. The show focuses mostly on Mr. Kimpachi's guidance with his students with extra-curricular matters such as preventing students from committing acts of juvenile delinquency, and helping a student who became pregnant.

about the Primaries in a lesson and students did not seem to be interested who would be the next President of the United States at all. I guess ‘the world’ is different for each person and my students’ world is more limited to their own town or neighbors (JE 25/26 Mar.).

Sara became *aware* that what the world meant for each person was different. For Sara, ‘the world’ meant “foreign countries and people outside of Japan on this globe” (JE 25/26 Mar.), but for her students ‘the world’ meant physical world around their residences and the high school. Sara elaborated on her *awareness* of the difference of the students’ world in the final interview:

S: So, my teacher used to often talk about bringing the world into the classroom, and I used to believe that referred to foreign countries and people around the world outside of Japan. That was ‘the world’ to me. However, at this school, my impression is that ‘the world’ of these students is very limited. For example, their transportation usually consists of walking or riding a bicycle. And when we went downtown to the monument for an experiential learning excursion, one of the students asked me “What prefecture is this?”

A: What?

S: The monument is located in the urban prefecture. So I guess some of them had never had a chance to get on a train and go somewhere. The reality is that their world consists of their High School, and the area around their High School is the extent of their world. For example, one time, the US presidential primary elections were being discussed on TV a lot, so I talked about that to them a little, but got blank looks. It seemed like they didn’t know who the current US president was. So, I felt that my view of ‘the world’ may have been too broad for them, and that I should start from topics they can relate to, things in their lives, and then gradually expand to things in Japan outside of their region. I need to take it step by step before I jump to talking about things in foreign countries. Those things are too far away for them. Of course, I need to introduce international things, but I felt that I shouldn’t jump into such big things too suddenly (INT6).

(S: Sara, A: Atsuko)

After becoming *aware* that the students' world was different from hers, Sara *reinterpreted* the type of 'the world' to be introduced to the students; it should be based on what 'the world' is for the students, and not what it meant for Sara. As she said, "I felt that my view of the 'world' may have been too broad for them" (INT6) and "I need to take it step by step before I jump to talking about things in foreign countries" (INT6).

After becoming *aware* of the differences of the students' world and her world, Sara was not surprised or critical of the students' lack of knowledge any longer; instead she attributed the lack of knowledge to the environments in which the student were situated. She stated that the reason for their narrow world was due to their limited experiences in visiting many places (INT6) as "their transportation usually consists of walking and riding a bicycle" (INT 6). Her *awareness* and *reinterpretation* led her to state an aspiration as a teacher which she wrote in the final journal: "If I could stretch their boundaries a bit further by teaching English and make them interested in what's going on in the world around us, it would be my great pleasure" (JE 25/26 Mar.).

5.2 'Whole person education'

Reading the past interview transcripts in the fourth interview, Naomi became *aware* of her reflective theme, 'whole person education,' (INT4, JE 12/19 Feb.) to be her mission, i.e., what she was interested in and what she wanted to practice. 'Whole person education' shows that Naomi bears a strong sense of responsibility for her students and for the society. 'Whole person education' meant different types of education in different schools to accord with the types of students, but had the same goal, which was to change the students' learner belief, to facilitate their learning and to encourage them to be good citizens (INT2, JE 13/19 Feb.).

'Whole person education' at one of the previous high schools Naomi taught at, a vocational high school with a low t-score, Technical High School (pseudonym), shows her social responsibility to keep the students in school to protect and to prevent them from committing crimes, and also to terminate "a vicious cycle" that they are trapped in. She learned that many of the students came from uncaring families; some of their fathers were in penitentiaries, some of their mothers had

deserted them, and some were commuting to school from orphanages (INT1). Naomi found that many of their parents did not seem to care very much about their children, not to mention their education. Naomi expressed that her substantial task as a contribution to society was to take care of these students and to keep them in school. She observed: “since their parents are disinterested in their sons, I wonder what would happen to them if I deserted them. I felt social responsibility that if I don’t, the society will be full of *freeters*⁷” (INT2). She described her mission:

In our school as well as others, if we fail a student like that, it might be OK if he or she has somewhere to go, but if there is no place to go, that becomes a source of strong resentment and bitterness. We can only hope that it does not lead to criminal activity. In order to prevent things like that from happening, I think we need to keep supporting students like that. I think that is one of our missions (INT2).

