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REFLECTIVE THINKING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF AN EFL TEACHER EDUCATOR

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ABSTRACT

Reflective teacher education for developing critical and inquiry-based competencies among pre-service teachers through enacting noticing, questioning, associating, reasoning and deducing conclusions have served immensely for the beginning of their professional development. Reflective thinking and learning has become a dominant paradigm in teacher education for the last three decades in the Turkish context. Foreign language teacher education within the reflective paradigm has also been accelerated since then. This study is designed as an autoethnographic one where I analyse my own professional developmental journey as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher educator centralizing the concept of *reflection* along the timeline. Autoethnographies are in a way self-studies in which the processes are analyzed from the insider's perspective. In the paper, the term reflection is elaborated for not only the meaning within my English Language Teaching process to follow a career pathway but also as a concept whereby I have developed the use of reflective thinking in educating EFL teachers for the last two decades. The way I developed the concept in my learning and teaching, and its evolution in the training procedures are examined via my practical uses in the coursework with EFL pre-service teachers. As a result, this study reveals a transformation in one's reflective learning to become a reflective teacher and thus a teacher educator. Such studies, like this one, might present not only valuable insights at the personal level but also a contribution to others for conceptualizing the construction and complex processes of professional development in teaching and teacher identities.

Keywords: Reflective learning and teaching, EFL teacher educator, pre-service teacher, autoethnography

INTRODUCTION

Reflective learning and thinking is nothing new, particularly with regards to learning in the history of pedagogic research, and it has long been known in the field of education with Dewey's views (1910/1997; 1933). He listed consecutive but not sequential four points to be reflective in one's learning.

- (a) Reflection is a systematic and rigorous thinking,
- (b) It needs to happen in a context and interaction with others,
- (c) It is a meaning-making process where the learner develops a deeper understanding by analyzing experiences and their relations with others, and
- (d) Reflection requires a set of attitudes and values for intellectual growth.

His views have enlightened many scholars in the field and have also been reflected in teacher education. Considering the significance in teacher education, reflection has arrived relatively later into the field via various scholars with their seminal works (Anderson, 2020; Calderhead, 1989; Goodman, 1984; Killen, 1989; Newman, 2018; Schön, 1983, 1987; Sellars, 2017; Smyth, 1989; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991; Tillema & van der Westhuizen, 2006, Valli 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1987, 1996) in 1980 and onwards. Mostly conducted in the context of USA higher education institutions and positioned accordingly, these studies highlighted that an inquiry-oriented teacher education paradigm would enable purposeful and reasoned behavior change as well as the judgment on why certain actions and the content in teaching. To them, reflection in teacher education promises deliberate changes from behaviourist and traditional approaches towards a more reflective framework in teacher learning. Reflective thinking to be used as a conceptual device to discover student teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards their own teaching would also enhance teacher educators' work for encouraging them to be more facilitative throughout the teacher education curriculum.

Similarly, the studies conducted afterwards for fostering the reflective learning of second/foreign language teachers and student teachers demonstrated the use of various skills, reviewing, reconstructing, reenacting, critically analyzing and supporting explanations with evidence (Shulman, 1987). They suggested many tools of professional learning and focusing on their exploration of the practices, such as portfolios (Lippincott, 1999, Wade & Yarbrough, 1996) action research (Burns, 1999; Wallace, 1998), ethnography (Tarjana, 2002), journal writing (Cole et. al, 1998; Farrell, 1998; Ho & Richards, 1993), diary keeping (Brock et al., 1992), self-observation (Richards, 1990; Wajnryb 1999) and peer observation (Richards & Lockhart, 1991).

Reflective thinking and learning has become the dominant paradigm in EFL teacher education in the last three decades in Turkey. Since the reform enacted in 1998 and subsequently in 2008 and 2018, the theory and practice issues in teacher learning and thus reflective professional learning is officially sustained via the teaching practice having been collaboratively conducted with the help of local schools and faculties (Grossman & Sands, 2008; Kavak et al., 2007; Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2001). Quality professional education has been the ultimate goal in such reformation processes although a visible lack of achievement in reflective teaching exists

(Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Tezgiden-Cakcak, 2015). Nevertheless, numerous studies (Akcan, 2010; Dollar & Mede, 2019; Güngör, 2016; Korucu Kis & Kartal, 2019; Turhan & Kırkgöz, 2018) have been carried on to demonstrate the efficiency of reflective thinking in EFL initial teacher education programs across the country.

