

## REFLECTIVE JOURNALING FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) TEACHERS IN JAPAN

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**Abstract:** This paper reports on the initial phase of a qualitative investigation into reflective journaling as a form of professional development (PD) involving EFL teachers at universities in Japan. The research questions were: (1) What shared/differing concerns or challenges are experienced by university EFL teachers in Japan? (2) Is reflective journaling a viable form of professional development for EFL teachers in Japan? Preliminary analysis identified classroom management, questioning of one's own perspectives/practices, and classroom community as shared concerns. Also, with appropriate support, reflective journaling appears to be a viable form of PD for in-service teachers of EFL in this context.

**Keywords-***Journaling, Reflective, EFL Teachers*

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## INTRODUCTION

Raising the professional standing of university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Japan is important in terms of both job satisfaction and self esteem for practicing teachers, as well as attracting and retaining talented new teachers. The position of the EFL profession in Japan is tenuous in that several Japanese universities or departments have begun outsourcing the teaching of English to private language schools which hire newly-arrived foreign teachers with little or no training or experience. The context for this troubling tendency is exceedingly complex and beyond the scope of the current paper. However, it is important to note that these decisions are often made for financial reasons and not pedagogical. University decision makers are often faculty members and administrators who have little or no background in educational theory or educational psychology, let alone language education, and there seems to be an underlying belief that anyone who speaks the language can teach it. At the same time, cross-country

comparisons of English-language ability, as measured by standardized tests (TOEFL; IELTS), have revealed an alarming decline in competitiveness by Japan. University applicants in Japan normally study extremely hard to get into university, and their knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar reaches a peak at around the time they enter university. However, most university programs include only a limited number of contact hours for English, and there is very low accountability for the courses that are taught. In this climate, any language gains that are made to individual drive and determination than the program that is offered.

To stake their professional claim, it is important for teachers in this context to collectively and individually pursue professional development activities that positively influence learning outcomes for their learners. However, there are few empirical studies of what types of professional development (PD) endeavors actually help in this area. One of the PD pursuits that has gained some traction in recent years is reflective practice (Farrell, 2008). Sellars (2014) views engagement in reflection as the path towards developing “*the skills and competencies of an expert teacher*” and reflective practice is described by Robins, Ashbaker, Enriquez & Morgan (2003) as allowing teachers to “*become skillful in making informed judgments and professional decisions, and is empowering.*” With this in mind, an action research project involving reflective journaling was initiated at two private universities in western Japan. The ten participants agreed that reflective journaling would help them better understand their teaching and levels of learner engagement, and could offer a springboard for further individualized professional development endeavors. This paper reports on my initial analysis of qualitative data collected to answer the following research questions: (1) What shared/differing concerns or challenges are experienced by university EFL teachers in Japan?; (2) is reflective journaling a viable form of professional development for EFL teachers in Japan?

I am approaching this study from a pragmatic yet “transformative” research paradigm, pragmatic in that I am working with busy teachers and have designed the study within existing structures and “transformative” in that I hope to challenge the status quo in this teaching context with the aim of bringing about some positive change. I believe that this study can empower participant teachers as well as their students, and hope the results of this study will ultimately reach and influence a larger audience. Finally, in designing this study, I have attempted to provide an example of an action research project that can be done collectively or individually to transform the way teachers view and approach their craft.

Here, I will briefly introduce some of the attempts to define reflective practice in general, reflective teaching in particular, as well as reflective journaling. I will also provide some contextual background for the study.

### Reflective Practice

In educational contexts, reflection is defined broadly by Sellars (2014) as *“deliberate, purposeful, metacognitive thinking and/or action in which educators engage in order to improve their professional practice.”* (pg. 2) The American philosopher and educator John Dewey is often credited for shining the spotlight on reflection in professional contexts (Calderhead, 1989; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Sellars, 2014). Dewey (1933) saw reflection as the *“active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends”* (cited in Jay & Johnson, 2002).

