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Recursive Reflective Reports: Embedded Assessment in PBL Courses for Second Language Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual article begins with a general definition of reflection and the soft skills of PBL: collaboration, agency, and metacognition. Then it presents theoretical frameworks for reflection from second language teacher education (SLTE) (Farrell, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016) and illustrates six types of reflection with examples from the field of SLTE. The article features a reflective self- and peer-assessment instrument, utilized in a graduate SLTE program. The standard yet flexible template of the reflective teaching report (RTR) allows these teacher educators to interact with their students' development in the soft skills and the content of the SLTE knowledge base. As a recursive tool, instructors use it at the end of each module in most of the courses. Its embedded, recurrent positioning in the program's curriculum system is displayed in diagrams. Data from the program are provided to show how items in the shared RTR template support the types of reflection encouraged theoretically in the field of SLTE and PBL. The reliability and validity of this reflective report is discussed in the context of language assessment qualities of usefulness (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Keywords: reflective report, self-assessment, peer assessment, second language teacher education

Reflection in Problem-based Learning

Since the 1990s, problem-based learning (PBL) has been recognized by teacher educators as a valuable methodology for developing teachers in ways that meet 21st-century expectations for professional practice (Brears, MacIntyre, & O'Sullivan, 2011). These expectations include the notion of professionals as reflective practitioners. In the generic version of PBL methodology, reflection has been associated most directly with the tutor-led resolution of the learning cycle (Savery, 2015). However, other PBL specialists emphasize that learning in PBL is a reflective knowledge creation process and that reflection can and should be encouraged in students' integration of theory, praxis, and personal experience, as the curriculum progresses (e.g., Lähteenmäki & Uhlin, 2011). If reflection is to permeate knowledge creation cycles, how can educators be sure that it is occurring? Hung (2016) recommends that design of PBL cycles should include explicit elaboration of the reflection component.

Certainly "reflection" has become an expected and enduring component of quality learning in higher education. Research on "an explicit component of reflective development" (Spiro, 2013, p. 2) in an MA in education brought data to light indicating that the undergraduate subject disciplines of students shaped the way they perceived and understood "reflection" at the start of their MA program. Summarizing examples of disciplinary influence on the activity of reflection from a cross-disciplinary study (Entwistle, 2009, cited by Spiro, 2013), the researcher reports on the phenomenon. Although reflection is a term used across different subject disciplines, "the legitimate objects of reflection vary between self, text, ideas, practice or the external world," including "a critical and analytical approach to data," depending on the disciplinary perspective (Spiro, 2013, p. 3). Consequently, it is important to have conceptual articles that provide in-depth disciplinary understanding of reflection in PBL delivery in order to differentiate disciplinary influences on reflection and the soft skills from those that are stimulated by the PBL

methodology itself. There are many research methods that may be used to gain data on the acquisition of soft skills through PBL curricula; however, these do not necessarily involve regular assessment of the students throughout their programs of study. A secondary purpose of this conceptual article is to explain how teacher educators in an MA TESOL implement and assess reflection in the context of a PBL curriculum. Finally, students learn to invest in learning activities that are rewarded by assessment procedures (Entwistle, 2009). Nevertheless, questions arise as to how reflective assessments in higher education contexts should be graded to provide fairness and consistency for students (Gibbons, 2015).

Reflection in Teacher Education

Teacher educators believe the embedding of reflection in authentic assessment tasks will scaffold teacher-learners in the process of using reflection for their own growth (e.g., Cornish & Jenkins, 2012). Reflective practice in second language teacher education (SLTE) may involve reflective teaching, action research, practitioner participation in reflective discussion groups in face-to-face and online forums or writing in private reflective journals (Burton, 2009; Farrell, 2016). According to Burton (2009), reflection is difficult to separate from other stages of experiential, inquiry-based learning. She reports, for the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), that "inquiry and reflection are embedded in TESOL practice internationally" and various types of teacher reflection are now "central to teacher learning processes" (p. 302).

"Reflection is an iterative process of critical thought about assumptions or views, their implementation in practice and their revision as a result of practice" (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012, p. 164). It is a process through which second language teacher-learners may modify or reorganize their existing understandings of language teaching to integrate their new knowledge with the old, creating a congruent knowledge base. Outcomes from reflection are in fact varied, although often it is assumed by the theorists that when novice professionals reflect upon their assumptions and beliefs, these should be transformed (e.g., Nelson & Sadler, 2013). However, in some cases, reflection may reinforce a teacher's assumptions and beliefs. Change may be a matter of strengthening or enlarging a second language teacher's conceptions of language teaching practice. It is important for second language teachers to cultivate their professional identity relative to the wider fields of TESOL and language education, not just their immediate classroom practices (Pennington & Richards, 2016). By encouraging a broader view of professionalism, second language teacher educators will contribute to the development of robust professional identities in their teacher-learners.

Soft Skill Outcomes in Language Teacher Education

It is reasonable that the evaluation of learning via PBL cycles includes reflective assessments, which can reveal development in the soft skills. Thus, three types of soft skills that are important to professional education will be defined from the perspective of second language teacher-learning (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Collaboration

For learning teams, collaboration is working together with a high level of interdependence to complete a learning task. Common examples of collaborative activities in second language teacher education (SLTE) and English language teaching (ELT) are team teaching, action research, and interaction in professional development (PD) groups (Johnston, 2009). Collaborative thinking (Garrison, 2016) in small groups encourages MA students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds to harness their differences to enrich group engagement with academic concepts and integration of those concepts in collective and individual pedagogical content knowledge.

