

Critical Reflection as a Skill Development Methodology for In-service Educators: An Application in Collaborative Professional Discourse

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Author Note

The research and findings presented in this article commenced before I moved to Miyazaki International University. Data presented in this article were collected and analyzed as part of the requirements for the Doctoral Program at Kumamoto University but have not yet been published. I have no further conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

Ignited into action by the communicative shift in English language teaching in Japanese senior high schools, in this paper the researcher stresses the importance of continued professional development among in-service private high school teachers of English and specifically the necessity for developing teacher knowledge through critical reflection. It is suggested that, when guided by collaborative professional discourse, critical reflective cycles can be used as a methodology for teachers' skill development. This article focuses on the critical reflections of one participant extracted from a larger two-year long study involving three in-service Japanese teachers of English with varying levels of experience.

Keywords: Assisted Questioning, Context-specific, Critical Reflective Feedback, Sociocultural Theory, Transformative Change.

Teachers appear to intuitively know what works and what does not work in their classrooms. Moreover, experienced teachers perform the amazing feat of finding unique ways to engage their students using appropriate teaching approaches and methods. Teacher development programs attempt to capitalize on the experiences of such teachers. However, we can only benefit from these experiences if we are given examples of their various context-specific teaching realities. This is because, not all examples for adjustments in teaching work across multiple contexts, i.e., there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to teaching. Therefore, the premise that there is a need for more examples of the wide-range of day-to-day teaching experiences of teachers at various stages in their career is a valid one.

This qualitative case study draws from data collected in a larger study conducted over a two-year period and focuses on a novice teacher with only one-year of in-service teaching experience. Broadly speaking, the aim of this article is to provide readers with a glimpse into the teaching realities of this in-service Japanese teacher of English as he navigated through this professional teacher development (PTD) process and, more specifically, to demonstrate the important role critical reflection through collaborative professional discourse plays in PTD. Critical reflective practice is exhibited as a skill development methodology because the steps taken can be applied across a wide-range of skills and because critical reflection can also be used as a framework for the development of the desired skills. Moreover, the critical reflective aspect of this study was viewed as a methodology because it framed and guided the entire PTD process.

Working within the framework of critical reflective praxis cycles, the participant was encouraged to share his perspectives on how English was taught at this school and the challenges he was facing in his teaching. His views regarding the communicative shift in the revised curriculum guidelines found in the Course of Study, known as English in principle (EIP), disclosed ways of delving deeper into his teaching beliefs. Furthermore, the participant's reflective comments led to emergent context-specific concerns addressed in reflective feedback sessions throughout the study. Working together through the reflective praxis cycles he developed his critical reflective skills and actively engaged in his professional development. His engaged reflections directly contributed to deepening his teacher knowledge.

This participant began the PTD project showing signs of passivity, addressed in detail later in this paper. As the project progressed his pedagogical practices began demonstrating his transition from what Kumaravadivelu (2003) calls a "passive technician" to a "reflective practitioner." Throughout the critical reflective process focus shifted from his views on teaching and his teaching

practices, to his students' behavior, and back to himself. This occurred organically, indicating that when given the opportunity to engage in reflective practice he naturally addressed what he and his students were doing in the classroom, with the aim of improvement. Guided by the following research question, this paper argues that critical reflection can provide teachers with the methodology necessary to conceptualize such improvements as those attained by this participant:

RQ 1. Can the development of critical reflective skills through collaborative professional discourse contribute to pedagogical changes in the classroom for this participant?

Literature Review

This review draws from the literature, which clearly states that teachers must develop their critical reflective skills if they wish to make positive changes in their teaching. One way to develop one's critical reflective practice is by engaging in collaborative professional discourse. Therefore, professional discourse and transformative change are also included in this review to provide the reader with the context within which this study was conducted.

