

PROMOTING TEACHER REFLECTION THROUGH DIALOGIC JOURNAL INTERACTIONS: A COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Journals are valuable tools for reflection and allow teachers to examine their teaching practice to identify areas for improvement. Prior research on reflective writing has mainly focused on formal education. This collaborative self-study aimed to fill this research gap by investigating the significance of peer feedback on teachers' reflective practices through teaching journals, examining feedback types and intentions, its utility for practitioners, and the meaning of dialogue. After a year of journal exchange, a two-hour discussion was conducted. Data from the journal entries and discussion were analyzed using coding and reflexive thematic analysis, respectively. The analysis of journal entries revealed eight types of feedback comments, including requests for clarification, suggestions, and self-disclosure. The analysis of the discussion demonstrates how the colleague fostered the practitioner's reflections, journal writing, and exploration of teaching practice. From the practitioner's perspective, the feedback proved valuable in enhancing their teaching practice, receiving a different viewpoint on student reactions to language tasks, and reinforcing teacher beliefs. The study findings contribute to the literature by offering insights into how regular dialogue may enable practitioners to affirm their educational principles and appreciate the benefits of integrating their colleagues' best practices into their teaching.

Key words: collaborative self-study, journal writing, reflection, feedback

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INTRODUCTION

Through reflection, teachers can enhance their teaching skills and personal development. Journals serve as essential tools for reflection, enabling teachers to scrutinize their practices from an insider perspective and identify areas for improvement (Mann, 2005; Rathert & Okan, 2015). Journal entries can also lead to practical problem-solving (Risko et al., 2002). However, while teachers can engage in independent reflection through journaling, they may not always be aware of their own beliefs or be able to articulate their tacit knowledge, which can hinder the depth of their reflections. Although teacher reflection has often been regarded as an individual process, Mann and Walsh (2017) emphasize the importance of collaboration, where peers can support and scaffold reflective practice. Brandt (2008) also supports the role of feedback from others in reflective practice, suggesting that while reflection can be a productive individual activity, it can also benefit from being a social activity. Seeking regular feedback on their journals from peers can help address these challenges. Specifically, regular peer feedback can be highly beneficial, as other colleagues possess a profound understanding of classroom teaching, enabling them to provide practical and critical insights that enhance and balance the teacher's reflections.

In this collaborative self-study, we explored the effect of a colleague's ongoing feedback on journals on a Japanese high school teacher over one year to understand how this feedback process impacted the teacher's evolving teaching practice. We analyzed the types of peer feedback provided on the teacher's weekly journal entries and examined how this feedback facilitated their reflection process. In addition, we highlight the learning experiences resulting from this regular dialogic journal interaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Reflection and Reflective Practice

Over the past few decades, the importance of reflection and reflective practice in teacher education for professional development

has been widely acknowledged (Cirocki & Farrell, 2017; Farrell, 2016). Farrell (2015) proposed a reflective practice framework for language teacher education that integrates both cognitive aspects and the often-neglected spiritual, moral, and emotional dimensions. To enhance teachers' reflective practice, a well-known circular systematic model of reflection based on the theories of reflection by Dewey (1933) and Schön (1984), known as the ALACT model, is used (Korthagen et al., 2001; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). The ALACT model is an acronym derived from the first letters of the names of the five phases: (1) action, (2) looking back on the action, (3) awareness of essential aspects, (4) creating alternative methods of action, and (5) trial. It has been utilized for structured reflection to enhance "growth competence" (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005, p. 49). Korthagen (2016) argued that teachers often skip phases 2 to 4, risking the adoption of superficial and ineffective solutions in their subsequent lessons. However, it is crucial to attain a deeper understanding of the core problem (phase 3), which can be achieved through detailed reflection during phase 2. To facilitate this comprehensive reflection, he introduced eight specific questions that considered both teachers' and students' perspectives. These questions focused on aspects of thinking, feeling, wanting, and acting, thereby fostering an extensive awareness of the essence of the problem during the third phase through detailed reflection in the second phase. Awareness of the essence of the problem is assumed to be enhanced through critical reflection.

Hatton and Smith (1995) differentiated between basic, non-reflective descriptions and more advanced dialogic and critical reflections. Similarly, Lee (2005) introduced a three-tiered model of reflection: (a) recall, involving simple description without seeking explanations; (b) rationalization, where interpreting and justifying actions to establish guiding principles take place; and (c) reflectivity, which involves examining experiences from various viewpoints to enhance or modify future actions. In connection with this, Liu (2015) defined critical reflection as a continual process of analyzing, questioning, and critiquing established assumptions about teaching and learning. This approach involves reassessing past actions influenced by these assumptions to support improved educational

