

# THE JOURNEY TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE:

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A Case Study of the Reflective Process of Six  
Japanese EFL Teachers During a Professional  
Development Programme in Canada

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## **ABSTRACT**

Many researchers claim that reflective practice is an integral component of professional development and a necessary component for the development of professional competence, which involves both dispositional competencies (knowledge or awareness of) and capacity competencies (the skills and attitudes required to make reasoned judgments about professional practice). The lack of such reflective practice has been identified as an underlying reason why many teachers have difficulty applying formal learning in their classrooms post-training.

This qualitative research study examined the impact of introducing a reflective process into a 2007 Canadian teacher education programme for six Japanese secondary English as a foreign language teachers (EFL). It was hypothesized that introducing a reflective process around a contextually-based research project (also known as the Professional Development Dossier or PDD) would be instrumental in helping to bridge the theory practice gap so common in similar programmes. Data sources included reflective worksheets, classroom observation records, practice teaching summaries, research essays, and one-on-one pre and post-training programme interviews.

The results of this case study analysis indicate that the PDD research process was instrumental in developing the teachers' knowledge of required second language teaching methodologies such as Communicative Language Teaching and raised their awareness of the important role teachers plays in creating a classroom environment that is conducive to learning (dispositional competencies). However, it was the reflective process supporting the research process that assisted the teachers in understanding how to apply this knowledge in their individual teaching contexts.

The reflective process promoted the development of reasoned judgments regarding the teaching theories, activities, and teaching practices best suited to their specific teaching challenges. This experience provided the Japanese English teachers with the skills needed to create a more

balanced English language programme for their Japanese students (capacity competencies). The findings from this study suggest that teacher education programmes which include a contextually based research project that is supported by critical reflection, classroom observation, mentoring, and practice teaching can be instrumental in helping to bridge the theory-practice gap. This study also suggests that a longitudinal approach to research is needed to more clearly understand the interaction between teacher education and teaching context.

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# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

## *1.0 GLOBAL CONTEXT*

As a result of rapid advances in technology over the last several decades, our world is changing at a rate that is incomparable to any time in the past. These changes are having an impact on every aspect of our society from business to education (Crystal, 1997). Many factors such as the increasing demand for international trade, the economic dominance of English-speaking countries like the UK, the United States, and Canada, the strong influence of information technology and the Internet, have resulted in “English becoming the world’s most taught learned, and used second or foreign language” (Govardhan, Nayar, and Sheorey, 1999: p. 114; Warschauer, 2000).

The globalization of the world has resulted in an increasing use of English as a means of communication. It is estimated that up to 300 million people speak English as a second language (for communication with native speakers of English) and that as many as one billion people speak it as a foreign language (for communication with other non-native speakers of English) (Ito, 2002). Many international organizations have adopted English as their official language of communication and for other major international corporations such as Microsoft, IBM, Price Waterhouse Cooper, and A.P. Moller-Maersk it has become the daily working language, regardless of their location in the world.

Given the prominent use of English in so many areas, there has in recent years been an increasing demand for English language learning worldwide. In order to maintain their competitiveness, governments in many countries have begun implementing changes in their second language education programmes in order to produce a new generation of citizens who can communicate more fluently and effectively in English (Gorsuch, 2000; Ito, 2002, Law, 1995; Medgyes, 1994; Nolasco and Arthur, 1986; Tsui and Bunton, 2000; Warschauer, 2000). In countries such as Japan, there has even been discussion around making English the second official language

(Kawai, 2007). Such discussion has increased the demand for, and implementation of, more experiential or communicative language teaching (CLT)<sup>1</sup> practices in areas of the world that have traditionally emphasized an analytic approach<sup>2</sup> to language teaching and learning (Medgyes, 1994; Stern, 1992). As a result, there has been a swell in the number of teacher education programmes available for English as a foreign Language (EFL) teachers, especially in places such the UK, Canada and the United States. However, some feel that these programmes are not necessarily well-suited for teachers who plan to teach in countries where English is not the main language of communication outside the classroom because they do not adequately consider the unique requirements of those teaching contexts (Cook, 2009a; Govardshan, Nayar, and Sheorey, 1999).

### ***1.1 TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE***

Teaching English in a foreign language (EFL) context is very different from teaching in countries where English is the national language. The EFL teachers' ability to do their job well will depend on many factors, including their proficiency in English, their overall knowledge of teaching methodology, and their ability to adapt their teaching skills to meet the demands of both their students and the educational policy requirements in current English language teaching techniques and methods (Medgyes, 1994). While this situation is changing as more teacher education takes place, many teachers in EFL contexts such as Japan start their teaching careers with little preparation, which leaves them unable to meet the varied demands of teaching in this particular context (Cook, 2009a; Cook, 2009b; Laimie, 2004; Manabu, 1992; Yonesaka, 1999).

The teaching situation in EFL contexts is often challenging due to overwhelmingly large class sizes (40 plus students), lack of authentic teaching materials and audiovisual equipment, board

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<sup>1</sup> In CLT, the primary focus of classroom activities is on using language for “meaningful interaction and for accomplishing tasks, rather than learning rules” (Lightbown and Spada, 2000: 40). Meaning and communication are emphasized over accuracy.

<sup>2</sup> The analytic approach is characterized by a focus on the various aspects of language such as grammar, lexicon, and discourse. It usually involves practice and rehearsal with attention to accuracy be key (Stern, 1992).

mandated teaching texts, pressure to conform with other colleagues regarding specific curriculum resources such as textbooks, the teachers' lack of proficiency in English, and the daunting influence of grammar-based testing at the university or high school level (Cook, 2009a; Cook, 2009b; Govardhan, Nayar, Sheorey, 1999; Li, 1998; Reed, 2002). In fact, it has been suggested that the influence of grammar-based university entrance exams on current teaching practices is one of the most significant barriers to promoting communicative based teaching in many Asian countries (Brown and Yamashita, 1995; Kwon, 1999; Law, 1995; Lundy, 2003; Reed, 2002). In countries such as Japan and Korea, a student's performance on such exams has been considered to be one of the major factors in determining his or her future success and overall standing in society (Gorsuch, 2000; Kwon, 1999). As most of these tests do not include an oral/aural component, the students and their parents tend to view CLT activities as a waste of the students' time because they do not prepare them for the extensive form-focused exams required in these contexts.

This is a very important issue to be considered in teacher education for EFL teachers because the opinion of students regarding acceptable teaching methodologies can have a major impact on a teacher's approach to language instruction, especially in more collectivist Asian societies such as Japan (Cook, 2009a). A study by Kawakimi (1993) examined several factors that influenced English education in Japan. Not surprisingly, she found that university entrance exams had an extremely negative influence on high-school teachers' willingness to use communicative activities in their classrooms. Gorsuch (2000), who measured teachers' perceptions of CLT several years after government education reforms were implemented to promote more English communication in Japanese English language classrooms, found similar results. In a recent study conducted by Cook (2009b), it was found that the negative influence of grammar-based university entrance exams continues to be a challenge for teachers in Academic High Schools, despite many years of curriculum reform in Japan.

The impact of grammar-based testing is not limited to the Japanese context; countries such as Korea have also experienced the negative influence of these tests on their attempts to create more communicatively based classrooms (Kwon, 1999). Gorsuch suggests that one of the main reasons teachers in countries such as Japan and Korea shy away from CLT practices is that “teachers who conduct classroom activities that run counter to students’ expectations risk non-cooperation from their students” (2000: p. 685). Cook (2009b) suggests that pressure from peers in collectivist societies like Japan is also a major factor, especially at the high school level where schools are often rated on the success they have had in preparing students for acceptance at the main universities in Japan or elsewhere. Finally, CLT can also “put a heavy linguistic strain” (Medgyes, 1986: 112) on the non-native speaking teachers, who may already feel insecure about their own English proficiency. As a result of these contextual factors, many non-native speaking teachers in Japan tend to emphasize a more analytical approach to teaching, even where governmental policies stress a desire for more communication (Brown and Yamashita, 1995; Cook, 2009b; Gorsuch, 2000; Li, 1998).

## ***1.2 IMPROVING LANGUAGE TEACHING IN JAPAN***

Despite the challenges inherent in teaching in an EFL context, educational policy makers in countries such as Japan believe that it is possible to change the current language teaching situation in Asia so that it can be more reflective of the types of communicative programmes found in most English speaking countries (MEXT, 2003). Although many reforms will be necessary, professional development programmes for current junior-high and high school teachers are expected to play an instrumental role in reforming the predominately non-native speaking EFL teacher’s ability and willingness to implement a more communicative approach (Lamie, 2004; Richards, 1998; MEXT, 2003; Murdoch, 1994; Parish and Brown, 1988). This will be especially important as the Japanese

Ministry of Education makes attempts to introduce more immersion or intensive level English language training programmes for their high school students (Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008).

Because so many non-native speaking teachers were themselves taught English through the traditional grammar translation method, it is not unreasonable for them to continue to teach their own students in the same way. If these teachers are expected to promote a more communicative approach in their own classes, they will have to be educated to do so (Li, 1998). While this will mean improving both their personal speaking abilities and knowledge of teaching methodology (Medgyes, 1994; Yonasaka, 1999; Yashimi and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008), it will also be necessary to develop teacher education programmes that will be instrumental in helping non-native speaking (NNS) teachers to better understand their own views and beliefs about the usefulness of various types of teaching methods for their specific contexts, in order for them to appropriately transform their teaching. One approach to doing so is to immerse teachers in programmes that reflect a more student-centered approach to learning so the teachers can experience the benefits of this type of education first hand (Britten, 1988; Richards and Nunan, 1990, Richards, 1998; Schön, 1983, 1987; Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008).

Many Asian governments have spent large sums of money sending their teachers on in-service teacher education programmes in English speaking countries such as the UK, Australia, Canada and the United States in order to immerse their teachers in an English speaking culture. By doing so, they hope that the teachers will acquire a more positive understanding and attitude towards utilizing the more communicative language teaching methodologies being slowly implemented in non-English speaking countries around the world. This is especially true for countries such as Japan that are in the process of reforming their language teaching curriculum. As the Japanese strive to become a more competitive force in the global market place, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has developed a strategic plan “to cultivate Japanese with English

abilities” (MEXT, 2003). The plan is fairly comprehensive and includes the development of a revised “Course of Study” (MEXT, 2003: p. 4) that outlines new communicative requirements for all Japanese junior high and high schools students. As part of the overall plan to reform language learning in Japan, the Ministry plans to:

- improve the current teaching methods and teaching materials;
- increase the motivation for students to learn English by offering more scholarships to study abroad;
- increase students’ opportunities to have contact with English speakers in the community;
- improve entrance examinations into universities so that they reflect oral/aural skills as well as reading and writing skills;
- promote and support those universities that develop/implement exceptional English education curricula and which offer subject courses in English;
- increase the English proficiency requirements for new teachers;
- improve the speaking and teaching skills of current Japanese English teachers at all levels through intensive training programmes at home and abroad (MEXT, 2003, P4).

As the professional development of Japanese English teachers is expected to play a major role in this process, the Ministry has sent hundreds of junior high and high school teachers abroad to participate in either a two-month, six-month or, one-year in-service programme. The main objectives of these professional development programmes are to “foster English teachers with advanced English and teaching abilities and to improve the motivation of teachers” to become English language mentors to their students and peers (MEXT, 2003: p. 7).

The components of such programmes are outlined by MEXT, with the main requirements being instruction of language teaching theory (with an emphasis on communicative language teaching), observation of teaching in local schools, and completion of an individual research project. However, the actual structure and execution of these various components is decided upon by those designing and administering the programmes. Universities are chosen to host the various in-service programmes through an annual competition organized by MEXT.

The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the impact of implementing a reflective process (which will be described more fully in chapter 2) into a six month in-service teacher education programme for a group of 10 Japanese teachers (junior high and high school level)

during the summer/fall session of 2007 at the University of Ottawa. It was hypothesized that the introduction of a structured reflective process around the individual research projects would be ideal for further developing the professional competence of the Japanese teachers as it would provide an opportunity to both contextualize and personalize the learning experience for these teachers and thus increase the transferability of the learning experiences in the programme to their actual teaching practice, which has proved to be a significant challenge in past programmes.

### ***1.3 THE IMPACT OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES ON JAPANESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE***

Despite the time and resources being devoted to in-service teacher education programmes for foreign language teachers in Japan, little research has been done to examine the type of teacher education that is most effective in relation to MEXT's overall objectives. Those studies that have been conducted have focused on changes in teachers' beliefs as a great deal of research suggests that changing the beliefs of teachers is essential for changes in teaching practice to take place (Richards, 1998). These studies have produced mixed results and Japanese junior high and high school teachers continue to experience difficulties integrating new learning into their Japanese teaching classrooms (Cook, 2009a).

Pacek (1996) surveyed 56 secondary teachers who had previously participated in a one-year teacher education programme in the UK. His study found that while the teachers felt that the programme positively influenced their attitude towards using a more communicative approach in their classrooms, many contextual barriers such as resistance from peers, students and parents, along with the incompatibility between the new approaches and the use of prescribed textbooks, often presented significant challenges when it came to actually implementing new teaching ideas. An understanding of these factors is, therefore, critical in developing programmes that are better matched to the needs of these teachers.

A similar study by Lamie (2001), examined changes in both beliefs and practices of a group of teachers engaged in another UK teacher education programme for Japanese EFL teachers. This study, conducted with four participants and relying on various sources of data including interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations, looked at changes in the Japanese teachers' perceptions of English teaching methodology, their teaching attitudes, and changes in actual teaching practice. The study found that there was an overall shift in both attitude and teaching towards a preference for more communicative based practices, despite the contextual constraints (e.g., grammar-based university entrance exams and large class sizes) faced by these teachers.

Similar to Lamie's (2001) study, a study conducted by Lundy (2003) assessed changes in the beliefs and teaching practices of Japanese EFL teachers following a six-month teacher education programme in Canada. This study used a variety of data sources including pre and post-training questionnaires, journal reflections, and follow-up questionnaires six months after the end of the programme. While all ten teachers in the programme showed an increased preference for communicative based teaching by the end of the session, only five of the teachers continued with the post-training follow-up study. The results of the follow-up questionnaires for these teachers varied. Two of the teachers felt that they were able to make several changes in their actual classrooms such as implementing more communicative based activities and increasing the overall use of English during the class. However, the remaining three did not feel that they were able to implement any significant changes in the short period of time studied. The reasons for this included a feeling of pressure to keep up with teaching peers or to prepare students for the grammar-based test, as well as personal issues such as a pregnancy and a change in teaching position.

However, continued communication between instructors from the Canadian teacher education programme and several of the students in Lundy's (2003) study suggests that for the majority of teachers, this particular programme has a positive effect on their overall attitude towards



communicative teaching practices and that some change in teaching practice does take place, but that time, experience, and personal factors determine how long it takes for individual teachers to successfully implement new ideas into their classrooms.

A study by Kurihara and Samimy (2007), on the impact of a six-month US-based teacher education programme on Japanese teachers' beliefs and practices, reinforced many of the findings in the previous three studies. This study used a variety of questionnaires and interviews both during the programme and several months after the teachers returned to Japan, as well as a careful analysis of a number of written documents such as research reports that were produced during the programme. Interviews and questionnaires with the teachers revealed that the teachers felt the teacher education programme was instrumental in raising their awareness of the use of English as a communicative tool. It increased their confidence in using English in their own classes, and increased their overall confidence as EFL teachers. The teachers said they believed that the teacher education programme had a positive impact on their use of more communicative tools in the classroom, although they did note that it was often difficult to implement these tools for the same reasons indicated by previous studies (i.e. class size, use of textbooks, grammar-based university exams, etc.). One additional finding from this study was that the teachers appeared to have an increased sense of responsibility for reforming English language teaching in Japan by passing on knowledge learned in the teacher-education programme to their peers through meetings and conferences.

Finally, during the fall of 2007 Cook (2009b) studied the post-training impact of a 6 month programme at the University of Ottawa (U of O) in Canada on the teaching approach of five Japanese high school and junior high teachers (who were part of the same participant group for the research study outlined in chapter 4). Cook suggests that one of the main differences between the U of O teacher education programme and other similar programmes was that the U of O "programme planners challenged MEXT's goals and attempted to create a programme they felt was more suited to

Japanese teachers' needs" (Cook, 2009b: p. 103). Similar to Kurihara and Samimy (2007), Cook found that most of the teachers were able to implement a number of theories and practices into their classrooms following the programme, though a few continued to face challenges such as the grammar-focused university entrance exams, ministry mandated textbooks, classroom culture, and pressure to conform with teaching peers. Interestingly, Cook suggested that one of the keys to helping teachers surmount such obstacles was previous training in teacher education. Her study suggests that those who had studied teacher education in university were able to make the most of what they had learned in the U of O programme to address their unique teaching challenges.

As suggested in the studies above, there are various factors that can influence whether or not teachers are able to transfer knowledge gained during such teacher education programmes to their individual teaching contexts. That being said, the structure of the teacher education programme itself appears to also play a major role in preparing them to have the necessary skills needed to implement new practices in their classes when the time and circumstances are right. As the study by Pacek (1996) demonstrated, if the content of a teacher education programme is not well suited to the teachers' contextual teaching needs, then it will not have any long term impact. Unfortunately, this has been the case with many in-service programmes to date.

Wallace (1991) has suggested that one of the main reasons that many of the in-service programmes designed for EFL teachers have failed in their mission to reform teaching is that the majority limit themselves to what he calls an "applied science model", and others such as Schön (1983; 1987) refer to as model of "technical rationality". Typically, this model is a one-way transfer of knowledge whereby "the findings of scientific knowledge and experimentation are conveyed to the trainee [i.e. a teacher in an in-service programme] by those who are experts in the relevant areas ... [and] ... it is up to the trainees to put the conclusions from these scientific findings into practice" (Wallace, 1991: p. 9). As the research studies above suggest, this is often very difficult for teachers to

do, especially when the received knowledge that has come from such programmes is not readily transferable to their individual teaching contexts (Atay, 2008). Many researchers now believe that this may be one of the main reasons why it takes some teachers longer than others to implement changes in their classrooms and why others don't make any changes at all (Atay, 2008; Johansson, Sandberg, and Vuorinen, 2007; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Sowa, 2009).

Building on the key theories of previous researchers such as Dewey (1910) and Schön (1983, 1987) (to be discussed in Chapter 2), Wallace (1991) suggests that implementing a “reflective process” that identifies a teacher's context and previous experience as essential components of the teacher education process, can help bridge the gap between theoretical acquisition of knowledge and actual teaching practice for foreign language teachers, thus making the learning process more immediately relevant and transferable to their teaching context. In fact, reflection is now believed by many to be the key component in developing professional competence (which will be further discussed in Chapter 3) (Attard, 2007; Carr, 1996; Liyanage and Bartlett, 2008; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Schön, 1987; Wallace, 1991). As will also be discussed in the chapter 3, current research has indicated that inquiry or problem-based research of one's own teaching context in community with others can be a very effective approach for stimulating this reflective process (Atay, 2008; Johansson, Sandberg, and Vuorinen, 2007; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004, Sowa, 2009).

#### ***1.4 THE JOURNEY TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE***

As noted earlier, the purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the impact of implementing a reflective process such as that originally framed by Wallace (1991) into an in-service teacher education (professional development) programme for Japanese teachers during the summer/fall session of 2007 at the University of Ottawa. As the Japanese teachers were required by

the Japanese Ministry of Education to conduct individual research projects on specific teaching challenges as part of the in-service programme, wrapping a structured reflective process around the research project provided an ideal opportunity to increase the overall impact of the research projects as well as their experiences in the programme as a whole.

Before presenting Wallace's (1991) model of the "reflective process" in more detail and outlining how this was applied in the 2007 in-service programme at the University of Ottawa, it is important to examine current theory on the role of reflection in professional development to outline in more detail how Wallace's model might be useful for reforming English language teaching in Japan (Chapter 2). This discussion will be followed by an examination of how reflection and professional competence are related, why a professional development model such as the one that Wallace (1991) outlines is essential in any professional practice, the role of inquiry based or action research in promoting both reflection and professional development, and the research questions that structured this research study (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 will give an overview of the methodological approach followed, while Chapters 5 and 6 outline in case study format the reflective process followed by the Japanese teachers of English (JTE) who participated in this study. Finally, Chapters 7 and 8 relate the insights from this study back to the literature and suggests future directions for both professional development and future research studies on this topic.

## CHAPTER 2 - REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: Competing Perspectives

### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

The term ‘reflection’ is commonly used and has, over the last two decades, become one of the most “dominant policy doctrines in teacher education” (Erlandson, 2005, p.1). The main catalyst for the adoption of reflective practices in teaching and teacher education was undoubtedly the publication of Schön’s two books: *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987). These writings were developed in response to what he called “The Crises in Confidence of Professional Education” (Schön, 1987, p. 8). The idea of reflection and its use in education and learning had been espoused much earlier by philosophers such as Dewey (1910); however, it was Schön’s conception of the role of reflection in improving professional practice during a period when there was so much dissatisfaction with professionals, especially in teaching, that made the notion of reflection so easily accepted in professional development programmes.

However, Schön’s notion of reflection has also faced criticism from others who are equally concerned with improving the professional development of educators. At the heart of much of this criticism is a difference in belief as to the role of ‘practice’ versus ‘reflection’ in the making of a competent teacher. This difference in belief is mainly the result of differences in epistemological perspectives held by theorists on either side of the debate. Many of these criticisms have helped to reshape the use of reflection into what is commonly referred to as ‘critical reflective practice’.

Though still referred to frequently in current approaches to reflective practice, Schön’s initial conception of the role of reflection-in-action has been modified significantly. This chapter will first outline the two competing epistemological perspectives on reflection and practice and then follow with an explanation of the evolution of reflective practice in current teacher education programmes.

## **2.1 DEWEY AND REFLECTIVE THOUGHT**

It is clear by the number of references to his work that Dewey's role in articulating the importance and role of reflection in and for learning has certainly been significant. His definition of reflection, "turning thought back on itself" is one of the most common found in the literature on this topic. In his book, *How We Think* (1910), he presents four senses of the word 'thought'.

In the first sense, thinking can mean "everything that goes through our minds" (Dewey, 1910, p. 2). This type of thinking is akin to daydreaming, where the thoughts don't really hold any significance or truth, they are just random ideas. In a second sense of the word, thinking might refer to thoughts which one is conscious of in any way. In this sense of the word, we only think of "things which we do not directly see, hear, smell, or taste" (ibid, p. 1). A third, more restricted meaning of the word 'thought' is "limited to beliefs that rest upon some kind of evidence or testimony" (ibid, p. 1) with little grounds or attempt to support the belief. The fourth sense of the word 'thought' is also based on beliefs, but it differs significantly as there is an attempt or effort made to verify or support the examined beliefs. This "active, persistent and careful considerations of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (ibid, p. 6) is what Dewey calls 'reflective thought'. When day to day activities carry along in a routine manner, one of the first three senses of 'thought' may be invoked depending on the task at hand. However, when one comes across a problematic situation where current presuppositions or actions are halted for some reason and the individual seeks solutions for this problem (from their previous experiences or from newly acquired knowledge), the fourth type of thinking takes place.

In Dewey's opinion, it is this fourth type of thinking, thinking which actively engages the individual in a form of problem solving, that is related to learning. This proposition of reflective 'thought' was the basis for promoting more experiential learning in educational programmes of all types as it was believed that these experiences would provoke more moments of uncertainty in

students, thus forcing them to engage in reflective thought. Dewey outlines five stages or steps that thinking might pass through (suggestions of ideas, identification of problem, presentation of possible solutions, mental elaboration on these solutions, hypothesis testing), though he is quick to say that many of these steps not only happen very quickly, but may even be coalesced or omitted all together. More recently, these five stages have been reduced to three broader categories (returning to experience, attending to feelings, and evaluating experience) by Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985).

## ***2.2 SCHÖN AND THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER***

The various senses of thought outlined above are also present in Schön's theory of the reflective practitioner where he brings reflection "into the centre of an understanding of what professionals do" (Smith, 2001, p. 8) in their everyday lives. In response to the growing concern with the positivist epistemology of 'technical-rationality' of practice, which emphasized technical or formal knowledge as the basis for professional training, Schön presented an alternative constructivist epistemology to explain how professionals engage in practice.

Unlike positivists who believe that there is a reality out there to be discovered (though they differ in their belief about how close one can approximate this truth) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Phillips, 1990), most constructivists believe that reality is something that is constructed in our minds through our experiences and through sharing our beliefs with others (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2000). Some argue that if we believe that knowing something is not a passive activity and that the mind is actively involved in creating knowledge, then we are all constructivists to some degree (Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2000). While there is great debate about the individual versus social nature of knowledge construction amongst those who label themselves constructivists, all constructivists agree that knowledge is not static, it continues to change and be revised as we encounter new learning experiences. The epistemology of constructivism is

therefore, not interested in discovering the truth about our world, but rather with ‘understanding’ and thus the ‘making’ of our world (Goodman, 1978).

The idea of knowledge construction is the underlying epistemology of Schön’s theory of professional competence. For decades, the traditional, positivist perspective of professional competence was the mastery of skills identified through careful, most likely scientific, experimentation and observation. It is true that many daily professional tasks can be dealt with by simply applying these previously taught skills. In fact, many of these activities become so automatic that it is difficult for practitioners to explain why they are doing what they are doing. Schön (1983, 1987) refers to these implicit theories as knowing-in-action. However, Schön (1983; 1987) and others (Atay, 2008; Mezirow, 1991; Osterman, 1998; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Richards and Nunan, 1990) believe that through careful observation and reflection it is possible to describe this ‘tacit knowledge’ (Polanyi, 1967), which Schön calls ‘theories-in-use’ (1983, 1987), though our explanation of these theories will never match exactly what we do.

However, there are many other times during professional practice when a practitioner is faced with a unique or problematic situation that literally stops her, perhaps for only a second as her current theories-in-use don’t apply directly to the new situation. The professional can either respond by ignoring the incident, or she can attempt to address the issue. When the practitioner chooses the latter option, she must apply a different type of competence or thinking, which Schön refers to as ‘professional artistry’ (Schön, 1987), which he suggests is developed through reflection.

According to Schön (1983, 1987), we may use reflection in one of two ways. First, we may actually reflect in the midst of the action without interrupting it. In this type of on-the-spot reflection, our thinking reshapes what we are doing, while we are doing it. He calls this ‘reflection-in-action’. A less academic term might be ‘trial and error’. It is important to note that these trials are not randomly related to one another. Reflection on each attempt and the consequences of the attempt are closely



linked with any subsequent trials. This is a conscious level of thinking where we identify an issue and think critically about it and the process that led us there. This may then result in a restructuring of the strategies we can use to handle this, and other, similar situations. This is very similar to Dewey's (1910) concept of 'reflective thought'. Through this process, we 'construct' a new understanding of our professional world. Similar to Dewey (1910), Schön (1983, 1987) notes that these stages are not necessarily distinct and may happen very quickly, with several stages taking place at the same time, or even being skipped. Like knowing-in-action, it is actually possible for us to go through these stages without being able to articulate exactly how we are doing it, especially for those who are very experienced with the reflective process.

The second type of reflection is 'reflection-on-action', which is a process of thinking back on our actions in order to discover how our knowing-in-action could have contributed to an unexpected outcome. This can be done after the troublesome event or by stopping during our action to think about a problem. In this type of reflection, our reconstructions are not related to present action, but more likely directed to simply understanding what took place. It is also possible that this process of 'understanding' will produce new constructions of our practice that could then be accessed in future situations of uncertainty. If this latter type of reflection is intentionally directed towards dealing with similar future issues that a practitioner knows he will face, then it might be more accurately termed 'reflection-for-action' (Schön, 1983; 1987).

In essence, constructivism is focused on developing theory that is primarily concerned with knowing and understanding. In order for understanding to take place, practitioners must think consciously, become aware of what they are doing and why, and assess how new knowledge and experiences fit in with old knowledge and experiences. This process of thinking will shape the constructions we have about our world. Therefore, reflection is the key to constructing (or even reconstructing) the world as we know it (von Glaserfeld, 2003), which is why it has become such a

popular professional development tool, especially in teacher education programmes (Atay, 2008; Johansson et al, 2007; McGee, and Lawrence, 2009; Mezirow, 1991; Osterman, 1998; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Richards and Nunan, 1990; Sowa, 2009).

### ***2.3 CRITICISMS OF SCHÖN'S MODEL OF THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER***

While Schön's model of reflective practice has been widely adopted, it is not without its criticisms. According to Smith (2001), these criticisms can be grouped into three main categories. In the first case, the distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action has been debated by many. For example, one of Eraut's (2004) main criticisms has to do with the lack of consideration of 'context' in Schön's model. In Schön's (1983, 1987) model, there seems to be little difference between reflection-in-action during a very intense situation where there is little time to respond as action is constantly ongoing and immediate (similar to what teachers face on a daily basis) and situations where the practice is more relaxed and there is plenty of time (maybe even a week or a month) to engage in the reflective process (similar to what an architect or artist might experience). Eraut (2004) calls these two contexts 'hot action' and 'cold action'. While hot action situations are very immediate and almost require an intuitive response, the cold action situations are more akin to understanding the past problem and are similar to what Schön refers to as thinking-on-action (1983, 1987), though there may be moments within this latter process that are distinctly 'hot' and require reflection-in-action as well.

Secondly, it is not clear to what degree the reflective practice affects praxis (Smith, 1994). Schön's model seems to focus more on creating awareness, and less on how it can actually affect day to day practice. It is mainly a 'descriptive concept' (Richardson, 1990, p. 14, cited in Smith, 2001) which is concerned with "the process of framing and the impact of frame-making on situations" (Smith, 2001, p. 10). There is little concern over the manner in which the frame-making might be ill-

suited to ‘good’ professional practice mainly because there is little in Schön’s model that challenges the current values or perspectives one is using to engage in ‘worldmaking’, and so it fails to outline how one might draw upon the repertoires or metaphors of other ways or views of the world.

Third, there is concern about the degree to which Schön has failed to interrogate his own model. According to Smith (2001), Schön appears to have been more interested in the creation of formal knowledge rather than giving some account of his own reflection-in-practice or his reflective practicum. Had he done so, Smith feels (2001) he might have become aware of other significant factors such as the importance of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) ‘situated learning’ theory which has been shown to play a significant role in professional development.

An additional criticism of Schön’s model, which was not identified by Smith (2001), is the notion of reflection-in-action and whether or not such a concept even exists. This criticism comes largely from those who see ‘worldmaking’ from a very different epistemological perspective (Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2000). This view will be discussed in the following section.

## ***2.4 PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE***

According to Schwandt (1994, 2000), phenomenology is part of the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivists, like constructivists, are also concerned with ‘understanding’ the world in which they live, but they place a much larger importance on the lived experiences of the individual within their social world. As with constructivism, interpretivism arose out of dissatisfaction with positivism’s approaches to research and was one of the first naturalistic paradigms to develop. Again, similar to constructivists, interpretivists are not in total agreement about various aspects of their paradigm and there are many factions of which phenomenological interpretation is one (Schwandt, 1994). A phenomenologist’s main concern is with “grasping the intersubjective meanings and symbolizing activities which are constitutive of social life” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 120). This approach does not

attempt to understand the subjective states of individuals. It is more concerned with understanding the “intersubjective character of the world and the complex process by which we come to recognize our own actions and those of fellow actors as meaningful” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 120). In other words, it is concerned with how we interpret our everyday world.

From this epistemological perspective, the concept of reflection-in-action for teachers is debatable. For phenomenologists, it is the actual practice of teaching that creates meaning; people do not examine or reflect on their experiences from the outside and then attach meaning to those. The action and the meaning are bound together in a reflexive relationship (van Manen, 1995). According to van Manen, the “professional practices of educating cannot be properly understood unless we are willing to conceive of practical knowledge and reflective practice quite differently” (1995, p. 1). Van Manen takes issue with the process of thinking outlined by both Dewey (1910) and Schön (1983, 1987). He feels that actual practice plays a much bigger role than either one of them acknowledges because it is practice and our relationship with the phenomenon that creates meaning, not reflection on those phenomena.

In addition, he takes issue with the ‘temporal dimension’ of Schön’s reflective model. For him, there is a very real difference between thinking before, during, and after, which Schön does not sufficiently explore in his own theory. Van Manen questions whether the notion of reflection-in-action, as Schön presents it, is even possible. He suggests that when teachers are so involved in teaching, they do not have time to reflect on what they are doing, where they will go next, why they are doing what they are doing, etc. Van Manen (1995) believes it is essentially impossible to think in this way and teach at the same time and that the dynamic and active characteristics of teaching dictate that teaching is necessarily an ‘unreflective’ process. This does not, as he says, mean that teaching is nothing more than “Dewey’s blind impulsivity or routine habit” (van Manen, 1995, p. 3), but rather an act of “pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact” (van Manen, 1995, p. 8).

This pedagogical tact cannot be taught, but must be developed through experience and practice and requires teachers to develop the following abilities: the sensitivity to interpret how the students in their classes feel and think; the sensitivity to emotions such as shyness or frustration; a sense of standards, limits, and boundaries, that direct them in knowing the appropriate distance they should maintain with individual students; and a moral intuitiveness that allows teachers to sense what is 'right' and 'good' for their students. In van Manen's view, tact "spontaneously emerges as a certain type of active (but ungrounded) confidence in dealing with ever-changing social situations" and appears as a "spontaneous bridge or link between theory and practice, when a direct technical relation is not possible"—as it would be when one (1995, p. 10) is able to apply technically acquired knowledge to specific situations. In this view, it is the experience of practice, and not reflection, which aids teachers in their time of need. While this knowledge cannot be taught, van Manen suggests that engaging in practice with a 'master' teacher can help positively influence its development.

