

Reflective Teaching, Post Method Pedagogy and Teacher Professional Development and How These Interrelate to each other and Improve Classroom Teaching

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Abstract

Reflective teaching is an activity to recall what has been done in the classroom, and evaluate the process of teaching itself. The purpose of doing this is to improve the quality of teaching (Richard in <http://www.tttjournal.co.uk>; Tice, 2011) through data collection (Bailey, 1997). It is the attitude of questioning the practice of teacher's profession (Bailey, 1997). The principles of doing this is by peer observation, written account of experiences, self-reports, auto biographies, journal writing, collaborative diary keeping and recording lessons (Richard in <http://www.tttjournal.co.uk>), student's feedback (Tice, 2011), teacher's stories (Bailey, 1997). *Reflective teaching* has been proven to learning effectiveness (Taghilou, 2007) and 'encouraging growth and improving pedagogical knowledge and professional development for pre-service teachers' (Rodman, 2010). This could be one of possible ways of teacher's *professional development*, in which teachers act as adult *learner* and the *facilitator* in education system (Borko, 2004), focus on student's learning, includes training, practice and feedback, is on going process, collaborative etc Haqq 1995 (cited in Wilson and Berne, 1999). *The practice of reflective teaching* as a way of professional development could, in my opinion, be integrated in the *Post Method Pedagogy* (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; 2006) which advocates *three pedagogic parameters*; particularity, practicality and possibility. **Particularity** refers to a 'context sensitive pedagogy', **practicality** means 'theorize what teachers practice and practice what teachers theorize', and **possibility** means 'the social, political, educational and institutional forces that shape identity formation and social transformation' (p.184). *The integration might be possible* as primarily, in particularity and practicality parameters, teachers should have a reflection on what they teach in what context and how they teach a particular subject, the things that might also facilitate professional development. This paper will explore the interconnection among reflective teaching, post method pedagogy and teacher professional development. At the end of the paper, the writer will share my experiences of teaching as a reflection and a way of developing profession

Introduction

In exploring this paper, the definition of Reflective Teaching, Post Method Pedagogy and Teacher Professional Development is outlined and the inter-relation among those are elaborated in the end along with possible constraints of PD, followed by my personal reflection as an EFL lecturer for the last 5 years.

The definition of reflective teaching and its common procedure

Reflective Teaching is a means of "looking at what you do in the classroom, thinking about why you do it, and thinking about if it works - a process of self-observation and self-evaluation" (Tice, 2011). The purpose of doing it is to improve the quality of teaching (Richard in www.tttjournal.co.uk, Tice, 2011) through data collection (Bailey, 1997). While Loughran (1996) says that reflection involves "working toward a better understanding of the problems and ways of solving it" (p.13) it is further seen as number of steps in thinking which are organized and linked and lead to action. According to Loughran (1996), the steps involved cover "suggestions, problems, hypothesis, reasoning and testing". Reflective Teaching is also seen as the attitude of questioning the practice of teacher's profession. The ways to have teaching reflection could be done through peer observation, written account of experiences, self-reports, auto-

biographies, journal writing, collaborative diary keeping and recording lessons (Richards in www.tttjournal.co.uk), student's feedback (Tice, 2011) and teacher's stories (Bailey, 1997). For the structure of reflection Van Manen (1977 cited in Brooker and Donoghue, 1993) identifies that **three level of reflections**, 'technical rationality' in the first level, 'practical reflection' in the second level, and 'critical reflection' in the third level. *The first level* emphasizes the "efficient and effective application for educational knowledge" in achieving given goals. To reflect at this level is to question "the appropriateness of various course of action in the classroom". *The second level* accentuates on the clarification of the assumptions on moral, ethical and value considerations which are the basis of practical action. The reflection in this second level is "concerned with the deciding the worth competing educational goals and experiences". *The third level* focuses the reflection on how "educational goals and practices" are systematically and ideologically distorted by "structural forces and constraints at work and various aspects of society including educational settings" (p.3). From the explanation we may infer that reflection begins with the abstract concept to the complicated variables.

Reflective teaching itself, has been proven to have learning effectiveness (Taghilou, 2007), 'encouraging growth and improving pedagogical knowledge and professional development for pre-service teachers' (Rodman, 2010).

The writer's personal account for reflective teaching

In doing the reflective teaching, the writer did not include all the data collection but only from colleagues' personal stories (teaching the same courses or the teacher who has the teaching experience on the same course), joining consortium on a course facilitated by department, the student's feedback, continuously updating the materials and syllabus, as well as contemplating on what are the major problems for students doing a particular course and students in English department in general. The following are the activities that have been done: discussion the syllabus of the Writing and Speaking courses, discussion on the changes of syllabus of writing courses (at consortium session), updating the syllabus for Speaking I as the syllabus has been outdated (too easy) given the level of undergraduate students.