outcomes and a more equitable society. Furthermore, Farrell (2022) highlights the distinction between reflective practice and reflexivity, noting that while reflective practice often involves collaboration, reflexivity is a more inward-focused, individual activity. Reflexivity emphasizes a practitioner's self-examination, often independent of others. Farrell (2022) also acknowledges that reflective practice and reflexivity overlap, as discoveries made during reflective practice can lead to personal insights typically associated with reflexivity. However, distinguishing between the two remains useful for understanding their unique contributions to teacher development. Reflective practice often involves collaboration and external engagement, whereas reflexivity tends to emphasize individual self-examination and introspection. Highlighting these differences allows educators to apply these concepts more effectively in varying contexts, whether through social interaction or solitary reflection. This suggests that while collaboration enhances reflection, reflexivity offers a deeper level of personal insight. Considering this perspective, we need to consider the balance between reflective practices that benefit from social interaction and those that emphasize a solitary, reflexive approach.

According to an analysis of 116 studies on reflective practice in the field of TESOL (Farrell, 2016), journal writing was the second most frequently used reflective tool. In the process of maintaining a journal, teachers become aware of their own knowledge, skills, and attitudes, considering them from an insider perspective (Abednia et al., 2013; Rathert & Okan, 2015). Journaling provides a means of generating questions and hypotheses about teaching and learning processes as well as explaining the teaching and learning experience (Bassot, 2013; Ho & Richards, 1998; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Teachers who commit to regularly writing in journals about their practices are compelled to consider what they will write, influencing their reflections and the underlying reasons for these reflections (Farrell, 2013). Furthermore, it can promote teaching awareness, leading to improvements in teacher performance (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Gadsby (2022) developed a classification system categorizing reflection into four levels, from basic descriptive tasks to more complex writing that encompasses wider teaching

aspects: narrative-rich descriptions, self-inquiry, meta-cognitive thinking, and broadened awareness. Her research found that sustained journaling progressively transformed students into more assured reflective practitioners. In this sense, journal writing is a useful tool for enhancing deeper reflection during phase 2 of the ALACT model.

Feedback and Critical Friends

Feedback on journal entries helps teachers deepen their reflection (Samuels & Betts, 2007). Since reflection is a complex cognitive process, peer feedback allows teachers to reflect on their practices from various perspectives and try to address issues by examining their personal values and beliefs (Farrell, 2015). Not only the journal writers but also their colleagues who read those journals and provide feedback can gain a new outlook on their beliefs and practices. Charteris and Smardon (2014) suggest that opportunities for dialogic peer feedback could lead to teacher growth in terms of learning together and building knowledge.

The concept of a “critical friend” plays an important role in enhancing teachers’ deep reflection. Costa and Kallick (1993) defined a critical friend as “a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person’s work as a friend” (p. 50), mentioning that two people can collaborate to play the role of either a learner or a critical friend. Farrell (2001) revealed that a critical friendship between him and his colleague resulted in mutual development for both teachers: while his colleague gained insights into her teaching, he was able to enhance his understanding of the reflective/collaborative process. To promote a cooperative approach to teaching in which peers provide support and scaffold reflective practices (Mann & Walsh, 2017), the role of critical friends will be crucial.

While research has clarified the benefits of journaling for teachers, such as promoting reflection, increasing self-awareness, understanding of issues related to ELT, and improving their performance (e.g., Abednia et al., 2013; Khanjani et al., 2018; Lee, 2008; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018), more studies have been conducted in the context of formal education within university or

college programs than in secondary school settings (Farrell, 2016). Moreover, few studies have examined the role of feedback, as well as different types of feedback, on journal entries. For instance, Krol (1996) categorized teacher-educators' comments on student-teachers' journals as follows: affirming, thinking more or nudging, personal connection, giving information, and little/no reaction. In another study conducted on master's degree students in Thailand, three tutors' comments in response to nine course participants were categorized into nine types: supporting, probing, evaluating, understanding, analyzing, suggesting, adding information, agreeing, and thanking (Todd et al., 2001). Wen et al. (2015) investigated feedback characteristics in a reflective dialogue group of fifth-year medical students in Taiwan and identified eight types of feedback among students and six types from the tutor to the students.

However, feedback offered by peers may differ from that provided by teacher educators because of variations in experience or expertise, such as their own practical experiences in the classroom and theoretical knowledge of established educational principles in the research field. Nevertheless, considering the differences between feedback from colleagues and teacher educators can provide a broader range of insights and perspectives for enhancing teachers' professional development. In other words, engaging in collaborative inquiry helps examine preconceived notions about learning and enhances the understanding of the dynamics within interactions (Zech et al., 2000). Considering these perspectives, this study seeks to examine how peer feedback on self-initiated reflection journals contributes to practitioners' teaching practices and understanding. Specifically, it explores the effectiveness of feedback provided by critical friends in secondary school settings for uncovering insights that practitioners might overlook.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study focused on understanding the role and impact of peer feedback on reflection journals for practitioners in reflective practice. Four research questions (RQs) were formulated:

1. What type of feedback did the colleague provide?
2. What intentions did the colleague have in providing the feedback?
3. What type of feedback was useful for promoting the practitioner's reflection?
4. What was the meaning of the dialogue through the reflection journal for the practitioner?