One influential theorist to build on the ideas of Dewey was Donald Schön (1983, 1987), who saw the spread of technical rationality as turning a blind eye to human intuition and artistry exhibited in many professions. Schön made the useful distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, and viewed reflection-in-action as a *“reflective conversation with the materials of a situation.”* In this metaphorical conversation, the professional listens to the *“back talk”* or surprises that arise, and *“responds through on-line production of new moves that give new meanings and directions to the development of the artifact”* (Schön, 1987, p. 31). Two of the main ideas that informed the current study were Schön’s separation of (1) reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice, and (2) single loop versus double loop learning.

As cited in Sellars (2014), Robins, Ashbaker, Enriquez and Morgan (2003) describe reflective practice as *“a tool that allows teachers, student teachers and teaching assistants to understand themselves, their personal philosophies and the dynamics of their classroom more deeply.”* Earnest and authentic engagement in reflection facilitates teachers’ efforts to become *“contemplative,”* to improve their *“professional competencies”* and to identify their *“personal strengths and relative limitations”* as a teacher (Sellars, 2014, pg. 2).

Thus, reflection and reflective practice seem to be a good starting point for professional development endeavors in my context and provides a solid foundation for the current study.

## Reflective Teaching

The related term “*reflective teaching*” has been in use for sometime, with James Calderhead (1989) noting its popularity and the widespread use of the concept in a wide range of teacher training courses for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Reflective Teaching has even been used as a brand name for an instructional package (activities and materials) developed by Cruickshank (1985) and colleagues.

In his review of existing reflective teaching literature, Calderhead (1989) recognized a wide variation in how researchers and theorists viewed the *process of reflection*, the *content of reflection*, the *preconditions of reflection*, and the *product of reflection*. He also noticed a wide range of ways in which the concepts had been justified in teacher training contexts, and concludes: “*While several idealized models of reflection are prescribed for teacher education purposes, the nature, function, and potential of reflection has yet to be fully explored*” (Calderhead, 1989, pg. 49).

Gore and Zeichner (1991) describe the four dominant versions of reflective teaching practice that have emerged in the literature, namely (a) *an academic version* - aimed mainly at representing and translating subject matter knowledge to promote student understanding, (b) a *social efficiency version* - emphasizing the practical application of relevant pedagogical theory, (c) a *developmentalist version* - with a focus on teaching practices centered on students’ interests and development, and (d) a *social reconstructionist version* - prioritizing reflection about social and political context with the aim of contributing through teaching to greater equity, social justice and improved conditions at school and in society.

Zeichner and Liston (1996) later describe reflective teaching as entailing “*a recognition, examination, and rumination over the implications of one’s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as the opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works*” (p. 20).

Despite the lack of agreement surrounding the term, we have here several lenses through which to view teachers’ approach to reflecting on their practice. We also recognize a gap in the literature that the current study might help fill, namely clarifying the nature, function and potential of reflection identified by Calderhead (1989) in my teaching context.

## Reflective Journaling

The topic of Reflective Journaling comes up in literature for teacher training context and for use with learners. Francis (1995), for example, describes a reflective

journaling project for pre-service teachers where they reflect on four clear themes: (1) teaching plans; (2) reflective writing about workshop content, strategies, and issues; (3) a professional diary documenting events which make an impact on personal view of teaching; and (4) a critical summary of professional reading.

One early example of a study aimed at comparing depth of novice teacher reflective journaling and teaching ability is reported in Gipe and Richards (1992). As part of their teacher preparation studies, these novice teachers were required to keep a reflective journal throughout one 15-week term. Their entries were evaluated on the depth of reflection and compared to their teaching ability ratings during the same term when they were involved with their practicum. Despite the limitations of this study, the authors reported a positive relationship, with higher teacher ratings being associated with deeper reflection.

In language teaching contexts, Farrell (2008) has reported on the what, how and why of reflective journaling, and believes reflection through writing enables teachers to *“step back and take stock of their thoughts because they can see them on paper or screen”* (pg. 82). Farrell (2013) also seems to be advocating reflection and journaling as a way for teachers to pursue PD individually and in groups, and to maintain a positive outlook while avoiding burnout.

Taken together, these and other published studies on the topics of reflective practice, reflective teaching and reflective journaling have encouraged me to pursue this line of inquiry in my specific teaching context.