The writer also always updates the materials and teaches the new materials for Writing Course e.g. by giving International journals for relevant topics such as: genre description of argumentative essays, lexical bundles in disciplinary variation, cultural thought patterns etc. Moreover, the writer introduced the ideas of the spoken versus written English by Michael Halliday, looking for the fact that most students are not able to differentiate the use of spoken versus written English in academic writing context. The writer also asked students to investigate the thesis from the alumni then they should indicate the part of thesis which are not academically written and suggest the better writing style.

In speaking I, the writer modifies the activities in the syllabus. As written in the syllabus, the students should be taught about: personal information, likes and dislikes, showing direction etc. The writer thinks that the activities are too easy for students therefore, he has students summarize the theoretical concepts of the activities and submit them. The teacher then discussed the activities in the classroom. In addition, the writer decided to have more challenging activities such as doing movie presentation along with the summary of the movie synopsis and the unique expressions (group of two and maximum three students), doing power point presentation individually (of student's own topic) followed by questions and answer, and on the spot presentation (unprepared topic). Having those in the classroom students seemed to be more enthusiastic in joining the Speaking class.

As for "on the spot" presentation, it was inspired by student's feedback who compared activities done in another speaking class especially having drama performance. Having got student's feedback, teacher formerly decided to assign students to perform "joke on the spot". However, as students felt that it was too hard for them, finally teacher asked students to write their own topics individually in a folded paper. Then students should choose randomly and perform accordingly.

All the things that the writer has done in the classroom, if measured from three levels of reflections Van Manen (1977 cited in Brooker and Donoghue, 1993), seem to fall on 'technical rationality' and 'practical reflection' not 'critical reflection'. This perhaps due the fact that, the courses the writer teaches is mostly English language skills so that it seems not relevant to deal with the issue of 'systematic and ideological distortion of educational goals', the case which perhaps is mostly appropriate object of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) course as this course examines ideological issue, abuse of power and serves as the advocatory role (Meyer, 2001).

The definition of professional development

Dale Lange 1950 (cited in Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001, p.4) defined teacher development as "a term used in literature to describe a process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers". While the approaches for professional development as (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001) mentioned, there are two kinds of approaches: individual and cooperative development. They also mention that there are several reasons of doing professional developments.

The reasons are to 'overcome the sense of isolation' from daily teaching activities, to enable teachers to get in touch with positive people, finding colleagues for co-developing materials, providing contacts for next job search, offering new teaching ideas, conducting action research, can help expand teacher's conceptual understanding of teaching, boosting confident as a professional, and gaining confirmation and re-affirmation that what teacher does is worthwhile (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001, p.10).

Other prominent scholars in language teaching Richard and Farell (2005) mention that there are five areas in which teachers need update their professional knowledge and skills to improve their professional development. Those are;

1. engaging in self-reflection and evaluation
2. developing specialized knowledge and skills about many aspects of teaching
3. expanding their knowledge base about research theory and issues in teaching
4. taking on new roles and responsibilities such as supervisor or mentor teacher, teacher-researcher, or materials writer
5. developing collaborative relationship with other teachers (p.vii).

Developing professional knowledge, as elaborated above, is one of ways of becoming a good teacher. Cruickshank and Haefele (2001 cited in Stronge, 2007) define that good teachers are "ideal, analytical, dutiful, competent, expert, reflective, satisfying, diversity responsive and respected"(p.x)

The writer's personal experience in practicing professional development

As for my own experience for professional development, the writer has exercised the individual approach. The writer has presented my papers for national and international conferences such as ADIA International Conference 2010 and International Poetry Festival 2012 both at UIN Malang, National English Teachers and Lecturers (NETAL) Conference 2012 at the State University of Malang, Language in the Online and Offline Worlds, Petra Christian University Surabaya, 2012, University of Malaya Discourse and Society Conference 2012, CONAPLIN conference (at the moment) and TEFLIN Conference 2012 at Widya Mandala Catholic University (Forthcoming). As Lee (2011) points out that teacher's active involvement as a presenter in continuing professional development seminars "enable teacher to think and reflect more seriously on their practice" (p.39) as well as greatly enrich teacher learning. By challenging myself to be presenters, it necessitates the writer to read more widely and prepare a unique topic. By joining the

seminar, the writer gains a lots of benefits in which one of them is broadening and enriching my understanding on different issues in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Furthermore the writer has published my articles in LiNGUA journal 2011, Research on Humanities and Social Sciences www.iiste.org 2012, Language, Discourse and Society, 2012, Theory and Practice in Language Studies 2012 and a book chapter for State University of Malang Press 2012. At the moment he continually writes articles for conferences and journal publications and apply for grants for overseas conferences. What he has done in these professional development aspects confirm the validity of the reasons for professional development above. Additionally, there is a bit of instrumental motivation for doing the mentioned professional development above such as gaining the credits for career promotion and gaining the standards of applying Ph.D. overseas scholarship.