METHODOLOGY

Self-study

In this study, we utilized a collaborative self-study design. Self-study is a methodology for exploring professional practices that build on the traditions of reflective practices and action research (Loughran, 2005). The five elements of self-study (LaBoskey, 2004), which promote collaborative work, are: self-initiated and focused; improvement-aimed; interactive in terms of the process and potential products; qualitatively-collected data sources; and validity based on the trustworthiness of the shared results. The two main authors of this study had the perspectives of a teacher as well as a researcher based on their experience in conducting and publishing practitioner research. It was assumed that employing collaborative self-study as a methodology would enhance their professional development as teacher-researchers. This study also aimed to share the public benefits of research with the teacher education community (Loughran, 2007).

Self-study goes beyond simply understanding and improving one's own practices; it also has the potential to significantly contribute new insights to the field (Percy et al., 2018). This is the reason why we believe self-study is appropriate for this study. Regarding the interactive nature of self-study, critical friends play an important role in that they assist the self-study researcher through adept questioning and offer challenges by incorporating insights and information from various sources in addition to contributing their experiences from different networks (Mena & Russell, 2017). Stolle et al. (2019) distinguished two uses of "critical friends" in self-study research: first, as supporters or coaches aiding in the transformation of teaching, and

second, as helpers ensuring the reliability of research methods. In this study, the second author intended to fulfill this double role as a critical friend to the first author.

While self-study primarily focuses on an individual researcher, it is crucial to adhere to ethical protocols to safeguard against potential harm to students and ensure that the research is conducted respectfully (Thomas, 2019). First, we ensured that our research aims to do good and minimize harm to students. The first author (the practitioner) made great efforts to acquire a profound understanding of his students and demonstrated a strong commitment to behavior and communication that exemplifies democratic and socially equitable principles in his class. Second, to maintain the privacy of students, he never used their names or disclosed any personal information in his journal. Finally, to enhance reflexivity, both authors reflected on their positionality and how it may impact the research. We considered how our personal experiences, beliefs, and values shape our research process and findings and thus, attempted to document our reflexive insights to enhance the credibility and transparency of our study.

Participants and the Teaching Context

The two main authors were principally engaged in this study, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data together. They graduated from the same university in Tokyo in different years and did not meet until 2019 in a qualitative research study group that the third author regularly conducts. Both took the third author's teaching methodology course during their third year at university. They decided to work together on the present study because they would benefit from the experience of growing as practitioners. The third author served as a mentor, providing advice on aspects of data collection and analysis, and facilitated a discussion to reflect on the experience of the two main authors' dialogic journal interaction. The backgrounds and teaching contexts of the main authors are briefly described in the following sections.

The Practitioner

The practitioner majored in English and American literature as an

undergraduate. He worked in a Japanese public junior high school for six years and then enrolled in a TESOL master's program in England. After returning to Japan, he worked at a private integrated junior and senior high school for two years. He enrolled in an Applied Linguistics PhD program as well. He had had two years of experience writing journal entries to improve his teaching before the present study began.

During the period of this study, he taught English to high school students and wrote journals, focusing on four of the six classes he taught. These classes comprised one class of first-year high school students, two classes of second-year high school students, and one class of third-year high school students. He had begun teaching high school students at a new school and was seeking ways to improve his teaching practice to facilitate his integration into a school type that he had not previously experienced. The main purpose was to promote awareness of students' reactions to newly introduced language tasks and improve his teaching skills.

The Colleague

The colleague majored in education as an undergraduate and immediately enrolled in a TESOL master's program in England. After completing his master's degree, he worked at an integrated junior and senior high school (different from the practitioner's school) for five years. He did not have experience writing journals but was interested in reading the practitioner's journal to support him as a colleague. From the perspective of a teacher-researcher, he wanted to explore how the practitioner could deepen his reflections on his teaching practice and engage in professional development through dialogic journal interaction.

Data Collection

Two data collection methods were employed: journal entries and a verbal reflective discussion on the experiences of dialogic journal interactions. Reflective journals serve as valuable sources of data for self-study research and contribute evidence to scholarly publications. Additionally, they represent a distinct method of generating

knowledge offering a detailed array of insights into personal and professional development (Williams, 2021). The practitioner journaled about his teaching practice using the framework of the ALACT model (Korthagen et al., 2001), once a week from April 2020 to March 2021, excluding long vacations and school events such as exam weeks and school trips. He wrote 28 journal entries during the 35 standardized weeks of a school year in Japan. To promote essential awareness, he chose one lesson to reflect on every week from his perspective and that of his students, focusing on the dimensions of thinking, feeling, wanting, and acting, as proposed by Korthagen (2016). In this practice, he set the goals for the class and his practice, noting the teaching procedures, activities, and self-evaluation in a single lesson plan. He wrote journal entries with an awareness of six perspectives—teacher’s and students’ actions, teacher’s and students’ thoughts, and teacher’s and students’ feelings—mainly based on what he observed in class while teaching.