Agency

In the context of formal PD programs, agency or autonomy may be expressed as self-directed learning by an individual or a small group. "Research suggests that group members are more engaged when they can decide which actions to take, have responsibility for their learning and performance, and work in a climate that supports team autonomy" (Scott, 2014, p. 5). One goal of PD is that agency expressed in formal learning environments would transfer to professional leadership in the field. Professional decision-making is central to effective leadership, and for second language teachers, agency is contextually informed decision-making (Feryok, 2012; Tichy & Bennis, 2007). Leadership in the classroom encompasses choices about language learners, performance in practice, handling of critical incidents, and relating to second language teaching peers. Professional judgment is a process that involves recursive chains of preparation, the decisions or choices themselves, and the enactment and adjustment of these decisions in the second language teaching-learning environment (Feryok, 2012; Tichy & Bennis, 2007). Sound professional judgment and discernment is developed in the context of practice. These capabilities draw upon knowledge of self-as-a-practitioner, perspectives of professional practice accepted in a language teacher's immediate educational organization, special awareness of second language learners, and knowledge of progression in language learning. Teacher

agency is both driven and constrained by the values and goals of the teacher in relation to issues and dilemmas in the field of teaching (e.g., Liyanage, Bartlett, Walker, & Guo, 2015). Agency may be encouraged through mentoring relationships, which expand a teacher's understanding of the field.

Metacognition

"Metacognition refers to the process of 'thinking about your thinking'" (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012, p. 164). Consequently, metacognitive thought and reflective experiences interact with each other, contributing to the development of expertise in practice and to the formation of professional identity of teachers. In formal PD programs, and particularly those that involve collaborative knowledge creation, metacognition includes both individual and shared aspects. Small group members should possess shared knowledge of the stages of the inquiry cycle they are experiencing. There also needs to be group awareness of how they are progressing in their problem-solving and exploration of new subject matter (Garrison, 2016).Through public discourse processes that voice this shared metacognition, peers may help each other challenge assumptions, consider a range of solutions in problem-solving, and refine conceptualizations of both theory and practice. Through such shared, reflective learning experiences, peers have opportunity to support each other when experiencing liminality (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Savin-Baden, 2016) and transformative changes in professional identity (Kiely & Davis, 2010).

Theories of Reflection in SLTE

Reflective frameworks (e.g., Farrell, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016) specific to SLTE have been published to guide second language teacher educators and teacher-learners in the metacognitive processes of reflective practice and professional identity development. Choice of researcher expertise has a bearing on how the most recent reflection frameworks for SLTE are organized.

Pennington and Richards (2016) view reflection as important for the development of teacher identity. They group 10 dimensions of language teacher expertise under foundational and advanced levels of professional identity development. Foundational identity development includes the dimensions of "language proficiency, content knowledge (both disciplinary and pedagogical), teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, and learner-focused teaching" (p. 11). The advanced level includes flexible "pedagogical reasoning skills, theorizing from practice, membership in a community of practice, and professionalism" (p. 11).

In contrast, Farrell (2015) views reflective practice as the dominant means of fostering both second language teacher identity and teaching expertise. His framework includes reflective dimensions and activities, and his theoretical levels are

philosophy,[1] practice, principles, theory, and "beyond practice" (i.e., critical reflection). He considers his model to be relevant to all types of professionals in the field of second language teaching. The constructs of the SLTE knowledge base identified in the two models are similar though emphasized somewhat differently.

After comparing these two SLTE models, I have chosen to use six components for the reflective framework in this article: *identity, philosophy, practice, principles, theory,* and *critical reflection.* These components of reflection will be defined briefly, then exemplified and elaborated through published instances of issues and dilemmas in teaching English as a second or additional language. These examples are typical of problem triggers that may stimulate reflection for second language teachers.

Identity

Reflection on identity focuses on the emergence and consolidation of a professional identity as teacher. The formation of professional identity in the context of practice is a dynamic process involving the integration of each second language teacher's institutional roles and her or his individual persona (which Pennington denotes as the autobiographical self). This combined institutional and personal identity arises through learned responses to second language learners and to the expanding gyre of educational contexts within which each professional teaches (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Identity formation. The experiences of a Soviet Armenian EFL teacher are informative regarding identity formation (Feryok, 2012). A young woman named Nune[2] had been influenced deeply by her high school English language teacher to become an EFL teacher. Nune praised her teacher's innovative spirit. Despite teaching in an environment with limited resources, her teacher implemented new and unusually creative ideas. The long-term development of Nune's teaching identity is linked to two factors. First is the perseverance and innovation that her mentor demonstrated in the high school EFL classroom. Nune's "apprenticeship of observation" as a language learner was positive (Lortie [1975], cited by Johnson & Worden, 2014, p. 128). Second, throughout Nune's TEFL program, the mentoring relationship with her experienced high school teacher was sustained.

Philosophy

Reflection on philosophy refers to teachers' beliefs and values about teaching and learning, and about the people they interact with professionally, such as their students and teaching colleagues. The emphasis on "teacher-as-professional" is enlarged in this category of reflection and involves teachers' developing self-awareness of how their professional experiences affect their views of teaching and learning.

An emerging teaching philosophy. Continuing with Nune as an illustration, her beliefs about teaching and evidence of her own capacity for agency emerged as she found a placement and developed her own teaching experience (Feryok, 2012). She praised English teachers in her country as "heroes" (p. 101) and was proud to be among them. Nune was tenacious and had learned how to transform obstacles into opportunities. She came to believe that her own actions could have an impact in a wider field of influence. Realizing the lack of PD for teachers in her country, she became an EFL teacher trainer by offering PD seminars on her own initiative. In reflection, Nune credited her professional philosophy and agency to her vibrant memory of her teacher and to her own character.