### **Contextual Background**

The context for the current study is university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings in Japan. English is considered a key element in most university programs (despite the limited contact hours and lack of accountability mentioned above), and most entrance exams in Japan, for both public and private universities, include English as one of the key subjects. The Japanese government has also established policy to promote English at the university level (MEXT, 2014), with a focus on both communication skills and English for Academic Purposes.

English as a second language (ESL) has been used to describe the teaching and learning of English by non-native speakers of the language in social contexts where the language is used by the general populace. Examples include foreign students learning English in countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Conversely, the term EFL has been used to describe English taught in context where students do not have

ready access to the language outside the classroom or pressing need to function in the language in their daily lives.

Professional development has become a buzzword in teaching over the past several years, and we are beginning to see some reports on PD efforts in EFL programs in Japan (Jimbo, Hisamura, Oda, Usui & Yoffe, 2011). However, there is still a need for further empirical studies that explore the concerns of teachers in these programs as well as the related topics of professionalism (see, for example, Hargreaves, 2000) and PD (Borko, 2002).

## METHODS

Returning to the research questions, I am interested in: (1) What shared/differing concerns or challenges are experienced by university EFL teachers in Japan? and (2) Is reflective journaling a viable form of professional development for EFL teachers in Japan?

To address these questions, I solicited participants for a reflective journaling project, which would involve weekly reflective writing over one 15-week semester and semi-structured interviews at weeks eight and fifteen.

Two of my major concerns in designing the study were to link the project to existing PD pursuits and to minimize the burden on any participants. To address both of these concerns, I approached teachers at two universities in western Japan who are part of an inter-collegiate PD group and who expressed interest in action research and joint research. Candidates were all active members of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) and/or the Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET), and are current or former colleagues of the researcher. Candidates were presented with a detailed Participant Information Sheet and the researcher explained that participants were encouraged (but not obligated) to collaborate on related projects beyond the scope of the initial study, which was being undertaken as part of coursework in an educational doctorate program at University of Reading.

The participants included seven male and three female teachers with a range of experiences. The two most experienced teachers have been teaching ESL or EFL for more than twenty-five years, the least experienced has seven years of teaching experience, and the average for the group is thirteen point nine years. Nationalities represented were American (5), British (1), Canadian (1), Malaysian (1), Japanese (1) and Japanese-Algerian (1).

Participants were asked to fill in a short online questionnaire after each class meeting (once or twice a week) for one of the courses they are teaching, and encouraged to

spend approximately fifteen minutes at each sitting. Participants decided themselves which course they wanted to reflect on, with most teachers opting for a course they were teaching for the first time or one that they were struggling with. The questionnaire included three prompts and help text as follows:

*Prompt (1)* Reflection in practice (What adjustments or accommodations did you make to your lesson plan during today's lesson? Describe as many as possible, in as much detail as possible) *Help Text* - Reflection in Action is described as 'thinking on our feet'. It involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings, and attending to our theories in use. It entails building new understandings to inform our actions in the situation that is unfolding.

*Prompt (2)* Reflection on practice (What worked? What didn't? Explain in as much detail as possible.), *Help Text* - Looking back on the class (and the various encounters). The act of reflecting-on-action enables us to spend time exploring why we acted as we did, what was happening and so on.

*Prompt (3)* \*Emotional Aspects (What emotions did you experience? What emotions did you perceive in the learners?) *Help Text* - Specific emotions as well as general moods during today's lesson. Semi-structured interviews lasting between thirty and forty-five minutes were scheduled for the middle (week 8) and end of the semester (week 15). The aim was to get an overall view on how participants were doing and review their entries for topics or issues that were being reflected on.

The main ethical concerns for the study were related to anonymity and confidentiality. I prepared a participation information sheet and consent form for all potential participants (available upon request), and gained ethical approval from my Advisor Professor Andy Goodwyn and the University of Reading. I fully acknowledge that there are issues associated with conducting insider research (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). As all of the participants are colleagues, I needed to emphatically assure them that participation in the project was completely voluntary and that data or findings would not be shared with anyone or be used for any other purpose than the study. The agreement was that an individual's raw data would be viewed only by the researcher and the participant themselves.