The Importance of Building Reflective Skills in Teacher Development

The development of critical reflective behavior is at the foundation of teacher development. Literature dating back to John Dewey, in the 1930s, posit the benefits of reflective behavior and its impact on pedagogy. The statement that when access to PTD is lacking or restricted both teachers and students suffer carries as much weight today as it did then. Donald Schön, building on Dewey's contributions, introduced the concept of reflective practice in the 1980s. This involved the direction of critical thought toward one's own experiences (Schön, 1996). Ferraro (2000) draws our attention to the fact that "reflective practice is used at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching" (p.3). This is important because in Japan, where the study was conducted, access to teacher development is readily available to pre-service teachers in undergraduate and graduate teaching programs. However, access drops drastically once the teachers begin working, especially in private high schools like the one where this study was conducted (see Laskowski, 2007; Laskowski & Waterfield, 2014).

Since the participant in this study had just such an experience with his teacher development, the work of Richards (1991), which notes that teachers develop their teaching style early in their careers, brought a sense of urgency for PTD with this participant. Richards further states that early teaching experiences are often stressful. Therefore, it would make sense to provide PTD access to

teachers early in their careers as a way to develop their teaching style and reduce stress. This further supports the rationale for working with this participant at this early stage in his teaching career. In this aim, we attempted to form effective teaching behaviors thorough reflective practice and possibly reduce some of the stress he was facing.

Reflective Practice

The development of critical reflective skills inevitably leads to reflective practice (Schön, 1983). As Mathew et al. (2017) state, “reflective teaching is a process where teachers think over their teaching practices, analyze how something was taught and how the practice might be improved or changed for better learning outcomes” (p. 127). This indicates experience alone does not always lead to learning because “deliberate reflection on experience is essential” (Mathew et al., p.126) in the learning process. Farrell (2012) suggests, “teachers who engage in reflective practice can develop a deeper understanding of their teaching, assess their professional growth, develop informed decision-making skills, and become proactive and confident in their teaching” (p. 2). These were desirable outcomes for this participant.

Dewey (1933) made the distinction between reflective thought and other ways of thinking such as routine thinking nearly ten decades ago. He distinguished the reflective component as being most important in the development of “intelligent action” (Calderhead, 1989, p. 44). Schön (1983; 1987) further developed this concept by stressing the need for “reflection in-action.” Drawing attention to the need for this kind of reflection, in this context, suggests that teachers need to be aware of what they are doing in the classroom to make necessary changes while in the act of teaching. Schön argues, developing this balance of reflection on-action and in-action is what best helps teachers meet the daily challenges of teaching. In short, such critical reflection facilitates more flexible thinking among those who engage in the practice of it. To develop this flexible thinking, we used praxis cycles as our critical reflective framework.

Praxis Cycles as a Critical Reflective Framework

The modern concept of praxis, simplified, is the practical application of a theory. Of importance to this study, praxis cycles can be used as a framework to guide teachers through the reflective process because they require the practitioner to decide what theoretically can be applied within their own pedagogical context. This kind of reflective action promotes change by providing teachers with opportunities to reconstruct their teaching theories in practice (Hobley, 2003). When teachers begin looking for ways to improve upon their actions, which may have become routine, it can promote positive change. Or as in this case, with novice teachers, it can contribute to the

development of effective developmental habits early in their teaching careers. Furthermore, the argument can be made that this critical awareness is necessary for conceptual change at any stage of one's teaching career. One way to develop this critical awareness within the praxis cycles is through professional discourse.

Professional Discourse as a Facilitating Tool

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) indicates that mediated language can significantly influence skill development. In this case, the participant needed to be able to express his ideas in articulate and professional ways. Takegami (2016) states, the ability to articulate why ideas are working at a deeper professional-level is an important part of the developmental process for teachers. This is supported by Nation (2001) who stresses the importance of specialized use of language. Furthermore, engaging in and developing professional discourse enables teachers to become stakeholders (Freeman & Reed, 1983) in the change process.