Practice

When reflecting on practice, a teacher focuses on the perceptible aspects of the teaching-learning interaction. Such reflection involves identifying, describing, and considering the visible behavior and activities of the classroom (Farrell, 2015). It involves comparing actual teaching episodes to how one intended to teach or was used to teaching.

The culture of teaching-learning practices. An example of cultural influence on acceptable classroom behavior is demonstrated by a researcher, narrating his response to the learning culture in his advanced TEFL studies in Australia (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014). He recalled being surprised at how classes were taught and how the entire "culture" of teaching and learning was different (Cortazzi & Jin, 2013). The lecture approach, which he was comfortable with as both a student and a teacher, had been replaced by the communicative approach. Both teacher and student behavior in the classroom appeared radically informal to the point that he considered the students to be "irreverent" (p. 131).

Principles

Reflection on principles refers to teachers becoming deeply aware of "assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning" that have subconsciously influenced their day-to-day practice (Farrell, 2015, pp. 25–26). As second language teachers develop consistent approaches to classroom management, individual classroom curriculum design, and its implementation, their practitioner principles for handling similar teaching situations become evident and reinforced through analytic levels of reflection.

Second language teachers' principles. For instance, Baker (2011) conducted a study with five teachers who taught pronunciation for English for academic purposes in a university. Through interviews and classroom observations, Baker synthesized a picture of how each second language teacher's knowledge about pronunciation pedagogy was formulated through an interweaving of prior second language learning experiences, professional development through teacher education courses, pronunciation teaching experiences, and individual or collaborative reflective practices. The second language teachers' practice of reflection varied considerably across the group. Baker (2011) suggests that second language teachers may become more deeply aware of their conceptions of teaching and learning through coupling observation of their practice with reflective interviews, journaling, or retrospective reviews of videos of their teaching.

Theory

Reflecting on theory refers to teachers examining formal (i.e., disciplinary, researcher-developed) and informal (i.e., classroom-based, practitioner-developed) theories and methods that are put into practice in their language teaching from day to day (Farrell, 2015, p. 27; Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 19). The historical distinctions between formal and informal theorizing are becoming blurred as more second language teachers are engaging in teacher research and are granted resources for dissemination and publication of their findings.

Reflecting on graduate coursework. From a postgraduate critical TESOL education class, a teacher educator reports on outcomes from a speaking activity involving 17 experienced second language teachers (Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf Jr., 2014). These global TESOL practitioners came from Vietnam, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and the Asia Pacific region. The activity involved demonstrating teacher agency with respect to current theory and policy changes in TESOL. Language management theory was used to distinguish between errors and innovations in a sample of World Englishes[3] utterances. The teachers individually classified a set of utterances in terms of intelligibility and acceptability, and then in two smaller groups identified whether the item was an error or an innovation. They justified their choices with various criteria, such as conformity to standard English norms, intelligibility of neologisms, context (e.g., spoken versus written), and gate-keeping authority. The researchers report that there were several occasions in the discussion, due to group influence, when individuals changed position, became more critical, or had increased confidence about assertions voiced (Hamid et al., 2014). This course activity is a positive example of how second language teacher educators may include opportunities for their students to reflect collectively on authentic dilemmas in their coursework.

Critical Reflection

This soft-skill "entails exploring the moral, political, and social issues that impact a teacher's practice both inside and outside the classroom" (Farrell, 2015, p. 30). Critical

reflection recognizes systemic problems that are entrenched in the institutions of the field. EFL teachers around the world experience dilemmas due to issues in policies and practice in their national and regional contexts.

Systemic Contradictions. In Chinese provinces such as Inner Mongolia (Liyanage et al., 2015), or countries such as Japan, Korea, India, Hong Kong, and Thailand (Ross, 2008), public opinion about the validity of standardized examinations means that results of gate-keeping tests are of great concern to students, their families, and educational institutions. Second language teachers in these countries struggle with misalignment of innovations in national curricula and accepted standardized testing practices, which pressure them to teach to the test (Ross, 2008). Although a new English syllabus was introduced as policy in China in 2005, the National Matriculation English Test continues to be used to judge the performance of schools and teachers. Public examinations are recognized by teachers as the most major influence on teaching, in comparison to other potential influences such as teaching experiences and beliefs, job satisfaction, or even the new syllabus itself. EFL teachers' expressions of agency are compromised, as they comply with community pressures. The impact of national testing policies has been a persistent dilemma for EFL teachers, and often undermines their sense of self-efficacy or forces them to innovate outside of the classroom (Liyanage et al., 2015).

Problems of various types are the heart of a PBL curriculum. These illustrations offer a glimpse into the real world of second language teaching and potential cases that may be used in a PBL curriculum in SLTE. Having defined the components of an SLTE framework for reflection and demonstrated how these areas (*identity, philosophy, principles, practice, theory*, and *critical reflection*) relate to problems for teaching professionals in the field, the curriculum context for the reflective assessment instrument will now be introduced.

The Curriculum Context of the SLTE Program

The SLTE program that provides the curriculum context for this reflective assessment is a master's, which has been delivering a constructivist curriculum (Harasim, 2012) for more than a decade (Goertzen & Kristjánsson, 2007). It welcomes second language teachers who specialize in English as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL).The content of the curriculum involves courses typical to many MA TESOL programs (e.g., second language acquisition, methods, materials and evaluation, sociolinguistics, testing and assessment, and so on). The PBL courses in the curriculum are delivered through collaborative knowledge creation in which small group[4] participants produce a graduate-level task[5] outcome with a unified, "teachable point of view

(TPOV)" (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Savery, 2015; Tichy, 2002, p. 7). Collaborative learning and reciprocal peer teaching with expert, teacher-educator facilitation are the methods by which second language teachers in the program expand their understanding of the SLTE knowledge base and cultivate professional capabilities (Caswell, 2017; Tichy, 2002).