While the studies done in early 2000s were relatively less in number, there exists a huge body of literature in this field currently in Turkey. To name a few from earlier years, for example, Bulut and Can (2005), drawing attention to the discrepancy between the teacher education curriculum and the required skills to be developed of pre-service teachers in the context of practicum, emphasize that critical reflections in teaching via implementing action research projects will significantly create worthwhile professional experience. In another study by Arıkan (2004), it is highly advised to give reflective feedback to EFL student teachers for their classroom practices after observing them by promoting both parties (feedback giver and senders) to be involved in observing, thinking, reporting and responding. An ideal way of nurturing reflective thinking in practical issues Zeyrek (2001) describes and thus suggests diary keeping as a tool not only for professional but also personal growth of ELT student teachers.

The number of papers published after 2010 has immensely increased. These publications, in line with the contemporary global literature, elaborate on the significant use of diverse reflective tools and across different contexts varying from coursework to practicum in EFL teacher education (Bener & Yıldız, 2019; Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016; Dos & Demir, 2013; Genç, 2010; Karakaş & Yükselir, 2021; Kırmızı & Tosuncuoğlu, 2019; Kırmızı & Sarıçoban, 2021; Koçoğlu, 2008; Ögeyik, 2020; Özkan et al., 2014; Yalçın Arslan, 2019; Yeşilbursa, 2011). The body of research also encompasses not only the student teacher reflections but also teacher educators' respective reflective accounts in the given topic (Atay, 2008; Demir, 2015; Evişen, 2021; Sert, 2010).

As a result, being educated and socialized in such an academic milieu within the framework of the reflective teacher education paradigm, it was quite inevitable for me to become one. Though I have been conducting coursework, and academic studies via reflective thinking and learning tools for myself and my student-teachers for many years now, it took me long to notice the processes I have been through. It is not an easy task to analyse oneself and track the ways of developing personal and professional development unless it is done rigorously. Cited by Trumbull (2004), as "teacher educators seeking to improve our own practices and to help others practice differently, we can, and must, write our research so that others can see themselves in that setting and can understand in emotional and practical ways what is going on" (pp. 1224-1225). Consequently, after studying the relevant literature for a few years, I decided to present my self-study through an autoethnographic design with reference to the similar studies conducted (Arıkan, 2015; Öztürk, 2020; Park, 2014; Yazan, 2019) in the field of English Language teacher education. Therefore, this study is designed as an autoethnographic one to reflect over one teacher educator, myself, in the field of ELT for the last two decades in enacting reflective thinking and learning in developing EFL pre-service teachers' professional competencies within the paradigm of reflective teacher education.

METHOD**Research Design and Data**

This study is designed as an autoethnographic one. Autoethnography offers powerful ways for engaging with self in relation to others and the culture. It can be defined as a way of connecting scholarship to lived experience by expanding the paradigm of ethnography. In other words, “when ethnography is located in the particularities of emergence and the bricolage of personal encounter rather than in generalizations, reifications, or objectifications, it is often defined as being ‘autoethnographic’” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2016, p.58). Autoethnographic inquiry combines many of traditional qualitative data collection tools such as fieldnotes, interviews and personal documents, but it often is incorporated into analysis differently from traditional ethnography. The way how the analysis is presented includes “the visibility of the researcher’s self, strong reflexivity, relational engagement, personal vulnerability, and open-ended rejection of finality and closure” (p. 58).

Autoethnographic design emphasizes ‘I’ and it is through this ‘I’ that connection, positioning and unfolding intersect. Autoethnographic inquiry is realized via self-narratives that makes ‘I’ both the method and the text (Reed-Danahay, 1997), which is why autoethnographic studies discard the distinction between the subjectivity and the objectivity, accepting a research form utilizing subjective experience as the core. (Davies, 1999). As the focus is on the self or selves, naturally, data in the autoethnography come from the self. Co-constructed narratives directly analyze researcher’s relations in the form of events, decisions, coping strategies and the surrounding experiences with the contributions from others who play a role in unfolding the ideas, events and decisions. One of the main characteristics of autoethnographic inquiry is the strong reflexivity that the researcher displays an awareness of reciprocal influence between him/herself and the setting and the other participants. It is an effort in an introspective guide to understand both the self and the others’ by examining his/hers framing the accounts with personal reflexive views of the self. Strong reflexivity can be demonstrated, for example, describing and reflecting over one’s experience at different points in time. As in Humphreys’s (2005) study challenges and successes in academic life over the years through vignettes are presented through his reflective perspectives. Autoethnography is effective and persuasive when readers can feel the lives of the autoethnographer. A thorough engagement with the life stories, a strong reflexivity the self would create a sincere bond between the author and the reader.