The importance of practice over reflection is echoed by Beckett (1996), though he approaches the issue in a slightly different way. He makes a distinction between 'acting intentionally' and 'intentional action'. In the case of 'acting intentionally' the "action is the outcome of prior deliberation" (ibid, p. 142), or in other words, what the agent intended to do. On the other hand, "if an action appears immediately and spontaneously, it may be regarded as intentional action" (ibid, p. 142) because it is more what the agent finds himself or herself doing, than what he or she intended to do. He further distinguishes that when there are more than a few moments of time within the action episode, there is a greater possibility for intentional action; however, that is often not the case for professionals such as teachers or doctors who are constantly on the spot and must make judgments moment-by-moment, where the main focus is to get the problem solved without any clear idea of how one might do so beforehand. In this case, the practitioner is moving forward, not by reflection, but by

an intentional decision to move on and accomplish what is appropriate for a given context. In this case, the agent is acting intentionally rather than with intentional action. For this reason, Beckett (1996) disagrees with the notion of reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action may be possible when time permits; however, when professionals are engaged in 'hot action', they cannot intentionally direct their actions. Like van Manen (1995), Beckett (1996) also thinks that a teacher's notion of what is 'good' and 'right' for their students is developed by doing or engaging in practice.

This paradigm has also had an influence on teacher education and there is a movement by some to return to a craft-based approach to teacher education where teachers hone their skills by working with an experienced or 'master' teacher. Bartell (2005), Brandt (2006), and Hagger and McIntyre (2006) promote this approach as one possible answer to the dissatisfaction with current teacher education.

## ***2.5 REFLECTION VS PRACTICE***

While there is support for the importance of learning the artistry of teaching from other professionals, there are also some concerns about the theories proposed in the previous section. Based on the arguments presented by van Manen and Beckett, it is difficult to see how their own analysis discounts the notion of reflection-in-action and the importance of reflective practice in general. Both van Manen (1995) and Beckett (1996) criticize the models of reflective thought put forward by Schön and Dewey, yet analysis of their arguments also reveals areas of weakness. Both Schön and Dewey claim that the reflective process can take place very rapidly, and that the capacity to access this artistic ability increases with experience. This is a concept which both van Manen (1995) and Beckett (1996) chose to ignore in their respective discussions of this topic. However, if what Schön (1983; 1987) and Dewey (1910) suggest is true, then this might explain why experienced teachers can move from one activity to the next, without any outward indication that they are facing

difficulty. If this is the case, it may be an increased familiarity with reflection, and not practice in and of itself, that promotes teaching skill.

Secondly, both van Manen and Beckett argue that the teaching classroom is too dynamic and active to permit reflective thought. It is quite troubling to believe that anyone could imagine that teaching is essentially an 'unreflective practice' as Beckett (1995) claims. Neither Schön (1983, 1987) nor Dewey (1910) ever suggested that teachers need to reflect on all of their activities as van Manen (1995) claims. Quite the contrary, both insist that most practice, especially for experienced practitioners, is unproblematic and therefore does not involve reflection. Reflection is only required when teachers run into problems that are not easily solvable by the knowledge and skills they have at their immediate disposal. This sentiment has been echoed by Gimenez (1999) who notes that all teachers reflect, even though it may not be systematically.

In terms of a more personal example, I would like to take a short moment to examine my own teaching journey as an example of how experience and reflection may interact. Given my current level of knowledge and experience, I am more inclined to adopt a constructivist (reflective) perspective on the role of reflection in professional development as I strongly believe that my current actions, both inside and outside the classroom are strongly directed by reflective practice. That being said, when I began my teaching career, I think I probably exemplified more the type of professional practice suggested in the phenomenological model. I was so overwhelmed with the constant demands of the classroom that I often reacted to my situation and let it guide me more than I was able to guide it. I would relate this type of action more to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sense of thinking outlined by Dewey (1910) as I often implemented strategies and ideas (suggested or required in my textbook) that I did not examine closely. This type of thought also seems to characterize the notions of 'intentional action' and 'professional tact' described by Beckett (1996) and van Manen (1995), respectively. However, as I progressed in my teaching career, I found that I was often able to simultaneously reflect on what I was

doing, while I was doing it, probably because the act of ‘doing’ (teaching and classroom management) had become much more automatic and so I had more cognitive space available to dedicate to the act of reflection on those non-automatic tasks. Contrary to the idea suggested by van Manen (1995), that the process of reflecting-in-action left his students feeling unconfident and distracted, it actually made me feel more in control of the situation because I came to realize that in most cases I would be able to use my past knowledge and experiences to help me deal with difficult situations that sometimes arise during teaching. As a result, it made me feel competent and therefore more confident in my abilities. This is similarly true with my other responsibilities such as lesson planning or academic research.

Perhaps this personal scenario explains why novice teachers are more influenced by their immediately lived experiences than teachers with more experience. A study by Joram (2006) suggests that one’s level of experience has a great deal to do with the epistemological perspective that teachers have in regard to the use of research in educational practice. Joram found that novice teachers were much more interested in learning ‘how’ to teach and therefore more interested in acquiring knowledge and experiences that were directly transferable into classroom teaching skills and strategies. However, experienced teachers were more interested in discovering the ‘why’ of teaching and thus research began to have more relevance for their own practice. If this change in epistemological perspective toward technical knowledge results from experience, then it is very plausible that the importance of practice might also be affected in the same way.

Finally, there are concerns with the concept of ‘good’ and ‘right’ as suggested by both authors. While it is commonly believed that the idea that ‘good’ and ‘right’ are context specific, it is difficult to believe that teachers automatically learn these virtues from teaching (van Manen, 1995; Beckett, 1996). What happens when a teacher’s unchallenged actions lead her to perceive her approach as being ‘right’ and/or ‘good’ when that is not the same perspective of others (fellow teachers, administrators, students)?



This is an area where Schön's model also fails. In the various theories outlined above, the practitioner is constantly looking within themselves and their own beliefs for solutions to their problems. This is a very limiting approach as it might be difficult for teachers to even be aware of when there are problems with their own teaching or when their actions don't match what it is they think they do as their theories-in-action are often so automatic and deeply imbedded that they are not easy to observe.

## ***2.6 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE***

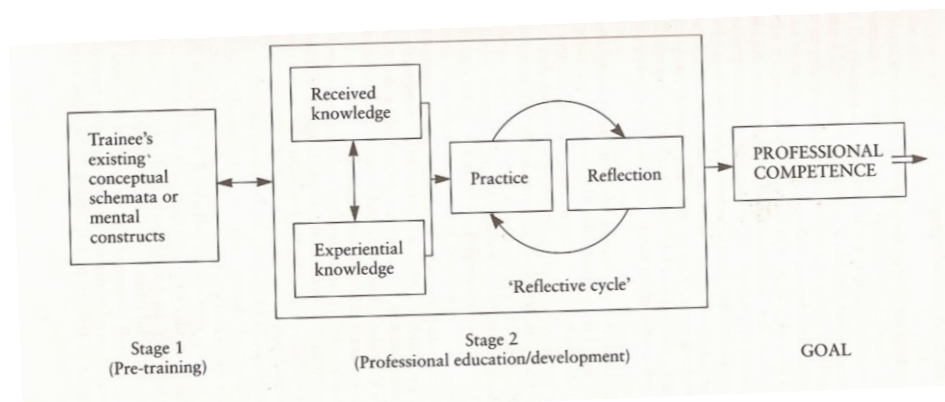
Because the past has shown that experience alone does not always produce teaching that is 'good' or 'right' as defined by our individual teaching contexts, many concerned with improving professional development programmes (England, 1998; Eraut, 2004; Lamie, 2004; Markee, 1997; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1998; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1990; Richards 1998, Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Wallace, 1991; and Yost, Sentner, and Forlenza-Bailey, 2000) insist there is a very real need for teachers to re-examine their individual practices more critically. This can be done by bringing others into the learning process, such as a mentor or a community of practice (Atay, 2008; Adey et al, 2004; Gimenez, 1999; Hoekje, 1999; Johansson et al, 2007; Vacilotto and Cummings, 2007). Engaging in discussion with other professionals and sharing knowledge and experience can help teachers to add to their repertoire of information, which is good from both a phenomenological and constructivist perspective (Halbach, 2000; Johansson et al., 2007; Sowa, 2009).

Reflection is also an important element in critical self-analysis (Smith and Rawley, 1998). That being said, the type of reflection needed for promoting professional development is not the reflection-in-action promoted by Schön (1983, 1987), but rather reflection-on-action, or more likely reflection-for-future-action (Johansson et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1998; Sowa, 2009; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004). This type of reflection requires a careful examination of one's beliefs,

the environmental influences (culture, politics, and administration) that helped develop those beliefs, followed by a critical examination of how those beliefs affect one's professional practice (the latter of these being one of the key missing elements in Schön's model of the reflective practitioner). This is the basis of the currently popular 'critical reflection' movement that is influencing the development of current pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes, especially in second language teaching (Hedgcock, 2002; Kontra, 1997; Wallace, 1991). If teachers (or any other practitioners) are concerned with improving their practice, many educators (Mezirow, 1991; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Wallace, 1991) now believe that it is beneficial for them to reflect on their past actions, as well as the environmental influences that may have led to such actions (i.e. school policies or previous learning) to uncover unconscious theories or beliefs. This is a very important stage in professional development as one's unconscious theories ultimately direct one's professional behaviour (Mezirow, 1991). Once a practitioner is able to shed light on his underlying theories (usually through observation by others or careful analysis of their own teaching), it is important to critically re-assess these in light of new experiences or received knowledge to determine if these theories are as relevant as the practitioner had originally assumed. It is through this process of turning back one's thoughts to consider previous judgments and actions in the light of new experiences and knowledge, that professionals (of any sort) can construct a clearer understanding of their world and develop more detailed knowledge about their own professional practice. This is not only essential for identifying areas of practice which could be adapted or changed, but is also necessary if practitioners wish to enhance their overall teaching efficacy as this process can present them with options for change (Johansson et al, 2007; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Schön, 1987; Vacilotto and Cummings, 2007; Wallace, 1991).

## 2.7 A PROPOSED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Given the constructivist perspective to learning outlined above, Wallace (1991) suggests that any type of professional education should not only promote the development of received knowledge (which is typically the case), but also help teachers to make connections between this knowledge and their own teaching practice, through reflection. Figure 1 presents an example of a professional development framework which emphasizes the role of reflection in helping practitioners to become competent professionals (a concept which will be discussed more fully in chapter 3).



**Figure 1 Reflective Training Model 1 (Wallace, 1991)**

According to Wallace (1991), this model compensates for what is often missing in most in-service programmes. Because many teacher education programmes have not attempted to address the past experiences or lived context of teachers as a valuable component of the professional development process, transfer of newly acquired knowledge to teaching practice has been difficult. As the teachers' contexts can often be very different from the contexts in which the teacher education programme takes place, making connections between newly-received knowledge and current experience is essential as most teachers will have difficulty doing this without assistance (Cook, 2009b; Johansson et al, 2007; Liyanage and Bartlett, 2008; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Richards, 1998; Sowa, 2009; Wallace, 1991).

While making such connections is critical, the learning cannot stop there (Wallace, 1991). In-service programmes also need to provide teachers with an opportunity to put these new ideas into practice and then to follow this practice with further reflection in order to see how their new experiences either confirm, extend, or even negate their own personal theories of teaching (Mezirow, 1991; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Penlington, 2008). This is a very important stage of the professional development process because the reality is that “new practices cannot just be learned, they also need to be recreated for new clients and new contexts” (Eraut, 2004: p. 116). This is the underlying reason for the increase in promotion of action research (Wallace, 1998; Sowa, 2009) or practitioner-oriented research (Johannson et al, 2007) as a tool for professional development. Through a process of trial and reflection of new ideas, teachers are able to combine theory with context and create their own unique understanding of teaching practice (Grangeat and Gray, 2007).

Sadly, many in-service programmes leave the teachers to engage in the latter part of this reflective process on their own, once they return to the classroom. The problem with this is that this type of reflection becomes at best anecdotal and unfocused, and at worst, not done at all. The main reason is that engaging in reflective discussions with oneself or others is very difficult as most teachers are not trained on how to be reflective practitioners. In addition, reflecting on oneself has its limitations as we can seldom challenge our own ideas without the constructive input of others. The lack of a reflective component in training and education can thus limit the benefits of these programmes as reflection is now believed to be a key component in the development of professional competence (Johansson et al, 2007; Liyanage and Bartlett, 2008; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Schön, 1983; Schön, 1987; Sowa, 2009; Wallace, 1991; Wallace, 1998).

As the model proposed by Wallace (1991) suggests, professional development programmes must acknowledge that participants come equipped with prior experience and perspectives on learning which can and will affect their own learning and make use of these as an instrumental part of the professional development process. In addition, these programmes need to give participants the opportunity to assess how technocratic (or received) knowledge can both support and/or influence their current beliefs. As the model in Figure 1 shows, practice is also critical as practice is what gives participants an opportunity to try out new ideas and develop new experiences. While the model suggests that reflection is the final stage of the experience, this is not totally accurate as Wallace (1991) clearly states that reflection can take place before, during, or after practice, which is supposed to be indicated by the cyclical arrows in the model.

Within this model, reflection is viewed as a critical tool for helping both pre-service and in-service teachers to construct new perspectives on teaching and either add to or even transform their current teaching practices. Therefore, it is critical to provide opportunities which will allow teachers to uncover the underlying beliefs which guide their daily practice. As Osterman and Kottkamp note “reflective practice is a collaborative search for answers, rather than an effort to teach a pre-determined response to a problem” (2004, p. 17). They insist that if professionals can begin to determine more clearly what they do and understand the consequences of their actions and the ideas that have shaped those actions, then they will have the awareness that is the basis for change in their own teaching practice. In other words, reflection will be essential in helping them to construct their personal knowledge of teaching.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

What is most interesting about the approach to reflective practice outlined by Wallace is that it is the result of input from multiple epistemologies and from various disciplines (Mezirow, 1991;

Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 2002). This is ‘reflective’ of a current trend in the development of theory and knowledge. In fact, some have called for a form of ‘epistemological anarchy’ (Geelan, 1997), where epistemologies cease to be seen as competing paradigms. Instead, it is suggested that each epistemological perspective creates a different understanding that is beneficial to all “since their dialectical interaction throws each theory into sharper focus, making it more useful and powerful” (Geelan, p. 1997, p. 26).

As Geelan notes (1997), opening our minds to as many different perspectives as possible can provide us with a very powerful tool for deriving educational theory. These changes are definitely being seen in the area of second language teaching and teacher education in general where there is a movement away from a single method approach to teaching, towards an eclectic approach that considers contextual features as key in determining the most appropriate educational practice (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Kumaravedivelu; 2006). While most would agree that formal knowledge serves as a tool to support enquiry and learning, the overall goal of professional development programmes is not for professionals to simply develop more information, but rather for them to learn how to make the best use of that information in their own contexts and for their own students. Given this new dynamic, it is believed that critical reflection and the notion of ‘reflective practice’ will play an important role in helping practitioners to develop their professional competence as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

### ***3.0 INTRODUCTION***

As discussed earlier, the ultimate goal of teacher education, either pre-service or in-service, is to improve the professional competence of educators. In fact, defining and thus developing professional competence is now an activity which has become a requirement for those occupations wishing to aspire to a professional status. Although the phenomenon of defining professional competence seems to be a fairly current issue in second language education, McGaghie suggests it has been a topic which has “occupied the attention of educators for centuries” (1991, p.1).

But how exactly is professional competence defined? While this appears to be a simple question on the surface, the discussion in this chapter should reveal that the concept of professional competence is actually a complex construct that has multiple dimensions and requires a closer look at what defines a profession, how professionals are trained, and how this relates to the concepts of both professionalism and competence. This chapter will also examine the role that teacher inquiry plays in developing professional competence and present the research questions which guided the inquiry of this dissertation.

### ***3.1 HOW CAN PROFESSIONALISM BE DEFINED?***

Historically, a profession could be defined as “an occupation that had reached the highest level of technical skill and social helpfulness” (Metzger, 1987, p.1). In a review of this topic by McGaghie, he points out that professions have typically been separated from general occupations by two features: “(a) acquisition and especially schooled application of an unusually esoteric and complex body of knowledge and skill, and (b) an orientation toward serving the needs of the public, with particular emphasis on an ethical or altruistic approach towards clients” (1991, p.1). Law, medicine, and the

clergy were considered to be the three main professions for decades. However, the western industrial revolution brought with it an increase in access to post secondary education and this in turn changed the landscape of professionalism forever. Consequently, the title of ‘profession’ is no longer limited to the three professions noted earlier. Now, there are many publicly oriented occupations which not only require one to be educated in a specific body of knowledge, but also require a process of certification that is strictly governed by the professional organization to which one would like to belong (ibid).

A quick review of the second language teaching literature suggests that in the world of language teaching, the definition of professionalism is consisted with the above. For example, Farmer (2006) uses a rather generic definition he borrows from Freidson (2001) to describe professionalism for language teachers: professionalism is “a set of institutions which permit the members of an occupation to make a living while controlling their own work” (ibid, p. 12). Likewise, Wallace defines a profession (which includes language teaching) as “a kind of occupation which can only be practised after long and rigorous academic study” (1991, p. 5).

As we will see throughout this chapter, defining what constitutes a profession is far easier than defining how one actually acquires professionalism. The notion of professionalism and the education needed to develop professionalism has changed greatly over the last century and these changes have, in turn, affected what we currently conceive to be professional competence. This will be the focus of the discussion in the next section.

### ***3.2 HOW IS PROFESSIONALISM ACQUIRED?***

Prior to the development of the educational programmes now found in universities and colleges, which are an integral part of professional development in today’s society, a profession such as becoming a doctor or lawyer was normally learned by a means of apprenticeship with an expert or master practitioner. Schön (1987) and Wallace (1991) refer to this as the ‘craft model’ of professional



development where a profession was learned over an extended period of time of observation and practice, under the guidance of a watchful mentor. It was through this very individualized training process that professional competence was achieved. This was the typical approach used until after the Second World War, when it was replaced by what Schön (1987) and Wallace (1991) refer to as an ‘applied science model’ of professional development. While it was acknowledged that practice and apprenticeship play a major role in learning, the ‘craft only’ model was seen as being limited in a fast changing world where ‘master teachers’ might be out of touch with new theories and approaches to practice (Hagger and McIntyre, 2006) and it was therefore believed that professional development had to be systemized in some manner (Wallace, 1991).

The ‘applied science model’ of professional development was part of the general movement of putting higher institutions of learning in charge of the process of systematizing the process of professional education (Schön, 1987). Within this framework, professional training consisted of transferring scientific knowledge (facts, rules, research) to practitioners, in a more formal academic setting. After the formal training period, practitioners were expected to hone their individual skills by ‘applying’ this formal knowledge in their own practice through a process of experimentation where they attempted to solve practical problems by looking for solutions from the bank of knowledge received in training. While this training was updated on a periodic basis when new theories or approaches came to light, professional competence was largely a measure of the degree to which practitioners were able to master and apply the formal knowledge they were taught.

Up until recently, this approach has been the most prevalent model used in developing education programmes for the professions, especially language teaching (Wallace, 1991). In teaching, the underlying assumption of this approach has been “that learning to teach is a by-product of good raw material – capable trainees and skilled trainers ... long-term training programmes, and well-structured teacher-training materials” (Freeman, 1998, p. vii). From this perspective, ‘good teaching’,

or any other professional practice could be “reduced to a list of discrete behaviours” (Richards, 1998, p. 5) and was the foundation for the popular implementation of the “competency approaches of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s [which] broke teacher’s performances down into discrete observable items of behaviour, or behaviours” (Walker, 1996, p. 111). Because this applied science approach did not produce the level of competency it was expected to, the value of practical experience once again became evident and, in the 1980s and 1990s, there was an increase in the implementation of a practice period (or practicum) where practitioners such as teachers had a chance to be inducted into their profession, either after or during their theoretical training period. The influence of these two approaches to the development of language teachers over the last century is clearly visible in a review of foreign language (FL) teacher development from 1916-1999 presented by Schultz (2000).

In the early part of the 1900s competent FL teachers were “essentially self-made” (ibid, p. 496) in that they learned their profession through independent training of literature and languages. This training in actual teaching methodology was limited to a few hours of classroom observation, peer teaching, and practice teaching. By the 1920s there was dissatisfaction with the lack of consistency in the skills of FL teachers in the US and a process of certification and licensing was implemented in various states in an attempt to improve the competency of these practitioners. Emphasis was placed on the acquisition of knowledge in the area of linguistics, literature, and the target language itself, all of which was acquired in a formal learning setting such as a university. By the 1960s, these requirements also extended to include education in general cultural background as a necessity for teaching competency.

Despite these initiatives, there was little consistency in the overall education of FL teachers provided in the US, or elsewhere in the world, and there was growing dissatisfaction with the lack of professionalism most of these programmes actually delivered. By the 1970s, the language teaching profession joined the movement towards competence-based teacher education and evaluation (ibid),

and it also began to include an emphasis on both practicum experience as well as general instructional knowledge that came to be viewed as a necessity for all teachers, regardless of teaching domain. An example of the general pedagogical competencies evaluated on the Modern Language Association (MLA) Proficiency Tests around this time “include: 1) Stating goals and objectives; 2) Planning and carrying out instructions; 3) Developing attitudes and motivation; and 4) Evaluation” (cited in Schulz, 2000, p. 11). These basic competencies were later broken down even further by others and included:

“selecting learning activities; preparing students for learning, presenting learning activities, asking questions, checking students’ understanding; providing opportunities for practice of new items; monitoring students’ learning; giving feedback on student learning; reviewing and re-teaching when necessary” (Schulman, 1987, cited in Richards, 1998, p. 4).

By the 1990s, the competencies of language teachers included the general pedagogical skills described above as well as a knowledge of theories of learning (i.e. didactic, discovery, and integrationist views), strong communication skills (i.e. personality, presence, general style), a high level of proficiency in the target language functions (in regards to: requesting, questioning, giving advice, warning, etc.), and linguistic subject matter knowledge (i.e. phonetics, phonology, syntax, sociolinguistics, etc.) (Richards and Lockhart, 1998). It was believed that if a teacher could be educated in these various areas, competency would be a natural end product. Unfortunately, time revealed that competency based assessment was not sufficient for the development of professional competence and that ‘competence’ was a more complex concept than most had expected.

### ***3.3 ISSUES AND CONCERNS WITH A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALISM IN LANGUAGE TEACHING***

While many felt that the movement towards competency-based teacher education and evaluation was very beneficial as it forced teachers to think in a more analytical way about teaching

(Schulz, 2000) and provided guidelines for the development of teacher education programmes (ACTFL, 1988, Whitty, 1996), there is also much criticism against the use of the competency-based approach of the past: the competencies outlined typically referred to a limited range of practice situations; assessment was intricately linked to acquired knowledge; they failed to include an assessment of practical teaching skills; they did not tend to include ethical considerations; and the measurement or assessment criteria were often unreliable (McGaghie, 1991). In addition, many felt that the competency-based assessment era of the latter part of the century failed to produce competent teachers because it did not account for the importance of context (Greiss, 1984) or practice (Brandt, 2006), and it ultimately failed to address the complexity of the true nature of professional competence (Adey, 2004; Bartell, 2005; England, 1998; Neil and Morgan, 2003; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Schön, 1987; Wallace, 1991).

This does not mean that the concept of competencies as used in the past needs to be discarded, but rather that it needs to be reassessed and redefined. This has been a key focus for the last decade, especially in the case of language teaching where there has been little consistency in developing teacher education programmes or in developing standards of qualifications in North America or elsewhere. The inability to set common standards for language teaching has ultimately threatened the status of this occupation as a genuine profession (Brown, 1992; England, 1998; Richards, 1998; Richards and Nunan, 1994; Schulz, 2000). The following section discusses how professional competence has been further redefined in light of past research in this area and the role that reflection and practice play in the process of developing professional practitioners.

### ***3.4 REDEFINING COMPETENCE***

According to Beckett “one of the central distinguishing features of a professional’s work (wherever it is found and by whomever it is being done) is the expectation of discretionary

judgments” (1996, p. 135). This sentiment is echoed by Farrell (1998) when he states that language teachers need to be able to do more than simply apply knowledge in their classrooms. Teachers also need to use reasoned judgments and have the ability to explain these judgments and the actions that follow them, if second language teaching is to become recognized as a profession. If this is true, then it is essential to understand what is meant by the term ‘discretionary judgment’ and why it is such an important aspect of professional competence.

In order to understand why discretionary judgment is such a critical component of professional competence, it is important to first come to a better understanding of the term competence since it has become such a widely used term in professional practice in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Carr, 1993). For many, the term competence has become synonymous with thoughts related to vocational qualifications, either in terms of formal knowledge or practical application of this knowledge. However, this is only part of what competence entails. Carr prefers to break competence down into two distinct senses: dispositions and capacity. The dispositional sense of competence is what enables us to demonstrate specific functions as a result of either education or some natural endowment that one possesses. Carr claims that certain “skills, habits, and faculties may all count as dispositions” (1993, p. 257). An example of a dispositional skill would be a teacher’s ability to create a lesson plan based on principles taught during either pre-service or in-service education programmes. Habits involve the repeated application of such skills. Habits are essential as they help us to be competent by allowing us to develop routines that become so automatic at times that they may cease to be consciously directed by us. When asked about these two types of competencies (or more directly, why we use such skills and habits) we often respond with phrases such as “That is the way I was taught to do it,” or “That is how I have always done it”. As these answers suggest, these are behaviours that appear to be prescribed and routine in many cases. Faculties are somewhat different in that they are more akin to inborn traits or personality attributes. For example, being organized or structured is a

critical competence for teachers, but in most cases this is not a skill that is taught, rather it is a natural disposition that one has. In fact, it can be very difficult to get someone to alter their faculties without a great deal of time and effort. In many cases, one might be able to alter their faculties for a short time, but under pressure these natural faculties may surface as dominant characteristics.

Dispositional competencies seem to be similar to the notion of ‘theories-in-action’ proposed by Schön (1983, 1987) in that they have been conditioned in the practitioner by their environment (physical, social, or educational) and are not always easy to explain. It is important that teachers, or any other professional, take time to carefully assess their dispositional competencies, especially if they are subconscious, as these are the competencies that will typically guide their day to day behaviour.

The capacity sense of competence is quite different from dispositional competence. Capacities are those actions which are driven by our intentional selection or use of knowledge (both practical and theoretical). Capacities “are not just formed in us by the operations of causality – not just explicable in terms of (scientific) knowledge – they are actually *knowledge-driven*; capacities entail the voluntary and deliberate exercise of principled judgment in the light of rational knowledge and understanding” (ibid, p. 257).

While not suggested by Carr, this second sense of ‘competence’ bears some resemblance to what others call ‘reflective thought’ (Mezirow, 1991; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Schön, 1983, 1987). It involves the ability to look back on one’s actions and examine the effectiveness of this behaviour, but not just as a matter of understanding, but for the purpose of improved current and future practice. For example, when a teacher knows that a particular topic must be covered from an assigned text but is also aware that this topic is not explained well in the text or will not suit the current group of students, and thus examines her own past practice or the practice of others to come up with an improved approach to covering the required topic, she is making use of capacity competencies. Carr suggests that while we may think that our dispositions control us, if we are

professionals, it is we who must choose to exercise our dispositions, by accessing our capacity competence (1993). This ability to ‘choose’ our behaviours, given a period of rational consideration about our options, is what separates professionals from technicians.

While the dispositional sense of competence can be exhibited by abilities that arise largely from formal education or habit (our dispositions), the capacity sense of competence is quite different in that it has to do with those abilities that arise out of conscious and autonomous decisions that are based on a careful examination of the knowledge that surrounds us (our capacities). According to Carr (1993), the main problem with professional competence to date is that it has largely been measured in terms of or equated with our dispositions (skills and knowledge), rather than our capacities (behaviours based on reasoned judgment). In fact, the competency-based requirements discussed earlier were largely based on a description of those dispositions which the particular teaching organization or government body decided were most representative of effective teaching. Professional competence was thus the result of becoming a master of that knowledge.

As indicated earlier, this approach was problematic and did not account for the situations where implementing acquired knowledge or competencies did not resolve the often problematic or challenging situations which teachers encounter and deal with on a regular basis. Or as Schön (1983, 1987) says, it did not account for the ‘artistry’ of teaching. According to Carr, in order to prepare teachers, especially new teachers, for meeting these day-to-day challenges, we must educate teachers to “begin from the idea of *knowing* before that of bare *ability*” (1993, p. 261). However, this knowledge is not knowledge in the theoretical sense (as was traditionally expected), but rather knowledge in the practical sense that is derived from a reflective consideration of one’s whole teaching context as well as one’s beliefs and presuppositions about teaching or the dispositions that one has been conditioned to use. It involves a process of ‘rational deliberation’, which is the result of “rational reflection about educational policies and practices and what is *ethically*, as well as

instrumentally, appropriate to achieve them” (ibid, 265). From this perspective, ‘good judgment’ can be equated with a form of moral inquiry which requires practitioners to determine what should be done for the best of their clients, given their individual contexts.

Where does this judgment come from? From Carr’s perspective, this sense of capacity competence is developed through “initiation into the diverse modes of rational discourse, the plurality of voices, in which the character and quality of educational goods are discussed and evaluated” (1993, p. 265). In other words, this type of professional competence is developed through a process of critical reflection where practitioners engage in discussion with others and question not only their own teaching practice, but how their practice is situated in a much larger educational and political context (Holmes, 1992; Mezirow, 1991; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Smith and Rawley, 1998).

Grangeat and Gray (2007; 2008) have conducted studies on the role that ‘collective work’ can play in the enhancement of professional competence. Their research examined the application of two models used for competence development in industrial and commercial settings (‘didactique professionnelle’ and ‘work process knowledge’), for in-service teacher development. The first model focuses on the individual construction of knowledge through constructive activities, conceptualizations and action rules, while the second model focuses on facilitating understanding through the study of knowledge as a collective activity. Similar to Carr’s theory, their research has suggested that the development of professional competence (in teaching as elsewhere) requires both investigation of one’s own challenges as well as critical reflection with others to ensure that there is at least some link between self-constructed ideas of best practice and acceptance of those beliefs within a larger community of practice. When teachers (or any other professional) engage in work-based problem solving in collaboration with other teachers, ‘meaning’, or understanding of teaching practice is “constructed both individually and collectively” and “competence development arises



from interactions among members of the group as well as in the cognitive models of the individual agents” (Grangeat and Gray, 2007: p. 491). It is Grangeat and Gray’s opinion that professional competence is therefore developed through a process of teachers facing problems and working through them with collegial support.

Likewise, Hofman and Dijkstra (2010) suggest that teacher networking is essential to the development of professional competence. They conducted a study with 100 teachers in the Netherlands who were grouped into various networking relationships aimed at professional development. The study found that networking was instrumental in helping teachers to become more professionally competent through critical discussion and reflection. They concluded that networks “that were focused on (self) reflection, that exploited the use of subgroups and network meetings with a strong content focus, that stimulate enthusiasm and are instructive, that build a community of teachers and that make room for the application of new material/methods in the classroom, are the most promising way for encouraging professional development and job motivation” (ibid: p. 1031). The lack of such emphasis in past professional development programmes may explain why so many of these have failed to bridge the gap between theory and practice and thus left teachers fundamentally unprepared to handle the challenges that are part of their everyday professional practice.

These studies demonstrate the benefits that critical discussion between professionals can play in developing a better understanding of the ongoing nature of professional development in any occupation. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is for this reason that reflection and critical analysis of practice have become essential components in current professional development programmes (Hedgcock, 2002). If we bring this discussion back to the initial quote with which we began this section, that “one of the central, distinguishing features of a professional’s work (wherever it is found and by whomever it is being done) is the expectation of discretionary judgments” (1996, p. 135), it is clear that capacity competence plays a significant role in distinguishing professional

practice from mere technical practice. However, it would be a mistake to assume that dispositional competence, which is a combination of practical experience and formal learning, is no longer a critical element in defining professional competence. Quite the contrary; without either practical or theoretical knowledge, the critical conversations of teachers would be limited as it is precisely this knowledge which is useful for both informing and contributing to the critical analysis of teachers' professional practice. Therefore, developing professional competence requires that practitioners have competence in both the dispositional sense (practice and knowledge of) as well as competence in the capacity sense (the ability to make judgments). What is especially important for professional practice is that professionals use their capacities to control their dispositions, and not the other way around (Carr, 1993).

Previous approaches to certification in language teaching (and other professions) have left one with the impression that professional competence can be reached through a process of education, testing, and accreditation. While this may be true for competence in the dispositional sense, it is clearly not the case for capacity competence. While certification is beneficial in that it provides assurance that professionals have been exposed to important theories, methodologies, and practical initiation, it is only the beginning of the journey towards developing professional competence in the capacity sense, which requires that the professional be able to work from the concept of knowledge and understanding before that of ability. In the case of capacity competence, knowledge and understanding is not about academia or theory, but rather about “doing in a broadly principled, reflective, and informed way of doing well, efficiently or effectively, according to some verifiable canon or standard of acceptable performance” (Carr, 1993, p. 262). As indicated in the studies noted earlier, this type of knowledge and understanding is derived from experience, but not experience in the limited sense of simply doing, rather it is experience that is derived as a result of careful and considerate reflection on the doing. The development of this type of competence is critical to

professionalism as it is what provides the professional with the “capacity to respond to surprise through improvisation on the spot” (Schön, 1987: p. 5), a competence which is only available to the professional as a result of both their dispositional and capacity competencies. In fact, Eraut (2004) insists that professional development is not meant to train one for the predictable (which can be handled by our dispositional competencies), but to be prepared for the unpredictable (which requires competence in the capacity sense).