The practitioner emailed each journal entry to the colleague immediately after its completion. The colleague provided comments on specific words and phrases within the entry and replied to the practitioner within a week. The practitioner responded to most of the colleague’s comments and sent the journal entry with comments back to him the following week, along with a new journal entry. Data in the form of these journal entries and feedback were used to address RQ1.

After all dialogic journal interactions had concluded, the three authors participated in a reflective verbal discussion via Zoom, primarily focusing on RQs 2, 3, and 4. Four discussion questions were prepared by referencing journal entries, as follows.

- 1) How did the practitioner approach his reflection?
- 2) What aspects did the colleague concentrate on when providing feedback?
- 3) What were the practitioner’s feelings and thoughts when he received the feedback?
- 4) How did the practitioner integrate the feedback into his reflection process?

The third author served as the facilitator for this session, posing the discussion questions and elaborating on discussion points that appeared interesting and significant in enriching the exchange between the authors. The discussion, which lasted for approximately two hours, was recorded and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

Feedback comments on journal entries were coded and classified to identify the characteristics of the feedback. First, the second author extracted all feedback comments and parts of the journal entries on which feedback was provided and added them to an Excel file. Second, he conducted trial coding to create a preliminary list of feedback categories. All three authors discussed and refined the names of the feedback categories in the list, following those in Todd et al. (2001) and Wen et al. (2015). Specifically, some feedback categories, such as “suggesting” (Todd et al., 2001), “self-disclosure,” and “encouraging” (Wen et al., 2015), were applied to the feedback categories of this study. All authors reviewed the coding and altered it as necessary to ensure trustworthiness, and finally, the frequencies of all comments were counted.

The discussion transcripts were also analyzed following the six steps of the reflexive thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). First, the main authors familiarized themselves with the data while highlighting interesting lines during the discussion, such as “feedback loop” and “change of students’ thinking.” Second, they generated a list of initial codes, thinking of specific questions, such as “how were the practitioner’s and colleague’s feelings when they exchanged their comments” and “how were the exchanged comments used for their reflection.” Third, the authors collated the codes into potential themes to identify patterns, utilizing mind-maps to think about the relationships among codes, sub-themes, and main themes such as “teacher beliefs” and “awareness building.” Fourth, both reread all the collated extracts for each theme and all the dataset to identify potential new themes. They also reviewed some candidate themes that did not have enough data to be supported and that might be formed into one despite seeming separate. Fifth, the authors

defined and named themes by organizing sub-themes to make stories that each main theme told. Subsequently, they exchanged their analysis and discussed what to modify and delete for the refinement of themes and underwent several rounds of revisions. The analysis during these phases was conducted recursively, meaning that the authors moved back and forth between the stages of analysis to obtain the final findings. The third author checked the themes the first and second authors identified so that the member-checking process promoted the credibility of the study (McKim, 2023). Finally, the first and second authors selected vivid and compelling examples to present the data for producing the report.

FINDINGS

Types of Peer Feedback Provided

A total of 150 feedback comments on the practitioner's journal entries were provided. The colleague's comments were categorized into eight feedback types. The following section provides an overview of the eight feedback types and the number of comments extracted from the practitioner's journal entries.

(1) Asking for clarification of the content (26 feedback comments)

This type of feedback required the practitioner to elaborate on statements that appeared unclear. It aimed to understand the content of his practice.

Example 1: "Did your students use Japanese to express their opinions?" (fourth journal entry)

(2) Asking for clarification regarding students' behavior and behavioral changes (22 feedback comments)

This type of comment allowed the practitioner to clarify changes in his students' behaviors in class.

Example 2: "How did your students respond to the feedback

sheet?” (second journal entry)

- (3) Asking for clarification based on the colleague’s teaching interests (13 feedback comments)

This feedback asked the practitioner to describe the teaching methods and activities in which the colleague was interested.

Example 3: “What criteria did you establish when the students were guided to assess their classmates’ presentations?” (seventh journal entry)

- (4) Asking for clarification from the researcher’s perspective (7 feedback comments)

This type of feedback intended to shed light on the practitioner’s teacher beliefs and cognition through teaching and reflection, reflecting the colleague’s research interest in his professional development.

Example 4: “What enabled you to recognize the importance of listeners in presentations?” (seventh journal entry)

- (5) Suggesting (11 feedback comments)

The colleague offered practical advice for the practitioner’s teaching and reflection based on the colleague’s teaching experience. The intent of this type of feedback is not to coerce the practitioner to accept the colleague’s suggestions but rather to offer another perspective and allow him to decide whether to adopt it.