When discussing language and discourse in PTD, it is helpful to once again reference sociocultural theory because it presents language as a sociological tool that people use to mediate thought. This further strengthens the argument that PTD works best when collaborating with fellow colleagues (Laskowski & Waterfield, 2014). Viewing language as a tool also allows us to consider it a major piece necessary for skill development. Therefore, the language used in reflective feedback sessions was grounded in the epistemological stance of sociocultural theory and framed by the guidelines of professional discourse. The aim of this was to facilitate transformative change.

Transformative Stages of Teacher Development

Building on Schön's (1983) work, Kumaravadivelu (2003) outlines three transformative stages of teacher development: (1) passive technician; (2) reflective practitioner; and (3) transformative intellectual. He suggests that language teachers begin at a level of a passivity when they are not yet flexible enough to deliver lessons in innovative ways. This passivity was evident in this participant when he was observed teaching by reading directly from the teacher's manual and prepared scripts during the early observation lessons. Kumaravadivelu (2003) argues that this inability to veer off script is due to the lack of reflective skills. With time, as teachers develop their reflective practices, they become more flexible and better able to adjust their teaching in relevant and effective ways. These reflective practices are the defining feature of the second stage of development.

One of the crucial aspects of reflective practice is the continued attempts to maximize learning potential through informed reflection. Wallace (1991) offers practical applications of the

reflective teaching approach while Richards and Lockhart (1996) connect this approach specifically to EFL teachers. Cakcak (2015) asserts that a defining feature of reflective teachers is taking “responsibility for their actions and consider[ing] alternatives rather than acting without thinking” (p. 6). This participant began in a state of passivity similar to that defined by Kumaravadivelu (2003), and with extremely limited access to PTD (see Waterfield, 2018; Waterfield, 2019). Therefore, one of the *a priori* goals was to develop his teacher knowledge through critical reflection in the aim of generating more flexible teaching practices. In this way, critical reflection and professional discourse played significant roles in the PTD process, both in framing the process and facilitating the participant’s transformative conceptual changes.

Methodology

Research Design

The exploratory and interpretive nature of this study justified a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The methodological selection was informed by Nunan (1991) and Saldana (2016) who argue that research methods should be selected according to their appropriateness. As Saldana (2016) states, it is the particular goals of a study such as the research question(s), conceptual framework, and methodology, that propel studies forward. This reinforces the importance of recognizing that every study is defined by its context-specific conditions. Therefore, data collection and analytical methods which recognize the context-specific nature of this study were sought.

It must also be noted that my insider knowledge, as a colleague of the participant, influenced the decisions made early in this study. Therefore, an analytical method that prioritizes insider knowledge was chosen. Furthermore, conducting the study in collaboration with colleagues increased the potential for bias. Therefore, reducing bias in the analytical phase was crucial. Template Analysis (King, 2004) combined with Case Study (Yin, 2003) provided the necessary systematic steps for rigorous data collection and analysis.

Setting. This study was conducted in a large private senior high school in south-western Japan. This school offers courses ranging from general education to more specific courses such as engineering, as well as Tokyo university and national university preparation courses. However, the focus of the larger study was set specifically on teachers who were teaching the national university track courses due to their potential to be most heavily influenced by the EIP policy guidelines.

Participant. In the larger study, three full-time teachers volunteered to participate. This case study addresses the findings from data provided by the most novice of the three participants. Before this PTD project began, all participants completed voluntary agreements allowing the researcher to use any and all information gathered to conduct research with the understanding that they would all remain anonymous. Participants were then placed into categories based on their teaching experiences. The participant of focus in this case study was considered novice because he had only one year of in-service teaching experience at the time of the study. Of particular interest, the year of experience was spent in a public high school which, according to the participant, was more heavily influenced by the Course of Study than this private high school. He was viewed as a data-rich participant because of this transition from the public school to this private high school.