Instructional Design

In this MA TESOL context, teacher educators with expertise in the knowledge base of the field design task-based assignments. To scaffold the knowledge creation cycle, the problem-centered tasks are framed within a set of six categories that comprise the task template: definition, usefulness, the problem, reference checks, name checks, and references (cf. Caswell, 2017). From the student perspective, completing the task outcome is the unifying goal for team members who collaborate in problem-solving. Each small group researches the literature, relating the articles to a practical case or problem trigger. They negotiate the meaning of their resources and write a document on a subtopic from the larger module topic. The goal is to integrate individual knowledge into a group perspective, as each small group is responsible for presenting an academic argument (Jonassen, 2011) or teaching a unified point of view (Tichy, 2002) to their peers at the end of the cycle. During student participation in these recursive learning cycles, the development of content knowledge, higher order learning skills, and professional dispositions gradually becomes apparent.

Embedded Assessments in Integrated PBL

The MA TESOL curriculum may be classified as integrated PBL because of the repeated use of the knowledge creation cycle over multiple courses in the program (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Grant, 2018). There are 13 courses in the program, and eight of these are delivered as course-pairs in the online delivery mode. A modular cycle has three stages: foundations, knowledge creation, then presenting and debriefing (cf. Figure 1). The Reflective Teaching Report (RTR) is a self- and peer-assessment activity employed at the end of the module.

Reflective Teaching Reports in the Context of the Curriculum

Figure 2, "The reflective practitioner skills trajectory in the MA TESOL," contextualizes the function of the RTR in relation to other reflective activities and MA assessments. The RTRs are the most frequently used means of reflection in the program. While the RTR instrument explicitly requires the students to reflect, in many other areas, the students reflect tacitly to function at higher cognitive levels. In this program, students are also formally taught to approach classroom
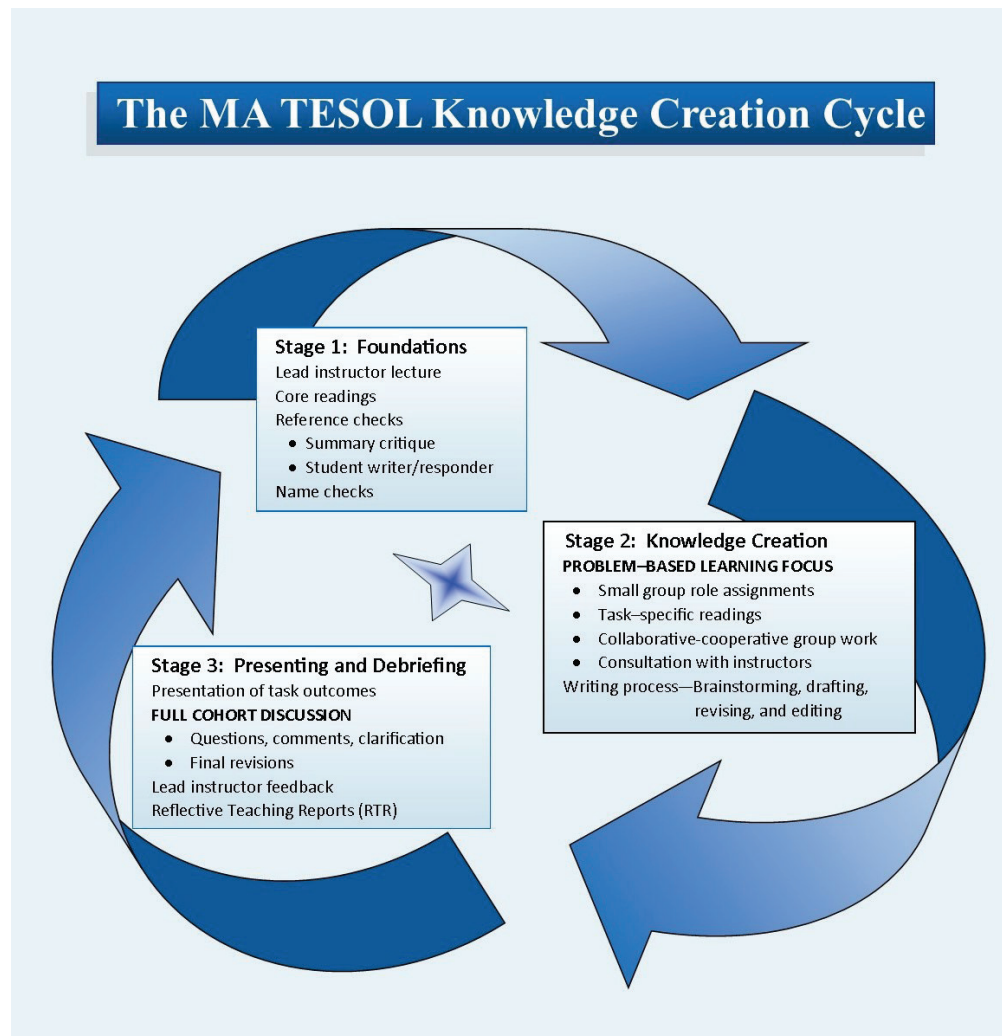
Figure 1. Three stages to the modular cycle.

observation reflectively, using ethnographic observation procedures that distinguish the activity of the classroom from their judgments about that activity. The summative assessment for each course is called an Applied Research Response (ARR). In these final projects, students display their learning by reflecting on how the theory and/or methodology they have learned should apply in a specific case or second language teaching context that they have chosen. Then they write up their response, demonstrating an individual integration of theory, method, and practice from the course. The internship course, whether a teaching practicum or a research-based experience, substitutes a set of nine reflection activities for the RTR template. At the end of the program, students reflect on program activities in relation to professional standards when completing the ePortfolio. As a unifying reflective activity, it complements the recursive function

of the RTRs and the ARRs. It documents outcomes from the inquiry process, content mastery, and achievements in practice, throughout the MA TESOL program. It is designed to help the student clearly see what they have gained through the program. Consequently, reflection is designed into the curriculum from beginning to end (cf. Figure 2).