The Concept of Post Method Pedagogy

This well-known pedagogical methods was first promoted by Kumaravadivelu (1994), as the response of his dissatisfaction of the former teaching methods, which he claimed, “merely transfer of body of professional knowledge to prospective teachers, knowledge that may not even be relevant to their local needs” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 199). Furthermore, he argued that former his chosen field of TESOL was marked by “a poverty of intellectual stimulus” (p.200). Disillusioned with the phenomena, he gained inspiration from cultural studies, the ideas from post-structuralism, post-modernism and post-colonialism. From the cultural studies thinkers such as *Pierre Bourdieu*, *Micahel de Certeau*, and *Michael Foucault*, along with great immigrant thinkers such as *Homi Bhabha*, *Edward Said*, *Gayatri Spivak* etc, he learned that “the borders between the personal, the professional, and the political are indeed porous, and that we are all constantly crossing the boundaries whether we know it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not” (p.200). Starting from this, he outlined his post method framework in terms of macro-strategies and micro-strategies, which he claims to be theory and method neutral as “they are not confined to underlying assumptions of any one specific theory of language, learning and teaching” and “they are not conditioned by a single set of principles or procedures associated with language teaching methods” (p.201). Despite of the remarkable work, Kumaravadivelu, in this regard practices continual development of his professional knowledge, not merely complacent with the existing teaching methods, which in his opinion, politically and ideologically shaped.

The ten macro-strategies that he proposes are: maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiate interaction, minimize perceptual mismatches, activate intuitive heuristics, foster language awareness, contextualize linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy, ensure social relevance and raise cultural consciousness. To implement the mentioned ten macro-strategies, **micro-strategies** are designed to realize the objective of macro-strategies. One macro strategy may have several micro-strategies “conditioned and constrained by national, regional, or local language policy and planning, curricular objectives, institutional resources and a host of other factors that shape the learning and teaching enterprise in a given context” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; 2006, p.209), so the specific strategies would need teacher’s creativity in designing it to meet the need of local context.

To illustrate in a clearer picture, he exemplified how to construct micro-strategies as illustrated bellow. *e.g. Macro strategy 5: foster language awareness.* The sample of micro-strategy 1 is the language use and levels of formality and micro-strategy 2 is language use and doublespeak. Further it is explained that the 1st micro-strategy is “to create in the learner general language awareness about levels of formality involved in interpersonal communication”. In realizing the first micro-strategy, here are the steps suggested:

1. Write the following forms of address in the board: Madam President, Mr. Chairman, Your Honor, Sir, Hello Darling, Hey

Note: the class is divided in groups, where each group should discuss the context in which the expressions are used and to whom students should address them to.

2. Get students from the selected groups briefly share their group discussion to the entire class. Disagreement among the students in the class is welcomed.
3. Have individual learners make a list of terms they use to address the family members such as grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, elder brother, young brother/sister etc) in their cultural communities. Ask them about where and when they use the address.
4. Divide the class into small groups (form pairs, depending on your convenience). Asked the learners to share their list with others and compare how forms address work within a family in different linguistic and cultural communities.
5. Have them talk about how factors such as setting, age, and gender of participants affect form of address, and in what contexts boundaries may be crossed.
6. Get students to compare how forms of address are structured in their L1 and in L2.
7. Ask the students to share some of their salient points with the whole class.

Lead a detailed discussion on any selected issues that came up in small groups.

8. Help them (if necessary, through leading questions) reflect on how different forms of address signal cultural values and beliefs, and how are these reflected in language use.

For the 2nd sample of micro-strategies and its aims together with the steps suggested (See. Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.211).

Apart from macro and micro strategies, Post Method Pedagogy proposes three pedagogic parameters, namely **particularity**, **practicality**, and **possibility**. Particularity refers to 'context sensitive pedagogy', practicality means that 'theorize what teachers practice and practice what teachers theorize' and possibility means 'the social, political, educational source, and institutional forces that shape identity formation and social transformation' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.184). In relation to context in language teaching (Richards & Lockharts, 1996) explained that "the context in which teachers work, have an important influence on teaching, since different teaching settings involve teachers in different kinds of roles" (p.97) ranging from fairly autonomous in designing course, assessment to a more guided role. Furthermore, Richards and Lockharts, (1996) explain the role of institution in regard to teacher's role. They elaborate that "the institutional administrative structure, the culture operating in each institution, and its teaching philosophy" create particular roles for teachers. Furthermore, it is exemplified that the school may have "one principal, several senior teachers and a large number of regular teachers. The senior teachers make the most of the key decisions and the regular teachers do most of the teaching" (p.98) etc. This seems, to some extent, apply to writer's teaching context where for example vice rector for academic affairs, vice dean for academic affairs and the head of department and other key figures have key roles in directing the curriculum. However, it is not only the determining factor as, lecturers for examples are involved in faculty curriculum workshop where changes or modification of the curriculum are discussed and debated