Given the complex and iterative nature of developing competency, in both senses, many now believe that professional competence is not something any practitioner ever fully achieves, rather it is a lifelong goal towards which all professionals should continuously strive through ongoing learning and interaction with their professional peers (Carr, 1993; Crandall, 1993; Hedgcock, 2002; Richards, 2002; Wallace, 1991). It is this notion of professional competence as a combination of theory, practice, attitudes, and continuous development which has been clearly reflected in the development of competency standards in the field of language teaching throughout the last decade.

### ***3.5 CURRENT LANGUAGE TEACHING STANDARDS - TESOL***

Given the research on professional development and professional competence to date, various organizations are actively involved in developing standards which can be used to guide professional education and further professional development. A few organizations concerned with English language teaching to speakers of other languages have been very public and inclusive throughout the process and therefore serve as useful examples for this paper (Haddock, 2006; TESOL, 2008). In these associations, standards committees from within were implemented and charged with the responsibility of working with the association members to identify and develop standards that were agreeable to those involved. This was done through a process of critical discussion amongst the association members. This is not only a valid approach to developing standards, but is also more

likely to yield a set of standards that are more “useful, feasible, and accurate in criteria” (McGaghie, 1991, p. 5), than standards or competencies that are drawn up either by habit or by outside organizations or administrators.

This next section will briefly outline the basic standards decided upon by TESOLANZ and TESOL, which are two separate associations for teachers of English to speakers of other languages in New Zealand and the United States respectively, and to reflect on how both sets of standards exemplify a clear shift in perspective towards the development of competence as described in this chapter. The standards presented by TESOLANZ will also be used as a framework for the identification and development of professional competence in the research study outlined in the following chapter.

### ***3.6 TESOLANZ PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS PROJECT***

A common approach to obtaining agreement within various associations has been the use of questionnaires (Bell, 2005). This approach was also used by TESOLANZ during the development of their professional standards. As indicated in a draft report issued in 2006, the ‘Core Competency Standards’ were developed to indicate that teaching English is a specialized profession that requires a rich body of knowledge and that it is, therefore, important that associations such as TESOLANZ provide the necessary professional guidance to ensure a minimum level of standards are identified and promoted within their association. According to this draft report, the members of TESOLANZ have decided on the following standards which they believe all members should minimally strive to acquire (Haddock, 2006, p. 9):

#### *Knowledge of:*

- Factors affecting language learning
- Broader principles of teaching
- The process of L2 development
- Different learning styles
- TESOL methods

- Phonological and structural features in English
- The principles behind materials development and selection
- The impact of L1 on language teaching
- The principles of TESOL course design and curriculum development

*Skills to:*

- Provide appropriate models of language in context
- Accommodate varying levels and abilities
- Use a language level appropriate to the student's ability
- Provide constructive and sensitive feedback to facilitate learning
- Use a variety of teaching strategies
- Provide a balanced programme
- Facilitate independent learning
- Assess and use appropriate resources
- Monitor learner progress
- Carry out a needs analysis
- Ensure assessment is valid and understandable by the students and other stakeholders
- Select and use a range of TESOL methodologies
- Develop suitable assessment tasks
- Use both formal and informal methods of assessment techniques

*Attitudes which:*

- Mean behaving in a non-racist, non-sexist and professional manner
- Create a classroom environment conducive to learning
- Encourage teacher-student rapport
- Ensure the students know what they are doing and why
- Ensure contribution to professional development programmes when possible

*Education and Experience which includes:*

- TESOL education
- Continuing professional development
- Qualifications in ESOL
- Learning another language

While the first category, *Knowledge of*, involves being aware of the target language and language teaching principles in general, which are essentially dispositional competencies, the second and third categories, *Skills to* and *Attitudes which*, rely much more on the need for reflection and moral judgment about what is best for a given student group and are therefore more at the level of capacity

competencies. The fourth category is the process by which one can acquire the competencies outlined in the first three categories.

### ***3.7 TESOL STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR TESOL TEACHERS***

TESOL has also developed one set of standards for teachers of adult learners and another set of standards for teachers of P-12 students in the public education system. While there were two separate task forces involved in this process, they shared the same goal, which was to develop standards that will “serve members and the profession in defining what the TESOL profession sees as effective teaching” (TESOL, 2008, p1). As space is limited for a detailed presentation of these standards, only an outline of the standards that were developed for teachers of adult learners will be presented.

The standards for teachers of adult learners have been divided into two groups. The first group support and sustain student learning and include *Planning, Instructing, and Assessing*. The standards that fall within this category are similar to those outlined by TESOLANZ in the sections *Knowledge of* and *Skills to* and will not be repeated here.

The second set of standards includes information that teachers take from their environment that will help guide their *Planning, Instructing, and Assessing*. This latter group includes standards related to *Language, Learning, Identity and Setting, and Content, and Developing Professionalism*. These include many of the same items listed in TESOLANZ’s standards on *Attitudes which* and *Education and Experience which includes*.

These standards have been further developed to include sample performance indicators that could be used to assess whether or not a teacher has been able to achieve a particular standard. For example, under the category of Developing Professionalism, you will find:

| Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Sample Performance Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching to the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and communities at large, and use these understandings to inform and change themselves and these communities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take information from the communities at large and the broader teaching community to inform the English language teaching profession</li> <li>- Develop personal professional development plans</li> <li>- Reflect on teaching practice to continue to grow professionally</li> </ul> |

(TESOL, 2002, cited in Nunan, 2002)

This description, while brief, is quite interesting from a competency perspective as it clearly highlights the need for both dispositional as well as capacity level competencies and thus further supports Carr's (1993) theory on this topic. As the Standard outlines, not only are teachers required to "grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching to" their teaching communities, they also need to take this understanding one step further and use it to "inform and change themselves and these communities". Teacher inquiry has been gaining popularity as one approach for helping teachers bridge the gap between acquiring new knowledge and actually applying it in practice.

### ***3.8 TEACHER INQUIRY AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

If the overall intent of professional education is to improve professional performance through changes in beliefs and teaching behaviour, then the examination of problematic experiences can play an important role (or in some cases re-learning) as it provides a means for personalizing and contextualizing the learning process and thus engaging the learner more fully in the professional development process (Atay, 2008). According to Kelsey (1993) (cited in Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004), a problematic experience can be defined by any gap that exists between one's ideal or desired condition and their current reality. If no such gaps are identified, then it is likely that there will be little incentive to learn or challenge one's current perspective since existing paradigms will already satisfy one's personal needs (Attard, 2007).

Identifying a problematic situation is an essential component in promoting the reflective process. As Dewey noted (1910), it is such moments of uncertainty and destabilization which help engage an individual in the learning process. First the individual must stop and try to identify the problem. This is usually done through observation or analysis of prior behaviour and the contextual factors that have contributed to this behaviour. Then he must look for solutions or answers for dealing with this problem. Once some plausible answers are found, it is important to test these out to determine if they provide legitimate solutions. If not, then the process begins again until the feelings of uncertainty subside.

This process of inquiry not only allows teachers to address specific teaching challenges; it also provides a useful tool for the application of theoretical principles to everyday teaching needs (Atay, 2008; Darling-Hammond and Snyder, 2000). Sowa suggests that engaging in such teacher inquiry is beneficial as it “encourages teachers to become lifelong learners ... [and] ... makes them more open to developing a variety of teaching methods and verifying whether these teaching methods work” (2009; p. 1026) or not in their particular context. The inquiry process can also allow teachers to become more reflective and critical of their own practice and in turn “to build their own practical theories of teaching” (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006: p. 20). Finally, some research suggests that it also allows teachers to become more confident in their own teaching and to develop an increased ability to become agents of change (McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Sowa, 2009).

Unfortunately, most of the individual research projects implemented as part of the MEXT teacher education programmes have never achieved their full potential in promoting the critical reflection needed for changes in beliefs or teaching practice as their implementation has been placed second to other aspects of these programmes, such as the teaching of methodology which seems to be at the core of most short-term teacher education programmes. In addition, the research process has been a solitary and sometimes overwhelming venture, which was expected to be completed by the



students, on their own time. This is regrettable since current research suggests these projects have a great deal of potential for helping teachers to engage in collaboration with others through discussion and observation, to reflect on their own teaching beliefs, and to critically assess their own teaching situations, all of which are important components of the reflective cycle as discussed in chapter 2 (see Figure 1).

A study by Johansson et al. (2007) examined the impact of practitioner oriented research as a tool for professional development with 44 Swedish preschool educators. The purpose of the study was to examine the benefits of promoting interaction between tacit or experience-based learning and scientific or knowledge-based learning in order to study teaching challenges with the aim of improving professional performance. As part of the research process, participants were placed into 15 working groups. Each team was supervised by a university researcher whose role was to guide the participants in their use of essential research methods and in the process of working with a problem on a research base. The researchers also gave lectures about information related to research in relevant fields relating to the research topics of the participants involved in the study. Working teams were required to meet seven times during an eight month study period. The theory underlying this research study was that “practitioner-oriented research emanates from three principles: learning from experience, cycles of reflection and action, and self-directed learning” (Yorks, 2005 as cited in Johansson et al. 2007).

Data analysis for this study consisted of questionnaires about the impact of the research process as well as one-on-one interviews. The results of this study suggest that practitioner oriented research helped promote an increased appreciation for the usability of research-based knowledge for improving professional practice (thus bridging the knowledge practice gap). In addition, the participants felt that the research process provided them with an increased ability to engage in constructive critical reflection. According to the authors of the study, the reflective process allowed

the participants of their study to “become more conscious of how to use research as a tool to explore, reflect on, and change their practice [which] in the long term ... [can] also [be] a process of empowerment” (Johannson et al, 2007; p. 164). Finally, the collaborative group structure used for this research study also had positive benefits for the participants. As a result of the collaborative learning process, the participants came to recognize their colleagues as an important source for gaining and evaluating the meaning of newly-acquired knowledge and personal understanding of teaching practice.

A similar study by Sowa (2009) examined the impact of action-based research on the professional development of six US based primary teachers who often had English language learners in their classrooms. The participants were required to engage in an action based research project as part of their education in a graduate level M.Ed. programme. For the purpose of this study, action-based research was defined as “self reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out” (Carr and Kemmis, 1986 cited in Sowa, 2009: p. 1026). Data collected for this study consisted of written research projects, action research reflection papers, a professional working theory paper, and surveys regarding the teachers’ perceptions of the research process.

The findings of this study suggest that action-based research was instrumental in promoting a deeper understanding of English language learners’ needs, the importance of teacher reflection, and recognition of the need for positive teacher dispositions. Through the research projects and the various reflection activities required during the process, the teachers realized that it was important to pay attention to the various factors which affect language acquisition as they will be important in facilitating the learning process. The knowledge they acquired allowed them to become more thoughtful about how they approached the presentation of material to their students and this allowed them to alter their lesson plans to promote classroom practices that were more conducive to promoting

learning for their students. The teachers felt that the research project made them more reflective and critical about their teaching which was a “crucial factor contributing to the changes in their teaching” (Sowa, 2009; p. 1030). Finally, the research project also created an improved understanding of some key dispositions required by teachers of English language students. They realized they needed to be more patient and more communicative with their students. They also realized that teacher satisfaction with the smallest achievements of their students and confidence in their own ability to know what and how to teach were also main areas of learning for them as a result of their participation in the research project.

While these studies support the use of a reflective project-based/action-based approach for professional development, they provide little insight into the research process itself and how this can be enhanced or adapted to promote increased learning gains in similar professional development initiatives. As Atay notes, although “there is a growing literature on the positive outcomes associated with teachers doing research” (2008; p. 140), little information has been provided on the characteristics of these research processes or their individual benefits in the professional development process. In an attempt to fill this gap in the literature, Atay (2008) examined the reaction of 18 Turkish EFL teachers to a research-based professional development programme. The programme ran for six weeks and consisted of the following schedule: Theoretical knowledge and ELT instruction (first two weeks); Focus on issues for investigation (two weeks); investigating the classroom and conducting personal research (two weeks). During the programme, the teachers worked in collaborative groups with other teachers and were guided through the research process by the researcher, who was also the instructor of the programme.

Like the studies noted above, analysis of the Turkish teachers’ research experiences suggests that the research process had a positive impact on their professional development. Through the research process, the teachers were able to develop a more positive perspective towards research and

its application in their classroom. They developed an increased awareness of the teaching/learning process and this caused many to initiate significant change in their teaching practice. For some teachers, the break in their regular teaching routine and subsequent renewal of knowledge increased their enthusiasm for teaching.

In addition, analysis of the actual research process indicated that the teachers found the research process as a whole and the sharing of knowledge with other teachers to be a very useful professional development experience. The teachers “acted like critical friends, discussing and reflecting on what they were planning to do and why” (Atay, 2008). The critical reflection prompted by these discussions helped the teachers to gain alternative perspectives on their own teaching approach, which allowed them to reconsider their approach and identify the need to make changes in their teaching practice. The study also indicated that the teachers often felt ‘lost’ during the research process and needed significant support and guidance at all stages of the research project (proposal, research, analysis), thus the help of the instructor as mentor in this process was invaluable.

The findings from this study are important as they can help professional development programme administrators and instructors better understand the components needed to help teachers to bridge the theory-practice gap and increase their overall professional competence.

### ***3.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

Like Atay’s study, this research study attempts to contribute to the discussion on professional development by examining the characteristics of the reflective process outlined by Wallace (1991) and investigating in what way the various components are perceived by teachers to contribute to the development of professional competence (as defined by Carr, 1996).

As indicated earlier, most research to date on Japanese teachers has focused on examining changes in teachers’ attitudes towards more communicative language teaching or assessing to what

degree the teachers are able to implement changes in their teaching practice after returning to Japan. No studies appear to have examined the type of education programmes teachers have attended or to understand to what degree the teachers' success in developing new attitudes or teaching practices can be attributed to the various training and development components provided throughout these programmes. Even MEXT officials, who invest great financial resources into such programmes, appear to only be interested in measuring the effectiveness of their in-service programmes based on two key assessments: the acquisition of knowledge as demonstrated in the final research paper and the teacher's language gain as measured on the TOEFL exam. While knowledge acquisition (theoretical and linguistic) is important, there is more to sustained professional development than can be summarized in the measurement of such achievements alone.

Given that current professional development theory suggests that the acquisition of both dispositional and capacity competencies is necessary for the development of professional competence, and that theory on teaching and learning suggests that teacher inquiry and reflection are key tools for promoting the development of such competencies, it is necessary to understand how the implementation of an inquiry-based reflective process could benefit professional development programmes such as the MEXT in-service programme hosted by the University of Ottawa. Since individual student research projects (professional development dossier or PDD) are a required component of all six-month programmes sponsored by MEXT, they not only provide an excellent opportunity to implement a critically-reflective process into the curriculum, they also provide an excellent opportunity to investigate how engaging students in the reflective process through problem solving or inquiry may be beneficial in helping them to develop knowledge about teaching as well as their ability to make professional judgments as to which second language teaching theories are most applicable to their own teaching contexts and thus help to bridge the learning-practice gap.

Thus, the following questions for this research study are:

1. In what way does the reflective cycle (the PDD process) contribute to the development of dispositional competencies for these Japanese teachers of English?

These are identified as knowledge/awareness of any of the following:

- The process of L2 development
- TESOL methods
- The principles of TESOL course design and curriculum development
- Factors affecting language learning
- The impact of L1 on language teaching
- Broader principles of teaching
- The principles behind materials development and selection
- Different learning styles  
(as outlined by Haddock, 2006)

2. In what way does the reflective cycle (the PDD process) contribute to the development of capacity competencies for these Japanese teachers of English?

These are identified as the skills/judgments needed to:

- Assess and use appropriate resources
- Provide a balanced programme
- Facilitate independent learning
- Provide constructive and sensitive feedback to facilitate learning
- Monitor learner progress
- Accommodate varying levels and abilities
- Provide appropriate models of language in context
- Use a variety of teaching strategies
- Select and use a range of TESOL methodologies
- Carry out a needs analysis
- Develop suitable assessment tasks (both formal and informal)

As well as *Attitudes which*:

- Create a classroom environment conducive to learning
- Encourage teacher-student rapport
- Ensure contribution to professional development
- Ensure the students know what they are doing and why  
(Haddock, 2006)

3. On a four-point scale (Very Useful; Useful; Somewhat Useful; and Not Useful), how do the Japanese teachers of English assess the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop both their dispositional and capacity competencies?

These components include:

- The Professional Development Dossier (PDD)
- The reflection logs
- The various reflection worksheets
- The school observation sessions and reflections
- The practice teaching sessions and reflections
- The small group discussion sessions
- The poster project session
- Their mentor

### ***3.10 SUMMARY***

This chapter presented two samples of the current professional standards movement underway in the English as a second/foreign language teaching profession in countries across the globe. What is interesting about both of these examples is the way in which they both exemplify many of the issues discussed in this chapter.

First, it is clear in both sets of standards that professional competence is not a simplistic concept. There are many constructs involved, as indicated by the various standards outlined by each association. If you consider the individual indicators required to further define each competency, it is apparent that developing professional standards is a complex task. Second, theoretical, practical, and reflective knowledge, as well as ongoing professional development are now believed to be essential characteristics of professional practice. Borrowing from Carr's theories (1993), these standards clearly indicate that both dispositional and capacity competencies are crucial for the development of professionalism and professional competence. Third, in language teaching (or any other profession for that matter), standards and our notions of what constitutes professional competence are not static. They are guidelines that have evolved based on our current understanding of our teaching and learning and are sure to change as we construct new beliefs about effective practices for either (Richards, 2002). This is important to keep in mind as professions, like practitioners, must be continuously assessing what 'good' practice is and how is it achieved.

Carr (1993) theorized that dispositional competence is often acquired as result of education or practice, while the development of capacity competence requires a process of critical reflection that is often lacking in many current teacher education programs. Current research in teacher education has suggested that one of the best ways of stimulating this critical reflection is by engaging teacher's in action research or problem based learning on their own teaching practices and encouraging them to share knowledge with others as an added means of challenging their own self constructed ideas of best practice and acceptance of those beliefs within a larger community of practice.

While there has been growing research on the benefits of teacher research for promoting reflective practice, there has been little information on the characteristics of the research processes that are most beneficial for promoting the development of professional competence. This research study attempts to provide further insight into the benefits of engaging teachers in the reflective cycle outlined by Wallace (1991) (see Figure 1) as a means of structuring and enhancing the teacher research process.



## **CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY & METHODOLOGY**

### ***4.0 RESEARCH CONTEXT***

As noted in Chapter 1, a common problem with many professional development programmes for teachers is that the participants often have a difficult time transferring the knowledge gained during such programmes to their own professional practice. As Dewey (1910) and many others following him have indicated that inquiry or problem based study can be an ideal approach for promoting learning and development, some governments have requested the inclusion of a research component into teacher education programmes in order to make the learning process more meaningful for the individual teachers. This has been the case for the six month in-service programmes sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEXT). Through these individual research projects, MEXT believes that the Japanese teachers will be able to bridge the gap between theory and practice and find solutions for some of their ongoing teaching challenges, as well as the challenges facing Japanese teachers in general.

One of the major problems with these research projects to date has been that they have followed the ‘applied science model’ whereby knowledge is simply transferred to the students through isolated research practices with little or no opportunity to reflect on how this information relates to their own teaching practices and/or their individual teaching contexts. In addition, there have been few efforts to determine how the newly-acquired theory will actually work in practice once the teachers have returned to their classrooms. Instead, the majority of these research projects turn out to be little more than traditional essays which review theoretical literature on a given topic. In this sense, they have mirrored the older transmission styles of professional development discussed in Chapter 3. This is unfortunate as teacher research/inquiry is considered to be an ideal tool to engage teachers in a critically reflective process, which the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 has suggested is

instrumental in further promoting one's professional competence (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1987; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards, 1998; Wallace 1991).

#### ***4.1 UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME***

The study presented here is based on the reflective process of participants from the MEXT 2007 Professional Development Programme supervised by the University of Ottawa in Canada. This programme ran from June 27th to December 10th. During the first two months, the Japanese Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (JTE) participated in an English as a second language (ESL) programme in Toronto to improve their English proficiency and fluency, both oral and written. For the remaining four months, they participated in a customized teacher-education programme at the University of Ottawa. MEXT's overall objectives for the programme were to improve the JTE's theoretical knowledge of language teaching as well as their fluency in English, so that they could implement a more communicative approach to language teaching when they returned to Japan and motivate both their peers and their students as well. The University of Ottawa's objective was to meet these requirements by providing the JTEs with a learner-centered teaching programme that blended theory and practice and strongly considered their individual classroom circumstances.

Every year the JTEs were required by MEXT to undertake an individual research project. Prior to being accepted into the programme, the JTEs had to identify a critical teaching challenge and submit a 1-2 page proposal with their application. These proposals were considered as a key component of the application process (Personal communication with MEXT administrators). During the four-month teacher education programme, each JTE was required to carry out research that would provide solutions related to his/her specific teaching challenge or challenges, and to prepare a 20 page research paper that clearly outlined both the challenge and relevant literature that is useful for understanding and dealing with this challenge. The individual papers were submitted to MEXT at the

end of the programme. The JTEs were then expected to not only implement this newly-acquired knowledge in their own teaching practice, but also share this knowledge with their peers in Japan as well.

It became apparent (to the U of O instructors) over the years that the completion of these research projects presented a challenge for the JTEs and that they often interfered with their ability to focus on other areas of the programme. In addition, it was unclear to the U of O instructors how relevant the output of the efforts were as they were largely theoretical in nature and in most cases not appropriately contextualized to the teachers actual teaching context. In an attempt to make these individual research reports more meaningful for the JTEs, and more integrated into the overall programme of study, the instructors decided to implement a more supportive and contextual process around the research project. This was done in a number of stages over the years leading up to this study.

One of the first initiatives the university undertook in 2005 was to provide a research mentor for each of the JTEs, as research in the area of training and development has suggested that a mentor is an essential component in the development of professional competence because they help the participants to vocalize the learning process (Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Schön, 1987; Wallace, 1991). The research mentors in the U of O programme were also the main instructors for the other areas of the programme, so they were aware of the overall curriculum and had regular interaction with the JTEs each week. The mentor's main role was to help the JTE identify a manageable topic to study for their research project, to guide them through the research process and to help the JTEs contextualize the findings to their individual teaching contexts. The mentors were assigned mentees prior to the start of the programme based on similar areas of interest and expertise. Typically, each mentor supervised two JTEs per session. The JTEs usually met with their mentors for collaborative discussions once a week for a 30-60 minute session, depending on their individual needs.

In 2006, the University of Ottawa obtained permission from MEXT to change the research report from one that was strictly theory based, to one that contained a balance between theoretical and practical content. While the literature review provided the JTEs with various options for addressing their teaching challenges, the instructors at the University felt that it was essential that the JTEs had an opportunity to apply this theoretical knowledge by developing teaching activities or strategies that could be used in their classrooms back in Japan. For this reason, the U of O instructors also encouraged the JTEs make use of their Japanese teaching texts and curriculum requirements as the basis for such activities. The view of the U of O instructors was that the research project should become a tool box of information and activities the JTEs could access long after the in-service programme was over, thus the findings needed to be contextually oriented as much as possible. For this reason staff renamed the research project, the Professional Development Dossier (PDD), which they felt more clearly reflected the intention of the revised format.

For a few years leading up to this research study, the JTEs had also been given the opportunity to prepare the background and introduction sections of their research papers through a process of group discussion and consultation. This approach was based on theory cited earlier that suggests the learning process is most effective when it is a reflective and collaborative effort as it ensures that there is a link between the teachers' self constructed ideas of best practice and an awareness of how those beliefs fit within a larger community of practice (i.e., their own peers from Japan) (see Chapter 3 for more details). During the first month of the programme, the JTEs and one of the instructors discussed and debated the current teaching situation in Japan as well as the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) processes as a realistic approach for improving language teaching in their classrooms. Throughout the month, the JTEs used these discussions to prepare an introduction for their individual projects regarding the benefits of CLT for teaching English as a foreign language. This reflective process was intended to not only provide the JTEs with the

opportunity to share their teaching experiences with their fellow teachers, but also help them examine their teaching context more critically and to open their minds to alternate perspectives, which was an important part of the process of breaking down the JTE's barriers and misconceptions about CLT.

In an ongoing attempt to make the research project more relevant for the JTEs, a further reflective component, adapted from the model proposed by Wallace (1991), was introduced during the 2007 programme. While reflection had played a key role in the other areas of this in-service programme, it had never been extended to the individual research projects. Introducing this reflective component for the research project provided the JTEs with an opportunity to share and discuss their individual teaching challenges with their peers on a more regular and structured basis throughout the session.

At the beginning of the programme, the JTEs were provided with a reflective log and asked to keep track of any knowledge related to their research interests that was acquired through: their independent research; their content classes; teaching observation sessions at five different schools; their own micro-teaching (presentation of mini-lessons to their peers) in content classes or observation of their peers' during these micro-teaching sessions; or simply through conversations they had with one another or their mentors. The purpose of these journals was to get teachers to think beyond the theoretical research process and make use of their overall experiences in the in-service programme as a means of finding answers to their research questions. Other studies have noted the benefits of using similar reflection journals for raising teachers' awareness of what they are studying and why (Atay, 2008).

At various intervals throughout the programme the JTEs were asked to share their reflections with the other participants. They were also given opportunities to discuss new information they had acquired with JTEs who worked on similar research topics, and were asked to complete several reflective questionnaires that were intended to focus their attention on the various professional

development tasks they were engaged in during the programme (i.e. the discussion groups, school observation, the research project, etc.). These discussions were meant to reinforce and extend the one-on-one weekly meetings they had with their mentors as well as their individual research efforts.

Once the JTEs had an opportunity to examine both practical and theoretical resources related to their individual teaching challenges, which they summarized in their individual PDD reports, they were asked to use this information to develop practical teaching tasks/activities which they believed they could implement in their classrooms fairly soon after their return to Japan. They did this in consultation with their peers and their PDD mentor. The JTEs were then given the opportunity to practice teach one of these activities (usually between 30-40 minutes in length) in front of their peers and receive written feedback and useful suggestions from their classmates which they could use to revise their teaching tasks before moving on to teach the same activity with a group of English as a second language (ESL) students who were studying in the English Intensive Programme (EIP) at the University of Ottawa. While they had practiced micro-teaching in English throughout the session with their peers in their various content classes, teaching in the ESL classes was the first time that most of the JTEs had conducted a whole activity with actual ESL students using only English.

Following both the practice teaching with peers and the actual classroom teaching with ESL students, the JTEs were asked to complete a reflective questionnaire on their experiences. The teachers were then given the opportunity to share and reflect on these experiences with their peers during a group discussion session. Once this process was completed, they were then asked to summarize and present their PDDs to their peers and other teaching staff at the university during a poster presentation seminar. This seminar gave the JTEs an opportunity to take ownership of what they had accomplished and to explain to others how they planned to implement their new ideas in their classrooms in Japan. It also provided the JTEs with a further opportunity to seek input from

others on their proposed teaching activities and further refine these activities before they utilized them with their students in Japan.

#### ***4.2 CASE STUDY APPROACH***

In this research study a qualitative collective case study approach (Creswell, 1988; Merriam, 1988) was used to investigate the benefits of a problem-based reflective process for promoting the development of professional competence in teaching professionals such as the Japanese teachers in the U of O programme. The case study is an ideal approach for examining the research questions presented in this study as it is “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998: p. 61) with an attempt at understanding a methodological approach to teacher education. This case study approach allowed for what is sometimes referred to as “developmental research, [which] comprises an investigation of patterns and sequences of growth and change as a function in time” (Brown and Rogers, 2002). This particular study observed how knowledge acquisition, experience, and reflection contributed over time (the length of the education period) to the development of both dispositional and capacity competencies.

Within this study, each Japanese teacher of English (JTE) represented an individual case within the larger collectivist case, which is an examination of the reflective process presented in the MEXT professional development programme. This study follows the typical format used for such case studies and “first provide[s] a detailed chronological description of each case and the patterns and sequences of growth within the case, called a **within-case analysis** [Chapter 5], followed by a similar analysis across the cases, **called a cross-case analysis** [Chapter 6], as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the cases [Chapter 7]” (Creswell, 1998; p. 63).

The purpose of this case study was not to make sweeping generalizations about the reflective process, but rather to present the “lessons learned” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) from introducing an inquiry-based reflective process into a four month in-service programme for Japanese ESL teachers. The overall intention of this research project is that others working in a similar field might also find some of these insights useful for developing or refining their own professional development programmes.

A variety of data sources were collected to achieve a more in-depth understanding regarding the influence of the various components of the inquiry-based reflective process in helping the JTEs to find solutions for their individual challenges, and thus develop themselves professionally. These various sources of data were necessary in that they were useful in providing a measure of triangulation which is an essential component in all qualitative research studies as this adds to both the truthfulness and the reliability of the findings (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 2000; O’Donoghue, 2007). Similarly, a ‘constant comparative method’ (Silverman, 2000) was used to analyze the data over an extended period of time as outlined in the Data Analysis section below.

#### ***4.3 PARTICIPANTS***

The programme consisted of ten JTEs. While nine JTEs volunteered to be part of the study, three did not participate in a sufficient number of reflective activities to gather insights into the benefits of the PDD process as part of their overall development and thus were not included in this analysis. However, the reasons for their lack of participation in the reflective process provides additional insight into the suitability of the particular PDD process outlined here for similar contexts (as discussed in chapter 7) so they will be described briefly as well. One of the three JTEs could not settle on a teaching challenge to address until very late in the process as she was entering a new school and was not fully aware of her teaching context. Thus the reflective activities did not have much value



for her and her research tended to stay at a very superficial level of knowledge gain of language teaching in general. The other two JTEs had fairly low oral and written English language skills and the reflective tasks appeared to present too much of a language burden for them to complete.

Of the remaining six JTEs whose case studies formed the basis of this research study, two taught at the junior high level and the remaining four taught at the high school level. Individual details of the JTEs are presented in Chapters 5 and 6 as part of the case study description. The JTEs came from various areas of Japan and most were nominated for the programme by the school board in their teaching district. Only two JTEs self-requested to attend the programme. All expenses, as well as their normal teaching salary, were covered by MEXT during the six month in-service programme.

#### ***4.4 INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES***

The researcher of this study was also an instructor in the programme and helped the JTEs on a daily basis to work through their research projects as well as to solve a number of other concerns such as home-stay problems, personal issues, and general academic stress. This dual role of participant researcher can have both benefits and concerns. The main benefit is that as a key participant in the learning programme, the researcher was able to be a natural part of the culture or context being observed and thus more able to observe the phenomenon in a holistic manner that was not obtrusive to the normal practice under study (Trochim, 2006). As much qualitative research is dependent on building good relationships between the participant and the researcher, having the dual role of instructor/researcher was ideal for gathering a rich data supply throughout the research process. However, the dual role of participant researcher also required that the research keep a number of factors in mind to ensure that an ethical level of respect was maintained throughout the data collection period and that she, as both researcher and instructor, was conscious of such issues as differences in age, power levels, and ethical principles (Guillemin and Heggen, 2008). Given the dual role as both

researcher and instructor, a number of steps were taken to ensure full disclosure and to avoid issues over power status relationships between the researcher/instructor and the JTEs.

During the first week of classes, the researcher informed the JTEs of her dual role as both instructor and researcher. They were informed of her intention to review the PDD process as the focus for her own Ph.D. thesis and that she would invite those who were willing and interested in being part of the study to participate via a consent form at the end of the programme. It was made clear to the JTEs that their participation in this study was optional and in no way affected their evaluation in the programme. In addition, the various data sources collected a part of the study (and described below) were all part of the programme and so no additional work was required of them as a result of the research study. Finally, none of the reflective activities or questionnaires used for data analysis in this study involved formal evaluations or grading of any sort and it was emphasized several times during the programme that the completion of the reflective activities was the individual choice of the JTEs given their abilities, demands, and personal goals in the programme. While obtaining more information on certain resources below may have been of benefit to the study, the researcher had to be constantly cognizant of her role as instructor first and to ensure that the comfort level of the JTEs was always uppermost in her intentions.

During the programme, the researcher was also engaged in intensive research of her own in preparation for her comprehensive exams and so she was also very empathetic and supportive of the challenges the teachers were facing. Her openness about her experiences and feelings of incompetency in this area allowed her to further develop a shared sense of community of practice during discussion sessions with the JTEs. Through these discussions, the JTEs came to realize that the research/reflective process was even challenging for native speakers and/or more experienced researchers. It is the opinion of the researcher that as a participant researcher these shared experiences, along with the fact that she worked with the JTEs on an almost daily basis to solve both their

academic and non-academic challenges (home-stay problems, etc.), allowed the JTEs to develop a sense of trust and to therefore discuss and write more openly in the various reflective tools than they might have had the researcher been from outside the programme. The potential conflicts involved in this dual role, were thus outweighed by the insights gained from being so actively involved with the JTEs on a daily basis.