The Format of the Reflective Teaching Report

In the MA TESOL, the debriefing discussions at the end of a knowledge creation cycle stimulate reflection on the content and process of learning. Following these discussions, the individual Reflective Teaching Report (RTR) is assigned to all cohort members (cf. Figure 1). On average students provide a typed, one-and-a-half-page response. Operating as a recursive instrument, consistently located or "embedded" within
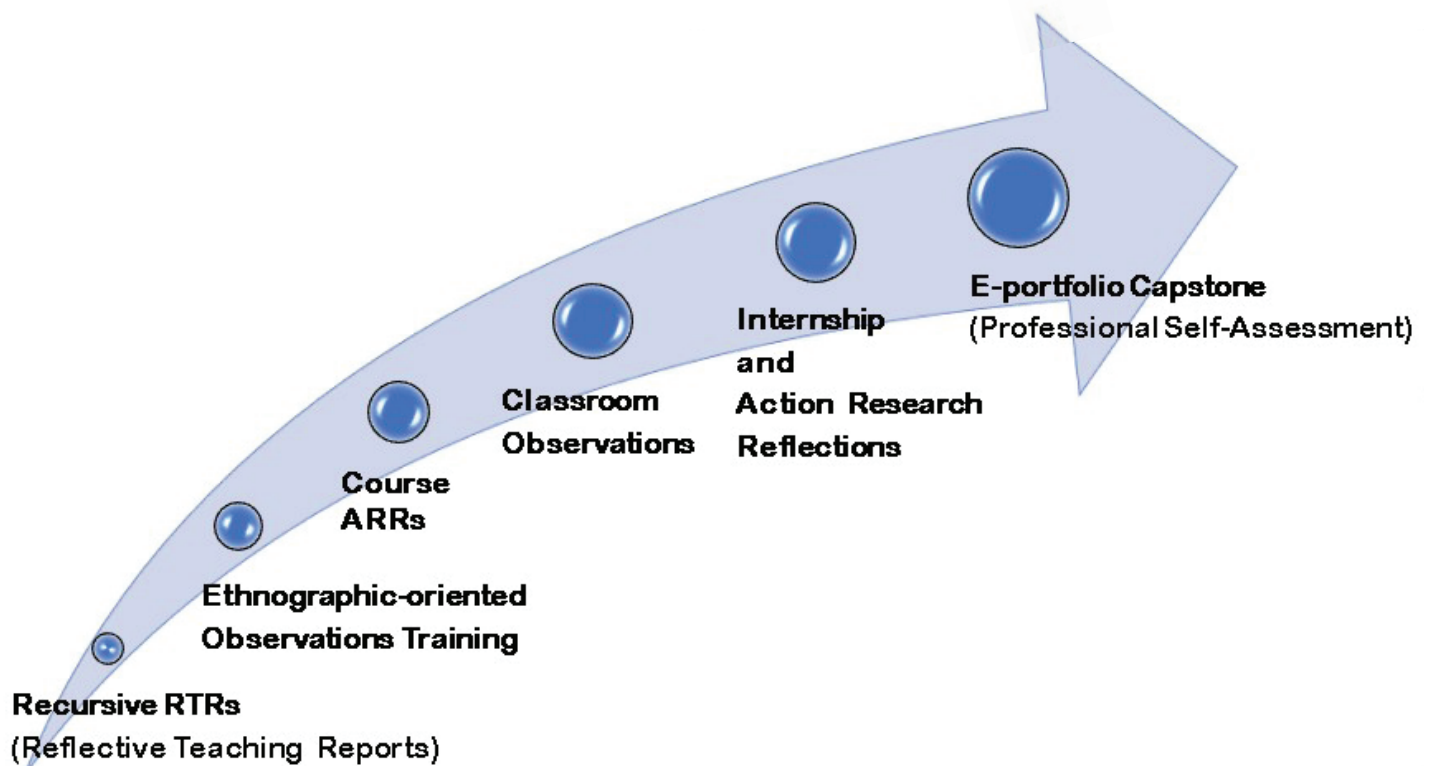
Figure 2. Reflective practitioner skills trajectory in the MA TESOL.

the curriculum, the goal of the assessment is to encourage students to reflect, describe, and evaluate their self-directed and collaborative learning.

Although MA TESOL instructors monitor the knowledge creation process, after reading the RTRs, facilitation was enhanced because the RTR information improves their understanding of how students in the MA perceive themselves as learners. Instructor expertise and ability to mentor are vital in recognizing what appropriate reflection for the MA level is, and how to design reflective prompts.

Table 1 provides the functional description of the reflective instrument in standard format. The format is a template that provides both a generic standard for consistent reflection across courses and flexibility for the varying foci of reflection that need to be addressed by individual teachers in their specific courses.