Keeping all the aforementioned principles of autoethnographic inquiry, I posit myself in this paper both as a subject and the researcher where I delve inward into my experience by carefully focusing on my thoughts and feelings in relation to the outside world (i.e., my academic milieu via relationships and culture) (Holman Jones et al., 2016). I use my own reflexivity to interact with my academic context and the participants to co-construe the narrative by elaborating and analyzing the events within the given period, which is my academic career from the start until today, comprising the last 21 years. However, I am aware that the time extends beyond the sphere defined as the flow of the events had their antecedents. Therefore, the extended body of time and space are also included in the interpretations of the analysis such as my high school and undergraduate period.

I collated all the data from my own academic life such as personal diaries, syllabi of the courses I delivered, email correspondence, lecture notes and academic theses and publications to contain the sections pertaining *perspectives* and *applications of reflective thinking*. Second reviewing of the collection allowed me to arrange these segments into systematic and thematic categories to display a clear picture of how I became a reflective EFL teacher educator in years. The categories to be presented in the analysis section are critically reflected over and also discussed with a few colleagues before and after writing. Ethics committee approval is not required for the current paper since I did not use any third party data but my own.

Analysis

Data in this study are organized around the processes I went through to become both a reflective thinker and an implementer as an EFL teacher educator. Processes in the first phase is explored by analysing my academic studies via my personal and professional reading, my interactions with the national and international community of practice and my engagement with teaching at tertiary level. I also relate my research and publishing endeavours with regards to engaging in qualitative and ethnographic designs. Also, following a career pathway, I describe the development of academic formation through reflective practices in my postgraduate studies. Second, I focus on my own uses of reflective thinking and learning procedures with ELT pre-service teachers as a teacher educator. I relate my reflexivity with my effort in educating EFL pre-service teachers to become reflective thinkers and teacher selves. I display my strategies of designing the course syllabi embedding reflective goals and tools in each by providing non-judgmental reflective classroom atmosphere, benefiting from alternative and process assessment modules, enriching classes with collaborative working via group and pair work with an emphasis on contextualized peer and teacher feedback. Thus, reflective learning and reflective teaching are two preminent sub-sections of the analysis. Nevertheless, I do not exclude the fact that I have continued to elaborate on being a reflective thinker and learner during reflective teaching in the latter process.

FINDINGS

My Academic Background for the Basis of Reflective Learning and Teaching

As a teacher educator and a practitioner in the English Language Teaching (ELT) world for the last two decades, I've always been into *reflective* thinking and learning/teaching through reflective tools. The term *reflection* entered my life in 1998 while I was a student-teacher at an ELT Department, when my methodology professor then was emphatically trying to elaborate on the role of reflection in teacher cognition and professional development. It was a significant moment in that the term itself was too novel compared to what I had learnt at the department about the profession. Graduated from a teacher training high school, pedagogy and most of the didactic classes at university were somewhat accessible and already comprehensible but not this one. I was not aware that it would be the core concept of my professional life for the upcoming years. Yet, the term exceedingly attracted my attention even then, but it was rather too abstract to understand and put into practice.

Later, while I was doing my postgraduate studies in 2003, I specified my academic focus on teacher cognition and learning and started to design my dissertation accordingly. Then, I was also registered for a course called 'Personal and Professional Development in ELT', where I came across teacher education paradigms. I was learning relating *theory and practice* via a reflective model proposed by Wallace (1991), in his seminal book titled *Training Foreign Language Teachers: A Reflective Approach*. I was exploring Lortie's (1983) *apprentice of observation*, and the role of reflective thinking in revealing espoused theories (Argyris & Schön, 1974) as well as situating teacher learning and development more than imitating role models. I was reinterpreting Dewey's (1933) preliminary contribution to the field of pedagogy with his description of reflection as a careful and constant consideration of beliefs and experiences as a reference for reflective practice involving active analysis of teaching practices.