Template Analysis

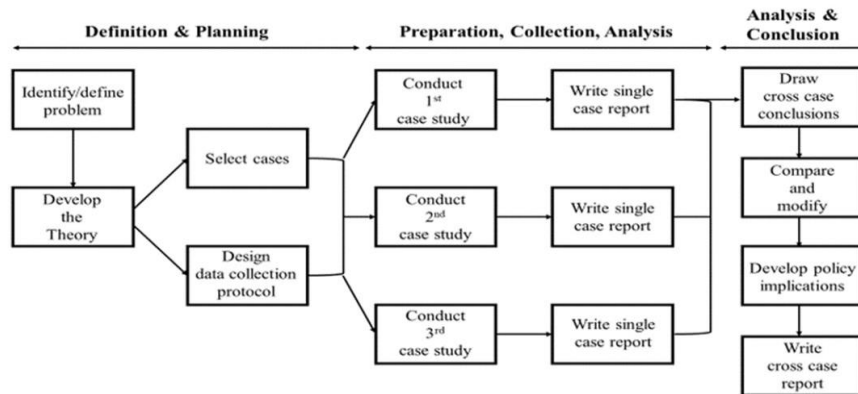
Over the past two decades Template Analysis has been gaining traction in qualitative research. A distinguishing feature of Template Analysis is that it allows researchers to formulate thematic categories early in the study. Themes are often based on researcher's expert knowledge and insider experiences. Notable in Template Analysis is the formation of an *a priori* theme or short list of themes which are then substantiated in a manner similar to other inductive research methods such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Charmaz, 2014) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

King and Horrocks (2010) suggest there are multiple ways to apply Template Analysis because it is not tied tightly to any particular epistemological stance. It is this flexibility of application that makes it popular among qualitative researchers across various research fields. According to Braun and Clark (2006), theoretical frameworks and methods may vary in qualitative research. Therefore, it can be said that Template Analysis can be used as an effective approach when the researcher is interested in problem solving, learning about particular phenomenon, or making discoveries. For these reasons, it was selected for use in this study.

Case Study

Case Study is well established as an analytical method in the social sciences and is frequently used in situations where the data collection and analysis are aimed at the contextual details of a phenomenon to help researchers gain insights (Yin, 2018). The use of Case Study in this research is aligned with Duff's (2012) rationale which states that to attain deeper understanding of individuals' behaviors, performance, knowledge, and or perspectives, investigations must be intensive and studies must be conducted over an extended period.

Below, Figure 1 depicts a Multiple Case Study Method showing the process of analysis (Yin, 2003). It blends well with Template Analysis in that the final goal is the production of a final report abstracted from the substantive data analysis. The larger study, from which these data were drawn, followed the progression depicted in Figure 1 to the final stage of cross case analysis. Since this paper focuses on only one participant, it ends at the writing of a single case report. However, the three distinct phases: (1) Definition and planning; (2) preparation, collection, analysis; and (3) further analysis and conclusion, are still noteworthy because they framed the phases of this study as well.

Figure 1*Multiple Case Study Method*

Note. Adapted from Yin (2003, p. 72)

Data Collection Protocol

Data were collected from multiple sources: (1) Questionnaires; (2) interviews; and (3) observations. Since this study did not use any instruments with established metrics, strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings were extremely important. The trustworthiness of the data analysis was verified using guidelines taken from Creswell's (2007) strategies for ensuring validity (pp. 191-192). These strategies use quantitative language. However, they are easily adaptable for use in qualitative research. As outlined earlier, data analysis was also broadly guided by an overarching research question of whether the development of critical reflective skills through professional discourse could contribute to pedagogical changes in the classroom for this participant.

Trustworthiness of Analysis. Although the aim of this study is not to produce generalizable findings, the following steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of analysis: (1) Attention was made to ensure prolonged engagement which provided rich descriptions of the participant's teaching realities; (2) data were gathered from multiple sources and triangulated using three separate collection sources; (3) member checking was performed regularly as a quality check which also provided opportunities to further substantiate thematic interpretations; and (4) peer debriefings were conducted at the end of each praxis cycle.

Interpretations were made during the coding phase and recorded in research notes. Interpretations were then substantiated during observations and reflective feedback session interviews. Eleven in-depth interviews (I-1 ~ I-11) were conducted over a two-year period.