The writer's classroom teaching experience inspired by Post Method Pedagogy

In exercising the principles of Post Method Pedagogy, in delivering teaching, the writer tries to explore the current and popular issues in local and Indonesian context as a way to engage students to the course. In this sense, they seem to be more motivated to actively participate in the classroom learning. The writer

sometime chooses the topics himself (e.g. the controversy of Lady Gaga Concert in Jakarta), get students to decide their own topic for instance in Speaking presentation, in an Essay Writing , or as way of exploring Linguistic issues (e.g. the informal word “secara” from Sociolinguistic points of view, the word “Sarindut” from Morphological perspective, the contrastive analysis of supra-segmental aspect of Bahasa Indonesia and English in the discussion of Phonology and Phonetics, exploring his own motivation in L2 learning in SLA discussion etc. These all confirm the practice of **particularity aspect** of the post-method. At the same time, he informs students about the current policy on necessity to publish articles at least the university journal prior to the graduation. This implements **institutional forces** of the post-method. For practical classroom teaching, in writing course (on going), the writer had students produce extended essay of about 2000 words on the Linguistic issue. He also informed them that for selected essay (at the end of semester), He would offer them to co-author for journal publications under my supervision. There have been two selected topics: contrastive analysis of nasality in English and Arabic, the pronoun and [verb changes] in the old, middle and modern English. During the writing process, he discussed the writing procedure in the classroom and outside the classroom. While for activity for presenting paper in the conference, writing article for journal publications or book chapter, these are likely to deal with **practicality** aspect of the post method as he always integrate his teaching experience and practices as the “voices” in his scholarly writing.

The possible relationship among reflective teaching, post-method pedagogy and teacher professional development

Having looked at the definition and the elaboration of reflective teaching, post-method pedagogy and teacher professional development. It can be considered that post method pedagogy as a tool of doing teaching reflection. It may serve as a means of improving classroom teaching through macro and micro strategies along with its three pedagogic parameters. This would ease teacher to develop his/her professionalism in classroom teaching. The following is the simple illustration of the relationship.

[Post-Method Pedagogy] → [Reflective Teaching] → [Teacher Professional Development]

Through the interconnection of three pedagogic parameters, teachers may enhance their professional development through for example to write journal article, paper conference, and book to introduce their own theory and practice of teaching, the local context that influence their teaching, as well as the bigger domain institutional forces e.g. language policy that determines where identity should be formed and socially transformed

The Possible constraints of Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

Apart from the successful stories that TPD may impact in the classroom, there are several constraints that teachers may encounter such as: “lack of time and money” (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999 cited in Williams, 2009), attitudes, perceptions and expectations of the learning experience (O’Mahony, 1997 cited in Williams, 2009), the individual’s lack of confidence, and the fact that they may consider themselves as too old (Cross, 1981, cited in Williams, 2009). All the factors mentioned seem influential in hindering one’s professional development especially lack of time and money. For some lecturers, especially non-state lecturers, the issues of time and money, seem matter for them. Most of the time, they have to teach in overloaded schedule in different universities to support their living. In this regards, they have lack time and money for their professional development. But this is not always the case, as for some events, there is a possibility to apply for sponsorship for conferences once their proposals are accepted e.g. CamTESOL Conference 2013 <http://www.camtesol.org/index.php/2012-conference> , CELC Symposium National University of Singapore (NUS) 2013 <http://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/symposium/callforpapers.html> etc.

Concluding Remark

Post-Method Pedagogy is a flexible framework in which teachers could engage it in reflective teaching to develop their professional development. As described by Baley, Curtis and Nunan (2001) that teacher development is continual process, professional development practice is a life long learning process as well (Williams, 2009). Teachers should continually develop their professional development as “technological advances, and the rapid and the continuous changes at the work place have provided an arena where learning throughout the entire life span is essential to keep abreast of ever increasing changes in professional practice” (p.3). Engaging in professional practice, teachers could “assess their professional growth, develop-informed decision making skills, and become proactive and confident in their teaching” (Farell, 2008, p.4). Having gone through this, teachers are likely to be able to answer the following reminder; “if “an educator is professionally fulfilled, and demonstrates skills and knowledge, job satisfaction, then they are more likely to motivate their students to learn” (Stoll & Fink, 1996 cited in Williams, 2009, p.3), the point where teachers should aim at, while at the same time crossing over the constraints or barriers.

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