Due to my gradual studies on my research interests, I could see the macro and micro level policy and practice interjections both at public schools and EFL teacher education institutions, being a reflective thinker at the heart. Alignment necessity between curricular requirements and teacher education paradigms scrutinized in the relevant documents (Beyer, 2002; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Delandshere & Arens, 2001; Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2002) was another focal point of my readings, all of which directed me towards theory and practice relations in teacher learning. After completing a qualitative research-based dissertation in 2007, as a novice teacher educator I had my own reflections on how to educate EFL teachers, though there is no formal education to become one. Still, I had a long way to go. My post-doc studies conducted abroad allowed me to observe closely how these processes were enacted and practiced in other countries for the following four years. Coming across ethnographic studies happened at this time via my project supervisor in Sweden. Being a pioneer in this strand of methodological approach to teacher learning and development, my supervisor provided several valuable insights on the research design with his numerous international publications (Beach, 2005; 2010; 2011; Beach & Carlson, 2004; Beach & Dovemark, 2007; Beach & Dovemak, 2009; Beach & Eriksson, 2010; Beach, Gobbo, Jeffrey, Smyth & Troman, 2004; Beach, Gordon & Lahelma, 2003; Beach & Lunneblad, 2011; Troman, Jeffrey, Beach, 2006). Research-wise it was very enriching and satisfying to execute research projects in an international arena with colleagues from different countries: another opportunity for fostering my reflexivity. Consequently, collaborative conducted projects and articles as an output taught me extensively in finding my researcher voice by positing my researcher identity within a broader context (Kızıldağ & Eriksson, 2012; Tuncer & Kızıldağ, 2013)

Returning to my home country and starting to work as a full-time teacher educator at an ELT Department in 2012, I quickly started to engage in my new position with its heavy responsibilities but also offerings for various opportunities. I was one of few academics working in the department as well as being the one assigned to be the head. Incoming pre-service teachers had taught me tremendously in terms of balancing academic and professional priorities for their future selves. Tailoring the curricular requirements and aligning them with the student teachers' existing professional competence and forthcoming needs were challenging but rewarding. Reflection as the core basis that I design my philosophy of educating EFL teachers upon has been diffused

throughout many ELT methodology course syllabi that I had to deliver. Working at an understaffed department might, at first, seem challenging to the reader in that I had to deliver ten different courses per semester, at least 35 class hours each week; however, it allowed me to build a framework where interrelations between the courses becoming more clear and thus providing a bird-eye view for the necessary curricular competencies. While doing my postgraduate studies, I was only assisting a few classes, which had hindered me seeing this heavy-coursework panorama of what I was supposed to contemplate and achieve.

Balancing teaching and research in my academic life at this point was very difficult considering the amount of teaching I was required to do. I could devote very limited time for my own professional development; a few I was engaged in were to participate in conferences and submitting to journals only once for each per year. In one of these conferences in 2018, I came across the term *autoethnography* (Adams et al., 2015; Boylorn & Orbe, 2020; Chang, 2008; Hayler, 2011; Holman Jones et al., 2016; Short et al., 2013), for the first time. I read more about it and felt very excited as I realized that I had been very interested in analyzing my relation with reflection through my professional development. Among various definitions that enlightened me most was Hayler's (2011), which he describes it as a collection of "methods and research tools focus upon the memories of events, feelings, thoughts and emotions which contribute through varying methods of recall, collection and analysis towards different types of systematic introspection in order to illuminate and to facilitate understanding." (p. 19). Regarding the professional development as a pathway into self and being aware of self-study as a way to comprehend my professional self, I added another aspect to my professional life for analysing the process of making *reflection* as the core concept of my EFL teacher educator career by focusing on my personal and professional experiences via an autoethnographic approach.

Engaging in Reflective Teacher Education and Becoming a Reflective Teacher Educator

In my career, next step was working as a full-time teacher educator at an ELT Department in Turkey. Since 2012, I have been working at a relatively small-scale public university, at the Faculty of Education, and acting as the head of the department until very recently. This long period assigned me executing both the academic and administrative managerial tasks, which, in turn, as aforementioned with an understaffed team, enabled me to make many critical decisions alone in principle. However, I cannot thoroughly admit that I was taking such decisions all by myself in practice, except for the scholars who shaped my academic philosophy and thus stance. Having become a reflective thinker and a teacher, and believing in a reflective teacher education paradigm (Calderhead, 1989; Goodman, 1984; Killen, 1989; Schön, 1983, 1987; Smyth, 1989; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991; Valli 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1987, 1996), it was a natural consequence to become and act as a reflective teacher educator in my career.