Example 5: “Analyzing and classifying your students’ comments on their reflection sheets would be beneficial.” (27th journal entry)

- (6) Giving opinions (38 feedback comments)

This type of feedback conveyed a wide range of the colleague's viewpoints except "suggesting"; the colleague's opinions, acceptance, and impression of the practitioner's journal entries promoted dialogic interaction.

Example 6: "I agree with your idea that even junior high school students need to practice scanning and skimming as reading skills." (third journal entry)

(7) Self-disclosure (15 feedback comments)

The colleague intended to show empathy or share concerns by referring to his own teaching practice, experience, and work environment.

Example 7: "As long as students maintain social distancing in our school, they are allowed to do pair work during English classes." (first journal entry)

(8) Encouraging (18 feedback comments)

The colleague attempted to encourage the practitioner to write journals regularly by affirming and applauding his ideas and teaching practice.

Example 8: "Brilliant! Your students made efforts to practice and were successful in debate activities." (27th journal entry)

The most frequent comments (68 in total) were in the category of asking for clarification. The second most frequent ones belonged to the category of giving opinions (38 feedback comments), followed by encouraging comments (18 feedback comments). In alignment with Todd et al.'s (2001) classification, the feedback provided in this study ranged from affirming to suggesting, with "asking for clarification" and "giving opinions" being the most prevalent and impactful, echoing the dynamic nature of feedback discussed in the literature. Notably, the use of "questioning" was intentionally promoted during the peer feedback process to foster reflective practice, reflection, and

reflexivity in the practitioner, rather than merely reacting by offering feedback or opinions. This emphasis on questioning aligns with the goal of deepening the practitioner's self-examination and enhancing the quality of reflection. Self-disclosing comments (15 feedback comments) were unique because they did not appear among the comments made by a teacher-educator in a previous study (Takagi et al., 2023).

Intention of the Peer Feedback

To answer RQ2, which discusses the intentions behind peer feedback, the reflexive thematic analysis identified three themes: promoting reflection on the practitioner's teaching practice, exploring the practitioner's teaching practice (and thus increasing understanding), and encouraging journal writing. This section presents the results by citing data from the discussion and journal entries.

Promoting Reflection on the Practitioner's Teaching Practice

Throughout this dialogic journal interaction, the colleague made a prolonged attempt to encourage the practitioner to reflect on his teaching practice deeply. In the discussion, he stated: "I placed the utmost importance on encouraging the practitioner to deliberate on his teaching practice. As a colleague, I wanted to help him by offering a different perspective." (Discussion, 4:42)

While offering feedback classified as "asking for clarification from the researcher's perspective," the colleague aimed to explore the practitioner's beliefs and cognition regarding his English teaching skills in his statements, as his teaching practice seemed to be influenced by his beliefs related to his experience as an English learner or teacher. By shedding light on this aspect, the colleague believed that the practitioner might have unconsciously realized his teacher beliefs, which would have affected his English teaching. Therefore, the colleague first attempted to clarify the abstract and unclear sections in the practitioner's journals by providing comments.

The practitioner's statement: "I encouraged my students to

develop the habit of studying English and spend more time doing this activity.”

The colleague’s comment: “Could you explain what you conveyed to your students in more detail?” (fifth journal entry)

As the above dialogue indicates, the colleague wanted to understand what the practitioner meant by using “the habit of studying English.” He also intended to ascertain the link between the practitioner’s beliefs and teaching practice through these dialogic journal interactions.

The practitioner’s statement: “For my students to be able to summarize my lessons in the future, I wanted them to seek and gain information other than what is included in their English textbook.”

The colleague’s comment: “When did you begin to raise students’ awareness of seeking information outside their textbooks? I would like to know more about the events and catalysts that led you to think this way.”

The practitioner’s response: “When I was a postgraduate student in the UK, I realized that individuals whose knowledge was derived from textbooks would not be able to enhance their creativity. I believe that students who obtain information from external sources other than textbooks can survive in this volatile and complex world.” (fourth journal entry)

By asking questions about the practitioner’s statements, the colleague enabled him to recall his study-abroad experience and describe why gaining information from sources other than textbooks was crucial for his students. As the practitioner elaborated, his experience as a postgraduate student in the UK had a noticeable effect on his teaching activities and instruction. This interaction demonstrates that the colleague was able to identify the link between the practitioner’s beliefs and teaching practice.