To ensure greater trustworthiness of the findings, multiple resources were collected and analyzed as part of the case study review:

#### ***4.4.1 Questionnaires on Demographic Information***

Prior to starting the programme, the JTEs were required by MEXT to complete a questionnaire that contained personal information such as: age, address, marital status, number of children, current teaching level and location, number of years teaching, education background, and prior visits to foreign countries (Appendix A). This questionnaire supplied information about the JTE's background training and teaching experience which was essential for providing a rich description for the case studies (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 2000).

#### ***4.4.2 Original written drafts of research interests***

Prior to entering the programme, the JTEs were required by MEXT to write a brief (1-2 paragraphs) description of a key teaching challenge (or challenges) that they would like to research during the programme. They needed to explain a major teaching challenge they have had, what they have done in the past to deal with this challenge, and the main topic they wanted to research and why (Appendix B). These documents were useful for providing details about the JTEs' teaching contexts. They also provided a useful baseline to reveal any changes that were made to the JTEs' research topics during the programme, which would have been discussed during the final interview sessions.

#### ***4.4.3 One-on-one interviews with participants to clarify research interests***

During the first week of the programme, as part of the researcher's teaching responsibilities, she met with each of the JTEs, one-on-one, for a 20-30 minute session during which they were given the opportunity to more clearly articulate their teaching challenges (see interview questions, Appendix C). The purpose of these one-on-one sessions was to get the JTEs to reflect verbally on their particular teaching context and its connection to their individual teaching concerns. Following these sessions, the JTEs were provided with a structural outline and asked to write a summary of their research topic for the introduction section of their research paper. In addition, these interview sessions helped to prepare the participants for their first meeting with their mentor which did not take place until the third week of the programme. This information was useful from a research perspective as it provided additional descriptive details on the JTEs' research projects as well as their individual teaching contexts. These sessions were tape-recorded and later transcribed for use in data analysis.

#### ***4.4.4 Participants' completed reflection logs and reflective questionnaires***

During the second week of the programme, the JTEs were introduced to the reflective logs and asked to complete them weekly (Appendix D). The purpose of the reflective log was to give the JTEs an opportunity to review their experiences from the previous week and summarize information or experiences that were obtained during the programme. The JTEs were asked to focus on those items that they thought might provide them with ideas, solutions, or advice relevant to their individual teaching challenges. The reflective log was not unlike a research diary in that its intent was to help the participants track their progress. However, implementing the log format not only provided a structure for the reflections, it also de-emphasized the language demands of diary or journal writing (which was a concern for many of the JTEs because of their limited written fluency). The JTEs were asked to submit their reflection logs to the instructor/researcher for review at periodic points throughout the programme for review. The instructor/researcher did not comment directly on the

content of these in any way, but rather used these review sessions to monitor the reflective process and determine if further instruction or assistance was required.

In the case of the logs themselves, it became clear after the first few weeks that some JTEs did not fully understand their purpose. Despite additional clarification discussions about the use of the logs, some JTEs still had difficulty understanding how to utilize them to their maximum benefit and instead preferred to use them as a location for simply reflecting on the week's activities at a very high level. No further attempts were made to correct this approach as the Japanese teachers were already challenged with a number of other required and more important tasks such as classroom presentations and PDD research.

In addition to the reflection logs, additional reflective activities related to the research process were used during the programme. Copies of these activities are included in Appendix E. These reflective activities were designed to make the JTEs think about various aspects of their own teaching as well as the role of the overall teacher education programme and research process. The topics explored in these reflective activities include: their view of theory versus practice; if and how they currently implement CLT practices in their own classroom; how their teacher preparation and practice help them to address teaching challenges they face on a daily basis; their understanding of training versus development and the role their individual research projects played in the development process; the role of observation in professional development; relating the observation of teaching (during their visits to five different schools in Canada) to their own teaching context and teaching needs; reflecting on these observed teaching practice in relation to the PDD; and periodic reflection on the reflective process and its usefulness in helping them to achieve their goals. From a research perspective, the written product of these reflective activities provided the researcher with valuable insights and examples related to the role of the reflective process in promoting the development of professional

competence. As a result these data sources were very useful in addressing the three research questions proposed for this study.

#### ***4.4.5 Notes and audio tapes from group reflection sessions***

The reflective logs were primarily used to help the JTEs keep track of their findings in one location, but they were also used for in-class discussion and sharing among the JTEs. The purpose of these discussions was to help the JTEs connect the new knowledge they acquired in the programme with their experience as EFL teachers. These sessions consisted of periodic whole group discussion as well as small group discussions. One of the main objectives of this process was to help the JTEs to acquire more autonomy for the research process and realize that their peers could be a valuable source of support and reference, which could be beneficial for them after their return to Japan (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). On two occasions, these sessions involved the whole group and were conducted in a quiet setting. Both sessions were tape recorded for later review and reflection as part of the research analysis.

As with the reflective questionnaires and activities described above, the information from these discussion sessions was useful for providing insights into the reflective process as well as examples of how this process may have contributed to the professional development process. They were thus useful data sources for answering all three research questions.

#### ***4.4.6 Mentors' written summaries of the content of weekly meetings with participants***

During, or at the end of, the weekly one-on-one sessions between the JTEs and their mentors, the mentors were asked to complete a log book which briefly summarized the contents of the discussion and provided direction for future work on the PDD. As each mentor had his/her own approach to the mentoring process, these booklets were used in different ways and with different frequency. For example, some mentors wrote detailed computer notes during their meetings and then provided a copy of these notes for the JTEs to review. Other mentors used the booklet as a means for

summarizing what they had discussed and directing students to future tasks. Another mentor only used the booklet when the JTEs brought it to the meetings because this mentor exchanged a lot of the same information through e-mail correspondence with JTEs he was mentoring. While each mentor had a different approach to using the black book, the information contained in the book was useful as it provided insight into the type of support and direction offered during the mentoring sessions and validated the JTE's opinions about the role the mentors played in the development of their PDD. These log books are particularly relevant for answering the third research question.

#### ***4.4.7 Final copies of the PDD***

Copies of all the research projects were bound together in one document which was submitted to MEXT after the programme. The completed PDD was a valuable resource document for answering the first research question as it provided an artefact of the research process and its surface level outcomes. When carefully analyzed in conjunction with all the other reflective worksheets, it also provided a great deal of insight into the professional development process of the participants and the way in which this process contributed to the development of their overall professional competence (in both senses of the meaning).

#### ***4.5.8 End of session questionnaires and interviews with participants and mentors***

At the end of the programme, the instructor/researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the JTEs. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information about the JTEs' experiences regarding both the research process and the benefits or disadvantages of the reflective activities used throughout the programme (Appendix F). These interviews were done in lieu of a written evaluation of this portion of the programme and also gave the JTEs an opportunity to practice their oral skills before the final oral exam which they were required to do. The results of these interviews were useful in answering all three research questions as they confirmed once again many of the ideas and feelings the JTEs had expressed in the various discussion sessions, reflective tools, and

their PDD. As these interviews were structured as a discussion between the instructor and the teachers, they provided the instructor with an opportunity to clarify her understanding (or in some cases misunderstanding) of the general sense of accomplishment and the JTEs' intentions for changes in teaching practice following the programme. These sessions were tape-recorded for later review and transcription as part of the data analysis.

At the end of the session, the mentors also completed a questionnaire which provided details on their teaching role in the programme, their beliefs about various aspects of the programme, and their role as a mentor (Appendix G). The information in this questionnaire is useful for providing a rich description of the programme.

The instructor/researcher provided the JTE consent form (Appendix H) to the teachers during the second last week of classes and to the mentors at the end of the programme. As noted earlier, the JTEs were invited to participate and were even permitted to omit or black out information they did not want to share as part of the study. None of the participants chose to exercise this option which allowed the researcher to have access to many collaborating sources of data that share quite personal reflections about the JTEs' personal teaching approach and teaching context.

## **4.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

### ***4.5.1 Bumps in the road:***

The data gathered for this study was revisited and analyzed over a period of almost two years, not because the content was difficult to process, but because simultaneous personal, academic and professional challenges both delayed and contributed to the process. Delays were largely the result of interruption to the process by changes in the researcher's committee members, the loss of a supervisor, a move abroad with family and a switch from working part-time at the university to working full-time in training and development in the private sector. The upside of these adventures is that they also



contributed positively to the researcher's further development as a researcher and a practitioner and thus helped develop this study in the following ways. The changes in committee members and supervisor provided the researcher with new perspectives from which to review the topic and data analysis. This also forced her to revisit her approach and justify or adjust her understanding when necessary. The change in career was equally beneficial as it allowed the researcher to become immersed in the practical application of many of the theories outlined in this thesis. This experience allowed the researcher to examine the validity of these theories outside an academic context which served to heighten her understanding of these concepts. These transgressions also forced her to revisit the data a number of times, with various perspectives in mind, over an extended period of time to produce the final process as outlined below. While this was a very time-consuming process and often left the researcher feeling as though she was starting over once again, she came to realize that this process allowed her to become more aware of some of the finer details of the research data that would likely have been missed without these experiences.

#### ***4.5.2 The final process:***

The first step in the data analysis phase was to organize the various sources of data and create files for each JTE. All audio taped sessions were transcribed for meaning segments and any information pertaining to individual JTEs was coded and allocated to the appropriate file. A few comments were not related to specific individuals, but rather the teacher education programme as a whole or teaching in Japan in general so a separate file was also created for group documents that related to the programme in general or the reflective process in particular (i.e. interviews with mentors, instructors reflective notes, etc.).

A qualitative approach was then used to derive meaning from the various sources. An intensive approach to data analysis as outlined by Merriam (1988) was used. The data from each individual case was read over several times during which the researcher conducted a content analysis

of the data, a process of organizing the content of the various sources of data into patterns and sequences of learning related to the three questions posed earlier. Once each file had been read over several times and the information coded to the appropriate research question, the files were all reviewed a second time in order to use insights gained from the individual JTE files to examine all other JTE files for similar findings (Silverman, 2000). The information gathered during this process was used to articulate the learning process of the JTEs during the programme.

Once the individual case studies were completed, the same process was followed with any documents relating to the group as a whole. The procedures used during this phase of data analysis were similar to those during the single-case analysis. An initial reading of all the data was done to allocate the group findings to each individual research question. Once this process was completed, the data were reviewed again to identify additional information and/or patterns that arose after a second reading of the data. This process continued until no new patterns were developed and all information was successfully analyzed against the patterns developed in previous reviews of the data (Merriam, 1988).

Once all data were reviewed, the findings were compiled using Excel and an individual narrative style case study was written up and submitted to the research supervisor for review. Feedback was then incorporated into a revised version of the case study and the remaining five case studies were similarly outlined. These were then submitted for a second review and subsequent revisions were made before moving on to the next stage of the process; a cross-case analysis of the findings in relation to the individual research questions and the literature. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the study.

## CHAPTER 5 - CASE STUDIES

### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a narrative description of the individual case studies of each of the participating JTEs. The analytical structure used to present these case studies is intended to mirror the reflective cycle outlined by Wallace (1991), see Figure 1 on page 32.

First, each case study contains a background section that outlines the JTE's education, number of years of teaching, teaching context, and current teaching challenges (as outlined by the teacher in the various data sources). These factors combine to provide insight into the JTE's conceptual schemata at the start of the programme.

This section is then followed by an outline of the various reflective tools and resources that were part of U of O programme as well as a description of the JTE's understanding of or interaction with these items during the session. During the data analysis phase, these various tools and resources were analyzed in chronological order in an attempt to trace the reflective journey followed by each JTE.

Next, each of the research questions is addressed in turn. In Research Question 1, the narrative highlights the received knowledge that the JTEs encounter, while in Question 2 it highlights the outcome of the reflective process (where JTEs think about, discuss with peers, and try applying or utilizing some of the newly-acquired knowledge) with regard to the value of this newly-acquired knowledge for their individual teaching challenges and particular teaching contexts. The findings for these two research questions are grouped under general themes such as *the importance of theory*, *classroom organization*, *lesson planning*, and *cultural differences*. These themes were chosen as they represent the way in which the JTEs articulated their own learning in these areas and are common to all the JTEs. Within the narrative of these more general themes, the underlying core competencies such as *knowledge of the principles behind materials development*, *skills to provide a balanced programme* and *attitudes which create a classroom environment conducive to learning* outlined by TESOLANZ (Chapter 3) as being essential to the development of professional competence are highlighted when present.

Question 3 outlines the perceived contribution of the various reflective resources and tools in this development process and then each case study wraps up with a summary of the PDD process, and

also provides insight into the professional direction the JTE hoped to follow when they returned to their teaching context.

The subtlety of the competencies developed in the narrative below is intentional as the focus of the analysis in this chapter is meant to be on the journey that led to the development of the competencies, rather than the competencies themselves. A summary of the main competencies developed across the six case studies is presented in Chapter 6, followed by a discussion around the significance of these competencies in the overall development of professional competence (Chapter 7).

## **5.1 HANA**

### **5.1.1 BACKGROUND:**

*Hana's background and research interests, drawn from her draft written statement, one-to-one start of session interview with the researcher and her introduction to PDD:*

Hana was a Junior High School Teacher in Okinawa, Japan. She had been teaching for 13 years at this level and had worked in four different schools. Before entering the programme, she was teaching 7th, 8th, and 9th grade. Each group had approximately three lessons of 50 minutes each per week. Unlike most other Japanese junior high students, Hana's students did not need to compete on high school exams as there is only one high school in their area. Entrance is based on writing tasks where students are required to describe their hopes for high school. According to Hana, most students are accepted into the high school as a result of their performance on these written tasks.

Hana obtained her formal teaching skills from a teacher education programme at university. The focus of this programme was on Teacher Education and Linguistic Study about English. The programme also included a few weeks of student teaching. Over the past 13 years, she has also attended a number of short (weekend) teachers' workshops. In addition to teaching, she had also spent a total of seven weeks abroad in English-speaking countries as part of a home-stay programme. Part of this time was as a student and part of it was as a supervisor for her students. Prior to the programme, Hana's experiences had been more important to her development as a teacher than theory about teaching. She felt that her experiences, both in the classroom, with other teachers, and travelling abroad had provided her with information she could share with her students and inspire them to want to learn English.

Hana's goal during the U of O professional development programme was to create worksheets to support her assigned textbook. She wanted to develop activities that would help her students to learn English naturally and practice or reinforce their classroom learning, especially with regard to grammar and vocabulary acquisition. She also wanted to develop a better understanding of the optimal way to teach students how to use English for communication, not just study English as a subject. This has been a great challenge for students in Japan for many years and she wanted to change their overall view of the purpose of learning English.

Prior to the programme, Hana had utilized various approaches to make English more communicative for her students. She had made a great effort to use English in classes every day instead of delivering her lessons in Japanese which many teachers do (especially in the case of

grammar instruction). She also tried to use various lesson patterns, not just drill activities. She tried to introduce many Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles into her teaching by beginning her classes with small conversations about daily life, using role-play during reading classes and using games and information gaps to get learners to use the language more communicatively.

Hana also made an effort to prepare her own teaching materials in an attempt to encourage the students to go beyond the textbook. She was fortunate enough to have an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT - a native English speaking aid) in her classes every second week which allowed her to break her class into smaller groups for communicative activities that could be led by the ALT. She also tried to encourage English use outside the classroom by rewarding students who use English with her and the ALT in the halls during breaks or afterschool activities. Students who received a sufficient number of signatures for using English would be given stickers or other small treats as recognition for their extra efforts.

### **5.1.2 REFLECTIVE PROCESS**

During the programme, Hana was a fairly active participant in the reflective process. While she did not engage fully in all of reflective tools provided to her, she did complete most parts of the major reflective/practice tasks as outlined here:

**a) *Reflection Logs*** - While Hana did complete the reflection logs on a regular basis, she used these more as a resource for summarizing what was covered during the week, rather than a tool for reflection on activities or concepts that were related directly to her PDD. She did improve this slightly near the end of the course when she made a few small reflections on the usefulness of the Poster Project and her Practice Teaching with the EIP students.

**b) *Reflective Questionnaires*** - Hana completed the following reflective Questionnaires: Reflection on past teaching experiences, September 24; Classroom Observation, October 3; Reflection, October 15; Observation Reflection, November 12; Practice Teaching Reflection, November 7 and 19; and the End of Session Reflection, November 28. While her answers in these reflection activities were brief, she was able to identify key areas for consideration in relation to her teaching approach in Japan as well as the overall PDD process.

**c) Mentor's Written Comments** – comments in the Mentor's notebook focused on the process of the PDD and direction for Hana to make connections between her research and her teaching practice and thus provide insight into the overall process followed by Hana throughout the PDD process.

**d) Final PDD** – Hana's PDD has a balance of both theory and practical teaching activities. In the first half of her PDD, she carefully reviewed her current teaching practice and introduced current research on theories in her areas of concern. In the second half of her PDD, she made a connection between theory and practice with three activities (that arose from her research process) that she could easily use in her classroom back in Japan.

**e) Whole Group Discussion Sessions** – Hana was quite attentive during the 'whole group' discussion sessions. She affirmed many of the opinions provided by other members, but did not openly express many ideas of her own. She preferred to express her own opinions in the reflective questionnaires noted above.

### **5.1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - The PDD Process and Development of Dispositional Competencies:**

Hana viewed this programme as an opportunity for her to define some of her own activities theoretically, develop her skills for using English and develop teaching materials that would help her students "escape from ordinary work" (Sept. 24 reflection sheet, p. 1). She specifically wanted to learn more about CLT so she could prompt students to learn by themselves. Given this goal, Hannah's focus was largely on studying language teaching theory and learning about new language teaching tasks. Through the programme, she developed knowledge in the following areas:

##### *The importance of Communicative Language Teaching:*

Through her PDD, Hana developed a better understanding of the various TESOL methods and how to best use them in a given class, especially in regards to CLT in action. In her PDD (p. 12), she indicated that a CLT classroom should focus on fluency, emphasize meaning, and use authentic texts and visual tools. In order to promote communication, students need to be engaged and present their own opinions (PDD, p. 15). The need to express one's opinion was identified as being a key requirement for promoting a communicative language environment and was emphasized in several

reflection sheets as well (Reflection, October 15; Classroom Observation, November 12; Practice Teaching, November 19; end of Session Reflection, November 28).

One of the main concepts Hana wrote about in several of the reflective journals (Reflection October 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28) as well as her PDD (pp. 13-14) was the idea that an effective teacher doesn't rely on only one teaching method to promote language acquisition, rather they learn to use various methods in different combinations, depending on the students' learning context, their language level, cultural expectations and their relationship with their students. This idea was also discussed several times during her mentor meetings (September 12, 20, and 26). According to both her PDD and one of Hana's mid-session reflections, "It is the teacher's job to learn the most effective way of implementing the various teaching methods available to meet the needs of her students" (Reflection, October 15).

As an approach for deciding how best to combine multiple teaching methods in one lesson, Hana also developed a better understanding of the Engage, Study and Activate approach used by Harmer (2001). One of the key principles of TESOL course design that she was able to draw from her research was that teachers can make use of the Engage, Study, and Activate approach to blend various teaching methods and organize their lesson plans so they promote an effective learning environment (PDD, pp. 13-14; Reflection, October 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28). During discussion with her Mentor on September 12, it was noted that this approach could also be used to help motivate her students, develop a good relationship between teacher and students, and make for more interesting classes.

#### *Listening and Speaking – theory and observation:*

In order to better understand how to promote a more communicative approach to learning English, Hana also studied theory related to the development of listening and speaking skills. According to her PDD, teaching speaking is important as it is a key requirement in the Japanese Course of Study. Emphasizing speaking in the classroom is an important factor in L2 development as it promotes autonomous and incidental learning and helps to engage students by allowing them to express their opinions. Hana indicated that to promote speaking in the classroom, the teacher needs to follow some basic principles of material development such as “using good speaking activities and ensuring that teacher interruption should be done carefully” (PDD, pp. 15-18; Reflection, September 24). Speaking activities are an important factor in L2 development as they help to “Activate” learning



(Mentor Log, October 3; Reflection, October 15) and “give students an opportunity to practice and receive feedback in a safe environment” (PDD, p. 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

In regards to listening theory, the main principles Hana focused on were the use of “pre, during, and post-listening activities to enhance the listening experience for the learner” (PDD, p. 17). She highlighted the use of audio and video resources as a good approach to enhancing students’ oral proficiency (PDD, p. 17). Based on her own experiences with listening activities during the programme, she indicates in her reflective journals that the “use of pre-listening before watching videos is an effective approach to help with challenge of listening to authentic English sources” (One-on-one interview, August 29; Reflection, October 3) and motivating students as it is interesting and promotes learning in both a “conscious and unconscious way” (PDD, pp. 17-18; Reflection, October 3).

#### Classroom Organization:

During the classroom observation sessions, Hana came to understand the role of the teacher as a key principle in promoting TESOL. Teachers “need to praise students naturally” (E-mail, October 10) and draw them into the learning experience by the use of audio tools (Reflection, October 3), classroom organization (Reflection, October 3; Observation, November 12), and “the selection of the correct activities” (PDD, p. 10; Reflection on Classroom Observation, November 12; End of Session Reflection, November 28). She also noticed that in the in the French Immersion classes she observed, the teachers used a lot more of the target language with their students. They challenged the students by “speaking in French with them and even checking their understanding in French”. As a result, students also felt more comfortable using the target language and “responded often, and with confidence” (Reflection, October 3; Observation, November 12).

#### Development of teaching Activities:

In her PDD, Hana focused on the development and selection of listening and speaking activities as she felt they were essential components of any CLT based TESOL curriculum since they were instrumental in promoting a more communicative classroom. They have been designed to both “Engage” the students in the learning process and “Activate” their knowledge of various grammar or vocabulary skills. She said that she liked to use interesting activities such as these in her classroom as “they promote learning in both a conscious and unconscious way” (PDD, pp. 13, 16, 18; Reflection,

September 28; Reflection, October 15; Mentor Notes, October 12 and 18; End of Session Reflection, November 28,).

The first activity was a Circle Conversation speaking activity (PDD, pp. 19-21). The objective of the activity was to have students work in small groups and make sentences using word prompts derived from a stack of word cards. Assessment comes from the other members of the group which will promote further speaking and listening between the group members (PDD, p. 18). The second activity was a board game which emphasized the oral use of prepositions (PDD, pp. 19-21). Students move around a board game and are directed to select cards which have an incomplete sentence. The task of the learner is to complete the sentence with the correct preposition. Feedback from peers is intended to generate further listening and speaking practice.

The final activity was a listening activity designed to promote the understanding of relative clauses (PDD, pp. 22-25). Students listen as the teacher reads out sentences which contain relative clauses and the students must identify the correct relative clause. After each sentence, students work in small groups to identify/negotiate the correct answer.

### **Q#1 - Summary:**

When reviewing both the completed PDD and the various reflection sheets completed by Hana, it is clear that through the overall PDD process she was able to learn more about some of the factors affecting language learning, the principles behind materials development and selection as well as the various TESOL methods she could utilize to improve the communication level of her students, which was one of the main goals for her participation in this programme. In addition, she was also able to broaden her knowledge of general teaching principles (such as praising students often to boost their confidence and increase participation) as well as the importance of exposing students to as much L2 in the classroom as possible.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION #2 - The PDD Process and Development of Capacity Competencies:**

According to Hana, the PDD process was very useful in helping her to understand the important role that theory plays in helping teachers to better understand how to meet their students' needs. In addition, she also realized the role that she can play in helping her students to become more motivated and autonomous learners of English.

### Lesson Planning:

As a result of the PDD, Hana indicated that the programme helped her to be able to assess and use appropriate resources in her classroom. She said that she could now "categorize [her] previous activities according to different kinds of method so that [she] could have confidence about the particular activities she selects for her lessons" (End of Session Reflection, November 28). According to Hana, she already used many of the teaching approaches she had read about through her own research or been exposed to in the programme. She had also learned to use similar activities from her textbook, activities she has found on her own, or those shared with other teachers. The major change for Hana following the PDD process appears to be that she had gained the confidence and ability to not only explain WHY certain activities could help her students acquire English more effectively, but also to judge which activities would be best given her specific teaching objectives. Hana noted, "I could now categorize my previous activities according to different kinds of method so that I have confidence to use activities along the methods and I have knowledge to explain why they activities may help students' language learning" (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

Hana also developed a clearer insight into how she could use TESOL methods and teaching strategies to structure her lessons and provide a balanced programme. At the end of the session, she indicated that she could now "go back and forth between learning stages" using the Engage, Activate, and Study approach promoted by Harmer (2001) to "make sure her students learn" more effectively (November 28, End of Session Reflection). She felt this approach would help her to meet her students' learning objectives (PDD, pp. 12-14). Hana also realized that she could now make her "classes more enjoyable and instructive on practical lesson plans in both a conscious and unconscious way" by using the ESA approach (End of session Reflection, November 28). When examining her own lessons prior to the programme, she indicated that her "patterns of lessons are mostly EAS" (Reflection, October 15). After some critical reflection, she still supported this approach and said she would continue to use it as she believed this approach created an environment conducive to learning as it helped her students to learn more naturally and encouraged acquisition of English versus learning of English. She notes "students like EAS cycle because when they are doing Activate naturally, they don't feel they are studying. This sequence of learning is real acquisition of language" (Reflection, October 15).

### Cultural Awareness:

During the programme, Hana picked up on several cultural differences between Canadian and Japanese classrooms that she observed as being critical for creating a more communicative environment with ESL students in Canada.

Hana felt that “interaction between students and teachers is the key to developing communication skills” (Classroom Observation, November 12). Hana notes that in Japan, teachers don’t “interact with students as often as in Canada” (Classroom Observation, November 12). She said Japanese, “teachers teach new ideas to students, but they don’t share ideas with students and don’t ask students’ thoughts or opinions so much”. There is often less opportunity to discuss in class and students are not required to do presentations either (End of Session Reflection, November 28). In her Reflection on Classroom Observations, November 12, she noted that in Canada, teachers always seem to try to “find what are the best ways for letting students learn autonomously”. In her September 24 Reflection, she indicated that she needed to “prompt [her] students to learn more by themselves” and that she planned to build more activities of this nature in her own lessons to challenge her students when she returned to Japan. Hana also noted that she now felt it was important for teachers to make students aware of why they are using a particular activity. She believed this would be a good way of “getting them more interested in the activity”. She also wanted to “give students a chance to think about how [the activity] helps them” (End of Session Reflection, November 28) as this would make it more obvious to the student how the various learning tasks connect with one another.

Through the various observation sessions, Hana was also able to better understand the role of constructive teacher feedback. She came to believe that teachers need to provide feedback as soon as possible and in a natural way (PDD, p. 15). In regards to language teaching, she highlighted the importance of Error correction in speaking as being especially important (Reflection, September 24). She also liked the way the teachers in Canada wrote the correct answers on the board and repeated them back to the students (Reflection, October 3). Feedback from students to teachers is equally important. Hana noticed that a great difference between students in Japan and students in Canada was their willingness to challenge the teacher. During her practice teaching with ESL students at the end of the session, some students challenged her answers, by asking why she had chosen that answer or why that answer was right (Practice Teaching, November 7; End of Session Reflection, November 28). This had never happened to her before because “Japanese students never question their teachers”. At first it made her very insecure, but when she reflected on it after her teaching session she realized that this feedback actually helped both her and her students to enhance their understanding and it helped

her to improve her teaching. Hana notes, “Thanks to him, I started to show some example sentences used with ‘of’ and ‘about’ and I got a chance to teach more deeply and have students’ understanding” (Reflection on Practice Teaching, November 19; End of Session Reflection, November 28). Based on these experiences, Hana said that when she returned to Japan, she would try to implement this new teaching strategy and challenge her students more often by using the ‘Why method’ (e.g. Why do you think that? Or, why is that your answer?) to extend their communication and learning in an authentic way (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

### **Q#2 Summary:**

Hana’s ability to critically reflect on her lesson choices and her own teaching approach in relation to either supporting or conflicting research was an essential part of the process needed to develop her capacity competencies. She was also able to reflect on her own teaching approach and substantiate the parts she felt were solid, based on her personal style and supporting research and then recommend changes for herself in areas where her critical analysis suggested change is needed for improved learning in her classroom. Throughout the programme, she was able to enhance her understanding of the role of feedback for both teachers and students and how to use a variety of strategies and TESOL methods to meet her students’ needs and promote more independent learning for them.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION #3 - On a four-point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, and Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?**

In Hana’s view, most of the components of the reflective cycle were useful in her professional development throughout the programme.

#### *Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Very Useful:*

In Hana’s case, there were four components of the reflective cycle which were very useful in helping her to develop her professional competencies. The actual PDD was instrumental in exposing her to theory about language teaching. She notes that by “getting information from my PDD, I can develop activities which can be used in real-life situations [i.e. her teaching] (End of Session Reflection, November 28). The school observations, on the other hand, allowed her to obtain practical knowledge about how to engage students into the learning process. She says that they “were a really

good opportunity to understand how students are taught” (Observation, November 12; End of Session Reflection, November 28). The assistance of a mentor was instrumental in helping her to organize her research approach and help sort out her thoughts and beliefs (Mentor Notes), and finally, the poster project session was a great opportunity to “summarize [her] PDD” and reflect on and understand her learning “more deeply” (Reflective Log, November 22; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

#### *Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Useful:*

The reflection sheets were also useful in that they allowed her to “look back on what she had learned” up to that point and remember the most important points (Reflection, October 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28). However, she felt that they were always “so busy” that she was unable to really spend the time needed on these reflections. As well, to write these in English took “a lot of time and effort for her” (Reflection, October 15) and she “felt rushed sometimes” to get all her work done (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

Small group discussion with peers and practice teaching to peers were also useful for sharing knowledge and providing feedback to one another. She said she was “able to learn from their experiences” (End of session reflection, November 28) as well as the feedback they gave her on her own ideas or presentations (Practice Teaching, November 7). She is the only English teacher in her school, so it was beneficial to have this group environment to extend her learning and reflection. The only part of this that was difficult for her was to express herself in English (E-mail, October 10; Reflection, October 15).

The practice teaching was also a useful activity for her. She was not only able to have a chance to practice some of the activities she developed, she was also able to experience a very different student-teacher dynamic than what she is used to in Japan. While it was challenging to deal with students who questioned her, she found that it was a really beneficial way of extending learning for both the teacher and the students (Practice Teaching, November 7; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

#### *Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Not Useful:*

The aspects of the PDD process which were of less significance (not useful) for Hana were the reflective logs and the reflections on practice teaching. She found it difficult to understand the purpose of the reflective logs, especially at the beginning, and to write in them in English was a “very demanding task” for her (Email, October 10). She was not able to take advantage of the discussion

session which centered on the reflections of practice teaching as she had to have a meeting with one of the teachers so she felt this activity has less value for her than the others (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

#### **5.1.4 HANA – Summary:**

The goal for Hana was to learn more about language teaching theory so that she would be able to improve her instructional approach. She also wanted to develop some additional worksheets she could use with her students when she returned home. This is the typical level of professional development that most teachers such as Hana expect when they enter programmes such as the one in this study. However, the insights that Hana gained through the reflective process are as important, if not more so, for extending her professional development to the capacity level.

It is clear from the analysis in Research Question 1 above that the PDD research process exposed Hana to many new language teaching theories and approaches and helped her to raise her understanding of the factors affecting language learning. There is no doubt that the development of this knowledge was crucial in building Hana's understanding of how to design her lessons and to explain the principles behind why a particular activity will help a learner to expand their language development. It also gave her an understanding of and professional language for describing much of what she was already doing in her classroom prior to the U of O programme.

However, as we discussed earlier, professional development is about more than just acquiring knowledge, it is about understanding how to utilize that knowledge given your particular needs and context. Through her engagement in the overall PDD process, Hana was able to develop a better understanding of her role in promoting the learning process in her classroom, especially in regards to assessing and selecting the most appropriate resources for students. She was also able to develop some skill in being able to use various teaching strategies and TESOL methods to help her deal with the cultural and contextual challenges she has to overcome to move her students' learning to the next level. Hana's understanding of what she was doing and why, changed substantially as she realized she had the ability to direct the type of learning her students engage in.

Through the various reflective tools (PDD, Reflection Sheets, School Observations, Practice Teaching and Small Group Discussions), Hana was able to critique her own teaching approach and discover that while she approved of the way in which she structures her lessons, she must work more to break down the barriers that exist between the teacher and the students and she noted that she desired to become more of a facilitator in helping her students to acquire English as a means of

communication, rather than a teacher who teaches about English. She was also able to understand the impact that one's culture can have when it comes to language acquisition. She recognized that the traditional Japanese classroom culture will present some barriers for her as students are not accustomed to expressing themselves to the teacher or speaking up in class, but that she must provide opportunities such as presentations or asking opinions of students in order to provide a classroom environment conducive to learning and to slowly change the typical role her students expect to play in the learning process (End of Session Reflection, November 28). She indicated that when she returned to Japan she wanted to try to be more of a model for her students and give them many opportunities to use English as a communication tool (Reflective Log, November 22).



## **5.2 TOMIMO**

### **5.2.1 BACKGROUND:**

*Tomimo's background and research interests, drawn from his draft written statement, one-to-one start of session interview with the researcher, the whole group discussion sessions and his introduction to PDD:*

Tomimo was a junior high school teacher in Shizuoka Prefecture. He had been a teacher for 14 years at this level and had worked in several schools. At the time of the U of O programme, he was teaching in a school in the mountains that only had six English language classes, with less than 30 students in each class. There were three other junior high schools in his area and they were working with the high schools to study the effectiveness of sharing resources such as language teachers across the two-school system. As part of this process, his teaching responsibilities were split between the junior high and high school EFL programme. In his junior high school, he was teaching level 1 and 2 classes three times a week, for 50 minute sessions as the main teacher. In these classes he also had an ALT to assist him in every lesson. In addition to these duties, he then also worked as an ALT with a high school teacher a couple of times a week. This experience helped to increase his understanding of the requirements of both levels.