Observation lessons were video recorded and points of interest were written down in observation field notes (OFN). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. To maintain the student and participant privacy agreement, use of recordings was restricted to the reflective feedback sessions attended by the participant and researcher only.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed in accordance with Template Analysis (see King, 2004). One *a priori* theme of focus was developed at commencement. It addressed the participant's passivity in the classroom. Analysis of the data surrounding this overarching theme led to the emergence of related themes and subthemes, some of which are discussed in this paper. The thematic template was revised multiple times as analysis progressed from open coding to thematic abstraction. Further refinement of the thematic categories continued until the completion of the final template.

The Coding Process

The term "coding" as used in Template Analysis is very similar to its use in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It refers to the first stage of analysis. Many forms of thematic analysis suggest a somewhat fixed sequence for developing a coding structure. Braun and Clark (2006) present a style of thematic analysis which King and Brooks (2017) describe as "generic" (p. 6). Methods such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and the various forms of Grounded Theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990) use this generic coding structure to avoid making interpretations too soon. However, Template Analysis is more flexible in its approach regarding the coding sequence. For example, the procedure does not depend on the use of any specific number of interpretive coding categories early in the study. In Template Analysis, only after a descriptive stage does coding become more refined (King & Brooks, 2017). Data were, therefore, grouped into thematic categories related to the research question, and the *a priori* theme. Then interpretations were made and thematic abstraction was performed. Data analysis memos (DAMs) were written to record insights generated during the analytical process. The process therefore, moved through three coding phases: (1) Open thematic coding; (2) clustering; and (3) thematic abstraction.

Findings

The findings reference classroom observations and reflective feedback session interviews which depict the professional discourse the researcher and participant engaged in. Inferences describe the transformative changes made by the participant through the PTD process.

A Priori Theme of Passive Teaching Behavior

Early classroom observations were guided by answers given by the participant on the initial survey and comments made in the first interview. In both, he made it clear he was not worried about his own English language abilities and, in fact, wanted to use more English in class. However, when doing so he perceived his students as being “disinterested” and “unengaged,” (DAM) as seen in the comment below (note, all interviews were conducted in English, with only very little Japanese used for clarification of more complex or technical terms. Moreover, none of the transcribed data included in this paper were translated):

Participant: When I speak English, I feel they don't understand my English and when I'm talking, they hardly reply to me in English, only Japanese. So, I don't think I could teach the whole class using only English. [I-1]

He was very confident in the interviews and had very little difficulty expressing complex ideas on teaching. Nonetheless, he was actively limiting his English use with his students. When asked about this he continued that his hesitancy to use English in class was further exacerbated by the pressure to teach to the test, a reality of teaching in Japan that Laskowski (2007) terms “high stakes” teaching (p. 145).

Participant: I think the most important thing is [for the students] to go to the university. In high school, the ultimate goal is for the examination, or the university and like that. Maybe this is true and this is a reality for the students in the high school. So, you know, I have to find out how to deal with the examination. Sometimes for English learners, I think grammar understanding is difficult and so, we have to make it simple and easy when we teach English to students. But yeah, the grammar we learn in high school is very difficult. So, I often feel, yeah, teaching grammar [in English] is very difficult. [I-7]

Ideally, in keeping with the Course of Study guidelines, he should be able to teach the content necessary to pass the university entrance exam using English. However, according to his teaching realities as expressed in this and previous interviews, doing so seemed bleak. Therefore, observations focused on finding out why students were not responding to his English use in the classroom. This is when his passive teaching approach was noticed. Upon observing the participant's lesson, it became clear that although he was a confident and competent English communicator, there was an observable gap in his focused pedagogical use of English as the following observation indicates:

After the greeting, the majority of the teacher's communication with the students during this lesson was limited to him reading directly from the teacher's manual verbatim in a low and steady voice [OFN].