Data-based Illustrations From MA TESOL Practice

Interrelationship between theories of reflection, the PBL soft skills, and the domain knowledge of a profession are complex. The illustrative data[6] are realistic, including both positive and negative experience with small group collaboration. They are also categorized with respect to reflective quality

dimensions of (a) description, (b) description with evaluation, (c) analysis (in relation to principles or theory), and (d) imagining or planning of action (Lane, McMaster, Adnum, & Cavanagh, 2014). By including analysis with the illustrative data from the RTR assessments and other activities in the program, this section will demonstrate the rich complexity of the reflective theory-practice nexus.

Data Sources

Most of the student reflections are extracted from the Module 2 RTRs of the testing and assessment course, which the author taught for 10 years. Two student reflections are from the discussion boards, giving a glimpse into how reflection occurs in the debriefing stage of that course. Four teacher educator reflections, which were gathered during an evaluation of the program at a department annual retreat, provide some insight into goals about professional competencies encouraged in the curriculum. The data illuminate the RTR as the core reflective assessment instrument and offer a glimpse into how reflective practice is experienced by students and teacher educators in the program. Each illustration is introduced in relation to an SLTE reflection framework component and/or a professional soft skill.

Table 1. Generic instrument components and marking criteria for a reflective report.

No.	General Description of the Component	Criteria for Marking
1	The students are to reflect, self-assess, and report on their role fulfillment in the knowledge creation cycle.	The report goes beyond mere repetition of the role and self-assesses one's own quality of participation and interaction in small group responsibilities.
2	The students are to reflect on collaborative learning within the small group, with emphasis on how the group members interacted to achieve their common and individual learning goals and to produce a unified point of view to frame the problem focus in their written outcome from the learning cycle.	The report provides peer assessment which demonstrates cognizance of how well all the various group members contribute and collaborate, not just those who collaborate most effectively with the individual reporting. When relevant, difficulties as well as successes are acknowledged, and reasons for the collaborative strengths and weaknesses of the group process are identified.
3	The students provide one or more samples of comments or questions which they individually posted to the problems (i.e., outcome documents) that they were not assigned, demonstrating collaboration with the larger group, and critical reflection on the broader module topic.	The comments or questions provide evidence of careful reading and understanding of the material written by other small groups, as well as a focused reflective response which engages specifically with some aspect of the peer teaching presentations.
4	The students are required to reflect and discuss their general learning, in either positive or negative terms, or both, with respect to the content of the current module or a specific area of learning identified by the instructor (e.g., time management, reading strategies).	The response gives evidence of reflection and is specific to the content of the current module or cycle. Keeping in mind that the instrument is used repeatedly, the response meets any specific instructor requirements regarding conciseness.
5	The students identify a resource (i.e., a source or construct) from the module which will be useful in the summative assessment.	The student chooses a resource and defends the choice (i.e., explains why the choice is relevant, valuable, and so on.)
6	Optional: The student may be invited to share other feedback regarding instructor response to previous reports or other thoughts about their experience in the program generally.	Optional responses are not graded. They serve to encourage dialogue between instructors and the students.

Illustration 1—Identity as Teacher-Learner

In reflection excerpt 1, the student describes his learning and leadership style in the collaborative process. He answers the reflective prompt by contrasting his own identity to a hypothetically opposite learning style; then he comments on potential actions that he would take to support collaborative interaction in the community of learning. He concludes by recognizing the value of other styles of leadership.

Student RTR excerpt 1. I tend to be more "people-oriented" as opposed to "task-oriented," so I like to do some of the work face to face. However, when it comes to reading or writing, I need to work in a quiet space. I can take leadership as needed depending on the situation, when decisions need to be made. I guess someone who is extremely detailed and "task-oriented" is the most opposite to my own learning style. To effectively work with this kind of person I would first need to explain my own learning style. However, then I would need to make every effort to successfully collaborate (give and take). Also, being detailed can be a very "good thing" as it would help to avoid "gaps" of information.

In teacher educator perspective 1, the instructor is sharing how a specialization in ethnography and sociolinguistics is relevant to the practice of reflection using the RTR instrument (cf. the trajectory in Figure 2). There is an expectation that teacher identity will be defined through use of the RTR. The mention of "power struggles" connects teacher identity to areas in the critical reflection component of the framework.

Teacher educator perspective 1. My thought was that . . . the sociolinguistic aspect also works within the reflection because it helps to define who you are as teacher in the reflection process, and the biases you carry. Sociolinguistics exists in this reflective aspect as well because it does introduce teachers to power struggles, and who a teacher is within in them. Even within the RTR aspect, because [as teacher-educators] you do ask sociolinguistic questions constantly about administration, about practitioners, about areas of influence.

Illustration 2—Identity as Learner Roles

In excerpt 2, the student describes the small group role assignments and evaluated group behavior, using the conceptual distinction between cooperation and collaboration introduced in the module. Evaluation of the small group process included analysis and reasoning to support the claim of effectiveness.

Student RTR excerpt 2. The cooperation and collaboration for this cycle went quite well because we were very clear about our roles and took a mature approach

to the reading, group discussion, writing, and delivery of the TPOV. Cavort mates were required to work more collaboratively by virtue of being placed on the same sections, so my role was more of a cooperative element than anything else. What worked most effectively with this group is that everyone had their sections finished at the time agreed, so that we could all get a read-through, make suggestions for modifications, and then move forward with the remainder of the task.

Illustration 3—Agency

This reflection in excerpt 3 describes how a small group negotiated and expressed agency in the absence of their assigned leader. The first sentence also indicates the expectations of the MA student that each small group member will carry the responsibility for assigned roles and communicate effectively.

Student RTR excerpt 3. I was a little disappointed at our manager who neither let us know why she had to be absent nor did her section which she was supposed to deal with. For that reason, all the small group members had to wait . . . and then decide to do her part together in the end. Another member did a good job on behalf of our manager so that we could organize insufficient parts on our TPOV.