During the last 12 years in my teaching career, I have designed the courses in line with the curricular requirements embedding reflective teaching via various ways. In this section, I am analyzing my strategies to integrate reflective thinking and learning and thus teaching into my coursework. The first and foremost goal of mine was to enhance the pre-service teachers to discover and become reflective thinkers. In their first and

second year courses, they were introduced to pair and group work that had mostly been neglected in their previous school years. Building a community sense, making them indulge in group dynamics and hearing their own voices among others' were my first steps (Dewey, 1910/1997). Learning from each other and learning together have always been my academic motto and thus I also insisted on students understanding and applying this into their own learning to develop ownership. Hands-on experience would enhance them to internalize the motto. By the time, they were practicing the peer review and learning how to receive and give feedback to each other. Discussion-based classroom tasks during which I was repeatedly asking what, how and why questions and alternative assessment modules such as letting them preparing projects, writing opinion papers and describing their experience in engaging the process of task completion did a great job for equipping the student-teachers with reflective teaching stage in their third and fourth year.

In the next step, they were required to project their reflective thinking and learning into reflective teaching. The strategies I developed through their coursework consisted of multi-layered modules. Student-teachers were exposed to much of the reading followed by both oral and written reflective dialogues with themselves and their respective peers. As they were not only engaged in pedagogical and content theoretical knowledge but also practical dimension of teaching, reflective pair and group discussions, and keeping weekly professional journals were very promising. They even started to call me as "Ms. Journal" since I was asking for them to keep their journals regularly and organizing reflective dialogue meetings on their writing. It was a challenging journey to become a reflective teacher for all the student teachers and I could see reflective thinking in their writing clearly but not quite focusing on their future selves. I was well-aware that reflective thinking has its own stages, starting from layperson descriptions and improving towards explanations with more reasoning, social and ethical issues. It was also clear that designing teaching and assessment tasks more on their teaching English and elaborating on why they prefer certain strategies to use and reasoning their choices in line with the relevant literature combined with the experience would yield beneficial outcomes for my ultimate goal in educating reflective teachers.

Working towards educating reflective teachers by closely analyzing what they were capable of and in need enabled me to become more reflective not only as a teacher educator but also a syllabus and a curriculum designer. My international engagement with the scholars' thoughts and practices in reflective teacher education (Lortie, 1975) and reviewing my past learning in teaching helped me notice some relevant patterns between my students and the expertise in the field. It was very true that they were trying to teach as they were taught without linking their past experiences to what has been done during their teacher education. Like the interlanguage period (Corder, 1975; Selinker, 1972), whereby second language learners still produce mistakes no matter what the teacher presented them as how the actual language is like, these pre-service teachers were somewhat returning to the back and starting from the imprints they formed out of 130,000 hours of *apprenticeship of observation* they were exposed to. I realized that providing a variety of different strategies, techniques and practices was not sufficient but rather challenging them to experience each and reflect over on such a teaching generated more efficient results. Another point was that establishing a good rapport with the

student-teachers inaugurated the ways to become more open during reflective talks. When they were assured of not being judged and or scored according to their teaching performance but more on reflective performance, I observed that a more reflective atmosphere was charged. During the reflective teacher-student meetings, they could sense it easily that I was not looking for the 'single' perfect answer in their papers and performances; it was their effort on reasoning their thought and actions and thus engaging in intellectual thinking and growth (Dewey, 1910/1997). Being accustomed to a community sense and feeling attached to a group accelerated the process of learning reflective teaching. Then, I realized that my strategic thinking of starting from such a point where all class members would feel they belong to their department was more than a lucky choice. All in all, many times, they misread my attitude towards them stating that I had changed between the first half and second half of their education at the department. However, it was them who transformed, which made me smile and encouraged my further practices.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

As a summary, in my journey to become a reflective teacher educator, I see not linear but spherical intersections and layers of some recurring patterns and concepts as illustrated in Figure 1 below. For example, without practicing reflective thinking, I could not be a reflective practitioner; prior to becoming a reflective teacher educator, I had to be engaged in various ways of teaching reflectively by using cognitive processes such as questioning, inquiring, associating and reasoning. Developing a repertoire of reflective tools and practicing with them enabled me to go further and use them in the process of EFL teacher education. Naturally, basic tenets for Dewey's (1910/1937) reflective thinking enlightened me how to design theoretical and practical ways throughout my career both in learning and teaching English. Moreover, eminent scholars in the field of teacher education and EFL teacher education provided valuable envisions on how to enact them in the context of education pre-service teachers. During the second layer of acting as a reflective teacher educator, building a milieu for fostering reflective thinking and free thoughts, valuing any opinion that would come out by demonstrating trust and openness within a community commence the process and ease it. A final remark on this side is the matter of sustaining what is achieved. Continuous interactions with the context and keeping a deliberate intention in any academic and professional engagement would naturally provide the regularity (Smyth, 1989).