This observation brought to point the significance of different language competencies. Although he was fluent and confident using English in the interviews and in his day-to-day communications, he was still uncomfortable using instructional English. Therefore, part of his hesitancy to use English in the classroom was his view that the English used there should be the type of English that Cummins (1979) calls English for academic purposes (EAP) which, according to Cummins, is very different from the kind of English we use in day-to-day conversation. He makes a significant distinction when he introduces the acronyms BICS and CALP to show the difference between the basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). He argues that conversational fluency and academic application of language are separate cognitive functions. Applying BICS is assumed to be easier because topics are addressed at a conversational-level, allowing for a higher context that offers many cues to facilitate successful communication. On the other hand, CALP requires more focused knowledge and a greater depth of understanding. It appeared that this participant was comfortable using English in BICS-type situations, but uncomfortable using English in the CALP-type setting of the classroom. This was brought to his attention in subsequent reflective feedback sessions.

The reflective feedback sessions facilitated interventions which occurred throughout the PTD process and focused on stimulating further critical reflection. Initial comments indicated he did not think his use of English in the classroom would have a positive impact on students because they did not appear to be responding to his attempts to use English [I-1~I-6]. However, in the later stages of the study, after regular engagement in reflective practice, significant changes in comments on teaching practices became evident [I-7~I-11]. One significant change was the recognition that the lack of engagement among the students earlier in the study could have resulted from the above-described passive teaching approach. He also began to see that the use of Japanese was not necessary in some areas of his lessons, e.g., when giving feedback or praising students.

After seeing positive reactions from his students, he became more open to implementing more communicative activities in his lessons. He also began showing signs of more thoughtful action as he began adapting his lesson plans. One such innovative change was the use of PowerPoint presentations which he made as supplement materials. He used PowerPoint to introduce the new topics in the textbook units. In subsequent classroom observations it became clear that the

reflections on-action during reflective feedback sessions had affected his teaching behaviors, suggesting that critical reflections were contributing to the pedagogical adjustments now being made. Comments during feedback session confirmed he was experiencing positive outcomes from the changes he was making:

Participant: Now, my students are more active. I think they enjoy the class more. When I talk to them, I think they understand what I am saying. When they work in groups and in pairs, they look like they are interested in what they are doing much more than before. [I-10]

He was then asked what he thought caused this change in his students. He felt that they understood the content of the textbook units more since he had begun introducing the topics using the PowerPoint presentations. This was interesting because the presentations were given entirely in English. Considering that when he began, he was reading directly from the teacher's manual, this augmentation of his lessons was a significant pedagogical advancement. Developing his reflective skills through collaborative professional discourse seemed to facilitate deeper reflections and aided in his conceptual changes.

Recognizing his passive teaching approach also significantly contributed to his pedagogical change because this allowed him to see the gap between what he thought he was doing in the classroom and what he was actually doing. He further stated that by engaging in collaborative professional discourse, he felt more confident that his perceptions were accurate because they were based on more substantial criteria [DAM], i.e., informed critical reflections framed by educational theories. This indicates that when teachers are given opportunities to reflect in and on the act of teaching, their reflections can deepen.

Providing opportunities to reflect on his actions outside of the classroom contributed to more informed thoughtful action in the classroom as seen in the comment below:

Participant: I really feel this experience has helped me a lot. I am thinking about my classes differently now. I think about them a lot more than I used to. As we talked about the lessons this year you called these discussions reflections? I am doing that on my own now. When I plan my new lesson, I think about my previous lesson and how I can make it better. I am excited about preparing the new lessons, it's fun for me because I can think of interesting ways to grab my students' attention. [I-11]

The above comment indicates that critical reflection contributed to transformative change in this participant. In the reflective feedback sessions, his focus shifted from his own behavior to his

students' reactions. This allowed for the conceptualization of lessons more aligned with students' specific needs and more communicative student-centered lessons.