Exploring the Practitioner's Teaching Practice

During the discussion, the colleague mentioned the importance of asking for clarification regarding students' behaviors and behavioral changes as a type of feedback. He believed that English teachers had valuable opportunities to monitor their students' achievements. During the discussion, he commented: "In particular, many teachers can grasp their students' behavioral changes during classes because they closely work with their students and can easily observe their growth." (Discussion, 43:01)

The colleague also believed that teachers have certain expectations regarding their students' career aspirations and how they learn English in class. Thus, when teachers implement teaching activities in class, the colleague presumes that students' behavior and behavioral changes can be a clear standard for determining whether the teaching is useful and offers teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching, as shown in the statement below. This idea may reflect the colleague's beliefs as an English teacher and practitioner, given his experience, as he stated during the discussion: "Students' behavior and changes in their behavior in classes are the most valuable and immediate feedback that teachers can receive." (Discussion, 43:16)

In addition to encouraging the practitioner to deeply reflect on his teaching practice, the colleague attempted to learn about the practitioner's teaching through dialogic journal interactions. Based on his interests, the colleague used comments categorized as "asking for clarification based on the colleague's teaching interest" to ask the practitioner to elaborate on his teaching practice. The practitioner implemented an activity to enhance students' scanning skills. In this activity, the definitions of some new English words were provided on a worksheet, and students were required to find the words in the text that matched these definitions. The colleague was intrigued by this activity and offered a comment to gain more information: "This activity is interesting. How many new words did you select for the students to match with the definition?" (16th journal entry)

The practitioner's response to this comment inspired the colleague to implement the activity in his own class. During the discussion, he mentioned: "Since his response to my feedback enabled me to

imagine a more concrete way to introduce the activity, I implemented the same in my class. In this case, I applied the learning from his journal entries to my class.” (Discussion, 21:34)

Although the colleague prioritized encouraging the practitioner’s reflections, he also attempted to learn from the practitioner’s practice to promote his own professional development. He asked questions about the practitioner’s ideas on activities such as assessments and debates.

Encouragement for Journal Writing

As part of promoting the practitioner’s reflections, the colleague tried to encourage him to regularly write in his journals by providing positive comments. Since the colleague was aware of how occupied the practitioner was as a high school teacher, he was fascinated by the practitioner’s practice. He mentioned during the discussion: “The practitioner is brilliant because he is consistent with his journaling. This may be something I am unable to do. Therefore, I wanted to help him continue this practice by sharing my feedback and appreciating his efforts.” (Discussion, 13:40)

The colleague believed that encouraging and self-disclosing comments played a crucial role in the practitioner’s reflective practices.

Useful Feedback for Promoting the Practitioner’s Reflection

RQ3 explores useful feedback comments to promote the practitioners’ reflection. Two main themes were identified to address this question: improving teaching practice and obtaining colleagues’ perspectives to observe students’ reactions and production.

Improving Teaching Practice

The practitioner found the colleague’s comments useful in improving his teaching practice. He considered task implementation essential for providing students with opportunities to express their opinions. Therefore, he conducted a presentation task in class, but observed a lack of awareness of the task evaluation through the

dialogic journal interaction, as the following excerpt shows:

The colleague's comment: "How were the evaluation items presented to the students? Did you use rubrics?" (The comment was classified as [3] "Asking for clarification based on the colleague's teaching interests.")

The practitioner's response: "I referred to an English textbook to select the evaluation items." (seventh journal entry)

The practitioner was less interested in the evaluation items than in the tasks implemented. He explained the reasons during the discussion.

Regarding student evaluations, I did not want to create the evaluation items. I preferred to borrow them from textbooks. The evaluation criteria that I independently develop may not be valid, and I may end up creating arbitrary evaluation items. (Discussion, 1:01:06)

However, he reconsidered the role of evaluation after receiving the following comments on his journal:

The colleague's comment: "What specific items did you ask the students to evaluate in the peer evaluation other than the presenter's structure and eye contact?" (The comment was classified as [3] "Asking for clarification based on the colleague's teaching interests.") (17th journal entry)

The practitioner introduced two new items for peer evaluation in a subsequent lesson: (1) the presenter can provide content obtained from sources other than the textbook, and (2) the presenter can respond to questions from the audience. He learned that his teaching practices related to task implementation and evaluation were closely linked. These items were also related to his teacher belief, which was highlighted through a dialogue, as shown in the section "Promoting Reflection on the Practitioner's Teaching."

Obtaining a Colleague's Perspective to Observe Students' Reactions and Production

The practitioner introduced a feedback sheet in which an assistant language teacher (ALT) highlighted the students' mistakes to allow them to independently correct them. The colleague was keen to know the students' reactions to this task. However, the practitioner relied on the ALT, who provided students with corrective feedback. He did not carefully observe these mistakes.

The colleague's comment: "How did your students react when you used the feedback sheet? Many students who are not good at English do not know how to fix their mistakes." (The comment was classified as [2] "Asking for clarification regarding students' changed behavior" and [7] "Self-disclosure.")

The practitioner's response: "If the students are unsure of how to fix their mistakes, the ALT will teach them how to do so." (second journal entry)

In a subsequent class, the practitioner introduced a sheet on which students wrote a question while listening to their classmates' presentations. The colleague inquired about the students' reactions to the activity and the practitioner shared that he had not checked the questions that the students had written on the sheets.