To make sense of the data, I followed the advice of Creswell (2013) regarding the analysis and interpretation process, and worked with the NVivo software. In analyzing the data, I wanted to gain a balanced view (zooming in on detail and backing out for a wider

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\* Note: Findings from data solicited through this prompt are not reported on in this paper.



view) as prescribed by both Richards (2009) and Hatch (2002). My approach was to read through entries or transcripts, coding portions that seemed particularly worthy of further analysis. While coding, I would jot down key words or possible themes from the text and bracket any personal ideas that came to me regarding direction for the project, etc. After all of the journal entries and interview transcripts had been coded in NVivo, I reviewed my coding decisions with a view toward consolidation and consistency. My preliminary interpretations were presented to participants as a means of validation, and I was able to gather some added insight regarding the two research questions as well as overall research design.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

All data from the reflective journaling and eight-week interviews was entered into NVivo for coding and analysis. Descriptive statistics in the form of coding results (Appendix 1) and the number of entries and words before and after the first interview (Appendix 2) were compiled to facilitate analysis.

For this initial phase of the study, seven nodes stand out as deserving special attention: Adjustment to lesson plan, Classroom atmosphere, Difficulties with reflective journaling, Questioning own perceptions, Questioning own practices, Recognizes the value of reflection/journaling, Understanding the students. Due to space limitations, I provide only a brief glimpse of the entries or comments at these nodes, including the number of sources and references in parentheses.

### Adjustment to Lesson Plan (14 sources/101 references)

As the Reflection-in-Action prompt asked for examples of adjustments to lesson plans, it was not a surprise to find the bulk of comments at this node which included adding an activity, adjusting an activity, and dropping an activity. My initial impression was that adjustments were being made when the teacher ran out of time, but further analysis of the entries and interviews revealed several instances of the teacher accommodating the learners:

*And sometimes, when I look at the PowerPoint, I say, "This is going to be more time—" like a mini-lecture or something. "There's going to be more time devoted to me bringing the students together and focusing on this while I go through it." And sometimes, I think, "Actually, I want them to explore more," so I tend to cut that. (June 1)*



*I noticed a few students getting sleepy during the AIESEC listening task, so decided to skip over some parts of the video the second time through and have them collaborate further on the worksheet. I also decided to have students read the Mikitani bio out loud while highlighting key ideas. (May 12)*

Some of the journal entries dealt with the effectiveness of adjustments made to lesson plans a participant had taught before.

*The last activity of the day was creating questions for the test and last year students created some questions I collected, but this year I gave students 10 minutes to ask their own questions in a small group for review of the test. It seems to be a more engaging activity than last year. (April 21)*

### **Classroom Atmosphere (10 sources/58 references)**

As mentioned earlier, I will be focusing on emotions in another paper and will thus limit my comments on emotions here. I would like to note however that several comments were coded at the Classroom Atmosphere node, an area that does seem to be a concern with this group of teachers. Several comments suggested the importance of classroom atmosphere in facilitating or hindering learning. These teachers seem to recognize how students feed off of each other and the teacher.

*The first class went really well and the emotions were definitely on the upside, even through the difficult parts of the video and text. My feeling is that the students and I were feeding off each other in terms of emotions and mood. (June 9)*

### **Difficulties with Reflective Journaling (7 sources/23 references)**

These results are directly related to my second research question, but there were not an overwhelming number of entries coded at this node. One participant expressed his frustration at not being able to explain his decisions or reflection in action movements.

*And I know that I do it, I do it all the time, but I cannot—when I sit down to write about it, I cannot think of how to explain it. And that's what I'm having a really hard time with. And that's why I look at some of my reflections, and before I'm getting ready to submit it, I think, "Oh, this is awful." But I [laughs] really don't know what else to say, so—submit. I'm done. [laughs] . . . So I'm trying to get better at it, something I'm gonna work on, but— (June 3)*

Time pressures and other comments were also mentioned as a source of frustration. *So a lot of times recently, when I've been writing these reflections, I just feel like I would be writing so much more and so much better if I had more time. And so I'm like, "Maybe just focusing on something in particular..." I don't know. Sometimes, I feel like I'm almost being too general now just because that's easier to write in 15 minutes ... (May 28)*

Shortage of things to write about also came up in the interviews.