Example of a Critical Reflective Feedback Session

The reflective feedback sessions made it clear there was a misunderstanding of the surface-level reason for disinterest among students. When he began to consider the passive learning conditions and lack of opportunities for student engagement as being a possible deeper-level causes for students' disinterest, a breakthrough occurred. The following comments were made upon seeing how students were reacting to earlier lessons:

Participant: I think, it was not so good. Because some students, fell asleep and some of them seemed to be bored with the lesson. I have to make the lesson much more interesting and fascinating for the students. But, at this moment I have no idea about that. How can I do it? [I-3]

He was asked to consider why the students seemed disinterested and asked to put himself in the students' place, listening to the CD many times and a teacher who was just reading from the teacher's manual, as observed together on the video. He continued:

Participant: I asked questions, but just the questions in the textbook. There were some questions, like what are community bicycles? Something like that. So, I could let them make groups when they share their answers for the questions in the textbook. So, maybe that's something? [I-4]

Including group work would be an improvement because it would provide students with more opportunities for communicative engagement. However, it was also noted that the types of question being asked needed to be addressed. Focusing on the question types brought to point the level of cognitive function involved in forming answers. He was asked to consider if he could teach the material through a dialogue with the students incorporating different types of questions. The following exchange shows how this helped him conceptualize the use of a specific type questioning, that Tharp and Gallimore (1989) call "assisted" questioning, for this and future topics. Moreover, the inclusion of assisted questions in lessons became an emergent central theme of his change.

Participant Breakthrough. The following exchange began with a description of the topic and ended with a clearly stated purpose for using assisted questions in class, demonstrating one of the positive results of extended engagement in critical reflection:

Participant: The topic is abandoned bicycles in the world. Most of the bicycles in Japan, that are thrown away, are sent to other countries. Especially, to developing countries. And, they use the bicycles as a transportation there.

Researcher: What are some questions you could ask the students? Remember, we are thinking of assisted questions.

Participant: Yeah. So, for example, “what are community bicycles?” that was one of the questions I asked. What are community bicycles? But the answer comes from the script. So, it must be an assessment question.

Researcher: Right, do you remember why it is called an assessment question?

Participant: It is called an assessment question because it is checking to see if they understood.

Researcher: Could you ask a question that relates the students’ experience to this topic?

Participant: How about starting with, “who owns a bicycle?” Maybe they all own bicycles. Or, “how many bicycles have you owned?” Or “Have you ever thrown away or lost a bicycle?”

Researcher: Very good questions! Maybe the students would answer something like, “Yes, I have.” “I had three bicycles and I’ve thrown two bicycles away.” If they answer the question like this, what other questions could you follow up with?

Participant: Maybe, where do you think those bicycles went? Because it is connecting the conversation to the textbook topic, but maybe the students don’t know.

Researcher: If they don’t know, that’s OK. You could say, “Well, maybe it went to...” one of the countries listed in the textbook and start the introduction. What do you think?

Participant: If I do that, maybe they are more engaged because we started with talking about their own experience. They are thinking about their own bicycle. Yeah! So, they can connect their experience to the textbook.

Researcher: That's right. That's it, exactly. [I-4]

When asked again if he thought the students were showing signs of disinterest because the topic was too difficult, he replied:

Participant: I see now that this lesson was very slow. I understand now that I can try some different things like presenting material differently and adding assisted questions to help the students connect to the topic. Maybe if they can make a connection, it won't be so difficult for them. [I-4]

The above demonstrates how this process of critical reflection, guided by professional discourse, helped him recognize the slow pace of the lesson was caused by his passive teaching approach and realize the importance of helping students connect the textbook material to their lived experience by using assisted questions.

Connecting the Textbook to Lived Experience Through Assisted Questions

After recognizing the importance of students connecting their lived experiences with the textbook material, everything changed. He began adjusting his lessons to include assisted questions, especially when introducing the new textbook units. With practice in reflective feedback sessions, he began developing original assisted questions. Augmenting his teaching materials in ways that helped his students form connections to their real-life experiences allowed him to break out of his passive teaching behavior and led to more active lessons with higher levels of student engagement [OFN]. Later in the study, the participant was asked about his in-class use of assisted questions, he replied:

Participant: Now, I really think it is important to know what my students are thinking. One way I can find this out is through assisted questions. [I-9]

This is significant because it shows a deeper understanding of the importance of this type of questioning and that he was also using the questions to better understand his students. This further increased the potential for students to share ideas, allowing them to access and build upon their previous knowledge of the various topics in the textbook. This resulted in the creation of stronger connections.