Naomi contended the need to change the vicious cycle that the students are trapped in by their socioeconomic background.

I cannot let their sons repeat the same thing and think the same way. I have to lead them to graduate from high school and let them know that school is not what is against them, but rather what supports them. I thought this might be my mission at the time. My biggest task was this. In a big picture, I thought I contributed to the society through this. I may create criminals by letting them drop out. If they dropped out, they would join gangs (INT2).

Keeping the students in school can prevent the students from committing crimes and alter their negative views towards school, which may lead to terminating the vicious cycle of attitude caused by their societal background. Faced with the students at Technical High School, Naomi ascribed the problems not to the students themselves but to the societal background in which they were brought up (INT1).

⁷ *Freeters* is a Japanese word which means those who never obtain full-time jobs and make a living through uncommitted part-time jobs throughout their lives.

‘Whole person education’ at Naomi’s current school, Medial High School (pseudonym), means to provide discipline (INT3). Naomi is concerned with the students’ lives after their graduation from high school, such as working at a company or going abroad (INT3). In order to foster decent adults, she attempts to provide discipline, even though it is not always pleasant.

In the past, I focused mainly on English education and didn’t emphasize discipline or guidance for students so much. But recently I feel the latter is more important, even more than English. In particular, I want the students who are going to go abroad to have very good discipline... I don’t want Japanese students to be rude overseas and be seen as representing Japan (INT3).

Her idea of ‘whole person education’ at the current school, giving discipline, indicates that she noticed the change in her ‘teacher belief’ in the course of her career. Naomi was not interested in giving discipline earlier in her career but she came to think that it was important and also that it was her mission and responsibility to foster students to be decent adults.

5.3 ‘The use of the worksheet’

Miki became *aware* of the dual roles of ‘worksheet,’ one of her reflective themes, were her compensation for teaching as well as an effective teaching tool. Towards the end of the study, Miki started to question, ‘the use of the worksheet’, which was her panacea for teaching, might have also been her ‘comfort zone’ in teaching.

What was meant by worksheet by Miki was a handmade teaching material which comprised a reading text of the textbook and content questions that she constructed. The worksheet was initially incorporated into a lesson as a way to engage students in learning when she was teaching at a challenging school. ‘The use of the worksheet’ with the textbook content was successful with the students who came to school without their textbooks (INT5). The success led Miki to continue ‘the use of the worksheet’ in a variety of purposes in accordance with the needs of different types of students.

Miki's second journal entry, 'the use of the worksheet', which shows concurrence of *hansei*, a generation of various perspectives, and *awareness*, indicates Miki's perception of worksheet as an effective learning tool:

Today, in Class D (my homeroom⁸ class), a student asked me again about whether or not I would give out the Japanese translation of the reading passage in the textbook. I told the student that I am not going to give it and don't need to because I am explaining everything during the class. However, the student's reply was "But you gave it to us last year." Last year, when we were using an official government approved textbook, we had many types of tasks such as oral introductions and I also created worksheets for each class. I explained to the student that the way I am teaching this year is different from last year. Then, another student said, "Last year's way was better. This year, it feels like we are reading the English text with only a strong focus on translating into Japanese, so it doesn't feel like we are reading English." That was pretty harsh to hear...I explained to the student the reasons for the difference and he seemed to understand. However, honestly speaking, preparing an English-to-Japanese grammar translation type class is easier for me. I may be making excuses (such as how the students wanted more explanation based on translation or wanted grammar to be explained more, or I don't have time to prepare because I am busy and don't have time to make worksheets). I assumed *hansei* as I felt that I may have been swept toward the easier way of doing things. Last year, I worked really hard to use many different ways of teaching because I was against the idea that the students of this school are on a college exam course and should just be taught with grammar translation to prepare for the exams. However, I've realized that I'm doing a completely different style of teaching this year. I promised the student that we will go back to last year's style after we finish with the exam. I resolved to try to teach classes that I will not be ashamed of (JE 1/18 Oct.).

⁸ Homeroom is a unit of a class where students take the same required courses together. They have a homeroom teacher who is like their "guidance teacher". A homeroom teacher is in charge of giving career and behavioural guidance.

Miki's entry first shows a description of a problematic event, that is, a student pointed out that the lessons from the last year were better. Then, she mulled over the reasons for differences between this year and the last year. She gave reasons to the students for the differences in the lessons. Then she explored the underlying reasons. "I don't have time to prepare because I am busy and don't have time to make worksheets". She then became *aware* that she was leaning towards teaching lessons that required less preparation, and wrote that she assumed *hansei*. She closed the journal with a *reconfirmation*: "I resolved to try to teach classes that I will not be ashamed of".