In his junior high classes, Tomimo's students were not as stressed as some other Japanese school students because most of them could attend high school in their local area and did not need to worry about passing difficult entrance exams. He felt students at the junior high level enjoyed taking part in communicative activities, more so than in his previous school, though they tended to lose interest as they moved up in levels and the grammar, vocabulary, and reading content become more difficult. He also felt that the content of some of the Japanese textbooks has not been very interesting for these young students and thus adds to the decreasing motivation of students in junior high EFL classes. He noted that for those students who need to take the high school exams, their course of study often involves a great deal of mechanical repeating of idioms and sentences through boring activities, which only acts to further decrease their lack of interest and motivation in seeing English as a means of communication rather than a subject to study.

Tomimo studied English teaching in university. His thesis topic was on Communicative Competence, in which he analyzed the importance of discourse competence and studied Japanese students' discourse competence in relation to the requirements of the MEXT Course of Study. In

addition to his formal education, he had also attended a number of workshops and seminars given by his Prefectural Board of Education and had some immersion in an English environment during a trip to Australia where he supervised a group of Japanese students on a short exchange programme.

Tomimo wrote in one of his first teaching journals that he saw the value in theoretical training, but believed that practical experience had been most useful to him as a teacher. Prior to the U of O programme he had had several opportunities to have observers in his class and he believed that those observers had given him an opportunity to reflect on his performance. Likewise, he welcomed a number of student- teachers in his class, the presence of which he felt was beneficial for him as a teacher because he could observe what his students like about their lessons or their approach and reflect on how to improve his own teaching. He said “I have made lots of failures in my classes ... however, thanks to those failures, I have had lots of opportunities to improve my classes” (Reflection, August 28). In 2006 he also had the opportunity to work as an area language teacher. In this capacity he travelled around, observed junior high teachers in other schools, engaged in discussion with other teachers, and then used these sessions to make recommendations on how to improve communicative teaching for all junior high students. He felt that this activity was very useful to him as a teacher because he was able to get a better idea of what was working in junior high EFL classes and what was not.

This experience of observing others and reflecting on his own teaching led Tomimo to conclude that the main problem with communicative issues in junior high English classes has been “too much focus on repetition and practice of structures, useful expressions, and clichés” (PDD, p. 4). While he believed this is required, he said he thinks many teachers in Japan think this is all that is needed for students to become communicative, but it is obvious that this has not been effective. In his school and in other junior high schools, he also realized that while students enjoy talking in English, their conversations often do not match. For example, one student might tell another student what they did yesterday, and the student might respond with a formatted, rehearsed question such as “Why do you like to study English?” This type of interaction appeared to be a consistent problem during most of his observations sessions and he believed that too much teaching of fixed phrases has been a major barrier to the development of communicative language skills in junior high schools in his area. For these reasons, Tomimo’s goal at the start of the U of O professional development programme was to study best practices for improving students’ practical communication abilities.

Prior to the U of O programme, Tomimo hypothesized a few solutions to this issue and tried them out in his classroom to see if he could improve the communicative abilities of his students. First,

he tried to teach his students many useful expressions and then give them several opportunities to use them in the classroom so they could learn to use these expressions more naturally. Second, he tried to give his students some interesting topics to discuss, thinking that this might motivate them to communicate more with their peers in English. Third, he tried to give his student activities at the end of each session to help reinforce the expressions that they have learned and perhaps this would help them to acquire English more easily. Despite these adaptations, he felt that he still needed to learn more about how to develop his lessons and materials to promote a more authentic communicative environment. He believed that if he could find a way to have students' not just practice these expressions, but actually use the expressions with one another to genuinely communicate, then his students will have more confidence to speak English.

In addition to learning about language teaching and learning he hoped that the programme would help him to improve his own speaking and listening skills which would allow him to improve his own teaching as he would hopefully become more comfortable using English more often with his students.

### **5.2.2 REFLECTIVE PROCESS:**

During the programme, Tomimo was an active participant in the reflective process. While he completed all of the reflective tasks, he did not always utilize them fully. Below is an outline of where Tomimo focused his reflective efforts during the programme:

**a) Reflections Logs** – Initially, Tomimo did not utilize the reflection logs very much. The main reason for this was he did not really understand their purpose. After discussion with the researcher, about a month into the programme, he had a better understanding of how he could use the reflection logs and began noting information in them more frequently. Most of this information was a list of important activities or tasks that he felt were in some way related to his PDD.

**b) Reflective Questionnaires** – Tomimo completed the following reflective questionnaires: Reflection, August 28; Reflection, September 24; Classroom Observation, October 3; Observation, October 15; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Summary Reflection, November 12; Practice Teaching to Peers, November 7; Practice Teaching, November 19, and the End of Session Reflection, November 28. His responses on these sheets tended to be brief, but he highlighted many areas of consideration given to his PDD.

**c) Mentors' Written Comments** – Comments in the mentor's notebook focused on the process of the PDD and direction for Tomimo to make connections between his research and his teaching practice. These notes provide insight into the overall process followed by Tomimo throughout the PDD process.

**d) Final PDD** – Tomimo's PDD has a balance between theory and practical teaching activities. In the first half, he reviewed his current teaching practice as well as the objectives outlined for all Japanese teachers in the MEXT Course of Study. He also introduced current research theories for his area of concern. In the second half of the PDD, he made connections between theory and practice throughout the five practical activities he developed. Each of the activities was designed so that he could use them repeatedly in his classroom in Japan. In his summary, he also highlighted his beliefs on the role of the teacher in the language teaching classroom. Tomimo's PDD is quite reflective in its presentation and thus provides many insights into Tomimo's professional development process.

**e) Whole Group Discussion Sessions** – Tomimo was very attentive during the whole group discussion sessions. He often affirmed many of the opinions of others, but did not openly express many ideas on his own. He seemed to be more comfortable expressing his ideas in the reflective worksheets or in one-to-one conversations with his mentor.

### **5.2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - The PDD Process and Development of Dispositional Competencies**

Tomimo viewed the programme as an opportunity to learn more about teaching communicative skills and was interested in learning how he could improve his syllabus design, activity choice and feedback to students so that he could promote the more authentic use of English in his classroom. Given this goal, Tomimo's focus was on examining current language teaching theory, classroom organization and the use of L1 in EFL classrooms.

### *The importance of Communicative Language Teaching:*

In the introduction to his PDD Tomimo noted that “There is an opinion amongst many that the only way to learn to speak English is through CLT”. As part of his PDD, he wanted to understand what features of CLT make it so conducive to promoting communicative skills.

Through his research on TESOL methods, he learned many of the same elements as the other teachers in the programme and that the focus of CLT is on “expressing meaning, rather than mastery of bits of language”. The teacher’s role is also very important in a CLT approach as the teacher does not “control” the classroom, but rather “facilitates” by helping students use the target the language as often and as authentically as possible. Errors are “ok” if they do not impede overall meaning. In addition, students are expected to be “autonomous learners and take more responsibility for their own learning” (PDD, p. 8). A popular CLT activity is the information gap activity where each participant is missing information needed to solve a task and must seek that information from the other participants. Other activities include role-plays and discussions.

While Tomimo understood the value in CLT, he also knew that many famous Japanese have learned to speak English very well, long before CLT was popular. Given this reality, Tomimo suggested that teachers need to continue to think about and discuss “what speaking English well means ... does it mean only accuracy, or is it [also] fluency” (PDD, p. 1). As part of the research process, he also reviewed several other TESOL methodologies, such as the Grammar Translation Approach (popular in Japan), Audiolingualism, and Task-Based teaching. Through this research, he concluded that “effective language teaching blends many of the ideas and elements of each method ... in other words, one of the main principles of TESOL course design is that the teacher’s main task is to learn which method is most appropriate for teaching the types and skills required by their students” (PDD, p. 11). The idea of blending teaching methodologies was very interesting to Tomimo and was discussed a few times over the course of the semester (Mentor Meetings, September 19 and 26).

Like several of his colleagues, Tomimo also researched the Engage, Study, and Activate approach (Harmer, 2001) as a means of understanding how to develop and select materials and combine multiple teaching methods in one lesson (PDD, p. 11). He discovered that the various stages promoted by Harmer could be used to “make language acquisition either more explicit or more implicit”. For example, the main focus of the “study” phase is to focus on language construction and is thus by its very nature conscious and explicit. Whereas, in the “activate” stage, “activities or exercises are used with the aim of getting students to use the target language freely and communicatively” (PDD, p. 11), which is when learning is often implicit and unconscious. Tomimo

indicated that one of the main principles in developing your lessons is to have the Engage, Study, and Activate phase in each lesson though the order of usage of these phases can be changed around to create variety and emphasize the different learning goals of the lesson.

### *Teaching Speaking Skills – Theory and Observation*

In order to better understand how to organize successful speaking activities in his classroom, Tomimo researched theory related to the development of L2 speaking skills. In his PDD, he indicated that teaching speaking is a “critical factor in language learning as those students who have more opportunities to activate the various elements of their language learning, will be able to use feedback they receive from their teacher and their peers to assess where they need more effort to make themselves understood by others” (PDD).

Tomimo’s theoretical research suggested that the more often students in Japan are required to practice using English, the greater their confidence will be that they can communicate with others in English. Based on available theory (PDD, p. 12) and his observation of language teaching classes in Canada (Classroom Observation, October 24), Tomimo concluded that too much L1 usage can be a barrier to the development of communicative skills. He notes that too much use of L1 is “often a problem in EFL classes, especially in Japanese junior high schools” (PDD, p. 13).

Tomimo also enhanced his understanding of how the types of activities selected by the teacher can help to improve oral communication between students. In order for speaking activities to be successful, they must ensure the learner has an opportunity to participate and they should be activities that motivate the learner to want to communicate with one another (PDD, p. 14). For this reason, “task based activities are a good way for promoting authentic communication between students” (PDD, p. 14). Tomimo learned that tasks such as information gaps, describing and arranging, simulations, role-plays, telling stories, show and tell, and discussions are all very good activities that can activate language knowledge use as students need to ask for real information, opinions, directions, etc. in order to achieve their goal (PDD, p. 14; Observation, November 12). Tomimo noted that one of the key factors with developing speaking activities is that “students need to have a necessity to speak with one another” (Reflection Log, November 14). Tomimo also observed that group work can be an effective way of enhancing communicative skills in the classroom (PDD, p. 14; Reflection, October 15; November 12).

The second key principle Tomimo learned about developing effective speaking activities is that it is important to “make the language easy for students to use” (PDD, p. 5 & 14; Observation,

October 24; Practice teaching, November 7). If the vocabulary or the instructions are too difficult, this will interfere with communication and thus prohibit successful interaction between students (Practice teaching, November 7). His suggestion for creating activities is “the simpler, the better” (Practice teaching, November 19).

As a third key principle for developing activities, Tomimo learned that the “topic choice is important” (Classroom Observation, October 24) for motivating students (PDD, p. 14). He reflected that during classes in Japan, students usually all have the same topic to present on or the discussion topics tend to be about things the students likely already know about their peers, so “they practice doing other things without listening to the speaker” (Observation, October 24). However, during his observation of Canadian classrooms he noticed “while one student is making a speech, other students listen to the speaker” (Classroom Observation, October 24) and ask their peers questions because the topic is new and interesting for them and they are genuinely motivated to find out more information from the speaker (Observation Summary, November 12). Tomimo concluded that if the topic is interesting, students will want to communicate with each other because they will want to obtain information from each other to learn more.

The fourth key principle for developing oral language activities is to remember that it is important for students have a sufficient number of useful phrases or expressions they can use in specific situations such as when they need to ask for clarification or direct the conversation so that it is at a level they can understand (i.e. Can you repeat that? Or, could you speaker a little slower please?) (PDD, p. 14).

### Classroom Organization:

Throughout the session, there were a number of interesting features Tomimo pointed out regarding the broader principles of teaching, especially in regards to classroom organization and the role of the teacher in promoting language acquisition. For example, the way in which the teacher organized the classroom also made a difference in promoting communication between students as well as between the teacher and the students. According to Tomimo’s observations, a U-shape provides an “open space in the center of the room. So it is easy for a teacher to observe each student and for students to move their desks to make small groups” (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 10).

Tomimo also noticed that in classes where the students are very young or their language skills are very low, the teacher needs to more actively “control the class” (Observation, October 3;

Observation, October 10; Observation, October 24). Tomimo notes that the teacher was also very aware of the attention span of our students and how to keep them motivated. “In younger classes, teachers used concrete things or had students learn by doing” (Observation, November 12). In all cases, “there were more group activities, and the students kept their concentration during the activities” (Observation, November 12).

#### *Development of Teaching Activities:*

In his PDD, Tomimo developed several speaking-related activities, which were designed to be used in tandem with one another and used in frequent lessons. All activities were designed to correspond to the “Engage, Study, or Activate” approach promoted by Harmer (2001). Tomimo’s goal with these activities was to ensure that he promoted both a “conscious and unconscious approach to language learning and acquisition” which was a main principle of TESOL course design (PDD, p. 14; Reflection, October 15; Observation, October 17; Practice Teaching, November 19). The first two activities emphasize more conscious learning or studying. They provide students with the knowledge needed to be successful in the activate phase, which is the third activity “Small Talk”.

The first activity was designed to promote the knowledge of useful expressions for understanding and clarifying what one has said (Pardon; Say that again, please; Please speak more slowly; What does x mean?) (PDD, pp. 16-17). The main reason Tomimo developed this activity was that he felt his students didn’t use these strategies mostly because “they did not know them” (PDD, p. 16). In this activity, students are introduced to useful phrases and given time to practice using small talk to rehearse when and how to use the phrases. Students are then asked to reflect on their use of these phrases after their small talk sessions and use a pre-prepared grid to indicate how often they used each of the expressions during their conversation. The main idea of this activity is to provide them with very important phrases for extending communication and to raise students’ cognitive awareness of their own learning process and development. The grid also provides the teacher with feedback on those expressions that may need more practice.

The goal of the second activity was to promote the use of Communication Strategies such as eye contact, clear voice, facial expressions, gestures, connectives, echo questions, paraphrasing, etc. Since 70% of all communication is made up of non-verbal cues, Tomimo felt it was important for teachers to help students learn these strategies (PDD, pp. 17-19). In this activity, students are provided with a list of vocabulary. Working in pairs, students must give sufficient clues via body language, paraphrasing, etc. for their partner to guess the word. Actually, Tomimo indicated that this



activity is quite common in Japan. However, on its own, the activity has not been successful in helping students to master these strategies. To make this activity successful, he felt it needed to be followed up with opportunities for students to use such strategies in actual conversation. This is where the “small talk” activity comes in once again.

During small talk, the third activity in Tomimo’s PDD, students work in pairs and discuss freely and spontaneously for a predetermined amount of time. During their conversation, students must practice using the communication strategies identified in the previous activity to assist them. In order for these small talk sessions to be successful, the topics for discussion should be new to the student and maybe even a little controversial to promote more authentic communication. The idea should be that the topic is not about something the student already knows about the other person (the typical approach in Japan). Some topics for junior high students could include discussions around “my ideal room”, “my favourite treasure, vacation, etc.”, “show and tell”, “a recommendation for a restaurant”, “what you would want if you were stranded on a desert island”, etc. (PDD).

Tomimo also outlined a few task-based activities that could be used for longer stretches to extend the student’s use of useful phrases after their comfort level is higher. He noted that it is not just important to give students lots of activities to do, the “most important aspect” is that they should “have to solve or finish a task” (Reflection, October 15) as they would need to do in real communication situations. Tomimo believed that these types of sharing or problem solving activities would help the students to successfully master those speaking skills outlined in the MEXT Course of Study.

### **Q# 1 Summary:**

When reviewing the completed PDD and the various reflection sheets completed by Tomimo, it is clear that the PDD process has helped him to become more knowledgeable about the principles behind language teaching theory (CLT and others, especially related to building speaking skills) and course design (ESA to address learning objectives) as well as to develop a better understanding of broader teaching principles such as the importance of classroom organization for promoting interaction between students and keeping them motivated during the learning process. In addition to learning about language teaching, Tomimo also highlighted a number of ways in which his experiences and reflections have affected his attitude towards language teaching in Japan at a deeper level.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION #2 - The PDD Process and Development of Capacity Competencies**

According to Tomimo, the experience he gained while going through this programme, combined with the experiences he had as a lead teacher back in Japan convinced him that the language teaching problems in Japan are not just problems with the students as many believe (i.e. lack of motivation or ability to learn), but with the teachers as well (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

### *Lesson Planning:*

In his PDD, Tomimo noted that many “English teachers, especially non-native speakers of English have negative opinions about CLT ... many teachers think that in CLT [you cannot] teach grammar ... they also worry that English spoken by students might lack accuracy” (p. 8) because they believe that there is too much emphasis on oral skills rather than written skills (which are important for those in countries such as Japan where there are entrance exams for high school and university). Through his own research and comparison of the various theories, he has realized that these beliefs are unfounded (PDD, pp. 11, 24) and that CLT can actually help teachers to promote a more balanced programme for their students. He says that the reality is that many teachers in Japan do not fully understand the theory behind CLT or any of the other common language methodologies and so they do not know when and how to use them.

Contrary to what he believed when he entered the programme, Tomimo learned that good teaching is not simply about discovering the best method, but rather about the way in which you assess and use the appropriate resources needed to plan your lessons (Reflection, October 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28; PDD). He notes that “all of the methods have been successful in one way or another ... effective language teaching blends many of the elements of each method” (PDD, p. 11). Tomimo notes that each method has its pros and cons and each can be used to emphasize a different learning objective, which is why it is important for teachers to understand the differences between the methods (PDD). Tomimo indicated at the start of the programme that teachers in Japan tend to focus on “practicing and drilling students on commonly used phrases and idioms”. He now believes that one of the reasons shy teachers in Japan have not been successful is that “the teachers are poor at theory” (End of Session Reflection, November 28) and thus do not have sufficient balance in their teaching programmes. For example, before coming to Canada, Tomimo noted that “I had participated in many workshops or seminars given by the Board of Education. Most of the native English speaking teachers introduced GAMES (caps in original). But I thought that just doing games did not help students improve communicative competence” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). The main reason for his lack of understanding was that they did not teach the theory

behind these activities or provide a clear context as to when teachers might use them in their classrooms.

Equally important is understanding your students' learning objectives/needs and then planning your lessons accordingly by selecting the TESOL methodologies best suited to helping students reach those objectives. For Japanese students, the learning objectives are very clearly outlined for each level in the Course of Study released by MEXT (PDD, pp. 2, 12, 13). Throughout the programme, Tomimo was quite surprised that "many of [his] peers were not familiar with the Course of Study" (End of Session Reflection, November 28) and the overall objectives for their students and wondered if this might be part of the reason why so many teachers (and their students) do not clearly understand the importance of embedding more communicative activities in their classroom. He believes that understanding the Course of Study is equally as important as understanding learning theory. Tomimo notes "I think both are important. We should teach English according to the theory, which includes the Course of Study" (End of Session Reflection, November 28) as it is pretty hard to decide on what is the best way to teach something if you are not clear on your end goal (End of Session Reflection, November 28, PDD). If teachers have a better understanding of what their students need to learn and why, they might be better at communicating these needs to the students as well.

In addition to understanding the course of study, Tomimo suggested that the "Engage, Study, Activate" approach promoted by Harmer (2001) would be a very useful tool for helping Japanese teachers to provide a more balanced teaching programme as most teachers do not sufficiently "Activate" their students' language knowledge. Tomimo suggests that "most teachers in Japan employ a straight arrow sequence [ESA]" (PDD, p. 12) with an emphasis on Engaging and Studying. However, Tomimo notes that the learning guidelines and objectives of the Course of Study clearly promote the use of an alternative approach which is "Engage, Activate, Study" as a key approach to developing Japanese with Communicative abilities (PDD, pp. 12). In fact, for students in his level, the two main communicative goals are "situational conversations" and the ability to engage in activities such as "describing and information gap" (PDD, p. 12), both of which are best acquired through activities targeted towards activating students' knowledge. When Tomimo assessed his own teaching approach and the activities he was using, he noted that he has been good at Engaging students: "I try to work out [how best] to introduce the new structure. I sometimes use pictures, show videos, draw pictures on the board, play with ALT, use authentic material and so on" (Reflection, October 15). He also believed he was good at the study phase: "I am good at teaching grammar" (Reflection, October 15). However, when it comes to the Activation stage, he realized that the type of activities and the

topics he had been giving had not been optimal. As a result of the PDD process, he learned the importance of topic choice and the use of teaching strategies such as questioning as a valuable tool for making any activity communicative, even those designed to emphasize the “study” of grammar or language form. His goal upon his return home was to include this approach in his lessons more consistently (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

Tomimo noted that in the years to come, it is expected that “the Course of Study will be revised ... [and] ... the time available for teaching English will be increased from three to four hours a week”(PDD, p. 24). Tomimo believes that many teachers think this is all that is needed for students to improve their communicative abilities. However, Tomimo insisted that “the way classes are taught will not change unless teachers try to change their desire and passion for teaching” (PDD, p. 24) and continue their professional development so they are able to use a range of TESOL methodologies and strategies. He said: “I know this is true from my own experience. Previously, I worked at a very large school where each class had about forty students. I wished that there could be less students. I believed that if this was the case, I would be able to teach English in a more effective way. However, last April, I moved to a new school where the number of students in each class was around 20. Despite this change in the number of students, I noticed that nothing changed about my teaching at the new school” (End of Session Reflection, P. 24)

It was only by taking part in a study where he got to observe other teachers, discuss problems and potential solutions with them, and reflect on his own teaching did he begin to see where changes were necessary. Based on these experiences and his learning in the U of O teacher education programme, he realized that successful language learning had much less to do with the size of his class and much more with his own selection and use of appropriate TESOL methodologies and teaching strategies. Tomimo notes that in order for students to really acquire a language, they cannot simply practice the language, they must be given multiple opportunities to “activate their language knowledge through meaningful interaction with others [by] using the language” (p. 6) in activities such as those outlined in his PDD.

### Cultural Awareness:

Tomimo noticed in many observation sessions that Cultural differences can also have an impact on teaching and learning.

Tomimo discovered that the approach to language teaching is quite different in Canada. Even though the students' English level was very low in many of the classrooms, Tomimo noticed that they were still able to communicate with one another using only English (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 10). This was the case in both ESL and EFL classes. For example, in one of the French as a Second Language classes, where all students had English as a common L1, the teacher acted as a model for the students by "speaking only French". "Despite their low ability, the students seemed to follow her without difficulty because she spoke clearly and slowly throughout the lesson" (Observation, October 24). Tomimo noticed that active use of the target language (i.e. practice) was also instrumental in helping students to become more independent learners (PDD, p. 13).

As a result of these observations, Tomimo felt that perhaps the Japanese teachers' unwillingness to push their students to use the target language and the Japanese students' unwillingness to take risks was actually a barrier to activating students' knowledge of the target language. One of the main inhibitions to speaking English in Japan is that students "do not want to make mistakes or get criticism" (PDD, 13). Tomimo suggested that this attitude on the part of both teachers and students could be slowly changed by the use of appropriate practice activities given by teachers to help students build the students' confidence (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 10; Observation, October 24). He felt that the useful phrases activity and mini discussion topic activity he presented in his PDD were good examples of how this could be done.

Similar to target language use, Tomimo also suggested that constructive teacher feedback was also important for helping the learner to understand how well they are doing (PDD, p. 13). This is another area where Tomimo noticed significant differences between Japanese and Canadian Teachers. During many of the observation sessions he noticed that even though the classes were quite communicative, the teacher spent time on error correction (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 17). In one class "the teacher corrected students as they spoke" and made the students "respond in complete sentences" (Observation, October 3). He noticed that the teacher would also help to facilitate the students' responses by coaching them along with phrases such as "I play ... what?" Tomimo felt that this interaction between teacher and student was very important for building student-teacher rapport and increasing students' confidence to take risks with language use. As with the use of the target language in the classroom, the use of constructive teacher feedback could also be used to help promote a classroom environment that is more conducive to learning.

## **Q #2 Summary:**

Tomimo's ability to critically reflect on the role of the teacher in relation to successful language teaching has been an essential part of the process towards developing his capacity competencies. Throughout the programme Tomomi not only critiqued his own teaching approach, but that of Japanese junior high teachers in general. Through his research, discussion with peers, and his own reflection, he concluded that there are many things that he and his colleagues are doing well, but there are many areas where they need to take more responsibility for their role in helping their students to become successful language learners. This insight was especially important for him as he was to return home to be a lead teacher in his prefecture once again.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION #3 - On a 4-point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, and Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?**

In Tomimo's view, all components of the reflective cycle contributed to his overall professional development throughout the programme:

### *Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Very Useful:*

For Tomimo, there were three elements of the reflective cycle which were very useful in helping him to develop his competencies. The PDD allowed him to not only learn a great deal more about research about best practices for developing oral communication skills, it also allowed him to develop his own "reading and writing skills" (End of Session Reflection, November 28). He felt that this process was very beneficial in teaching him how to conduct his own research and indicated that after the programme he wanted to learn more about error correction and feedback when he returned home (End of Session Reflection, November 28; PDD, p. 24). He said his mentor was very useful in helping him to understand the PDD process. She gave him "clear direction", reviewed theories with him and helped him connect these to his teaching context and provided feedback on his writing (End of Session Reflection, November 28). Finally, the practice teaching with his peers and with ESL students was also very useful for Tomimo. He notes, "I could get useful feedback ... [and] ... I could learn a lot of important things from other members' activities" (ibid). The teaching session with ESL students was the first time he ever taught a whole lesson in English and the experience increased his confidence to use English as well as his desire to try using English more at home. Tomimo noted, "I could teach English in English. [The] students enjoyed my activity" (ibid).

### Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Useful:

Tomimo also found the School Observations and Reflections on these Observations, the Small Group Discussions, and the Reflection on Practice Teaching to be useful. By observing classrooms in Canada he was able to make comparisons between Japanese and Canadian classrooms and reflect on how those differences contribute to the development of communicative skills. Tomimo said, “I could reflect on my teaching in Japan ... I could learn a lot of things from each teacher” (ibid). These sessions also allowed him to make connections to his PDD, especially in terms of the role of the teacher, error correction in class, and the benefits of using questioning to increase discussions skills.

In regards to the Small Group Discussions, Tomimo said “At first, I thought that this discussion would not be useful because the teaching context and challenges are different. But it was very useful to know other members’ situations” (ibid) especially those at the High School level. This was very new and interesting for him as junior and high school teachers do not have much contact in Japan. Finally, the Reflection on Practice Teaching was also useful. He was able to listen to his peers summarize the usefulness of the programme as a whole and this allowed him to think about how both practice and reflection are helpful for teachers. This helped him to “structure his own discussion more fully” (ibid).

### Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Somewhat useful:

The Weekly Reflection Logs were the only part of the process that did not provide much value (only somewhat useful) for Tomimo. While he did complete them and understood their overall purpose, he felt that they were very tiring to complete and that there were other ways in which he reflected more naturally: “I don’t think that I have to do the reflective activities in such a formal way. We can take brief notes. These notes will also become a reflection” (ibid).

### **5.2.4 TOMIMO - SUMMARY:**

The goal for Tomimo was to learn more about language teaching theory so that he would be able to improve the practical communication skills of his junior high school students. He wanted to learn more about how to develop his lesson plans and activities so that he could promote more authentic communication in his classes. As we saw with Hana, this is a common goal for professional development programmes such as the one in this study. However, the reflective process in this programme also helped Tomimo to come to a very deep understand of the important role that teachers

play in creating a successful learning environment for their students. This insight was critical in extending Tomimo's professional development to the capacity level.

A review of the data related to Research Question 1 reveals that the PDD research process was very beneficial in helping Tomimo to develop his dispositional competencies. Tomimo enhanced his understanding of TESOL methods and developed a better understanding of the factors affecting language learning. In addition, Tomimo learned a great deal about the principles behind materials development and selection (especially in regards to topic choice), the benefits of task-based activities, and group work. The development of this knowledge was crucial in building Tomimo's understanding of the main principles of TESOL course design, in particular how to organize his lessons and to be able to explain why a particular activity helps a learner to expand their language development.

While understanding what makes good teaching is important, learning to apply that understanding to critique and improve your own performance is critically important for moving learning beyond the dispositional level to the capacity level. The reflective process gave Tomimo an opportunity to do just this. By analyzing his own lesson plans in relation to the theory he was learning and the requirements of the MEXT Course of Study, Tomimo could assess that he was already on the right track in regards to his overall lesson structure (thanks in large part to his participation in the various workshops and observation sessions he participated in back in Japan). Through the various reflective activities, he was able to identify further weaknesses in his teaching approach and find solutions to improve or fine tune his lessons plans. As a result of this process, he said that he felt more confident that he would be able to provide his students with a more balanced learning programme and facilitate more independent learning in his students through the use of a variety of teaching strategies and TESOL methodologies (PDD, pp. 23-24).

In addition to this very critical instructional understanding, Tomimo also developed an awareness of the teacher's key role in transforming language teaching in Japan. While it is true that smaller class sizes, more instructional hours per group, and additional teaching resources such as ALTs, language labs, etc. will be contributing factors in developing Japanese students' communicative abilities, Tomimo concluded that the main responsibility for creating an environment that is conducive to learning lies with the teacher. If Japanese language teachers are not willing to change their approach to language teaching, what Tomimo called their "passion and desire for teaching" (PDD, p.24), none of the other improvement will have the desired effect.



Tomimo believed that when he returned to Japan, he had a responsibility to contribute to the professional development of other teachers by “showing what he had learned” (PDD, p. 24). He needed to not only adjust his own learning plans but also help other teachers to do so as well as part of his responsibility as lead teacher. He didn’t believe he would face much resistance in his efforts as the “junior high school teachers in his prefecture would like to make their classes more communicative” so he felt his information will help them reach their goals (End of Session Questionnaire, November 28).

## 5.3 NAKA

### 5.3.1 BACKGROUND:

*Naka's background and research interests, drawn from her draft written statement, one-to-one start of session interview with the researcher and her introduction to her PDD.*

Naka had been a high school teacher in Sapporo, Japan for 13 years. At the time of the U of O programme she had worked in the same school since 1998. Her school was an academic school and almost all students worked towards taking the university entrance exam. According to Naka, most students in her school received high scores on this entrance exam, so there was pressure for all students to perform at a high level. In her school, there were eight groups of students in each level (1, 2, 3), with around 40 students in each group. Before coming to the programme, Naka taught both level 1 oral communication (where students attend two 45 minute sessions per week) and level 2 oral communication (where students attend four 45 minute sessions per week). She normally had only 20 students per class as her classes were part of a “small-group instruction” initiative (PDD, p. 8).

Naka studied English Education in University and wrote her final paper in Pseudo-cleft Constructions in English, which is related to the concepts of Universal Grammar. Over her career she has also learned a great deal about teaching English from her earlier experiences as a student teacher, from observing other teachers in her school/prefecture, from reading about teaching and learning, and from participating in an organization called the Society for the Study of English Education. In addition to teaching, she spent ten months living in Tennessee (USA) and six weeks in Calgary (Canada), as part of student exchange programmes. She had also travelled to many other countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Greece, England, Hong Kong, Germany, New Zealand and Egypt.

According to Naka, these varied experiences were very important in her development as a teacher. Through her travels, she had the opportunity to communicate with many people and improve her English. Through her regular lessons and observing others she learned a lot about which areas of language learning challenged her students the most. When she first began teaching, it took her a long time to develop her lesson plans. But as she became more experienced, she said it did not take as much effort so she was able to use the extra time to make her lesson plans more interesting.

Naka's goal during the U of O professional development programme was to research how to improve her students' reading ability. In her classes, most students tended to check reading texts for

the meaning of new words, learn the grammatical points, and then translate the English into Japanese, “The end!” (One-on-one interviews, August 29). While this approach to reading has been common practice in Japanese English I and II classes at high school (because these are common entrance exam type tasks), Naka noted that the MEXT Course of Study indicates that the real objectives of English I are “to develop students' basic abilities to understand and convey information, ideas, etc. by listening and speaking English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communication through dealing with everyday topics” (PDD, p. 9). Likewise, the objectives of English II are “to further develop students' abilities to understand what they listen to or read and to convey information, ideas, etc. by speaking or writing in English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communication through dealing with everyday topics” (PDD, p. 9). Naka noted that while her students were able to use the skills noted earlier to understand the surface meaning of what they read, she was not clear to what extent they got any “deep meaning” from the texts. Aside from learning how to design her lessons so that her students could meet these MEXT objectives, she also wanted to enhance her students’ deep reading skills so they were able to “enjoy reading stories in English and thereby enrich their own lives” (draft written statement).

Prior to coming to the U of O programme, Naka had worked on this challenge in her classroom by giving her students additional materials to help them understand the stories in their textbooks. For example, she showed them a video or some photos to give them some social or cultural background of the topic. Secondly, she tried to ask the students questions about what they have read to help them comprehend the story more deeply. She also tried to give them worksheets with various types of questions such as multiple choice or true or false.

To prepare for the U of O programme, Naka spent some time examining theories on reading instruction and surveying the reading abilities of her students. From the U of O programme itself, she hoped to attend lectures on English education at the university and to obtain new ideas and tools for developing reading skills. She also wanted to observe English language classes whenever possible.