Assisted questions appeared to resonate strongly with this participant because he quickly saw the benefit in his students' responses when he began including them in his lessons. He noticed

significant improvements in his students' interest and engagement with the textbook [OFN]. At the commencement of this study, he thought the content of the textbook was too difficult for his students. However, when the study concluded he had developed a method of engaging his students with the content using assisted questions and PowerPoint presentations. This increased his motivation to further reflect on his lessons, develop teaching materials, and to engage his students further. Therefore, it may be stated this participant transitioned from a passive technician to a reflective practitioner during this PTD project. It may also be argued that the collaboration with colleagues also positively contributed to the process.

Benefits of Professional Teacher Development Conducted by Colleagues

Conducting PTD over long periods of time is rarely feasible when overseen by outside organizations. Colleagues have more opportunities to commit to collaborative critical engagement over an extended period. Moreover, colleagues have a heightened awareness of the context-specific needs due to their insider knowledge. Due to their familiarity with the local conditions, they can significantly contribute to the effectiveness of PTD. Therefore, in theory, by working together each participant has increased potential to make meaningful context-specific changes.

Based on the findings of this and previous studies (see Waterfield, 2011; Waterfield, 2018; & Waterfield, 2019) PTD appeared to occur in the best way for this participant and the group of participants in the larger study, when the following points were met: (1) The projects were conducted onsite; (2) each teacher's particular needs were addressed; (3) the teachers themselves took ownership of their development and were critical in their reflections; (4) it was done in collaboration with other teachers; and (5) the process empowered the participants. These five points have potential for transferability among teachers and teacher researchers dealing with similar conditions or concerns.

Conclusion

Without access to PTD, it is extremely difficult for teachers to engage in the reflective process necessary to make critically informed changes in their teaching. If the participant had not taken part in this study, he may have still improved his teaching practices on his own. However, the collaborative approach based in professional discourse described here did significantly contribute to the development of teacher knowledge. Furthermore, exploring teaching realities in context led to the development of practical solutions that he could get behind. In this way, developing his critical reflective skills allowed him to see his students' learning and his own teaching more clearly. In doing so, as he transitioned from a passive technician to a more reflective practitioner. Furthermore,

it can be said that critical reflection was used in this study as a skill development methodology because it provided a clear framework for engagement in the transformative process.

Collaborative professional discourse allowed this participant to more clearly understand that his own behavior was contributing to students' disinterest, not the difficulty of the textbook, as he previously suspected. After realizing students' responses were, in this case, not due to the material being too difficult but rather due to a lack of opportunities to engage with it in ways that allowed them to make connections to their own experiences, significant conceptual changes occurred. Namely, he was able to facilitate student connection-building to the textbook materials through augmenting his lessons with the effective use of English PowerPoint presentations and assisted questions. This was significant because, in considering ways to improve the learning conditions, he began taking control of his teaching. This allowed him to assess student needs more accurately. They needed to engage with the materials, their peers, and the teacher in more communicative ways through a more student-centered, task-based lessons. This style of lesson also happens to align with the Course of Study EIP policy guidelines.

Finally, signs of transitioning from passive technician-type teaching practices to reflective practitioner-type behavior were seen in how he taught and talked about his lessons in the latter observations and reflective feedback sessions. In short, this PTD process provided him with a framework that allowed him to become more proactive in his preparation, delivery, and reflection on and in his lessons. The same results may not be attained by others. However, the steps outlined in this paper do have a high probability for transferability in that they can be used as a framework for others pursuing their own PTD and aid them in facing their own context-specific teaching challenges. In this way, the critical reflective process detailed in this paper can be seen as a skill development methodology within this PTD context.

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