Illustration 4—Philosophy

In RTR excerpt 4, the student connects to the program's curriculum philosophy, commenting on the disjunction that may occur between that philosophy and some students' individual beliefs. This clash describes a typical trigger of reflection and critical thinking known as dissonance (Garrison, 2011; Johnson &Worden, 2014) and tends to open a liminal or transitional state in learning, which cultivates identity transformation (Savin-Baden, 2016).

Student RTR excerpt 4. I was surprised to realize how fundamentally the philosophy of the MA TESOL programme is based on constructivism. . . . I noticed how this philosophy challenges or even upsets some of us, since our prior understanding or schemata of the external world can be contradictory to constructivism.

Illustration 5—Theory

The next two reflective extracts demonstrate how the values and beliefs of a teacher educator (perspective 2) may influence the reflective thinking of a student (excerpt 5) and be transferred into the cycle-debriefing in a different course context.

Teacher educator perspective 2. I want students to understand situatedness. We are located in a cultural, educational, socio-economic nexus that comes to bear. [They need to understand it] . . . so that they are thoughtful and discerning when they approach literature.

Student discussion board excerpt 5. The amount [of] collaboration also varies in the demographic of each small group—some being more communicative, others more independently focusing on their own sections. The result is a document that has been collaborated on, but *(perhaps I could adopt a phrase from 512) the "social-situatedness" of the members* impacts the collaborative nature of the knowledge creation and therefore the validity of the project [outcome].

"Situatedness" is a construct within sociocultural theory (Johnson, 2006) that explains how contextual constraints influence teachers' perspectives on knowledge and reality. The student extends this idea of contextual constraints to teacher-learners' participation in asynchronous, collaborative knowledge construction.

Illustration 6—Collaboration

This teacher educator reflection (perspective 3), when compared with the descriptions and feelings about collaboration in student RTR excerpt 2 and excerpt 3, provides insight into the authenticity supporting the collaborative approach to knowledge creation.

Teacher educator perspective 3. So, we knew that as professionals, a good chunk of your day you spend talking with other people, collaborating with them. . . . And we thought anything in the training process that mimics that real-life process is absolutely, not just essential, but it's kind of its validity . . . because they [teacher-learners] are doing in their own education what they are going to be doing in their careers.

Illustration 7—Critical Reflection

This reflection (excerpt 7) is a demonstration of what the sociolinguistic teacher educator shared in excerpt 1, for it focuses on the power of second language teachers with respect to the broader social issues in ELT, such as the impact of assessment use and abuse. The student reflects on experiences in her homeland.

Student RTR excerpt 7. In this article, Shohamy (2005) explores the washback effect of high-stakes tests on teachers. Addressing the question—"What is the teacher's role within the power paradigm?", the author

suggests two answers: a servant to the system which is constructed or oriented by testing standards/syllabus, or a professional who has the access and power to take up an active role in creating the testing policies. If these are the only alternatives available, and, since very few teachers would have the privilege to be in the position of "a professional," does that only leave choices to teachers to be "servants in the system"? . . .

Illustration 8—Metacognition

Metacognition includes awareness of learning processes and the outcomes of these processes, whether in formal SLTE programs or in a teacher-learner's practice. This reflection (excerpt 6) highlights the MA student's experience of the module (i.e., evaluating the program assessments). The student affirms the evaluation as a critical process—noting that it did not undermine the perceived value of the alternative assessment instrument studied.

Student RTR excerpt 6. I was impressed at the depth within the knowledge creation/ARR process, that those teaching us are not only teaching but applying the concepts. After learning more about the effectiveness of *different types of assessment,* it was very interesting to *critically examine the way we are assessed and continue to see value.*

In teacher educator perspective 4, the instructor is explaining the metacognitive value of the reflective capstone, the ePortfolio assessment.

Teacher educator perspective 4. One of the things that contemporary cognitive psychology has given us are the tools to help people develop an accessible metacognitive conceptual framework for the work that they are doing. . . . Students have to walk away with a coherent framework, and a way to articulate what they've done and how it all relates.

These particular reflections demonstrate how cultivation of reflective practice operates in a formal PD program more so than in a teacher's classroom experience. The question remains as to how RTR assignments are to be marked so that grading has an appropriate degree of validity and reliability.

Grading the Reflective Teaching Reports

The RTRs are worth approximately 24% of the course grade, making them a moderate-stakes assessment. This percentage is intended to encourage students to engage seriously with reflection. Typically, there are four modules in each course, therefore four RTRs are assigned, worth 6% each.

Teacher educators mark each RTR assessment, giving feedback. On average, instructors teach two courses in different semesters and respond to eight RTRs per student over a year. Instructors reply to student responses, noting the quality of their answers. They recognize changes in assumptions and other types of development in students' reflective thinking within their own courses.

Discussion of Assessment Quality

An alternative assessment such as this recursive reflective report should draw on interpretivist procedures for assessment because the grading is subjective rather than objective (Gibbons, 2015; Lynch, 2003).There is no one correct answer, as is the case in assessment tasks that are graded objectively with a simple answer key. The content of the assessments are individual reflections on learning experience, which are undeniably subjective. The quality of a reflection must be determined relative to the stimulus or prompt that evokes it (Gibbons, 2015).