Miki often referred to 'the use of the worksheet' as a solution to problems. In one of the early entries, in order to achieve the mission at the high school, that is, to help students to gain proficiency in reading and writing, she resorted to 'the use of the worksheet' (INT1):

I assume *hansei* that I was too focused on the grammar-translation approach in order to finish the assigned part of the textbook. I started to make worksheet again....Then, most students were concentrated in doing the reading. I was relieved (JE 4/18 Oct).

The entry shows that Miki's *hansei* leads to the generation of a solution, which is the use of the worksheet. Miki showed *hansei* about her teaching practice; she said that she was just focused on finishing up the assigned part in the textbook. The entry indicates that she acknowledges and takes the responsibility for teaching mostly through grammar translation and not trying other attempts. It also shows that she acknowledged the need for change and that use of worksheet was associated with a successful solution. The reliance on the worksheet as a solution is also observed in the following extract:

When I go into explaining things, I still feel like the students are tuning out...I think I should do something, and I am trying to improve my worksheets to make sure the questions are not too monotonous, but... (JE 15/18 Feb).

These *descriptions* of worksheet indicate that when Miki felt she had to change her teaching, she relied on ‘the use of the worksheet’.

Miki, however, came to express a slight doubt about ‘the use of the worksheet’ as an effective learning tool for engaging the students in learning:

If I use worksheets, it seems like almost all of the students try their best to answer the questions. However, one thing I am worried about is whether or not the worksheets are really helping the comprehension of the students, even though I am creating them with the intent to assist students in grasping the content of the passage. I really felt this concern in my class with group E today. That was because some students seemed to not understand what they were doing or what they were being asked to do (JE 6/18 Nov.).

Towards the end of the study, Miki started to discuss the limitations of ‘the use of the worksheet’, in that it engaged the students in answering questions but it might not necessarily mean their engagement in learning. However, at the same time, Miki expressed that ‘the use of the worksheet’, the approach that she was accustomed to, was difficult to change.

A: So, it really seems like you are changing your style of teaching case by case depending on the students you are teaching.

M: Yes, but even if I make efforts to try to change how I teach my classes, somewhere in mind I think it is difficult to change the way I am. Do you see what I mean? Somehow, even if I think I should do some new things, to some extent I go back to my own old style of doing things

A: For example, more specifically, what would you say your style of doing things is?

M: I guess basically I end up creating ‘worksheets’ and assigning them. Then I give students some time and let them think about it before asking them what they think.

A: So you give them some time to think?

M: Yes.

A: And, so, do you feel that you need to change one more step beyond that?

M: Well when some students fall asleep, I have to reconsider whether this way of teaching is really good or not (INT 5).

(A: Atsuko, M: Miki)

The engagement in this study led her to examine her use of ‘the worksheet’, including its limitations. However, since it is a style of teaching that Miki relies on and is accustomed to, she referred to ‘the use of the worksheet’ as that which she could not change. Thus, it seems that she is staying within her ‘comfort zone’.

In the final interview, Miki *reconfirmed* ‘the use of worksheet’ to be her ultimate method of teaching and also gained *awareness* that its use as possibly a compensation for her lack of confidence in attracting students through talking.

A: Did you notice anything about your style of teaching?

M: Well, I guess in the end I go to worksheet. If I want my class to do something, I can’t really get their attention with charismatic speaking, so I tend to depend on designing some kind of task... Yes, that teacher tells very interesting stories, and the students really feel that the teacher’s stories are very interesting. Some teachers are just really good at speaking and getting the attention of the students. But I won’t be able to become like that... In contrast, I prefer to make the students do some kind of task. I think that may be because I want to feel a sense of comfort by seeing that the students are doing something (INT6).

(A: Atsuko, M: Miki)

When the lessons did not go well, she said she would ascribe it to her practice, such as her weakness in talking (INT6). In such circumstances, she resorted to engaging students in some tasks, which was often ‘the use of the worksheet’. She explained ‘worksheet’ to have given her some comfort because the students were engaged and she did not have to speak to the class (INT5).