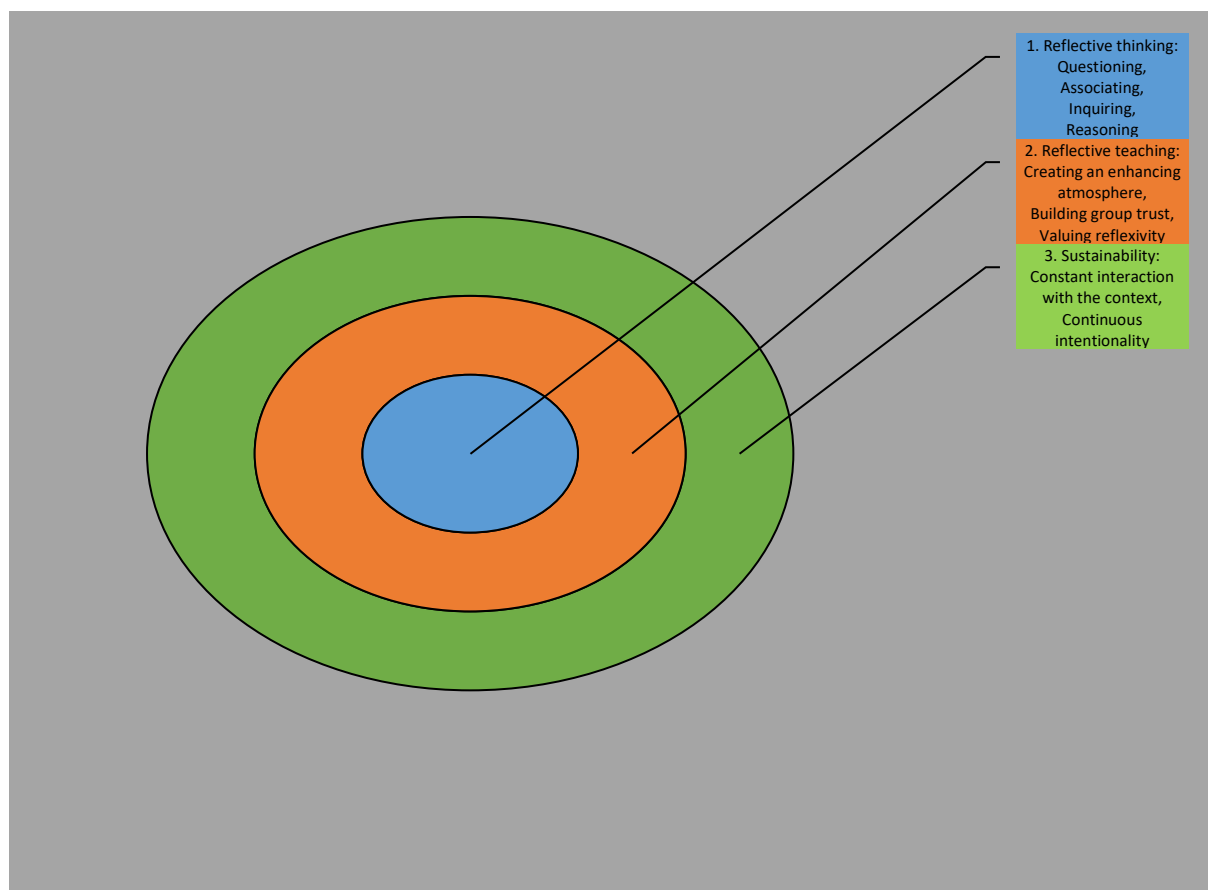


Figure 1. Reflexivity Cycles in my Academic Life

I see the high value in positive feelings and attitudes for reflective thinking, collaborative work with a sense of community, feedback with reference to the contextualized reasoning, linking theory to practice and being aware of what one knows and what one can do. These can only be possible with openness, associative thinking, seeing patterns and critical perspectives. In the relevant literature, a reflective journey is also described as an ambiguous, uncertain and infinite one (Pembroke, 2005; Trimble, 2013). Those who are seeking crystal clear answers and expecting to find one immediately might perceive themselves in a useless engagement in reflective thinking processes. Reflection starts with a perceived problem, followed by gathering information about, all of which leads to a plan for action (Boud et al., 1985; Dewey, 1933; Loughran, 1996; Luttenberg et al., 2018; Madin & Swanto, 2019; McKernan, 2013; Mezirow, 1991; Rogers, 2001; Simmons et al., 2021). The journey is uncomfortable since it requires deep analysis and self-confrontation (Pham et al., 2020; Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Sayers, 2005) as it also requires one's being aware of one's own beliefs, values and attitudes (Karagöz & Rüzgar, 2020). My students' struggle and sometimes unmotivated states were understandable in the sense that neither they were aware of theirs nor did they have a long time engaging in reflective thinking as I did, which also created another challenge for my task as a teacher educator. Their insufficient reflexivity was natural but frustrating most of the time. As Sparks-Langer et al. (1990, p.27) drew attention to the Framework for Reflective Thinking with a seven-level language analysis of reflexivity (see Table 1), my student-teachers also displayed various levels in their reflective thinking. Similar to what İlin (2020) found out in her study with a

group of pre-service ELT teachers, they mostly were descriptive in their oral and written reflective communication, at first, corresponding to the level 2 and 3 in the given table below.

Table 1. Framework for Reflective Thinking (Sparks-Langer et al., 1990, p.27)

Level	Description
1	No descriptive language
2	Simple, layperson description
3	Events labeled with appropriate terms
4	Explanation with traditional or personal preference given as the rationale
5	Explanation with principle or theory given as the rationale
6	Explanation with principle/theory and consideration of context factors
7	Explanation with consideration of ethical, moral, political issues

I have always believed that there are no problems but issues and I like challenges since I see the opportunities to change there. The disequilibrium and discomfort among my students also reflected in my own teaching, which I found quite useful. Seeking ways to promote reflexivity of my students motivated me to look for different strategies that were applicable in my context. Academic field supported me by studying many articles and realizing theory and practice