### **5.3.2 REFLECTIVE PROCESS:**

During the U of O programme, Naka was a very active participant in the reflective process. She engaged fully and with great effort in all the reflective tools provided, as outlined below:

**a) *Reflections Logs*** – Naka completed the reflection logs on a regular basis. For the first few weeks, she was itemizing all her programme activities in the logs in a very brief manner. However, as the first

month progressed, she began to use these reflection logs to focus solely on important observations, activities, research materials or discussions with teachers or peers that were related to her PDD (the original intent of the reflection log). She didn't engage in deep reflection about the usefulness of these items for her PDD, but she did indicate a fair amount of details including the purpose or usefulness of specific activities or knowledge pieces in general (a reflection process in itself).

**b) *Reflective Questionnaires*** – Naka completed all assigned reflective questionnaires: Reflection, August 28; Reflection, September 24; Classroom Observation, October 3; Observation, October 15; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 30-31; Observation Reflection, November 12; Practice Teaching to Peers, November 7; Practice Teaching November 19, and the End of Session Reflection, November 28. She answered all questions with detailed responses.

**c) *Mentors' Written Comments*** – The comments in the mentor's notebook focused on the process of the PDD and direction for Naka to complete the PDD process. There were a number of entries where her mentor guided her to continue to make connections between CLT, reading theory, and her own teaching practice. These notes provide insight into the overall process followed by Naka during the PDD process.

**d) *Final PDD*** – Naka's PDD has a balance of both theory and practical teaching activities. In the first half of the PDD she provided an overview of the most important aspects of CLT, followed by a detailed description of various taxonomies of reading skills and strategies which can be used to help learners develop reading skills that will allow them to read for both surface detail as well as deep meaning. In the second half of the PDD she made use of the theory she acquired from her research process to develop full lesson plans from her Japanese language teaching text.

**e) *Whole Group Discussion Sessions*** – While Naka was very attentive during the whole group discussion sessions, and expressed her agreement or disagreement through body language (nodding, head, smiling, etc.), she did not openly express her opinions unless directly called upon. Instead, Naka preferred to provide her comments in writing on the various reflective worksheets.

### **5.4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - The PDD Process and Development of Dispositional Competencies:**

Naka viewed the programme as an opportunity to learn how to effectively teach reading skills to her students so that they could obtain a deeper meaning from the reading texts they were assigned (by MEXT) and enrich their own lives by learning more about different topics and perspectives. In addition, she hoped that the programme would give her many opportunities to talk with other teachers and observe language teaching classrooms in Canada. As a result of her very active participation in the classroom-based instruction sessions and school observations, Naka was able to add to her professional knowledge in the following areas:

##### *The importance of Communicative Language Teaching:*

For her PDD Naka researched how CLT differs from more traditional TESOL methodologies. Through her research, she developed a much clearer understanding of the purpose and usefulness of CLT. She learned that the focus of CLT activities is to emphasize the expression of meaning, rather than a pure focus on the mastery of bits of language. Activities should be authentic (as real-life as possible) so they provide learners with a genuine need to communicate. Rather than organize lessons around grammar points, they should be organized around functions that help the learner practice how to actually use the language such as giving information, and agreeing or disagreeing (PDD, p. 1).

Naka noted that in CLT activities, the teacher acts as a facilitator of language learning and the learner takes more responsibility for learning the language by working on their own or in small groups. The teacher's job is to develop the right tools to help the learning process along. Some examples of common CLT activities include information gaps, role plays and discussions (PDD, p. 3).

Much to her surprise, Naka also learned that CLT is relevant when teaching all language skills, not just oral/aural skills. Therefore, even reading and writing skills should be taught communicatively as they are in essence a form of written communication (PDD, p. 6).

##### *Teaching Reading Skills and Strategies Communicatively:*

In her PDD, Naka reviewed a number of essential principles regarding the development of reading proficiency. She discovered that there are several skills that students need to practice or develop in order to become communicative readers. These skills range from such basic concepts as "recognising the script of the language" to "meta-cognitive knowledge and skills monitoring" (PDD,

pp. 11-13). Naka noted that meta-cognitive skills could be ideal for helping learners to better understand the reading process as well as the reading text as they require the learner to have “an awareness and understanding of their own thought processes” (Reflection, September 24).

In addition, Naka researched important factors in the process of development of L2 reading skills. Two key processing approaches that could help students to improve reading comprehension: linguistic and cognitive processing. In linguistic processing, readers recognize written information by sight, spelling, and sound and build up meaning from the phoneme level to the word level, and then on to sentence level and so on. In cognitive processing, readers understand the meaning of a text by activating schema, and using this knowledge to interpret phrases and words. Naka noted that both process are interactive and help in promoting reading comprehension (PDD, p. 14). Top down processing and bottom up processing are also commonly used terms for these two approaches. Naka indicated that “efficient readers constantly integrated both processes while reading” (PDD, pp. 15-18).

On a more practice level, Naka identified some key principles behind the development and selection of reading materials. As a result of her PDD research, she realized that “pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading” are the most common reading activities used to promote comprehension (PDD, p. 18; End of Session Reflection, November 28; Reflection Logs 17, Observation, October 17). During the observation sessions, Naka was also able to see many pre-reading/listening, while reading/listening and post reading/listening activities used frequently in the foreign/second language classes as well as for teaching English reading skills to English speaking students. Interestingly, Naka was able to transfer lessons learned from observing the use of listening activities to building reading skills. After observing how a teacher used questions during and after a video to build comprehension, Naka indicated that she could use this approach in her PDD as well as the while-listening and post-listening activities “helped the students to understand the content of the video more deeply” (Observation, October 3).

In regards to planning her lessons, Naka identified six main reading principles to build effective reading activities: “1) Encourage students to read as often and as much as possible; 2) Students need to be engaged with what they are reading; 3) Encourage students to respond to the context of a text (explore their feelings about it), not just concentrate on its construction; 4) Prediction is a major factor in reading; 5) Match the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts; 6) Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full” (Reflection, September 24; Reflection, October 15).

Naka also realized an important aspect of TESOL course design: “As with all other skills, it will be seen that reading often introduces, follows or is integrated in work in other areas, such as

speaking and writing” (PDD, p. 18), which is one reason why developing reading is such an important part of developing a student’s overall communicative abilities (PDD, p. 18).

### *Classroom Organization:*

During the observation sessions, Naka was also able to learn more about some of the broader principles of teaching such as classroom organization (Observation Reflection, November 12). The positioning of desks, even during language lab, was very important for promoting communication between students. In the classes she observed, the desks were usually placed side by side or in a half circle, which “allowed students to discuss, work in pairs/groups, and help each other” (Observation, October 29-31; Observation, October 3; Observation, October 17, Observation, October 24).

In all the language classrooms, consistent use of the target language was an important part of developing and encouraging language teaching. For example, during a visit to a French immersion classroom, Naka observed that the teacher conducted the whole lesson in French and “they didn’t translate the story from French to English at all” (Observation, October 17). During another observation session in a French as a second language class, Naka noted that “the teacher and the students only spoke French” even though some of the teaching materials were written in English (Observation, October, 24). Naka noticed that students of all levels were able to comprehend the target language when it was simple and clear.

Naka also identified the importance of the teacher in promoting language teaching. She noted that ‘many Canadian teachers asked the students a lot of interesting questions in their classes, and the students were enjoying learning by thinking and expressing their ideas ... the relationship between the teachers and the students were close’ (Summary Observation, November 12). Based on her observations, Naka concluded that teachers need to praise students and talk with them in the target language, even outside the classroom. Asking various types of questions is also a good way of getting students to participate in communication (Observation, October 17; Observation, October 29-31).

### *Development of teaching activities:*

In her PDD, Naka applied her newly-acquired knowledge of TESOL course design and curriculum development to develop three lesson plans, each of which included pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. Two of the lessons were based on lessons from her assigned textbook in Japan. The final activity was designed to practice skimming and scanning activities.

The first activity's main purpose was to help students become familiar with the structure of a text. The pre-reading activity uses a series of photos which represent the reading text. The students' task is to put the photos in the right order. Students compare their results and discuss alternatives. As students read the story, they can refer to their photos and reorganize them as needed. This pre-reading activity is designed to activate the reader's schemata and encourage predicting skills. Naka suggested that a good while-reading activity for this text would be to leave off the end and have students predict how the text will end, as they read along. Finally, the post reading activity involves students in role play scenarios to extend the original story. There are various roles and each will be involved in a radio discussion with another corresponding role. To prepare for this task, the reader must examine the text and understand such critical features as purpose, tone, mood, etc. (PDD, p. 19).

The following two activities are also complete lesson plans for covering reading topics from Naka's Japanese EFL text. The pre-reading tasks help build vocabulary knowledge and cultural information about humour. The while-reading activities encourage summarizing skills as well as understanding paragraph/essay structure. The follow-up question, or post-reading tasks, included debating and expressing one's opinions and feelings. For example, "If you were sick, would you like to stay in a place like Gesundheit? Why or why not?" was one of the follow-up questions at the end of the selected reading lesson. All of these activities were designed to help students with both linguistic and cognitive processing before, during, and after the reading process.

The final activity was designed as an information gap activity to practice students' skimming and scanning skills. Both students have an airline ticket, but with different pieces of information. They must first scan their ticket to answer certain information on their individual questionnaires and then they need to work with their partner to help each other complete all the missing information on their individual tickets. Naka created this activity because skimming and scanning are critical pre-reading (for predicting) and post-reading skills (for finding specific information).

### **Q # 1 Summary:**

A review of the information in this section outlines both the practical and formal dispositional competencies that Naka was able to acquire as a result of her participation in the reflective process. She was able to develop a better understanding of teaching methodologies such as CLT as well as specific principles about language development and TESOL course design. Finally, she was able to combine this information with her teaching needs back home and develop three comprehensive lesson plans for her students.



## **RESEARCH QUESTION #2 - The PDD Process and Development of Capacity Competencies**

Much of what is described in research Question 1 alludes to the main capacity competencies developed by Naka throughout the PDD process.

### *Lesson Planning:*

In Japan, Naka had not thought much about using CLT in her classrooms. As indicated earlier, she taught in an academic high school, where most of the students are focused on preparing to take university entrance exams. Because of these exams, senior high school English classes tend to orient their skills development towards answering questions similar to those on the entrance exam (which covers basic comprehension of facts and translation of Japanese text into English), rather than on communication. Even her own lessons were often designed this way (One-on-one start of session interview, August 29). However, As Naka came to understand CLT theory better, she began to conclude that it is important to embed CLT into all aspects of learning or as she says, to “learn all aspects of English, more communicatively” (End of sessions reflection, November 28) in order to develop a more balanced learning programme. By the end of the programme, Naka believed that by embedding more communicative activities in all her reading tasks she would be able to increase her student’s overall comprehension of reading texts and this is what is needed to help them develop a deeper understanding of the texts.

In terms of making her lessons more communicative, she had further reflected on how well her own lesson plans stacked up to the “Six principles for developing effective reading activities” mentioned in the previous question and understand what changes she needed to make in order to create a classroom environment that was more conducive to learning. She believed that Principle 1 (Encourage students to read as often and as much as possible) was quite well embedded in her overall programme of study, as her school does weekend reading marathons where students must read longer texts and answer a series of questions. The students have to do similar reading activities during the summer break as well. She also felt that she was OK on Principle 4 (Prediction is a major factor in reading) and Principle 5 (Match the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts) as most of the teaching activities in her text already teach predicting skills via pre-reading skills and all activities are not only matched to the topic, they are also matched to the learner’s level. However, she realized that her prior lesson plans did not include any focus on Principle 2 (Students need to be engaged with what they are reading), Principle 3 (Encourage students to respond to the context of a text, explore

their feelings about it, and not just concentrate on its construction), or Principle 6 (Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full) (Reflection, October 15). Naka indicated that the absence of these principles in her lesson plans was likely one of the main reasons why her students had not been able to engage more deeply in the reading materials in her lessons. She agreed that it is “important for students to learn the language” (analysis of vocabulary, structure, etc. which are a common features in the activities found in Japanese texts), but “the meaning and the message in the text are also important ... [and] ... that she must give students a chance to respond to the message in some way. They should be allowed to show their feelings on the topic” (Reflection, October 15). She believed that one way to resolve this issue was to use a variety of TESOL methodologies and teaching strategies to manipulate the readings texts more fully, such as “using the topic for discussion and further tasks, and using the language for study and then activation and use of a range of activities to bring the text to life” (Reflection, October 15).

Over the course of the semester, Naka had also come to view reading as both “a communicative activity between the reader and the writer and also a social and cultural activity” (PDD, p. 59), which enhanced her overall understanding of why it is so important to fully assess the appropriateness of learning resources. As noted in Question 1, Naka identified that during reading there are both linguistic and cognitive processes activated to aid in and promote comprehension of a text (PDD, P. 15). However, after some reflection, Naka has also concluded that while helpful, these processes can also malfunction for EFL students: “EFL students often interpret the text differently from English native students because EFL students cannot activate schemata related to the text because they do not share the same cultural knowledge” (PDD, p. 15). Naka felt that these are both common problems for her students as many of the English texts have been written by native English speakers from other countries. When this happens, students are not able to activate the schemata that are critical in helping them to understand the deep meaning of the text. Naka believed that by using the appropriate pre, during, and post materials she could help her students develop sufficient linguistic knowledge and cognitive schemata to process the reading passages in their textbooks (PDD, p. 17). For example, pre-activities can focus on building up essential vocabulary and setting cultural context, while a during-reading activity could be used to highlight both meaning and linguistic structure. Follow-up activities can then be used to dig deeper into the meaning by asking real information seeking questions from the reader (PDD, pp. 19-58).

A review of the lesson plans outlined in the previous questions suggests that Naka went far beyond just comprehending the importance of these reflections, to actually embedding them in the

way she plans to move forward with her students. What is important to note about the activities included in her PDD is that they are not simply add-on activities she can do when she has a few moments (or never do at all), but an actual restructuring of the way in which she will conduct the lessons she is required to teach from the assigned textbook to ensure that she has a more balanced programme of study for her students. She clearly recognized that it was important to balance students' needs with MEXT's overall learning objectives. She recognized that the students must work with their assigned textbook and develop the critical skills needed to pass the upcoming entrance exams and that diverting their time away from this would not be successful. So, her lesson plans allow them to meet these needs, yet move slightly beyond those requirements to also develop a deeper level of comprehension by the implementation of reading skills and strategies as discussed in the next section.

### *Cultural Awareness:*

Naka indicated that in Canada, "the teaching focus is much more communicative" (Observation, November 12).

The teacher's interaction with students in Canadian language classes is very different to the way Japanese teachers interact with their students (Observation, October 17; Observation Reflection, November 12). In the various observation classes she attended, she noticed that the teacher actually "asked students many questions", before reading, during reading, after reading, after presentations, when checking grammar, etc. (Observation, October 3, Observation, October 17, Observation, October 24). This was even the case in an English literature class (for native speakers). The teacher broke up the reading text into smaller chunks and "asked several questions to check the students' knowledge as they went along". He would say such phrases as "What has happened so far?" As part of the reading lesson, students were also asked to read aloud, like a role play (Observation, October 29-31).

Naka noted that the students also take a much more active role in their learning process: "The students respond to the questions immediately when asked and have a lot of time to discuss in pairs or as a whole class" (Observation, October 3). They are also very willing to express their opinions (Observation, October 17). In one of the French immersion classes she observed, the teachers asked the students many interesting questions. The students enjoyed the reading activities very much because they were able to "enjoy learning by thinking and expressing their ideas" (Observation, October 17). In one of the ESL high school classes, the students made presentations to their peers on

personal topics about themselves such as a family treasure. The students not only enjoyed presenting, they also enjoyed listening to others and asking questions (Observation, October 24; Observation, October 39-31).

The mixed use of teaching strategies (such as teacher questioning) and TESOL methods (presentations, group discussion, etc.) was interesting for Naka as she realized that combining a variety of approaches could be useful for creating a more conducive learning classroom and engaging the students more fully in the learning experience. In addition, the teachers also used the questioning technique as an informal approach for assessing students' comprehension. The teacher would first test students' knowledge with very simple questions and then move up to more difficult ones (Observation, October 39-31).

Another difference she noticed in Canada was the level of teacher-student rapport. She indicated that in the many classes she observed, "The relationship between the teachers and the students was close" (Observation, October 17). The teachers talked a lot with the students, even during the recess. The teacher was also a good role model for using the target language. This was the case in both ESL classes (where students all have different first languages) and EFL classes (where students share English as their first language). In one class she observed "the teacher spoke only French (the learning language) to the students", even though their level was quite low (Observation, October 17).

These observations caused Naka to reflect on her role in facilitating a classroom environment that is more communicative and conducive to developing all language skills, including reading comprehension. She noted that when she returns to Japan she would like to adjust her style "to be less lecture oriented" and to ask her students "more questions which call their interest in learning English" (Observation, October 17; Observation Reflection, November 12). She also indicated that she now understood how to adjust her approach to meet the needs of various levels and abilities. With very low levels, "she could use simple yes/no questions". However, to make students communicate more, especially more advanced students, "she could switch the type of questions she used in the classroom to those that go beyond a yes/no response and require students to express their opinions or feelings" so they have something genuine and unique to contribute about the topic (Whole Group Discussion). Naka also said she would like to make more time to talk with her students in class and after school as well in order to develop a stronger student-teacher rapport. She wanted to get to know their personality better and find the most effective way of teaching each student (Observation, October 17; Observation Reflection, November 12).

## **Q #2 Summary:**

Naka's ability to critically reflect on her lesson plans and her own role in the classroom in relation to her observations and knowledge of current learning theory was instrumental in helping her to develop her capacity competencies even further. As a result of her participation in the overall reflective process, she was able to reflect on her teaching approach and identify the areas in which she is contributing to her students' success and where she needs to be more proactive at facilitating a more conducive learning classroom and balanced learning programme. The activities she outlined in her PDD have also clearly demonstrated that she has internalized her new view of reading as a communicative process that needs specific skills and strategies to make the reading process successful.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION #3 - On a four-point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, and Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?**

In Naka's view, all aspects of the reflective cycle were useful for her overall professional development:

### *Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Very Useful*

First, her weekly meetings with her mentor were very useful in helping her to “correct [her] English and organize her PDD” and provide direction on the PDD process (End of Session Reflection, November 28). The PDD process helped her to better understand learning theory and apply it to her own teaching needs. She also noted that the PDD process helped her to acquire the skills needed for reading “technical books on English education, writing academically and having discussions with my peers and mentor” (ibid). The practice teaching sessions with her peers and with ESL students were also beneficial: “It was very useful for me to get some advice from my peers to improve my activity” (ibid) which was also useful for her PDD. The actual practice teaching session was useful because it gave her more confidence to use more English in her classroom when she returned to Japan. She noted that it “helped [her] to develop professionally by taking a long time in developing the teaching material” and that she “could have a precious experience of teaching the second language students”. She said “it was the first time to conduct an EIP class, which could enrich [her] life as a teacher” (Reflection on Practice Teaching, November 19). Naka also found the poster project to be a very useful opportunity for her to review her PDD and continue her professional development by sharing her findings with other teachers and getting “useful comments on her PDD” (End of Session

Reflection, November 28) that she could use to further adapt her teaching approach. For example, one teacher who is familiar with Japanese culture suggested that initially she might want to give the students the task of interviewing their parents on their opinions around issues in the reading texts and then present those to their classmates, rather than their own opinions. This would be less intimidating for them. She thought this was a great way of importing the new concepts into her class, while still respecting some of the cultural barriers her students have about talking about themselves (Researcher observation during the Poster Project session).

#### *Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Useful:*

Aside from the resources noted above, Naka also found the school observations, school observation reflection sheets, the reflection logs and the small group discussions to be useful. She said the school observation activities allowed her to gather practice information about teaching in Canada (End of Session Reflection, November 28). Between the various reflection sheets she was able ... to use directly in her research study”. They also helped her to “gather information related to [her] teaching challenges and be better prepared to write her research project”. The reflection sheets also provided her with an opportunity to “look back” on her experiences and “think of teaching in it in Japan and [improve] her professional development” (all quotes from End of Session Reflection, November 28). She believed that if she had not used the reflection logs to track important activities related to her PDD, she “would likely have missed some very important information” as she would probably have written notes in many different places and then had trouble synthesizing them all when needed (Reflection, October 15).

#### **5.3.4 NAKA – Summary:**

The goal for Naka was to learn more about teaching reading so she could improve her students’ ability to understand the deeper meaning of their reading texts and then enjoy reading as a means of broadening their perspective on the world around them. A review of the various reflective worksheets that Naka completed, along with her PDD suggest that her professional development went far beyond the surface level of understanding she was originally seeking, to a deeper level of understanding of the role of language acquisition theory as well as her personal role as a facilitator of the learning process for her students.

On the surface level, the programme allowed Naka to learn more about TESOL methods, the key principles of developing TESOL reading courses, the process of L2 reading development, and the principles behind the selection and development of appropriate reading resources and activities. She also learned more about general teaching principles, such as useful teaching phrases and classroom organization, as key elements in the development of her students (Summary Observation, November 24). One key learning in this area was an understanding of how CLT can promote communication, even for reading. Another key learning was in relation to the various reading skills and strategies a student must have in order to make the reading process successful. And as is always the case in programmes of this nature, she learned about a number of reading activities she could use in her classroom. However, learning about such knowledge is very different to internalizing it and making it a part of your teaching approach. It seems that Naka was already quite familiar with the ‘should’ of language teaching (i.e. the need to be more communicative, the need for skills development, etc.) from the various books she had read and her previous conversations with peers. What she seemed to lack was a clear understanding of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of language teaching and her role in that process.

It seems that one of the greatest gains that Naka made during the programme was her understanding that reading is a “form of communication”, not just a subject to be taught. With the revelation in mind, she was able to see so many of the ‘shoulds’ in a different light and understand more fully how to provide her students with a more balanced learning programme. The need for more communicative activities to promote deeper understanding suddenly made more sense. Likewise, her understanding of the importance of having access to both linguistic and cognitive processes also helped her to understand the need for specific types of activities at specific times in the reading process.

The many observation sessions helped her to develop a much deeper understanding of how she can impact her students’ learning process by using a variety of teaching strategies and TESOL methodologies to create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. She said that these observations sessions helped her to “broaden [her] horizon as a teacher” (Observation Reflection, November 12) as she was able to really understand how a teacher’s relationship with their students (student-teacher rapport) can make a big difference in lifting communication to the next level. Because of her experiences with these observations and the reflective process in general, she aimed to change the activities she uses in her class. She said she wanted to introduce more pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities as suggested in her PDD (PDD). She also wanted to emphasize

activities that didn't require the students to translate English into Japanese, but rather promoted discussion in pairs or with the whole class in order to comprehend the text. She felt that this would help her students to understand the text more deeply. She also planned to become more of a role model for her students and use more English during her classes. One of the ways she planned to achieve both goals was to start by asking the students more questions and use these to stretch their understanding and involvement with the reading texts (End of Session Reflection, November 28). She wanted to introduce these activities gradually into her class so as to gain the acceptance of the students. She wanted to start slowly with pre-reading and gradually add the rest. Finally, she indicated that she wanted to share some of the theory she had learned with her students in order to help them better understand how such processes could help them to improve their overall language learning (End of Session Reflection, November 28th).



## **5.4 CHIKATO**

### **5.4.1 INTRODUCTION:**

*Chikato's background and research interests, drawn from his draft written statement, one-to-one start of session interview with the researcher and his introduction to the PDD:*

Chikato was a high school teacher in Shimane Prefecture. He had been teaching at this level for 17 years and had worked in a few different schools. At the time of entering the U of O programme, Chikato was working in a commercial high school. The school had approximately 700 students with fairly diverse academic abilities and aims. About 35% of his students focused on learning practical skills and aimed to get jobs after graduation. The remaining 65% proceeded to higher education (15% university, 10% junior college, 40% technical school). Overall the students' attitudes towards school were fine, but they did not have good study habits and most were interested in sports after school, rather than studying. Chikato taught several different courses at the school, ranging from Oral Communication I and II to International Business English and Commercial English Reading. Some courses only had two 50-minute lessons per week (Oral Communication), while others had four 50-minute lessons per week (International Business).

Chikato obtained his formal education from a university programme where he studied English Linguistics. For his research topic he identified several problems in regards to Japanese-English dictionaries. For example, "some dictionaries don't tell users the difference between listed Japanese words and equivalent English words" (Draft Written Statement). This can be a problem for students as many words do not translate directly. In addition to his formal programme, he has also attended a number of courses and teaching seminars with other teachers in his prefecture and often read theory about teaching. About ten years prior, he had taken a two-week vacation to the US and Canada, but other than that he had not lived or studied elsewhere as some of the other teachers in this programme had done.

In one of his early reflections (August 28), Chikato said that he believed it was important for English teachers to have accurate knowledge about teaching English. If teachers don't have sufficient knowledge about how to teach, they will not have "good results in their classroom". He said that "students are sensitive to the academic differences among teachers" and "the more accurate the teacher's knowledge", the more the students will "trust them". However, knowledge by itself is not enough; teachers must of course have "teaching skills" as well. He also said that he believed that "trial and error" could be "a good textbook for teachers". By this he meant that actual teaching can

build knowledge that is as good as formal education. Likewise, student feedback can be a good way of gauging your success. He said he frequently conducted surveys on his performance with his students.

Chikato's goal during the U of O professional development programme was to learn about effective ways to improve vocabulary acquisition for his students. In his PDD, he said that he believed the introduction of new words in every English lesson "is one of the most important approaches to improving students' vocabulary knowledge ... [and] ... how teachers introduce these words to students has a great influence on their first understanding of them" (p. 5). He also said he believed it was important to teach vocabulary to students as vocabulary forms the building blocks of communication, which is one of the main goals of the MEXT Course of Study. After transferring to his most recent school from an academic school, he realized that the students in his new school only knew and were able to use a very limited amount of vocabulary. This was difficult for him as a teacher because their lack of knowledge hindered their ability to engage in several learning activities.

Prior to coming to the U of O programme, he had tried to deal with vocabulary teaching in a number of ways. He tried to teach his students about the importance of knowing suffixes and prefixes, word origins, collocations, English definitions, and synonyms and antonyms. He also made word lists for his students with the Japanese meaning and translation. While he sometimes succeeded in enriching their vocabulary knowledge with these approaches, he felt that he sometimes used "inappropriate methods" to teach new vocabulary and he therefore wanted to learn some new approaches for dealing with this challenge.

#### **5.4.2 REFLECTIVE PROCESS:**

During the education programme, Chikato was a very active participant in the reflective process. Chikato engaged fully in all the reflective tools provided, as outlined below:

*a) Reflections Logs* – Chikato used the reflective logs to keep track of all of his learning. He made a point of reviewing his activities over the day/week and noting down main points. He saw the Reflection Logs as a sort of diary where he could note down key learning experiences. During the first two months his notes were quite detailed and he often provided short reflective comments like "It was fun" or about whether or not a particular activity was useable for him back in Japan and why. As he became busier in the programme, he did not write as much detail in the reflection logs.

*b) Reflective Questionnaires* – Chikato completed all assigned reflective questionnaires: Reflection, August 28; Reflection, September 24; Classroom Observation, October 3; Observation, October 15; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 30-31; Observation Reflection, November 12; Practice Teaching to Peers, November 7; Practice Teaching November 19, and the End of Session Reflection, November 28. While his answers were quite brief on some of the questions, he took time to reflect on those questions most relevant to helping him relate his observations to teaching in Japan or his PDD topic.

*c) Mentors' Written Comments* – Comments in the Mentor's Notebook focused on guiding Chikato through the process of the PDD and helping him to review/discuss and make connections between his theoretical research and his teaching practice.

*d) Final PDD* – Chikato's PDD has a balance of both theory and practical teaching activities. In the first half of the PDD, he analyzed the teaching context in Japan and outlined the need for vocabulary teaching. He followed this with theory on CLT as well as vocabulary acquisition. In the second half of his PDD, he blended the theoretical knowledge and practical needs of his students in the development of seven different activities he could use on a regular basis to introduce and maintain his students' vocabulary knowledge in a communicative way.

*e) Whole Group Discussion Sessions* – Chikato was a very active participant in the whole group discussion session. He had many useful insights regarding the purpose of this education programme and his (and the other teachers') responsibility to the Japanese government and their students when they returned home. It may be that his seniority amongst the group (he was the second eldest teacher ... the other was quite talkative as well) forced this sense of responsibility on him to some degree. Regardless, his peers seemed to value his opinions and seemed to genuinely agree with his insights as being directly applicable for their own contexts.

### 5.4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

#### RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - The PDD Process and Development of Dispositional Competencies:

##### *The Importance of Communicative Language Teaching:*

Through his research, Chikato learned about various TESOL methods, with particular emphasis on CLT. He discovered that CLT is an approach that advocates that “learning a language means learning the way to communicate in real-world situations” (PDD, p.7). Therefore, learners should be exposed to authentic sources of the target language as often as possible. Chikato discovered that teachers need to consider two aspects of CLT: “what to teach” and “how to teach” (quotes in original, PDD, p. 7). In regards to TESOL course design, he learned that teachers need to focus on grammar and vocabulary as well as the communication of language functions and that “teachers need to create realistic communicative activities and encourage learners to participate” (p.7). The focus of a teacher’s activities should be on communicating meaning, using authentic tasks, a focus on fluency and the natural flow of language, use of the target language, and the ability to use language functions such as apologizing, requesting, and complaining. He noted that a focus on all four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) is important and that common CLT activities focus on problem solving, closing information gaps, role plays and simulations (PDD, pp. 7-9; Reflection, October 15).

Chikato also learned that the teacher’s role and the student’s role are somewhat different in CLT than they are in more traditional teaching approaches where the teacher is the focus of the class. In CLT, the teacher’s job is to organize their lessons in such a way that they “provide their students with enough opportunities to engage with fellow students, the teacher and the language as often as possible and in as authentic a way as possible” (PDD). Basically, they should act as facilitators in helping their students to acquire the language. Learners, on the other hand, need to be active participants in the communicative process and be able to draw on their own linguistic and cognitive knowledge as well as the assistance of their teacher in order to develop their language skills.

##### *Vocabulary Teaching and CLT – theory and observation:*

In regards to L2 vocabulary development, Chikato focused his research on teaching and learning new words. He learned that it is important for teachers and students to know what it means to “know a word” (PDD, p.10; Learning Log, September 28; Mentor’s Log, September 17). Knowing a word “involves both receptive and productive knowledge”. This means “knowing what the form is

and recognizing it when you see it”, but also “knowing how and when to use it” (context, various meanings, collocations, etc.) (Learning Log, September 7, 20).

When it comes to material development or selection, Chikato also came to realize that teachers must always consider something called the “learning burden” (PDD, p. 11). In order to help their students learn vocabulary effectively, teachers must first understand what factors make learning vocabulary difficult such as the “student’s previous target language knowledge and experience” and their own “first language”. The first language can interfere when there are similar sounding words between the two languages, but with very different meanings or when similar words do exist, but their contextual usage is different in the two languages (PDD, P. 12). Next, the words a teacher chooses can also add to or ease the student’s learning burden. For example, “word frequency is a critical aspect to consider”. Teachers need to think of how useful it will be for the student to learn this word. More useful words appear more often and will be both more useful to the students and easier to learn because they will be encountered more often (PDD, p. 12).

Finally, Chikato discovered that vocabulary can be acquired both “systematically and incidentally” (PDD, p. 13). For systematic learning, teachers choose the vocabulary they want their students to learn and highlight it for them. Word lists and structured vocabulary activities are common ways of doing this. In incidental learning, “it is left up to the learner to notice and grasp knowledge of new words in the process of encountering them in reading and listening activities” (PDD, p. 13). This is the way first language speakers usually acquire much of their vocabulary.

Based on his research, Chikato developed a better understanding of some of the key principles of TESOL course design and materials development/selection for vocabulary instruction. For example, Chikato learned that it is important to teach new vocabulary through activities that use “real-life strategies to promote systematic learning” and to then focus on “the communicative aspect of language learning as well to promote incidental learning from time to time” (PDD, p. 13; Learning Log, October 16). In real communication, when learners encounter words they do not know, they need to engage in various strategies such as asking questions or guessing to decipher meaning. Likewise, when we want to convey something to someone, we use a combination of gestures, physical objects, descriptions, etc. Teaching these strategies “systematically” will also allow learners to be more autonomous both inside and outside the classroom when they engage in more authentic communication with each other or other learning resources (PDD, p. 13).

### Classroom Organization:

During the classroom observation session, Chikato also picked up on some broader principles of teaching such as classroom organization. A “semi-circle shaped classroom allows students to engage in group work and work on tasks easier than having desks in rows”. Likewise, the more communicative classes in Canada “do a lot of pair work with students”. In other words, the focus tends to be on “having students work together to complete tasks than the teacher directing all learning activities”. In a communicative classroom, “the teacher acts as a facilitator to encourage students to engage with the language” (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 10; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 29-31; Reflection Log).

### Development of Teaching Activities:

In his PDD, Chikato focused on developing useful activities for introducing students to new vocabulary by using a number of communicative skills and strategies often used to clarify our understanding of vocabulary when communicating naturally in our L1. These activities are very flexible and the format can be re-used in various contexts.

The first two activities involved grouping words into similar categories. Chikato notes that when new words are introduced in context with words we already know, we are more likely to understand and retain them. The goal of the activity was to have students explain to each other the meaning of a new word by referencing words the students already know. For example, ‘furniture’ is used to refer to things we have in our house ... sofas, beds, tables, etc. This activity was also designed to enhance students’ speaking and negotiation skills (PDD, pp. 14-16).