6. Discussion

The reflective themes of the teachers showed that one does not develop reflection sequentially from one level to another, but the process is flexible, arbitrary, non-linear, returning to and reviewing that which was *described* earlier through the reflective continuum (Watanabe, forthcoming 2016). The reflective themes also indicated that the teachers did not follow the same paths in the reflective continuum. Different reflective themes of the teachers comprised different types of reflection. After *description*, Naomi became aware that ‘whole person education’ to be her reflective theme. Sara’s ‘Bring the world into the classroom’ developed through *description*, *reinterpretation*, *reconfirmation* and *awareness*. Miki’s reflective theme of ‘worksheet’ was developed through *description*, *reconfirmation*, *hansei*, and *awareness*. Most of the teachers *reinterpreted* and/or became *aware* through their reflective themes in the last phases of the study, which indicates that *reinterpretation* and *awareness* are often preceded by ample *description*, *reconfirmation*, and *hansei*. Moreover, *reinterpretation* and *awareness* are not an abrupt revelation and do not signify the end of the reflective continuum; they are just one point of a developmental continuum.

The second point of my argument is that I do not think that critical reflection with its focus of change targeted outward should simply and necessarily be posited as the utmost aim in the realm of teacher development. I am not against incorporation of critical reflection in teacher development. I do fully support the idea of crucial reflection focused inward to examine and change one’s beliefs, assumption, and actions through one’s historical, socio-political context. Also, I embrace the idea and the attitude of critical reflection focused outward, that is, questioning and attesting the context which has restricted one from a full engagement of ethical teaching practice. In my study, some teachers began to see teaching in the contexts they were embedded. Sara *interpreted* her perception of her students as she saw them from the environment they were situated. Naomi regarded her mission as a teacher as a contribution to the society. They did not seem to regard themselves as agents to change the contexts they were embedded. However, I do not think that it would necessarily be their ultimate goal to do so.

My concern is attributed to the placement of hierarchy in terms of levels of reflection to be pursued and also to an incorporation of what has become a current dominant discourse without its examination in a given context. Posing a certain type of reflection to be the highest aim means to address an ‘appropriate reflection’ that teachers should aspire to and possibly to impose evaluative criteria in teachers’ engagement in reflective practice. As I argued with the reflective continuum, I do not think reflection can be evaluated through prescriptive levels. Such levels seem to be incongruent with one of the underlying philosophy of reflective practice, which regards practicing teachers are “producers of legitimate knowledge” (Johanson & Golembek, 2002, p.3), which signifies an integration of theory and practice. The prescriptive levels seem to replicate the view that knowledge is bestowed to practicing teachers from researchers, which implies the separation of theory and practice.

Secondly, as is precisely argued with the concept of critical pedagogy, an incorporation of critical reflection itself, I argue, requires taking into consideration of the context. Due to its political, historical, and linguistic context, Japan is a unique community in Canagarajah’s categorization of *the center* and *the peripheral*. It is a peripheral community as our first language is not English. However, it is not a post-colonial community, but is a community that colonized other countries before and during WWII. The avoidance, prevalent in Japan, of the scrutiny of the past and the present political paradigms (Shirai, 2013; Uchida & Shirai, 2015) might have instilled the feeling of avoidance or ambivalence to confront the sense of one’s autonomy both in domestic and/or international contexts. There is a general observation of ambivalence or hesitance pervasive in Japan about having and raising voice to attest oppression of power, especially in their immediate working environments. In such a context, I do see the crucial need of critical reflection, however because of its context, critical reflection, an inquiry which involves ample discourse (Freire, 1970), cannot simply be incorporated and posited as the utmost level of reflection in teacher education, but is an endeavor that involves considerable effort and awareness raising, which requires dialogue and support through peers and a mentor as suggested by Farrell (2015).

7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a definition of reflection and the types of reflection. I define reflection as to look back at one's practice and ideas in order to understand their meanings in dialogue with oneself and with others and identified the following types of reflection: *description*, *reconfirmation*, *hansei*, *reinterpretation* and *awareness*. I argue that reflective process is arbitrary where teachers engage in different types of reflection in different orders, the reflective continuum. I also argued that critical reflection focused outward should not simply be posited as the aim of teacher development without support from peers and a mentor.

One point that was deemed crucial in this study of reflective practice is the position of the researcher. My interaction with the teachers was a crucial aspect of their engagement in reflection. It is, thus, extremely important for researchers to be mindful of reflexivity, what is described as “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgment and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (Berger, 2015, p. 220) as reflective practice involves a meaning making process through interactions between each teacher and a researcher.

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