relations once again in my quest. This was not only the pre-service teachers' confrontation but also mine as I was also measuring the size of my teaching repertoire and the extent of reflective thinking competence. Though not constantly satisfactory, I was developing a curiosity of how their and my journey would evolve and where I would end up. It was exactly the state of realizing the infinity of the process; that is never-ending reflection over reflective teaching and teacher education. Besides the reflective process being unique to one, I could also come to an understanding that I and my students both were going through similar states and we were teaching each other as well as learning from each other.

Overall, my beliefs and attitudes developed over time towards reflective thinking with my practical experience and my persistence to keep the knowledge on the topic enabled the process of becoming a reflective teacher educator. Along with the practice, developing some required skills such as observing, looking for clues and critically reviewing enriched my experience. Meaningful engagement with the context and being able to define and describe my self and tracking the transformation implicitly displayed that I was also highly engaged in my own reflexivity. The process could be much slower if I had not involved my students and colleagues, and a newer goal of becoming a reflective teacher educator. I believe that such an engaging process was the most satisfying itself cognitively and emotionally rather than reaching a conclusion as I know this work will not end for a long time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As for the recommendations, autoethnography is a facilitating research design and a tool to collate the reflections over theoretical and practical experience both in teaching and teacher education and could be used for many potentially yielding results. This study focusing on the field of ELT might also shed light for the practitioners, academics and highly engaged scholars not only in the area of education but for many other disciplines. Systematic, rigorous and long-term self-studies promoting reflexivity would also produce highly beneficial results for the teacher education institutions and their counterparting students. Critical reviews of

practices at higher education institutions and such performing academic and teaching staff would extensively contribute to the quality processes not only in the departments but also in the larger community by also creating an inquiry-based collaborative academic milieu. Providing agency and displaying an overt ownership for the teaching and learning practices, autoethnographies and reflection could stimulate positioning teacher educators by realizing the complex relationships between the academic and teaching duties.

ETHICS DISCLAIMER

In this article, the journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics, and journal ethical rules were followed. The responsibility belongs to the author for any violations that may arise regarding the article.

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