Prompt attributes for the RTR task are demonstrated in Table 1 in the middle column. These written prompts are the standard statements or questions, which indicate what the assessment "requires the test-taker to do" (Lynch, 2003, p. 42). Response attributes of an assessment indicate how the test-taker is required to respond in order to achieve quality. The prompts scaffold the students in learning to write reflectively. In the case of this reflective assessment, the responses are "constructed" (p. 42) or written texts (of various lengths) that may include description, evaluation, analysis, justification, future-oriented agency (Lane et al., 2014), awareness of collaborative interaction or a lack thereof, and other aspects of learning that indicate metacognitive activity (Garrison, 2016).

Qualities of Usefulness Applied to Reflective Assessments

The purpose of an assessment instrument should be a guiding factor in evaluating its validity. For language assessment design, qualities of usefulness have been identified that help determine the usefulness of an assessment instrument: *validity, reliability, authenticity,* and *interactiveness* (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Validity and reliability are considered the most common and most important qualities; however, the other two are especially relevant for reflective assessment instruments.

Validity. Construct validity is the degree to which an assessor can meaningfully interpret scores, having confidence that the results of an assessment represent the ability or construct being measured for the individual who completed the assessment (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Consequently, the validity of the RTR is the degree to which instructors can infer from the student responses that the student has reflective abilities. The construct validity of alternative assessments such as the RTR is strengthened by the additional quality of usefulness known as authenticity (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Authenticity. The real-world relevance of an assessment activity contributes to its level of authenticity. This makes the constructed-response task of reflection a performance assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998). The RTR is considered an authentic assessment instrument because second language teacher-learners are expected to cultivate reflective practice throughout their careers (Farrell, 2016). Using reflective journaling to understand oneself as a teacher, the events of the classroom, and to prepare psychologically for a change is encouraged as part of ongoing professional activity. Teacher educators can help teachers recognize the value of reflective assessments by providing prompts that involve current issues and dilemmas in the field.

Interactiveness. It may be problematic to some testing specialists that alternative, authentic assessments, which are viewed by teacher educators as having a high degree of validity, are not standardized to the degree that psychometric tests are, and they may be more difficult to grade with consistency. However, consistency in grading takes on a different focus when an assessment is designed for a high degree of interactiveness. Interactiveness in the psychometric sense (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) means that the assessment instrument is capable of distinguishing individual characteristics and abilities of the one being assessed with respect to the construct, in this case, reflection. Group dynamics is covered under the sociolinguistic understanding of interactiveness (McNamara & Roever, 2006) and may be apparent in the comparative responses of members of a small group. So, the RTR in its self- and peer-assessment components is also a personal-response assessment with a high degree of interactiveness (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Various types of performance and personal response assessments have been used in language proficiency testing and assessment for many years (Brown & Hudson, 1998), and techniques for strengthening reliability of other subjective assessments are available for use with reflective assessments.

Reliability. "Reliability is defined as consistency of measurement" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 19). The degree of reliability in grading of subjective assessments is addressed by creating a marking scale associated with the response attributes of the assessment, such as those conveyed by the right column in Table 1. The scale involves descriptors that rank performance characteristics for quality. Another option for increasing reliability is to *weight* each item of an assessment, so that students know its value in the total grade and where to invest the most effort. Each MA TESOL teacher educator is an expert in the content area upon which students

reflect critically in Table 1 component three (i.e., peer feedback on module content); so, the accuracy of student perceptions can be confirmed, focused, or corrected, as necessary. Furthermore, grading in the MA TESOL case is practical, as each instructor develops the course-specific prompts and marking criteria for Table 1 component four (i.e., module-specific content learning and/or student skills). Designing an instrument that can be used recursively increases reliability by probing students' reflections several times throughout the program. Having more than one grader for a moderately weighted assessment is often not practical; but the availability of a second marker, when needed, is required. It is policy in the program that the RTR is confidential between a student and the course instructor. The MA TESOL program director has potential access to all RTRs for policy reasons and has fulfilled this role (i.e., second rater for interrater reliability) for the program. In other contexts, a faculty member may be appointed to monitor and improve the reflective assessment; also, with larger cohort sizes and reflective reports of a different type and weight, more time may be spent assembling a marking team and determining criteria for marking (e.g., Gibbons, 2015).

Looking Forward—Assessing Reflection in SLTE and PBL

In the past 20 years, second language teacher educators and researchers have been encouraging the use of reflective practice in their programs (Burns, 2009; Burton, 2009; Stanley, 1998).They have also been developing theoretical understanding of reflection (Farrell, 2015) and its interaction with teacher professional identity formation (e.g., Pennington & Richards, 2016). Research to date has not focussed on teacher educator approaches to assessing reflection. In fact, not all reflective tasks are assessed. Consequently, it may also be advisable to elicit research studies that deliberately focus on (second language) teacher educators' assessment strategies for reflective instruments or activities. Approaches to formative (i.e., nongraded) assessment activities and their value in PBL should also be documented.

This article has introduced both the theory and practice of using reflective assessments and developing reflective practitioners in an MA TESOL program with a PBL curriculum. It has raised the question of subject or disciplinary influence in reflective practices in PBL. In conclusion, it is hoped that the article may encourage more second language teacher educators to use PBL cycles in their graduate programs and that it may foster understanding of the value of instructor-based reflective assessments in a variety of PBL contexts.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Farrell (2015) conflates identity with philosophy, and he deals with identity in terms of teaching roles. The MA TESOL data presented in the article requires a clearer distinction between identity and philosophy.
2. The name is a pseudonym.
3. These English varieties are used as a lingua franca between non-native speakers of English outside of the regions where a standard version of English has dominance.
4. In the program a small group is known as a "cavort."
5. In second language education, tasks are "real-world" activities that require the learners to process and produce authentic language appropriate to the learning level.
6. The data sources used in this article are derived from the study in Caswell (2018).

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