The third activity focused on understanding meaning through an information gap activity. Students have an activity sheet that has new words on one side and English definitions on the other. However, the two worksheets each have either missing words or missing definitions. The students must work with their partner to find the missing information needed to complete their worksheet. This activity works on all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and reading) at the same time (PDD, pp. 17-18).

The fourth activity focuses on teaching students how to infer or guess meaning from the reading context (an essential first language skill we use all the time). In a given reading passage, there are a number of new words highlighted for the learner. When the learner encounters these words, they should try to understand their meaning from contextual clues. Once they think they understand the meaning, they can then look through a list of definitions and see if they can identify the correct

definition for the specific word. This activity focuses mainly on building independent reading skills (PDD, pp. 19-21).

The fifth activity also focuses on helping students understand vocabulary in context by using the aid of pictures. In this activity, students read a number of very short dialogues in pairs. Students then work together to guess the meaning of underlined words (i.e. new vocabulary words) and also provide a translation for these words in Japanese (this activity works best with concrete nouns). Once students think they know the meaning of all the words, they are given a list of pictures that exemplify the new words and need to check if their predictions were correct. They can then check their answers with other groups and /or the teacher. This activity also focuses on having students use contextual cues to guess meaning (PDD, pp. 22-23). This activity covers many important skills. It builds the students' ability to extract meaning of new words from context as well as practicing their English listening and speaking skills. At the same time it enables students to increase their translation skills, which is a key component on the university entrance exam. Including consideration of translation requirements will help to get buy-in from the students on such activities.

The final activity is focused on building vocabulary knowledge to increase students' independent reading skills. Students all share the same list of new words they need to learn for a targeted reading assignment. They work in groups and divide up the words. Each student must prepare the following information for their words for the following class: The first is the actual definition; the second is an example sentence; the third includes a visual clue. During the following class, each student gives their group members the clues, one by one. The Other students will try to guess the meaning of the word using a Japanese translation. Points are given to the group members who guess the correct word (three points if they guess after the first clue, two points if they guess after the second, and only one point if they need all three clues).

### **Q #1 Summary:**

During the education programme, Chikato learned a great deal more about TESOL methodologies such as the various principles behind the process of L2 vocabulary acquisition. He discovered that CLT can be an effective tool for building vocabulary knowledge, even in an EFL context, so it is important for teachers to understand these learning theories in more detail so they can work to alleviate the learning burden of their students by developing and selecting relevant activities to build their vocabulary knowledge as well as organizing TESOL courses in such a way that they

integrate key communicative skills and strategies that can help students to maximize their learning effort.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION #2 - The PDD Process and Development of Capacity Competencies:**

Chikato was actively engaged in the reflective process well before the start of the programme at U of O. During his two month language training classes in Toronto just prior to Ottawa, he had the opportunity to write a few shorter research papers on language learning in Japan as part of his writing programme. Throughout his PDD and early on in his reflection logs he frequently reflected on how what he had learned fitted with his teaching context in Japan. His reflections suggest a realistic adoption and blend of new knowledge with his own prior knowledge, as well as a consideration of his students' contextual constraints.

### *Lesson Planning:*

In his PDD, Chikato reflected on the rather recent transition of language teaching in Japan to a more communicative approach. It was only in 2003, when MEXT decided that “The majority of an English class will be conducted in English and many activities where students can communicate in English will be introduced” (PDD, p. 1, quotes in original). He noted that as more teachers have become aware of the goals of the Action Plan “they have begun moving more towards implementing a communicative approach in their classrooms”. However, he indicated that more teachers need to develop balanced learning programmes that “implement teaching methods that stress the importance of using English authentically” (PDD, p. 2). Even after as many as ten years of learning English in Japanese schools, most students are not able to communicate effectively in English. He indicated that the main reason for this has been “the lack of real opportunities for them to engage in authentic communication in their day-to-day learning activities” (PDD, p. 2).

While the Action Plan issued by MEXT “places emphasis on the cultivation of communicative lessons through the target language, English,” Chikato reflected that in many cases “Japanese English teachers seem to have a misunderstanding about what real communication means” (PDD, p.2). He noted that many teachers think that simply using more English is the same as increasing communication, which is not true. He felt that English teachers need to be more aware of what real communication is and how to include it in their classrooms, which is why he wanted to study “how vocabulary can be taught more communicatively” (Whole Group Discussion, September 17).



In Chikato's view, many teachers in Japan think that memorizing vocabulary is the best way of acquiring new words. However, knowing a word involves so much more than just being able to recognize it and translate it into Japanese, it also means being able to understand its usage in a particular context (PDD, p. 11). Chikato said that in Japan teachers don't focus on teaching words in context, but rather often introduce words from word lists with the equivalent Japanese translation (One-on-one start of session interview, August 28). Because of this, they don't fully understand the "learning burden their first language can place on their students" (PDD, p. 11) and how it can interfere with the students' ability to properly comprehend new words. Chikato noted that most students in Japan "do not have enough opportunities to learn English outside the classroom" (PDD, p. 10), so they will never get enough authentic exposure to new words in their natural context and will therefore never fully understand or know a word without some "systematic" approach to instruction (PDD, p. 11). Therefore, Chikato felt it was the responsibility of the teacher to be able to assess and use the resources best suited to expose the students to as much exposure and authentic use of the target language and target vocabulary as possible (Practice Teaching, November 19). Chikato insisted that Japanese teachers need to begin to include more communicative activities in the classes that not only "expose students to new vocabulary words in authentic contexts", but also "teach students useful skills and strategies for comprehending new words as they encounter them" (PDD, pp. 7-13; Mentor's notes, September 17; End of Session Reflection, November 28). Chikato felt this could be done by blending various TESOL methodologies in a given lesson plan.

Chikato reflected that "while translation is one way of teaching vocabulary, teachers in Japan need to understand that it is not the only way" (End of Session Reflection, November 28; Whole Group Discussion, September 17). Teachers need to be more reflective about what they teach and how they teach it. He suggested that "the CLT approach is also a useful approach for helping teachers to think about vocabulary teaching in another way" and that equally important, "teaching vocabulary meanings can be in line with CLT principles" (i.e. focus on meaning not form, etc.) when done properly (PDD, p. 13). Understanding each other verbally or in writing is a necessary part of communication and as already noted in Research Question 1, Chikato identified a number of skills and resources native speakers use to understand the meaning of new words in everyday communication such as "guessing, inference, and discussion" (PDD, p. 13; End of Session Reflection, November 28). Chikato suggested that teachers in Japan need to understand that authentic dialogue between students can also build their knowledge of vocabulary while at the same time building their overall communicative skills. He believed that if he could learn to emphasize a more communicative

approach to vocabulary learning in his class, he would also “motivate students to be more autonomous” and continue to learn outside the class as well (PDD, p. 26; Reflection, September 24; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

While advocating CLT as a suitable “framework to which teachers can refer to develop communicative vocabulary activities that enhance second language acquisition” (PDD, p. 27), Chikato also expressed caution to his peers in the U of O programme to be vigilant about understanding the needs of their teaching context as well. He told the group that it is not all “the theories that they learn that will produce good results when they return home, but rather how they adapt these theories to their own context that will have the biggest impact” (Whole Group Discussion, November 12). He reflected with the group about the need to critique what they have learned before they adopted it outright. He noted that while they had learned many activities and observed many classrooms they must remember that “the students in Canada have much more exposure to English outside the classroom as well as more time for learning in the classroom. This is very different from [the setup] in an EFL context”. He said that “the methods are still OK, but they can’t be transferred directly to EFL Context” (Whole Group Discussion, November 12) and so the Japanese teachers always need to think about using the appropriate resources and range of TESOL methodologies to meet their students’ learning objectives and contextual constraints.

The ability to adapt what he had learned to his own context back home was actually a very significant preoccupation of Chikato’s throughout the programme (One-on-one Interview, August 28; Reflection, September 24; End of Session Reflection, November 24; PDD, pp. 9-13, 26). The way in which he integrates new learning with the needs of his students is nicely outlined in the following quote:

“One area of contention is the use of the L1 in language teaching. Using Japanese is one of the features of traditional teaching in Japan. Emphasizing accuracy in the traditional grammar-translation method is still supported by some Japanese English teachers as useful in the preparation for entrance examinations. This, however, is not necessarily at odds with CLT. CLT does emphasize that students be exposed as much as possible to the target language; however, as Brown (2001) points out, translation can be useful when students need it or it will benefit them. In other words, translation is possible, if it helps the process of communication. English teachers [in Japan] don’t have to be concerned that everything must be taught in the target language.” (PDD, p. 9)

The activities Chikato developed as part of his PDD (outlined in Research Question 1 above) are also a good example his own attempt to blend what he has learned with the needs of his students. While trying to build students’ communicative abilities, he has also not lost track of the very real

learning requirements that students have as a result of the university entrance exams (acquire certain vocabulary terms over others, be able to understand vocabulary in selected passages of writing, and be able to translate meanings into Japanese). The activities he developed were designed to engage the students in the communicative task of finding definitions and even finding equivalent translations for specific words, while the communicative task was to solve the problem of obtaining the information one needs for the exams. It is a very creative way of tackling the two tasks (communication and formal learning) at the same time.

### Cultural Differences:

During the main observation sessions that Chikato attended, he noticed a significant difference between the student-teacher rapport in Canada and Japan. He said that in Canada, “the classes were much more student-centered ... the students were very active participants in their learning process ... [and] the teacher played the role of facilitator” (Observation, November 12). Regardless of the level or age, the students seemed to be very active and join in the class: “They raise their hands very quickly to answer questions” and “were highly motivated learners” (Observation, October 10; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 29-31).

Chikato indicated very early on in the session that he believed the main reason for this difference was that his “Japanese students are very shy” and so they “do not express their opinions” (Observation, October 10). However, as the semester progressed, he seemed to change his mind on this point. He noticed that the teacher’s role in Canadian classrooms was quite different to that in most Japanese classrooms. The teachers in Canada made a substantial effort to create a friendly and supportive classroom environment that was conducive to learning. The teachers “smiled often” (Observation, October 3), they frequently “asked students questions and urged them to participate in activities” (Observation, October 10), and they frequently “used follow-up questions to engage students in communication” and “provide feedback on their learning process” (Observation, October 17).

In the October 24 Observation reflection form, Chikato noted that in one class he observed, the students did not seem too focused on the lesson, which he said was “quite similar to his own students” in Japan. However, after many months of observation and reflection in Canada, his response to this reflection on his students’ lack of participation was quite interesting: “Of course, I am to blame on this point ... I have to acquire the skill to attract their [his students] attention.” His attitude about the underlying belief for this lack of student participation had changed considerably since earlier in the

month where he had reflected on October 3 that the lack of such participation by students in his own class was largely due to “their very shy nature”.

October 24 (Summary Observation), he also reflected that students in Canadian classrooms often seem to be relaxed and that “teachers enjoy teaching” and work hard to develop good student-teacher rapport. He critiqued his own behaviour in this area as he reflected “I wonder if I like teaching so much. I often see the negative experience I have had (students’ various problems ...). I think I had better see the positive aspects.” He said he often heard Canadian teachers speak well of their students and he realized that he was “not very good at praising his students”.

These various observations and reflections contributed greatly to his sense of responsibility for creating a more communicative classroom environment in his classroom. He indicated that “however small an improvement” his students make, he would “begin to speak more highly of their achievements” and work to make his students feel more “comfortable and motivated” to learn English (Summary Observation, November 12).

## **Q #2 Summary:**

Through his interaction with the many reflective tools, Chikato was able to realize that implementing a more communicative approach in his classroom could help him to create a more balanced programme that would allow him to meet MEXT’s objectives of teaching Japanese students with communicative abilities while still building their more formal academic vocabulary knowledge. He also discovered the very important role that the teacher plays in creating a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. The teacher is responsible for developing appropriate activities and methodologies that will facilitate the learning process. The teacher also plays a significant part in motivating their students to become engaged in the learning process. Part of this will be the result of the activities they develop, but another significant part will be the way in which the teacher engages with the students. Teachers need to encourage students to participate more often through group work and share opinions with classmates. They also need to motivate students by smiling at them and make them feel good about their accomplishments through praise and recognition of even the little things.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3 - On a four-point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, and Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?**

Chikato thoroughly enjoyed the Reflective Cycle and found each of the components very useful for him in one way or another:

*Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Very Useful:*

The PDD helped him to develop more awareness of language teaching theory and develop suitable activities for his students. He also felt that the PDD process helped him to learn how to “summarize references and to integrate [his] own ideas with resources in the document” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). The weekly reflection logs were very useful as they helped him to review what he had learned during the week. He found it “useful to comment on every class when he got home” at the end of the day as this helped him to reflect on what he had learned, similarly, for the school observation reflection forms. The school observation sessions were very useful because they gave him insight into the “differences between teaching in Canada and Japan” (Ibid) and the role of the teacher and student in a more communicative teaching environment (Reflection, October 15). The small group discussion sessions were also very useful for him as there were a number of high school teachers studying vocabulary and so they could share their information on the topic. He said, “It was a very useful opportunity because I could know new references related to my topic. “Two heads are better than one” (quotes in original)” (End of Session Reflection, November 29). He said that he was very grateful to his mentor and found her support very useful. She helped him to structure his PDD and discuss the research theory he had found. This was very critical as he needed to work out “some of the contradictions in the literature” he had been reviewing (End of Session Reflection, November 24).

On a more practical side, he found that the practice teaching sessions with his peers were very useful as they helped him to improve his original teaching activity. He said “Every MEXT member and [the instructor] gave [him] good advice” (ibid). The practice teaching with EIP students was even more useful: “It was a good experience and I got some confidence in teaching English” (End of session Reflection, November 24; Whole Group Discussion, November 24). Reflecting on these teaching sessions with the other teachers was “indispensable because we couldn’t see the other MEXT members’ EIP classes. We needed to share their opinions” (ibid). Finally, the poster project session. Chikato said, “If it had not been for the poster project session, we couldn’t have summarized our own PDD. Also, explaining to professors [resulted] in understanding our themes deeply” (ibid). He said he found the activity quite difficult, but fun (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

#### **5.4.4 CHICATO – Summary:**

Chikato's goal was to learn more about language teaching theory so that he could develop more effective ways of introducing new vocabulary to his high school students. He felt that knowing sufficient vocabulary was essential for communication, which was one of the main learning objectives for his students, according to the MEXT Course of Study. Likewise, vocabulary knowledge was essential for those students planning to go on to higher education, especially at the university level. As a result of Chikato's participation in the programme, he came to a better understanding of the role of theory in vocabulary teaching as well as a much clearer understanding of his role as the teacher in facilitating his students' acquisition of the target language.

A review of the data related to Research Question 1 reveals that the PDD research process was beneficial in helping Chikato to develop his dispositional competences in a number of ways. He was able to learn more about the importance of TESOL methods such as CLT for promoting vocabulary acquisition. He was also able to develop a better understanding of the process of L2 vocabulary development which provided him with more insight into some of the principles of TESOL course design and how to assess and select or develop the most appropriate learning resources for his students. For example, frequent exposure to, and authentic use of, the target language is critical in helping students to build up their vocabulary knowledge.

However, Chikato believed that teachers need to be consciously aware of the learning burden that L1 interference and a lack of linguistic or cognitive knowledge can place on their students when trying to acquire new words. While it is critical for teachers to understand this language teaching theory, Chikato felt it was also critical for teachers to be able to analyze how new information and observations acquired during the PDD process could be adapted and integrated into their own teaching contexts. While exploring this and other questions throughout the reflective cycle, Chikato was able to enhance his own capacity competencies in the following ways.

While Chikato came to believe that CLT was beneficial to help his students develop their overall communicative abilities, he felt that not everything he saw and learned during the programme could or should be applied immediately to his classroom. He recognized that he must also consider the requirements of his teaching context as well and then select and use a range of TESOL methodologies to fit with his students' needs, such as the need to be able to translate English to Japanese during university entrance exams.

He also came to believe that the teacher has a key role in the learning process by creating a conducive learning environment in the classroom. In Canada, teachers acted much more as learning facilitators and through various activities and group work, they were able to successfully engage their students in the learning process. He felt that Japanese teachers also needed to learn how to provide more constructive feedback and actively praise their students to increase their confidence in their own abilities and thus their motivation to become more active participants in the learning process.

When he returned to Japan, Chikato's goal was to try to make his language classes more balanced by introducing more communicative activities. He said that "Even though it's a short [learning programme], when we go back to Japan, our colleagues and students expect something different from us" (Whole Group Discussion, November 24). So, he wanted to promote the professional development of his fellow teachers by showing them how the use of various teaching methods can influence the students' learning style and facilitate more autonomous learners (Reflection, September 24; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

He felt that he would also need to work with the teachers in his school to come to a "consensus" on how to move forward with some of these new ideas. He felt this would be a challenge as "each teacher has his or her own way", but that it was also important to make some small changes in the way vocabulary was being taught to students. In addition, he felt he would need to "continue to reflect on what works best for his students as his students needs would change from year to year" and so he needs to adapt his combination and use of methods to capture these changes (End of Session Reflection, November 24).

One final note that was quite interesting about Chikato was his attitude towards the whole reflective process in regards to both the linguistic demands and his overall professional development. While many other teachers saw it as a burden to have to complete so many of the reflective tools and the PDD in English, Chikato actually saw this as benefit in that it would help them to improve their own English abilities (One-on-one Interview, August 28). Also, during one of the whole group discussion session (October 1), Chikato reflected that "In [his] opinion, some development is happening here [during the programme], but [he] thinks real development will happen when [they] go back to Japan" and experiment with applying what they have learned (End of session reflection, November 24). This attitude allowed him to make the most of the opportunities available for him to develop himself throughout the programme.

## **5.5 AKIMI**

### **5.5.1 BACKGROUND:**

*Akimi's background and research interests, drawn from her draft written statement, one-to-one start of session interview with the researcher and her introduction to PDD.*

Akimi was a senior high school teacher in Shizuoka Prefecture. She had been a teacher for 13 years at the time of this study. Her school was a public, co-educational high school with over 700 students in grades 1 -3. There were about six classes per grade, with each class having an average of 40 students per class. After completing high school, most of the students go on to post-secondary schools and about 50% of them enter national or prefectural universities. Over the years, the declining birth rate has led to her school accepting a wider range of students, which has meant that teachers in her school have become concerned with teaching to more diverse groups of students than they had in the past. Akimi taught at the grade 3 level, and focused on Reading, Writing, and Oral Communication II. In her school, students spent more than five hours per week in these various English lessons, with each lesson running about 65 minutes in length. Her reading classes were taught to the whole homeroom group (40 students), but the students in her writing classes were structured by score level on the exam and there were only about 25 students at the lower levels. Most students in her school were focused and did well in exams.

At university, Akimi studied International Relations and English Culture. She also studied language teaching in her third and fourth year. Her thesis topic at university was based on the Cockney accent in British literature. As she progressed through her teaching career, she was able to continue to develop her professional skills through various teachers' seminars. In the first, fifth and tenth year of teaching she was able to attend a number of shorter prefectural teachers' seminars and in 2002, she attended an intensive teachers' seminar for three weeks where she was able to learn more about language teaching theory. In addition to teacher education, she also studied English abroad at a language school in the UK for eight months and had travelled abroad many times for enjoyment.

At the start of the U of O programme, Akimi's goal was to study how teachers could increase 'input' in limited English lessons, how learners could increase 'intake', and finally what sort of drills, practice, and language activities were most effective for learners to 'output' their acquired vocabulary (Initial draft statement; One-to-one start of session interviews). In other words, her main goal was to improve vocabulary teaching and learning with her students. She felt that her students often forgot newly-acquired vocabulary too quickly, had difficulty understanding written texts because of a lack of



vocabulary, and lacked sufficient opportunity to practice the vocabulary that they already had. For Akimi, this topic was very important as she believed that vocabulary learning was “one of the most significant elements for teaching and learning English, and that every student in her school wanted to know how they can learn vocabulary effectively” (Reflection, September 24).

Prior to the U of O programme, Akimi dealt with her teaching challenges in a number of ways. First, she gave all of her students a word book with a list of important words and a CD with their pronunciation so that they could practice these words at home. Three times a week she gave her students a word quiz to test their knowledge. Twice a month, they hosted a vocabulary competition, with small prizes for the winner, to encourage students to practice further. Akimi also taught her students a number of strategies such as understanding prefixes and suffixes and deriving meaning from context. She also emphasized the importance of vocabulary knowledge for becoming proficient in all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Akimi also noted that through a process of “trial and error” she had found some good ways of instructing her students (Reflection, August 28). However, despite her successes, she still felt that quite a few learners could not sufficiently retain the necessary vocabulary as shown by their marks on the word quizzes and vocabulary competitions.

### **5.5.2 REFLECTIVE PROCESS:**

During the U of O programme, Akimi was an active participant in the reflective process and she engaged fully in various reflective tools provided as outlined below:

*a) Reflections Logs* – Akimi completed her reflection logs on a regular basis. She used them to note down all the activities they had done during the day, including page numbers in the text or location of specific items so she could easily find them later on. She also included references related to learning on a broad scale, not just her PDD.

*b) Reflective Questionnaires* – Akimi completed all assigned reflective questionnaires: Reflection, August 28; Reflection, September 24; Classroom Observation, October 3; Observation, October 15; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 30-31; Observation Reflection, November 12; Practice Teaching to Peers, November 7; Practice Teaching November 19, and the End of Session Reflection, November 28. She took time to thoroughly answer each question in relation to her PDD as well as learning at large.

c) ***Mentors' Written Comments*** – No Mentor's notes were available for Akimi. Her mentor provided direct feedback to her orally during one-on-one meetings or on her written drafts through Microsoft Word's 'track changes' and 'comment' features.

d) ***Final PDD*** – Akimi's final PDD has a balance of theory and practical teaching activities. In the first half of her PDD, she carefully reviewed her teaching context, CLT theory, and relevant theories of teaching vocabulary. In the second half of her PDD, she outlined a number of vocabulary activities she could implement into her lesson plans. Her description of these activities is more narrative than exemplary.

e) ***Whole Group Discussion Sessions*** – Like many of the other teachers, Akimi was quite attentive during the whole group discussion sessions. She actively engaged in discussions with others during pair work, but did not speak out so much in whole group settings unless directly called on. She preferred, as did many of the other teachers, to express her own opinions through the reflective worksheets.

### **5.5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - The PDD Process and Development of Dispositional Competencies**

Akimi viewed the programme as a good opportunity to learn about the “mechanisms to acquire vocabulary ... and to read some book and journals about vocabulary acquisition” (One-to-one interview session, August 29). Given this goal, the main focus of Akimi's PDD was to better understand CLT and relevant theories on teaching vocabulary.

#### **The importance of Communicative Language Teaching:**

In the introduction to her PDD, Akimi noted that the current Course of Study (MEXT, 2003) requires that teachers work actively to develop students' practical communicative abilities. As a result, teaching communicatively has been “a keyword among English educators in Japan” (PDD, p. 5). Through her research on this topic, Akimi was able to increase her understanding of TESOL methods such as CLT, which is focused on learning to communicate. Akimi felt that in CLT, the emphasis should be on meaning over form and classroom activities should simulate authentic situations where “students have a genuine need to communicate” (PDD, p. 5). CLT classrooms are more students

centered. The teacher acts as a facilitator and students are required to learn more autonomously. Errors are not a major concern in CLT as they are considered part of the learning process. Finally, and most importantly for her students, Akimi realized that “CLT is a teaching approach that integrates all four skills” (PDD, p. 6), and even areas such a grammar or vocabulary acquisition can be taught communicatively.

### *Vocabulary Teaching and Communicative Language Teaching:*

What does it mean to know a word? This is one of the main questions that Akimi researched in her PDD. She said, “If I ask this question to Japanese students studying English, many of them say that it is to know its meaning. In fact, in order to know a word, a learner needs to know a lot of things other than that” (PDD, p. 7). Through her research, she discovered that the process of L2 vocabulary development is not simply about learning the translation for lists of words. To know a word means to know many things, such as the word form, the use as well as meaning, sound, spelling, and of course pronunciation. However, that is not enough, one must also know when and where it can be used and with what other words, and also having an understanding of the overall concept the word possesses (PDD, p. 7; Reflection log, September 23; Reflection, October 15)

Akimi also highlighted that knowing a word for “receptive purposes” is different to knowing it for “productive purposes”. Receptive knowledge involves being able to recognize a word. It involves knowing how it sounds, what are the grammatical phonemes that make up the word, how the word should be interpreted in context and so on. Productive knowledge involves all this as well as having the ability to say or write the word properly, in the right place, with the right words and with the correct registry or frequency. The difference between these two features directly influences the difficulty in acquiring vocabulary as it involves more knowledge, developing a word for productive purposes than developing receptive knowledge of a word. Other factors, such as the linguistic stretch from L1 to L2 will also impact the learning burden of acquiring productive knowledge of words (PDD, pp. 8- 9; Reflection logs, September 23, 24, 25, 28).

Akimi also discovered that active and passive knowledge can impact one’s “motivation” to learn words. She says that we tend to be more motivated to learn vocabulary which we need to actively use, rather than vocabulary that we simply need to recognize. One’s receptive vocabulary usually contains both active and passive knowledge; while one’s productive knowledge usually contains mostly active vocabulary knowledge. This also relates to the notion of high frequency and low frequency words. High frequency words are those that are most commonly needed for

communication and thus are easier to learn as they appear often both receptively and productively. On the contrary, low frequency words only show up on occasion, in a specific dialogue or with a specific subject. She notes that “high frequency words should be taught first because most of them are used as both productive and receptive vocabulary” (PDD, pp. 9-11; Whole Group Discussion, September 17; Reflection log, October 28).

One of the main principles of TESOL course design that Akimi noted, was that “a well-balanced language course has to provide four main strands: meaning-focused input (should be at the level and need of the learner); language-focused learning (direct study of the form/structure); meaning focused output (opportunity to use); and fluency development (frequent interaction with and use of language to build automaticity)” (PDD. pp. 15-16).

#### Classroom Organization:

During the various observation sessions, Akimi picked up on a few broader principles of teaching which could also be beneficial for promoting language acquisition in students. For example, when the classroom is organized in a U shape the “students can speak with other classmates in pairs and small groups which is useful for promoting communication” (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 10). Also, teachers can use “a lot of different activities to promote communication/comprehension and language learning” such as using gestures to convey meaning and even singing or reading stories aloud to improve pronunciation (Observation, October 10).

Another feature she noticed is that “teachers in Canada have their own classrooms and students come to them” (Observation, October 10). As a result, they can put many pictures, posters, words, etc. up on the wall” (Observation, October 10; Observation, October 17). In addition to information about language learning, she noticed that there are also posters related to learning strategies such as goal-setting, time management, attendance, organization, note-taking, literacy, and test-taking” (Observation, October 24). She thought this was a good way for “recycling learning” and providing students with constant exposure to important words or concepts (Observation, October 17).

#### Development of Teaching Activities:

As noted earlier, Akimi’s main focus was on developing useful vocabulary activities for her students. Through the PDD process, she concluded that by having students engage in various productive activities as often as possible, she believed their previously learned knowledge would be stimulated and brought out and as a result, their overall vocabulary would increase. In total, Akimi

outlined 11 activities in her PDD (pp. 16-24). As Akimi noted in her PDD, some of the output activities she outlined “could also be used to help students increase their receptive skills”, while some “focus on integrating all four skills to increase both reception and production”. In addition to these she also added a few activities designed to entertain students and lure them into “autonomous vocabulary learning” (PDD, pp. 16-24). A few examples of these are described below.

The first activity is called a vocabulary tree and focuses on activating existing knowledge. The teacher begins the vocabulary tree by writing a word and then asks students to work in pairs or groups to expand it by adding words that fit within specific categories. She believes this activity is useful for making the students think more deeply about the composition of the words they choose and how they all fit within the assigned category. This activity can also be used as a pre-discussion activity. Aside from promoting communication between students, this activity also helps students to be better prepared for answering multiple choice questions in the vocabulary section of the university entrance exams.

Another activity that Akimi suggested was to have students focus on developing frequency words from prescribed word lists (such as the word book she gives all her students). In, the ‘tea kettle’ game, students take a word from the word list and make three sentences containing it. Then they replace the target word with the phrase “tea kettle”. For example, if the selected word is ‘masculine’, the student could say: “Many people think I am ‘tea kettle’ ... or ... My friend is not ‘tea kettle’, she is feminine.” The rest of the group has to guess what the target word is. Not only does this activity help students practice the meaning of vocabulary words in a fun and creative way, it also helps develop sentence writing skills and guessing meaning from context.

Finally, the ‘word association game’ is an activity that helps students to recycle their previously learned vocabulary and also promote their communication with peers. The teacher prepares several sets of cards with previously learned vocabulary words. Students are divided into groups where each student in the group takes turns picking cards from the set. The student must explain the meaning of the word on their card without using the actual word. The student who guesses the correct word first, gets a point. The person(s) with the most points after a specific time wins the game. This activity can be used to help teachers develop communicative activities that focus on grammar, such as practicing relative clauses (i.e. by using phrases such as A person who... A thing that... etc.).

### **Q #1 Summary:**

Through the PDD process, Akimi was able to more fully develop her dispositional competencies by improving her understanding of both TESOL methods, the process of L2 vocabulary acquisition and factors which can affect the development of L2 vocabulary. Akimi learned that teachers can use meaningful output activities to increase their students' retention and learning of essential vocabulary words and she was also able to discover a number versatile and communicative activities she could use to enhance her TESOL course design.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION #2 - The PDD Process and Development of Capacity Competencies**

According to Akimi, the PDD process was very helpful for allowing her to be more focused and analytical about her teaching needs. She said that in Japan, she did not have time to think about her teaching approach so much, "but being here [in Canada] she always asked herself why she thinks the way she does" (End of Session Reflection, November 12). She said that through the reflective process, she had become more critical of herself. Below are some of the areas where Akimi explored deeper into her own teaching context and added to her beliefs and judgments about language teaching in Japan.

#### *Lesson Planning:*

Before entering the programme at U of O, Akimi had already reflected somewhat on her teaching situation as part of her research and writing tasks during the language teaching programme in Toronto. At the start of the PDD process, her main focus was on learning how "better to increase her students' vocabulary input" (One-on-one start of session interview, August 29). As the programme continued, and she learned more about retaining vocabulary knowledge, she concluded that maybe the problem in her classroom was not so much with the way she helped her students input vocabulary as she was already teaching all of the normal vocabulary skills and strategies. Maybe her students' lack of vocabulary retention had more to do with the fact that "her students had very little opportunity for meaningful output" (PDD, p. 14, 23; End of Session Reflection, November 24). This realization was useful in helping her to be able to outline a more balanced learning programme.

In her research, Akimi discovered that teaching her students high frequency words could "increase their motivation for learning" (PDD, p. 9). In fact, her research indicated that one only

needs to learn the 2000 most frequently-used words to be able to understand 85% of most written texts and to engage in simple, yet meaningful conversations with others (PDD, p. 9). Given this information, she asked herself, “how many words to Japanese high school students need?” (PDD, p. 11). She indicated that this was important information for her as a teacher because “it is obviously impossible for them to get as much vocabulary input as native speakers” (PDD, p. 11) so she must maximize their learning efforts by knowing where to focus their time. Her research of the Course of Study showed that Japanese students are required to learn approximately 1000 words in junior high and another 1400 in high school: 400 in level 1, 500 in level 2, and around 500 in level 3. When she examined these words against a commonly used frequency wordlist, her analysis showed that just over “80% of the words [in the Japanese textbook] belong to the 2,000 high frequency words, and around 8% belong to the 570 academic words in the AWL [academic word list]” (PDD, p. 12). This was a very interesting revelation for her because she was able to realize that the majority of assigned vocabulary words are those words that are useful from a receptive as well as a productive perspective. In addition, when she examined the vocabulary requirements of the university entrance exam, she found that a good percentage of the test requires the students to have both receptive and productive knowledge of these key terms. This made Akimi realize the need for, and other Japanese teachers to focus on, both input and output of these terms in their lessons and to ensure that they provide appropriate models of these vocabulary words in context whenever possible (PDD, pp. 9-12).

Through some careful analysis Akimi was able to find the answers as to what to teach and why; however, the answer to HOW best teach these critical vocabulary words seemed a bit more complicated. As she dug deeper into this issue, she discovered that in order for her to have a well-balanced language course, she needed to have the four strands outlined in Question 1: meaning-focused input; language-focused learning; meaning-focused output; and fluency development. When she examined her own teaching practice, and that of her peers, against these strands she realized that, “In traditional English teaching in Japan, the former two elements have been mainly stressed and the latter two strands have been left aside. She believed this could be partly because of the influence of the university entrance examinations” (PDD, p. 14).

When reflecting on this issue further, Akimi realized that, “lack of exposure to English” is likely the “obstacle to providing students with more opportunities to bring [their] receptive vocabulary into productive use” (PDD, p. 15). She concluded that if teachers worked harder to introduce high frequency vocabulary words in a more meaningful way, this could increase the students’ basic vocabulary which could then be used to engage them in more meaningful output. “As students engage

in more meaningful output with others, this will not only reinforce the vocabulary knowledge they already know, but also give them the opportunity to [need] additional vocabulary which will encourage [them] to learn new vocabulary knowledge as well” (PDD, p. 14).