*Most of the time, it's fine, but sometimes, there's times where I'm like, "Well, there's just really nothing." [laughs] I don't feel like there's anything that I think is important to comment on, so sometimes, I feel it's a little bit... frustrating. (June 2)*

One other difficulty was related to remembering what exactly occurred during class.

*And the things that you—one tricky thing is because I teach the same class twice, first and second period. Sometimes, something happens in the first class, but then the second class comes along, and then that moment, you know you want to reflect on the in-process, what's happening that particular time, but it's immediately followed by another class, so you sometimes lose that train of thought. (June 1)*

### **Questioning own Perceptions (11 sources/20 references)**

Eight of the ten participants had entries or comments coded at this node. There is some evidence that participants are moving toward the “double loop” learning described by Schön (1983, 1987).

*So I do see that in the class. Or maybe it could also be that I just perceive that, so I'm putting that emotion on the students. And it could be something completely different. Maybe they have a completely different emotion, but I'm just speculating. I don't know ... I mean it could be other things. They may have things in their mind—family problems... They might have other issues that we don't know about that they don't want to tell us. (June 3)*

*I am not sure what emotions are at play, but [student] seemed disengaged. I interpreted this as meaning that he wasn't enjoying the interaction with his partner, but this may be off the mark. (June 16)*

*Yeah, and I think I did have sort of—maybe a couple of wrong ideas about a couple of students in the beginning. And as I've gotten to know them better—a little bit better, I've realized, "Oh, okay, so maybe I was assuming this, and it wasn't like that." So I backed off a bit, and I tried to just let them be and sort of gauge them from there. So that was my mistake in assuming certain emotions or feelings that they had the opposite of or... So maybe that's just me acclimating to the culture or the classroom or them in particular. (May 28)*

### **Questioning own Practices (14 sources/73 references)**

This node had the second most references at seventy-three and thus appears to be a common concern for this group of teachers. Here is just a sampling of entries or comments coded at this node:

*Sometimes, I don't know if it's laziness or just like referring to the book and assuming the book would know or their suggestion for the scaffolding is good enough, and then when I do it, I realize that was not good enough, that I could have done a lot more with it had I taken that separately and thought about it more and come back. (May 28)*

*Occasionally, I probably change things because of those particular people who may be dominating the class, and I don't want them to be doing it. And other times, I may be reacting to what they're doing. And of course, I shouldn't be, but I may be doing that. I fall into that trap. (June 1)*

*The above incident was unfortunate as I had made assumptions about the group due to their consistent reticence and (seeming) disinterest in the task. It was a humbling moment to be sure. Afterwards, I felt that I should put more trust in my students' diligence and perhaps re-assign groups if one becomes stagnant, whether from cognitive or language difficulties. (April 14)*

*When we had an integrated writing activity last year, students read a biography of . . . and watched a video about his company, but there was little information from the video. This year, I told students that they should refer to equal amounts of information from both the reading and the video, and they could write much better paragraphs than last year. I thought I should have mentioned this last year as well. (May 12)*

### **Recognizes the Value of Reflection Journaling (6 sources/28 references)**

I acknowledge here that participants are clearly aware of the research project and may be making these favorable comments in support of reflection and/or journaling as a way of pleasing the researcher. However, the *critical friend* atmosphere that has been created among this group of teachers lends support for the sincerity of these comments.

*And for me, that actually—that was—I don't know—I just felt like by the end of that, I was a much better teacher than at the beginning. So I definitely see the benefits of journaling and reflecting and— (May 28)*

*This has helped me a lot, having everything in one place. (June 2)*

*There are things that come out of it where you... For example, especially—not so much for things that are going well, but for things that are not going well, you sit down and you write about them, and suddenly, what appeared to be a problem is somehow solvable. So— (June 1)*

Some comments during the interviews dealt with the value of talking through the journal entries with someone.