The colleague's comment: "Did any of your students struggle to formulate the question? I conducted a news journal activity in which I asked the students to ask questions about the journal. I learned that their question-making skills were weak." (The feedback was classified as [2] "Asking for clarification regarding students' changed behavior" and [7] "Self-disclosure.")

The practitioner's response: "I did not examine their sheets in detail. However, I got the impression that many students are not accustomed to framing questions." (15th journal entry)

In both cases, the colleague's comments included questions about

the practitioner's teaching practice and self-disclosure regarding his students' behavior. The colleague's questions enabled the practitioner to acknowledge the need to observe the students' reactions. His honest self-disclosure encouraged the practitioner to check students' production during and after the implementation of the new language tasks. As a result, in a peer review task in a subsequent lesson, the practitioner meticulously observed his students. The following reply shows that the practitioner had made more careful observations of his students than before.

The colleague's comment: "What type of comments did the students receive? In my class, when I conducted a peer-review activity, superficial comments, such as 'good' and 'excellent', were provided. Thus, I encouraged the students to provide useful comments." (The comment was classified as [3] "Asking for clarification based on the colleague's teaching interests" and [7] "Self-disclosure.")

The practitioner's response: "Regarding the comments, the students mentioned the aspects of the content of the presentation that impressed them and the ease with which they understood the presentation because of the use of charts and graphs." (20th journal entry)

In summary, the colleague's feedback comments, including his questions and self-disclosures, helped the practitioner to reflect on his teaching practice and view it from a different perspective. His teaching practice improved by responding to the colleague's questions about the language activity and students' reactions to it and by becoming familiar with another case of teaching practice that was related to language activity.

Meaning of Dialogue Through a Reflection Journal for the Practitioner

RQ4 addresses the meaning of dialogic journal interactions for the practitioner. Accordingly, regular dialogues through journal entries allowed the practitioner to confirm his teacher beliefs. Moreover, he gained awareness of the value of incorporating another colleague's

practices into his own teaching practice.

Confirming Teacher Beliefs

Through dialogic interaction via a reflective journal, the practitioner considered why he implemented the language tasks in class. He said: “When I reflected on the tasks, I was unable to determine the reason why I created and implemented them. It was difficult for me to examine my way of thinking without the colleague’s feedback.”

He learned that one of his teacher beliefs was that students’ learning should go beyond textbooks. During the discussion, the practitioner mentioned examples of students’ presentations in which they needed to demonstrate what they had learned in English lessons. Referring to an impressive student, whom he called the “first penguin,” he said:

One student did an excellent job of presenting her research in English. Since she was the first presenter, the other students were able to gain an idea of what a good presentation entails, which set a high standard for the subsequent presentations. This student embodied the spirit of the first penguin, who is the first one to bravely jump into the sea in search of food despite the risk of encountering predators. I was extremely inspired by her, as she had the courage to present first. (Discussion, 1:36:21)

The colleague expressed his empathy for the first penguin mentioned in the journal. The dialogue encouraged the practitioner to inspire his students who wanted to conduct their research using only their textbook as the material. As this example shows, the practitioner had the opportunity to confirm his teacher beliefs through dialogic journal interactions with the colleague. The practitioner challenged his students to gain information from not only the textbook but also external sources to present it to their classmates. He valued the student who took up this challenge and referred to her as the first penguin. The colleague empathized with the practitioner’s teacher beliefs and was inspired by them.

Being Aware of the Value of Incorporating Peer Feedback

During the process of regular dialogic journal interaction, the colleague disclosed his teaching practice in certain instances (see the colleague's comments in the second and 20th journal entries in the section "Obtaining a Colleague's Perspective to Observe the Students' Reactions and Production.") The colleague talked about his teacher-training experience as follows:

The colleague's comment: "I am currently taking an e-learning course sponsored by the U.S. Embassy, and I am reminded of the importance of reflection." (eighth journal entry, classified as [7] "Self-disclosure.")

The colleague's comment: "After taking an online course sponsored by the U.S. Department of State during the summer, I felt that presenting the evaluation criteria using rubrics is a good option." (18th journal entry, classified as [7] "Self-disclosure.")

The colleague provided the practitioner with several comments on becoming more aware of his teaching practice, especially during the evaluation. The colleague often commented on the evaluation because he had completed a teacher-training course that addressed evaluation issues. The colleague's feedback, the comments made by the students in the colleague's classroom, and information from the teacher training encouraged the practitioner, who incorporated the feedback from dialogic journal interactions into his teaching practice. Consequently, the practitioner gained an understanding of the issues that he was previously unaware of and further improved his teaching practice.

DISCUSSION

After reflecting on the data retrieved from journals and discussions, it is evident that dialogic journal interaction serves as an important tool not only for improving teaching practice but also for forming critical friendships. Consistent with the findings of Wen et al.