*Yeah, it's good that I'm writing these things down, but actually, those are just talking points to this. It's leading to this. This is important to me. The fact that I'm—that now, I'm going to change my classroom when we talked about this, already, this is a change I'm going to implement. So for me, now, that's so much more valuable. (May 28)*

### **Understanding the Learners (7 sources/19 references)**

Several comments revealed an understanding or attempt at understanding the learners.

*I can think of many, but I'll pick on this one student. And this student, I think, has had an attitude, probably not just in my class. So I don't think it's that overall issue that was happening. I think that it's also his issue. (June 2)*

*One thing that's struck me in [class name] is that exactly what you mentioned. I see some of the same students in there who I taught in the first semester or second semester in [class name], and I remember how they were in those classes. And some of them are*

*doing fine and have gone from strength to strength, and actually, some of them have not.*  
(June 1)

*Several students in the second class seem demotivated by the difficulty of the reading. Seem to be trying to understand, but rush back to the safety of wakaranai [I don't understand] mode quite easily. (June 16)*

The above sampling of comments is of course limited, but we have here some areas for my initial analysis, and that can be a springboard for further PD gatherings.

## Discussions

My general impression after analyzing the data was that this group of teachers is quite dedicated to helping their learners toward learning the target language and responsive to learner needs (as perceived by the teacher). Despite the shortcomings of the research design, I feel that the study was worthwhile and that findings may contribute to our understanding of teachers in this context, the value of reflective journaling, and this approach to action research. Readers will of course need to judge the value of these findings with the understanding that the researcher is an insider and that relationships between the researcher and participants may have influenced entries and interview responses.

In terms of shared concerns, we can recognize three major themes. First, these teachers seem to spend much time thinking about classroom management issues such as activity sequencing, gaining and keeping attention focused on learning, and continued work toward course goals. A second theme was the questioning of one's perceptions and/or practices. Collectively, these teachers reflect on such issues as whether or not they are correctly reading their learners' behaviors and levels of engagement, or if their instructional approaches and classroom practices can be improved. The third theme that comes through is the importance of relationships and classroom community. These teachers recognize the value of a positive social setting in learning, and much of the frustration that comes through in the entries and interviews is related to breakdowns in this area.

One of my early assumptions was that the preponderance of time related adjustments pointed to superficial or shallow reflection. As I went through the data, I realized a lot of these time adjustments were made intuitively to benefit the learners. Several participants mentioned in both the journals and in the interviews that they noticed

learners either really struggling with something or gaining deeper levels of learning on something else, and that the time adjustments were made intentionally to accommodate the needs of the learners. I realized that it wasn't a question of time, it was a question of priorities.

As to whether or not reflective journaling is a viable form of PD for teachers in this context, I believe a qualified yes is in order. Although several participants in this study stressed the value of this type of reflective journaling, it was pursued and prioritized by only a few (as reflected in Appendix 2). Although not overwhelmingly successful, I am encouraged by Sellars (2014) who claims that *"teachers are more likely to be able to successfully engage with the cycle that constitutes reflection-in-action as a result of prior engagement in the reflection-in-action process."* In other words, just participating in this action research project may help these teachers toward those metaphorical conversations described by Schön (1987) in which the professional listens to the *"back talk"* or surprises that arise, and *"responds through on-line production of new moves that give new meanings and directions to the development of the artifact"* (p. 31).

Sellars (2014) stresses that the reflective process is *"an intensely personal practice"* and warns against reflective practice that is *"overly dominated by prescription to any ideology, imposed values or academic evaluation"* (pg. 8). The limited success of the current project might be attributed to this. On the other hand, some comments hinted at a need for more structure. As one possibility, Sellars (2014) uses the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1994) as a framework for a personal model of reflection which includes the identification and description of an event for reflection (What?), an analysis of the event based on one's own experiences and understanding (So What?), and exploration of possible actions or follow up (Now What?).

One intriguing finding was that the least experienced teachers had proportionately more entries that included reflection on their own teaching practices or approach. The fact that there were fewer such reflections by more experienced teachers was not surprising, but I began to wonder if our capacity to question ourselves might diminish over time. This seems like an area that deserves more attention.

One final general impression was that many of the entries were rushed, forced and lacking in depth. There may be a need in this type of pursuit to prepare a prompt that elicits more critical reflection of one's own perspectives or practices. This group of teachers might need to be reminded to question their own assumptions and approaches.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Overall, the study was moderately successful in terms of answering the two research questions. For this group of teachers, there are shared concerns regarding classroom management, questioning of one's perspectives/practices, and the importance of relationships and classroom community. These topics may offer a springboard for further PD pursuits. Although this study does not make any claims at generalizability of findings, teachers in other programs likely have some or all of these concerns and can benefit from the type of reflective journaling described in this paper or other related PD efforts. At the same time, reflective journaling seems to hold out promise for in-service teachers of EFL at universities in Japan, but it must be approached in the right way and supported with appropriate frameworks or guidance. One promising finding was that this type of reflective journaling appears to make teachers more sensitive to their decisions during class and more reflective after class.

Two benefits of this action research project involving reflective journaling were that it (1) allowed teachers an opportunity to explore their own professional identities, including their characteristics, values and beliefs, and (2) helped teachers recognize and value the amazing things they do in the classroom. These benefits alone help us toward that goal of increased self esteem and job satisfaction mentioned at the outset of this paper.

Again, I would like to acknowledge the limitations of the methodology and the depth of analysis that this short paper allowed for. One area that I was hoping to explore but that will have to be part of future investigations is measuring the depth at which participants subject their own beliefs about teaching and learning. Two measures that might be applied are Critical Analysis (Farrell, 2008) and the typology of reflection described in Jay and Johnson (2002) that includes descriptive, comparative and critical dimensions. It would also help to have a better understanding of the on-the-spot decisions (reflection-in-action) teachers make. One way of gaining insight in this area would be to videotape a class, and go through individual teacher movements with a facilitator (or by oneself) to closely analyze what kinds of decisions are made during a lesson. One last area that needs further research is the relationship between teacher reflection and target language gains made by their learners.

Returning to the goal set out by Calderhead (1989) of clarifying the nature, function and potential of reflection, I believe the current study and future investigations can go a long way in raising the standing of our profession and help teachers in my context toward increased job satisfaction and self esteem. I hope readers agree that this is a worthy pursuit.



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## Appendix 1. Coding Results

Node	Sources	References
<b>Adjustments to lesson plan</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>101</b>
Appreciation of the complexities	5	10
Bleed Over	3	4
<b>Classroom Atmosphere</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>58</b>
Connections to other experiences	1	2
<b>Difficulties with reflective journaling</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>
Dissatisfaction with materials	4	8
Emotions - adjustment	6	7
Metaphorical thinking	2	3
Misinterpreting emotions	1	1
Missed opportunity	1	1
Misunderstanding regarding reflection	2	2
Neutral emotions	3	3
Past experiences with reflection/journaling	5	15
Pedagogy - approaches to teaching	4	7
<b>Questioning own perceptions</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Questioning own practice</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Recognizes the value of reflection/journaling</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>28</b>
Learner emotion - negative	12	32
Learner emotion - positive	13	45
Students responding to teacher	7	10
Teacher emotion - negative	14	60
Teacher emotion - positive	11	51
<b>Understanding the learners</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>
	163	583

## Appendix 2 - Number of Entries and Words Before and After First Interview

Participant	Entries (before)	Words (after)	AVERAGE	Entries (before)	Words (after)	AVERAGE
A	4	854	213.50	5	738	147.60
B	14	4,117	294.07	15	4,011	267.40
C	6	2,876	479.33	6	2,240	373.33
D	13	3,064	235.69	7	1,919	274.14
E	5	1,161	232.20	1	387	387
F	2	670	335	1	727	727
G	4	1,046	261.50	1	243	243
H	5	1,137	227.40	1	231	231
I	11	2,140	194.55	12	2,234	186.17
J	4	856	214	2	632	316
AVERAGE	6.80	1,792.10	268.72	5.10	1,336.20	315.26
STDEV	4.24	1,188.76	85.06	5.02	1,231.96	163