(2015), our analysis reveals that the most effective feedback is not merely corrective but exploratory, prompting teachers to reflect deeply on their practice and consider alternative approaches. Our results further support Farrell (2015) in that engaging in regular reflective dialogue, as facilitated by peer feedback, significantly enhances the reflective capacity of practitioners, an essential component of professional growth in education. Although the practitioner and the colleague were on good terms before the dialogic journal interaction, they had few opportunities to share their teaching practice with each other.

However, over a year, they were able to understand each other's practices and teacher beliefs and gradually developed a critical friendship as practitioners and colleagues, which resulted in mutual professional development (Farrell, 2001). For example, the practitioner gained insights into his task evaluation while the colleague enhanced his understanding of the practitioner's teaching practice, as seen from the colleague's teacher beliefs. The colleague believed that English teachers should monitor their students' achievements and that changes in student behavior can be a clear standard for determining whether the teaching is useful. His teacher beliefs led to his comments focused on the issues of task evaluation and students' reactions. These comments motivated the practitioner to reflect on his teaching practice and contributed to improving his teaching skills through regular dialogic journal interactions, indicating that the colleague played the role of critical friend. Supporting Liu's (2015) assertion, our study demonstrates that critical reflection leads to transformative learning, as the practitioner engaged in a reflective dialogue and was able to identify and address underlying biases that affected his teaching effectiveness.

Moreover, reflective journal interactions with colleagues encourage practitioners to continue writing journals and understand their teacher beliefs relative to their colleagues. Farrell (2015) reported that peer feedback allows practitioners to reflect on their teaching practice from a different perspective and solve issues they face by questioning their personal beliefs. It is difficult for teachers in Japan to understand their own and colleagues' teacher beliefs because they do not usually spend time giving their colleagues suggestions and

encouraging their classroom practices, much less undertaking a mentor–mentee relationship. However, in this dialogic practice, the practitioner and the colleague succeeded in forming an equal relationship, sharing feedback and suggestions based on mutual respect and their teacher beliefs. The practitioner was encouraged to improve his teaching through the colleague’s disclosure of his teaching and teacher-training experience. His self-disclosure facilitated the practitioner to incorporate the colleague’s knowledge and experiences into his own teaching practice. According to Charteris and Smardon (2014), opportunities for interactive peer feedback can lead to teacher growth in terms of learning together and building knowledge.

The study findings indicate that language teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their practice by interacting with colleagues in or outside school such that they can gain novel insights, ask questions, and develop a sense of collaboration to deepen their reflection. Writing, sharing, and reflecting on teachers’ classroom practices seems to be an intricate process of acquiring expertise and an effective mechanism for exploring various situations. Dialogic journal interaction with colleagues appears to be a powerful tool for language teachers to evaluate their classroom experiences. Writing journals and receiving regular feedback on them can help teachers clarify their teaching practice, explore their beliefs, and monitor their practices (Farrell, 2007; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). Dialogic journal interactions with peers play an important role in developing critical and equal relationships for mutual professional development. Gadsby (2022) has found that reflective journals contribute to a broader awareness of teaching practices. Similarly, our study observed that teachers who systematically reflected on their experiences, especially when prompted by peer feedback, gained insights that significantly contributed to their professional growth.

Future research might consider exploring whether differences in feedback exist between colleagues from the same and different schools. Conducting further research on the advantages and challenges of two educators who regularly write journals, exchange them, and share feedback with each other could yield valuable insights. However, the study has a few limitations. Time constraints

may have influenced the depth and frequency of dialogic interactions between the educators. Additionally, different teaching philosophies and biases toward preferences or choices of lesson contents written in journals may have affected the nature and effectiveness of the feedback exchanged. Resistance to feedback, whether due to personal or institutional factors, could have impacted the extent to which educators engaged in reflective practices. Furthermore, the type of comments or questions offered to the practitioner would certainly impact the level of openness and transparency that a teacher can offer. Creating an environment based on complete trust and ethical concerns where one can allow their vulnerability and weaknesses demands a lot of work. Therefore, future studies should aim to address these limitations and explore the effectiveness of dialogic journal interactions across diverse settings and cultural backgrounds to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its implications for professional development in language teaching.

CONCLUSION

The practitioner had a personal motivation to improve his lessons in high school, while the colleague, as a teacher-researcher, had a professional motivation to develop his insights as a prospective pre-service teacher educator. This dialogic journal interaction not only helped the practitioner reflect and improve his daily lessons but also enabled the colleague to analyze what the practitioner felt and thought during the daily lessons. These different motivations might have allowed them to continue with a one-year-long journal interaction. Through the interactive process, they realized the importance of cultivating teacher beliefs linked to the educational principle; it led to the awareness of the critical moments that teachers tend to overlook without any journal interaction. We conclude that the dialogic journal interaction allowed them to experience precious moments of looking back on what they considered valuable as a teacher and teacher-educator. It is hoped that this research will serve as a valuable reference for English teachers who aspire to incorporate dialogic journal interaction in their practice.

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