The above analysis allowed Akimi to be more skilled at selecting the most appropriate content to cover with her students. She noted that by giving her students as many opportunities as possible to practice their vocabulary knowledge in authentic and meaningful contexts, she might be able to overcome the teaching challenges outlined in her PDD (pp. 15-16). She said, “now that I have researched about improving their productive skills, my new activities would stress on vocabulary ‘intake’ by using output.” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). She also suggested that “giving students as many chances to use their learnt vocabulary in authentic/meaningful situations would be the solution to [her original] problems” (ibid).

She felt that she was now more aware of the need to use a range of TESOL methods, such as CLT, task-based learning and student-centered teaching to help her students to acquire and retain vocabulary, and indicated that she “would like to introduce some of the activities [she] presented in PDD into [her] class, but the problem is how to save time for them. Balancing between drills for explicit teaching and activities for implicit teaching is very important” (ibid). Having sufficient time to try new activities seemed to be a main concern for Akimi. Earlier in the semester, she also noted “I need to find some way to make extra time in my lessons, which seems hard for me, though” (Summary Observation, November 12). This was a recurring theme in previous reflections as well (Reflection, October 1; Observation; October 3; Group Reflection, September 17; Observation, October 24). Akimi indicated that another challenge she could see ahead of her was “how to reduce the students’ affective filters because my PDD activities are for speaking and writing” (End of Session Reflection, November 28) and her students are more focused on receptive skills such as memorization. One approach she suggested she take to deal with this dilemma was to “start with a simple, short activity and then gradually ... give them more creative tasks” (ibid).

### Cultural Differences:

The classes Akimi observed in Canada were smaller than classes at home in Japan and often more student-centered. She felt that the students in Canadian classes had “a more relaxed atmosphere,” they had “more opportunities to speak with one another,” and they used “authentic” materials more often (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 17).



In the French as a second language classes, she felt that the instruction style appeared to be similar to that of Japanese EFL classes. “The teacher gave instructions in French,” but also used English when needed (Observation, October 24; Observation, October 29-31). Similarly, “some students answered in English” (Observation, October 24). One French teacher told her that with her lower level students “she has difficulty getting them to speak in French, even though they could understand her when she spoke in the target language” (Observation, October 24). However, this was not the same situation in the ESL and French immersion classes. In these classes, the teachers “controlled the class almost completely in the second language” (Observation, October 10, October 17; Practice teaching, November 19) and students were also “quite interactive”. Most of the activities given to the students were more communicative than those used in Japanese schools and the students took more “risks” (Summary Observation, October 24). “Even with a little knowledge, the students were trying hard to answers the teacher’s question” (Observation, October 10). Akimi felt that her students would “never dare to answer such questions unless they were absolutely sure of the answer” (ibid). Akimi suggested that the main difference in the two approaches above was likely the goal of the teaching. In the French as a second language course, they were not really focused on communicating with one another to solve a task, like they did in the ESL classes (Observation, November 12). The other reason was likely a lack of time for learning as they have in Japan (ibid).

In her PDD, Akimi noted that in second language classrooms, one approach that non-native teachers can use to overcome the challenges of working in a more CLT approach is to “change learning focus from the content, to the process, which is ‘to use English to learn it’ instead of ‘to learn to use English’” (p.6. Emphasis in original). Many of her activities outlined in Research Question 1 are a good example of this approach.

## **Q #2 Summary:**

Through the many reflective tools, Akimi was able to realize the role that a more balanced learning programme can play in helping her to create a classroom environment more conducive to vocabulary learning. She also realized that by focusing on frequently-used vocabulary and providing appropriate models for these words, her students would not only retain this learned vocabulary, but also continue the learning process more autonomously. She also became more confident in her ability to assess and select the resources and TESOL methods most suited to enhancing the learning process in a context like Japan where there is a great deal of emphasis on preparing for university entrance

exams. However, the ability to find sufficient time to integrate these ideas still seemed to be a challenge Akimi was struggling with at the end of the programme.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3 - On a 4-point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, and Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?**

Akimi felt that overall, the reflective activities were useful, but they also had many other tasks to do and that during the programme she often felt “tired from the busy schedule” (E-mail, November 13). Below is an outline of her perception of the usefulness of the various elements available throughout the programme:

*Elements of the reflective cycle – very useful:*

Akimi found the PDD process very useful. She said, “I have increased my theoretical knowledge of teaching vocabulary and have got some ideas on how to overcome my teaching challenges” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). She also found the reflective logs very useful. She said she wrote down all the things she thought would be useful for her PDD and also took note of the titles and page numbers of books so she could easily locate the desired information when she needed it. She felt it was very useful for her to look back at what she had learned during the week (Reflection, October 15). In addition, she felt the reflection log helped her to keep track of information she would need upon her return to Japan: “I do not think we will have enough time to reflect what we have learnt in Ottawa after coming back to Japan. And taking notes is very helpful for me to remember what I need to do” (ibid). She also found the meetings with her mentor very useful: “He guided, organized and checked my PDD work” (ibid). Finally, she found both the practice teaching with peers and the poster project were a great way to get “feedback about my teaching” from other teachers. (Practice Teaching, November 7). She said, “I thought it was great. I really enjoyed explaining the summary of my PDD to the guests, and also listening to the peers’ explanation of their PDD” (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

*Elements of the reflective cycle – useful:*

Akimi found the school observation sessions useful for her “to see the similarities and differences between Canada and Japan” and the reflection sheets were a useful way for her to reflect back on what she observed during the sessions (End of Session Reflection, November 28). Likewise,

she found it quite useful to reflect on her practice teaching experience and share these reflections with her classmates (Reflection, October 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

*Elements of the reflective cycle – somewhat useful:*

Akimi found the small group discussions with her peers only somewhat useful: “Maybe they were useful for us in the first few weeks to get to know each other, but after that we had time to communicate with one another outside the classroom” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). She felt that it would have been helpful to actually have more time for such structured discussions after the PDD poster project session so that the teachers could have had a chance to dig deeper into the details of each other’s PDD (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

In regards to the practice teaching with ESL students, Akimi believed that while it was a good experience to teach in an ESL class, it was not particularly useful for her. She indicated that although the students were more motivated and challenging than her own, she “could not get much useful advice” from the experience because the context was too different than her own teaching situation (Practice teaching, November 19; End of Session Reflection, November 28).

#### **5.5.4 AKIMI – Summary**

Akimi viewed the U of O programme as an opportunity to get away from “the daily stress of teaching” and reflect on and analyze her teaching context (End of session Reflection, November 28). She had attended a number of teaching seminars in Japan and been exposed to a lot of information about general TESOL methods, but this programme was an opportunity for her to focus more on her own personal teaching and “get feedback from other teachers in similar teaching contexts” (Whole group reflection, October 1). She felt her activities were more ‘form-focused’ than ‘meaning-focused’ and aimed at developing her students’ receptive skills, and she found that she wanted to challenge herself to “slough off the old ways of teaching grammar translation method” (Reflection, September 24).

During the end of the final reflection session, Akimi said that participating in the programme gave her an increased theoretical knowledge of the process of L2 vocabulary development and the factors affecting it. She indicated that she was able to become much more aware of how to assess and use appropriate resources and TESOL methods to make her classroom more conducive to vocabulary learning. However, she was very unsure about how to balance them with all the other demands she had (End of session Reflection, November 28).

## **5.6 YAMATO**

### **5.6.1 BACKGROUND:**

*Yamato's background and research interests, drawn from his draft written statement, one-to-one start of session interview with the researcher and his introduction to the PDD:*

Yamato was a high school teacher in Yamagataken, Japan. At the time of this study, he had been teaching at this level for 19 years and had been in the same school for six years. Close to 99% of the students in his school went on to post-secondary education, thus the university entrance exam was very important to them. For most students, the main reason to study English in high school was to obtain a high enough score on the exam to get into the best universities. At the time of the study, Yamato taught several different classes during a given week. He had a reading class with second year students four times a week and a writing class with two groups of second year students, twice a week for each group. He also taught a writing class to third year students twice a week. Each lesson lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Yamato studied English Linguistics at university and wrote his thesis on “Derived Nominals”. He studied how the subject-verb-object sequence can remain or is changed when a verb is nominalised. Since these courses were quite theoretical and focused mainly on understanding language form rather than teaching, he noted that he mostly learned to teach based on his own experiences and working with other teachers to get useful suggestions or advice. He said that he often does not rely on using theory to guide his teaching as the situations described in books usually do not represent his teaching context. This trip to Canada was his first experience abroad.

Yamato's goal during the U of O professional development programme was to explore various methods to improve his students' communicative abilities, particularly in writing. He wanted to better understand how to integrate all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) as he believed that he could improve his students' writing skills by strengthening their skills in the other three areas. He felt that most of his students actually had a strong ability to analyze complicated structures when reading English and understand the deep meaning of the texts and that they had also acquired a good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary; however, they did not utilize these skills in speaking and writing.

Yamato suggested that one of the main reasons his students did not take risks to utilize their English knowledge more productively is the structure of their classrooms. In his classes he noted that he focused mostly on teaching reading comprehension, English grammar, and Japanese-English translation in order to prepare his students for the entrance exams. However, in the year prior to this

teaching programme, he was asked to give a demonstration class for local junior high and high school teachers. For this class, he chose to teach with a team teacher and they prepared several activities based on all four skills. The final activity was a writing activity where students needed to write a short essay on the topics they worked on in the previous activities. He was surprised to see the students were so interested and able to handle the writing task as his students are normally not interested in such tasks. He concluded that the main reason the students were motivated and able to complete the task was that the previous activities had prepared them sufficiently to boost their confidence and skill to tackle the assignment. As a result of this experience, Yamato believed that teachers in Japan need to discover improved teaching methods so that they can design lessons that will allow students to have “the confidence and ability to express themselves” (draft written statement) in speaking and writing.

### **5.6.2 REFLECTIVE PROCESS:**

During the programme, Yamato was an active participant in the reflective process and he fully engaged in all the reflective tools provided as outlined below:

*a) Reflections Logs* – Yamato wrote in his reflection log on a regular basis. He used it as an opportunity to record important learning activities so that he would have a quick reference source when he returned to Japan. He not only recorded the main learning topics during the day, he also provided brief reflections and summaries for significant topics that interested him.

*b) Reflective Questionnaires* – Yamato completed all assigned reflective questionnaires: Reflection, August 28; Reflection, September 24; Classroom Observation, October 3; Observation, October 15; Observation, October 17; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 30-31; Observation Reflection, November 12; Practice Teaching to Peers, November 7; Practice Teaching November 19, and the End of Session Reflection, November 28. While his answers were quite brief on some of the questions, he took time to reflect on those questions most relevant to helping him relate his observations to teaching in Japan or his PDD topic.

*c) Mentors' Written Comments* – The mentor's written comments provided a brief summary of main discussion points and future direction and provide a very detailed look into the process that Yamato followed to complete his PDD.

*d) Final PDD* – Yamato’s PDD has a balance of both theory and practical teaching activities. In the first half of his PDD, he analyzed the teaching context in Japan and provided quite detailed insight into why there are often barriers to CLT at the high school level. He then outlined the need for communicative approaches to English language teaching as well as current theory on improving writing skills for his students. In the second half of the PDD, Yamato blended both theory and the needs of his students in a number of pre-writing activities designed to get his students ‘ready’ for the writing process.

*e) Whole Group Discussion Sessions* – Yamato was an active participant in the whole group discussion sessions. As one of the more senior teachers in the group, there seemed to be more allowance or expectation for him to speak up and lead such discussions.

### **5.6.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - The PDD Process and Development of Dispositional Competencies**

Yamato viewed the U of O programme as a good opportunity to learn how to introduce more communicative activities into his classroom, especially in regards to writing. His students often had difficulty writing. In the one-to-one start of session interview, Yamato noted that his students’ “writing skills tended to be very childish. Usually they just write sentences with almost no connection with each other” (August, 29). His goal was to learn more about how to develop his students’ skills and confidence to improve their written communication.

#### *The Importance of Communicative Language teaching:*

During his research, Yamato developed a better understanding of CLT. He learned that CLT is an approach which advocates learning to communicate. Emphasis should be on “expressing one’s ideas rather than on mastery of bits of language” (PDD, p. 3), though it is still important to emphasize grammar instruction as grammar knowledge is important for communication. Classroom activities can be used to stimulate authentic use of the second language with the focus being on “getting one’s message across” (ibid, p. 4). Communication curricula should emphasize all four skills, not just speaking.

Yamato also learned that the teacher’s and student’s roles in a communicative classroom are quite important. Classes are more student-centered and the teacher is expected to act as a facilitator to

help the “student take more responsibility for his or her own learning” (PDD, p. 4). Likewise, the students are given more autonomy and control over the learning process and are expected to work on their language development independently or with their peers. Common activities used in CLT are information gaps, role plays and discussions. All these activities aim to get learners to engage in authentic communication as they try to find information or solve a problem.

### *Why and How to teach writing in English teaching programmes:*

During his research, Yamato learned that there are a number of reasons to teach writing, other than preparing one for an entrance exam. First, writing can be good practice for future communication because students get an opportunity to “rehearse language production when they practice writing” (PDD, p. 11) new expressions or language structures. Second, writing is a good way to “reinforce the acquisition of newly-learned items” (ibid) and can be a useful way for both teachers and students to assess progress in regards to learning acquisition and retention. Finally, “written output will become language input” (ibid) for the learner and others as they attempt to comprehend the student’s communication via reading and discussion. These insights provided him with a greater understanding of the importance of writing when designing his TESOL courses.

Yamato also discovered that production and reception are just flip sides of communication. He notes, “production cannot stand alone without some kind of reception ... productive skills and receptive skills are so deeply related to each other that they cannot be separated” (PDD, p. 12). For this reason, at least two skills (one receptive and one productive) should be integrated into any sequence of activities. For example, reading and listening can be stimuli for discussion and writing, and the other way around. By increasing the communicative element of language teaching and putting less focus on language as an element of study, students’ motivation to interact with the language will also increase (PDD, pp. 12-13; Reflection, September 24; Observation, October 3).

Finally, Yamato also developed a better understanding of the process of L2 reading development, especially in regards to process vs. product writing. In product writing, “the final outcome” is considered to be the most important focus. However, in process writing, the goal is to understand “how we get to that final product” (PDD, p. 13). Process writing involves a focus on pre-writing, drafting, review and revision. Yamato noted that pre-writing is especially important for getting students “ready to start the writing process” (PDD, p. 13-15; Reflection, October 15).

### *Classroom Organization*

During the classroom observation sessions, Yamato developed an awareness of some broader principles of teaching. As with the other teachers, he noticed that the classroom organization of desks in either a “U shape or groups” tends to be more productive for “promoting communication between teachers and students and between students themselves” (Observation, October 3; Observation, October 10; Observation, October 29-31). Another important observation was that using a number of interesting activities in one lesson it is a good way of keeping your students focused and engaged during the class (Observation, October 10; Observation; October 17).

### *Development of Teaching Activities:*

In his PDD, Yamato focused on developing useful activities for introducing students to pre-reading skills. He developed activities that were based on readings from his writing textbook. Yamato outlined five different activities he could use to blend communicative abilities and writing preparation.

The first two tasks are discussion tasks which ask the student to: 1. Identify their opinion on a specific topic, such as “What is good about their school”; 2. Discuss their opinions with their classmate giving reasons for their opinion; 3. Work in pairs to come up with sentences about items; 4. Use the sentences to write a short paragraph using the scaffold/paragraph template provided by the teacher. These two activities not only emphasis writing, but also place an emphasis on the use of terms such as ‘because’ and sequencing words such as ‘first, second, third’ (PDD, pp. 17-22)

The third activity (PDD, pp. 23-26) was also designed to engage the student in a communicative brainstorming process before writing. Students need to write a paragraph on the qualities needed for their future career and advice on how they can acquire those qualities. This activity takes place as follows: 1. Students work in pairs to brainstorm as many careers as possible. Then each student chooses one that he/she would like to have; 2. Students go around the room and ask many different students for advice on the qualities needed for that career as well as how they can obtain those qualities (adjectives are provided to assist students with this task); 3. From the qualities given, students choose two important qualities and develop these into a paragraph given the framework provided by the teacher. In addition to writing skills, this activity was intended to build up students’ oral fluency skills as well.

The final two activities (PDD, pp. 27-33) cover more traditional brainstorming activities such as mind-mapping and free writing. These activities are teamed with post mapping/free writing discussions to build on students’ oral fluency skills. In addition to focusing on communication, the



two final activities also emphasize grammatical structures such as “In order to...., I will...” and writing structure in regards to paragraph organization of topic sentence, supporting sentence, etc.

### **Q #1 Summary:**

During the programme, Yamato was able to increase his dispositional competencies by learning more about TESOL Methods, the process of L2 writing development and some key principles behind TESOL course design. For example, he discovered the importance of introducing multiple skills to enhance the acquisition of both productive and receptive language skills. In regards to increasing the writing skills of his students, he was also able to learn about the principles of material selection and development, such as the importance of pre-writing activities for helping to prepare his students for the writing task. He was also able to develop five relevant pre-writing activities that were designed to not only increase his students’ writing preparedness, but also their structural and grammatical knowledge as well as their oral communication skills.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION #2 - The PDD Process and Development of Capacity Competencies**

Yamato was actively engaged in all areas of the reflective process and his many notations reveal a great deal about the insights he developed as he progressed through the programme. These insights were instrumental in helping Yamato to increase his capacity competencies in the areas described below.

#### *Lesson Planning:*

According to Yamato, Japanese high school teachers who work in academic schools face a significant contradiction in their daily practice. The new Course of Study from MEXT requires teachers to increase the communicative abilities of their students, while at the same time ensuring that high school students are adequately prepared to take the university entrance exams, which do not require students to demonstrate any competence in communication (PDD, p. 5; End of Session Reflection, November 28). While the teachers in Yamato’s school have “learned theoretically that students can be successful at developing communication skills when using CLT” in class, there is a strong hesitation to use such methods to any great degree: “The biggest concern for us Japanese teachers of English, especially for those working at academic high schools, is that we cannot be completely sure whether CLT meets the students’ needs in getting admitted to university” (PDD, p. 5). He goes on to note:

“CLT might be a really effective method if it is seen from a wider perspective than merely passing entrance examinations. Yet we tend to step back from it and stick to our rather old-fashioned way. This reluctance to introduce CLT in our English lessons can be explained simply: the teachers are responsible for the students achieving their goals, which is, in academic school, passing the university entrance examinations. If we do something different than usual and fail to develop the students’ skills in English well enough (as measured by the entrance exams) compared to students in other years, we will be blamed for having failed to develop the students’ abilities” (PDD, p. 6)

Because their own experience with mock examinations has suggested that when they have focused more on communication skills, their efforts did not translate into higher scores on the university entrance exams, many of the Japanese high school teachers in their area are reluctant to focus on more communicative skills in their classrooms (PDD, p. 6). In addition, “in order to survive the competition in the entrance examinations, both teachers and students have to be efficient, which means we must focus on the main part of an English test, which is not oral communication” (Summary Observation, November 12). Despite this reality, the teachers in his high school are aware that students enjoy learning English more in junior high when they are able to focus more on communication skills, than in high school where the focus is much more on grammar and form.

This dual challenge was a major focus in many of Yamato’s reflections. As the programme progressed, Yamato concluded that, since the university entrance exams are a reality that is not likely to change in the near future and it is difficult, if not impossible, to increase the number of teaching hours available in his immediate teaching context “the problem is figuring out how we can achieve both the traditional and the new goals” (PDD, p. 7). Yamato’s conclusion was that the only real solution is for Japanese high school teachers to develop a balanced learning programme that meets both of the demands outlined above. He also indicated that “teachers need to change [their] ways of teaching so that [learners are able to] learn more English autonomously” (PDD, p.7; Summary Observation, November 12; End of Session Reflection, November 28). He felt this could be achieved best by blending a range of TESOL methods such as grammar translation with more communicative activities.

Since the classroom time available for students to “acquire the level of English competence which they are now supposed to acquire” (PDD, p. 8), has been so limited, “teachers of English must learn to teach their students how to practice English” (PDD, p. 8) so they can extend their ability to

learn outside the classroom as well. As students are introduced to more CLT-based activities, they may be more motivated to continue practicing their communication skills outside the classroom and “actually start learning English on their own” (PDD, p. 8; Reflection Log, October 10; End of Session Reflection, November 28). In addition, emphasizing both productive and receptive skills at all times will enhance students’ overall communicative skills and their confidence to speak with others (Whole Group Discussion, September 17).

By learning more about various TESOL methods and their benefits, Yamato was also better able to assess his own teaching resources. During a careful review of his Japanese textbooks, Yamato realized that most of the textbooks in Japan, even his own writing texts, are actually designed to focus on both form and encourage students to be more engaged and communicative (End of Session Reflection, November 28). In the past, when he came across these activities, he says:

“I have usually skipped the part during the lesson because I think it is just time consuming and students do not benefit a lot from these activities ... However, now [he] has come to think that these activities are worth doing not because it can increase students’ knowledge of English, but because it is necessary for students to have opportunities to practice using English, without which students will never learn to speak English” (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

Yamato indicated that such misunderstandings about what CLT is all about are common amongst Japanese and MEXT officials (Reflection Log, October 9). He discovered that contrary to what many believe, grammar teaching is actually an important component of CLT as correct grammar is also necessary for communication (PDD. p. 5). Likewise, CLT is not just focused on oral skills, communication “involves all four skills” (PDD. p. 5), even writing.

Yamato noted that another common misunderstanding of CLT in Japan centers on the use of L1 and L2. Contrary to popular belief in Japan, “CLT actually admits that the use of L1 is effective in some cases. The most important thing [in CLT] is for students to be able to understand the classes, acquire the knowledge of English, and then make actual use of it” (PDD. p. 7). Yamato noted that sometimes the most effective way for teachers to communicate is with the target language, but at other times it might be by using the L1. In other words, teachers in Japan should “take advantage of being bilingual and strike a balance between the two languages” (PDD. p. 7). This will allow them to provide the appropriate model of language needed, given the specific learning context. For example, in the lower levels of both the immersion classes and the second language classes that Yamato observed in Canada, he noticed that the teachers spoke the target language as much as possible but

used the L1 when necessary to make students follow the lesson. Also, at the lower levels, “the teacher allowed the students to respond in their L1” until they had the confidence to use their L2 (Reflection Log, October 10; Observation, October 10; Summary Observation, November 12).

Yamato reflected that in Japan they would likely not consider this type of interaction as communication. Yet, the classes in Canada were quite communicative using this approach. Yamato reflected on the fact that this idea of waiting for students to feel comfortable to speak in the target language is not common in Japan: “In Japan, if a teacher speaks only English and students only [speak] Japanese, nobody would consider that English is taught or learned communicatively” (Observation, October 10). Yamato wondered if perhaps the idea that “students should first develop their receptive skills and not be forced to speak [the second language] from the very beginning could change our view of the communicative way of teaching” (ibid) in Japan. If teachers developed their lessons (select the appropriate resources) such that they significantly increased the amount of input students get (though the use of CLT), this might help students to build up the receptive skills needed to give them the confidence and motivation to increase their output (Summary Observation, November 12).

The use of mixed TESOL methods to improve students’ overall writing skills was the underlying basis for the various teaching activities that Yamato developed in his PDD. In addition, he based all his activities on lessons from his writing textbook in order to balance both the need to be more communicative with the need to prepare for the entrance exams. His reasoning for this approach provided real insight into the development of his capacity competencies: First, Yamato reflected that since time is of the essence and students must cover the textbook and keep pace with the other teachers, it makes sense to build on this need by making all the activities linked to something the students must do anyway. Also, by using these required resources, he knows that his students will also have the necessary schemata to do pre-writing activities because of the previous preparation activities, such as reading and discussion that already exist in his text. Finally, and maybe most importantly, Yamato indicated that:

“If it happened that [he] did not frequently use the textbooks, students would find it unsettling and confusing. They might start to worry about whether [he] is doing the right thing to prepare them for their difficult and all-important university entrance examinations.” (PDD, p. 16)

Yamato’s recognition of his responsibility to make students feel comfortable with the changes and assure them that he understand their needs is one of the most important competencies any teacher can have and is not something that can be taught, but is rather something that is acquired through critical

reflection as well as the ability to synthesize and prioritize the various competing needs and requirements of one's students and one's context.

### Cultural Differences:

In addition to developing a better understanding of how to structure his lesson plans, Yamato also gained more insight into the role that he plays as a key motivator in the learning process. During the many observation classes that Yamato observed, he noted that most classes in Canada were much more “student centered” than in Japan (Observation, October 3) and that there was a much higher level of ‘interaction between the teachers and the students’ (Observation, October 10). The teachers made their students feel more comfortable and confident about their language abilities by “asking questions” and supporting their responses. This helped the students to be more motivated about learning and using English (Reflection Log, October 24; Observation, October 24; Observation, October 29-31). In addition, Yamato noted the importance of praising students. He felt that “the teachers in Canada praise their students often and that this motivated them to engage in the learning process more fully. Yamato indicated, that for him, “it is not so easy to interact with students in this way ... but [he] would like to try this kind of interaction. It could motivate [his] students” (Observation, October 24). He also noted, “I hope I can produce the atmosphere in the classroom to reduce the students’ nervousness, which I saw [when observing classes in Canada]” (Observation, October 29-31).

### **Q #2 Summary:**

Through the many reflective tools, Yamato was able to better understand how he can use various resources and TESOL methods to develop a more balanced programme that could not only create a classroom that is more conducive to learning, but also facilitate more independent learning for his students outside the classroom. He realized that increasing his students’ input through the use of more communicative activities could be instrumental in preparing and motivating them to perform better in written tasks. He also discovered that he played a major role in creating a more communicative environment with his students: Through the activities he develops and the feedback he provides, he can motivate his students to be more successful and autonomous language learners. However, the major obstacle he foresaw was finding sufficient time to incorporate the ideas in his class given the primary demands of preparing students for the university entrance exams.

**RESEARCH QUESTION #3 - On a four-point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, and Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?**

Yamato participated fully in all elements of the reflective cycle and found them all useful in developing his overall professional competence.

*Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Very Useful:*

The PDD was very useful as it helped Yamato to research theory related to writing theory and he “learned a variety of pre-writing activities” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). Yamato found his meetings with his mentor to be one of the most useful elements of the reflective cycle. He said, “She was always positive about my ideas and writing, which kept me in the right track” (ibid) and that she guided him on how to put all his information together. He felt that he could not have managed the task without her support (End of Session Reflection, November 28). He also found the practice teaching with his peers and the ESL students very useful. His peers were able to give him constructive feedback during the practice session and later reflection session which helped him to improve his activity (Practice Teaching, November 19). In regards to the practice session with ESL students, he notes, “I was assured that students can perform well in the activities if I take steps for them to follow” (ibid). Finally, the poster presentation was also very useful. Chikato noted, “It was a good opportunity to summarize what I really wanted to say in my PDD” (ibid), which was helpful as he would be required to share his presentation with his peers when he returned home (ibid).

*Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Useful:*

Throughout the Reflective Cycle, Yamato used the reflective logs as resources to note down and reflect on the various elements of the programme. He felt this was a worthwhile activity so that he would be able to remember what he had learned and be able to locate information quickly when he returned to Japan (Reflection, October 15). Unlike some of the other teachers, Yamato also recorded a few important reflections in each weekly journal (Reflection, October 15; End of Session Reflection, November 28). Yamato also felt the observation sessions and their corresponding reflection sheets were useful. In the former he was able to observe different types of language teaching in Canada as a model for language teaching in Japan. As for the reflection sheets, Yamato said that “reflection is always useful for us to develop professionally” (End of Session Reflection, November 28) as it forces you to look back on your learning and think about what was important and why.

### Elements of the Reflective Cycle – Somewhat Useful:

The only element of the reflective cycle that was not as useful for Yamato was the small group discussions with his peers. While he was still able to benefit in regards to sharing ideas about language teaching in general from small group discussions (Reflective Journal, November 7), “with regard to the topic, unfortunately, I didn’t have anyone to share ideas with” (End of Session Reflection, November 28).

### **5.6.4 YAMATO – Summary:**

Yamato’s goal was to improve his students’ writing abilities by learning how to make his classes more communicative, as he believed a focus on communication would allow them to become better prepared for writing. While recognizing the importance of developing his students’ communicative abilities, he also realized that an equal challenge was to ensure that he did not focus on such communication skills at the risk of losing focus on the more structured knowledge required to achieve a high score in the university entrance exams.

A review of Research Question 1 reveals that the PDD research process was beneficial in helping Yamato to develop a better understanding of TESOL methods as well as the process of L2 writing development and effective TESOL course design. He discovered that communication includes all language skills and that is important to build both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) as one often acts as input for the other. For this reason, Yamato learned that it is important to focus on more than one skill at a time in any given activity. The PDD research also gave him a better understanding of the principles behind material development and selection.

The knowledge he gained through the PDD process, combined with the various reflective elements, improved Yamato’s ability to assess and use appropriate resources for his students. Yamato realized that incorporating a more communicative approach in his writing class was not in opposition to the requirements of his assigned textbook. First, he realized that introducing communicative activities and pre-writing activities could be an ideal way of preparing his students to write by providing them with the sufficient schemata and vocabulary needed to complete the task. Secondly, he realized that his writing textbook already contained a number of communicative activities, which he had previously ignored as he did not understand their value.

As a result of the many classroom observations Yamato took part in, he was also able to reconcile a common misunderstanding about the use of L1 in CLT. Yamato concluded that the use of L1 does not preclude a communicative environment. In many of the second language classes he observed, he noted that the teachers used the target language but allowed the students to respond in their L1 until they were confident enough to use the second language. He also noticed in both the immersion and second language classes, that teachers occasionally used the L1 when they wanted to clarify students' understanding of important concepts. He reflected that perhaps Japanese teachers need to think more about providing their students with more appropriate language models in context. This can be done by increasing language input through greater use of the target language so that they can build their students' receptive skills enough that they feel confident to risk using the target language, while at the same time realizing when using the L1 will be most beneficial to their students.

Yamato also developed a better understanding of the teacher's role in motivating their students. It is important that the teacher makes sure they meet their students' long-term language needs by finding ways to creatively introduce more communicative language activities while still helping them to develop the essential skills needed to acquire a high score on the university entrance exam. It is also important for teachers to build closer relationship with their students and be open to praising their successes, regardless of how small or slow their progress may seem.

When he returned to Japan, Yamato hoped he could change "his way of teaching" (End of Session Reflection, November 28). He said it would be difficult because of the volume and difficulty of the material he must cover from his textbook each lesson, but that it was still important that he tried (Summary Observation, November 12). He noted that "Of course, it will never be in a drastic way, but in a gradual, balanced way, but spending a little more time on communicative activities so that students will get used to using English" (End of Session Reflection, November 28). He believed he could do this by first introducing some of the communicative activities in his book such as discussing what they have read.

Yamato also noted that it would be important for him to work out such changes with the rest of the teachers in his school. He said that in Japan, "the teachers must keep pace with other teachers, which means [they] are supposed to do almost the same things in our lessons. If we do something new in a lesson without other teachers' consensus, it could cause trouble" (Observation, October 17). He recognized that some Japanese teachers "have resistance to new things and don't like to change their ways because it is often bothering to do that. This is not a simple matter to solve. Actually, it almost seems impossible to solve the problem. Still we have to do something to change the situation however



slow and gradual it may be” (ibid). At the end of the programme, he indicated that “I have to show that CLT-based activities will not affect students’ development in English negatively. Then I will not face opposition.” (End of Session Reflection, November 28). He felt that most teachers in his school would not oppose these ideas as “they have already started trying to teach English more communicatively” (ibid).

## CHAPTER 6 - CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

### ***6.0 INTRODUCTION***

This chapter will provide a synthesis of the findings from the six case studies presented in Chapter 5. While the previous chapter focused on highlighting the individual journey of each JTE, this chapter focuses on highlighting the competencies developed throughout the journey. This section will present an overview of the participants based on the background information provided in the case studies. The following sections will address the three research questions in turn.

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants (teaching experience, level, type of school, etc.). As the table indicates, two of the six teachers came from the junior high system, while the remaining four came from the academic high school system. The teachers had a significant number of years teaching (between 13-19 years) and all but Tomimo had some experience abroad in an English speaking country.

The research topics for the participants were closely linked to their individual teaching demands. Both Hana and Tomimo focused on oral communication skills as this was an important area of focus for the junior high level. The four high school teachers focused on additional skill based research given their particular teaching requirements. Both Chikato and Akimi studied vocabulary acquisition as this is a main area of focus on the university entrance exams and both felt that vocabulary skills were also key to improved communication. Likewise, reading and writing were key areas of focus at the high school level as students at this level work towards preparing for university entrance exams. Both Naka and Yamato were looking to provide a more communicative approach to teaching these skills.

**Table 1: Participant Information**

| <b>Particip-<br/>-ant</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Teaching<br/>Level</b> | <b># of<br/>years<br/>teach-<br/>ing</b> | <b>Type of<br/>School</b> | <b>Original<br/>area<br/>of study</b>                  | <b>Previous<br/>study/<br/>travel<br/>abroad</b> | <b>Request<br/>for<br/>Particip-<br/>-ation</b> | <b>Research<br/>topic</b>    |
|---------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Hana                      | Female        | 35         | Junior<br>High            | 13                                       | Academic                  | Education<br>and<br>Linguistic<br>Study                | 7 weeks in<br>USA                                | Self-<br>request                                | Listening<br>and<br>Speaking |
| Tomimo                    | Male          | 37         | Junior<br>High            | 14                                       | Academic                  | Education                                              | None                                             | School<br>Board                                 | Speaking                     |
| Naka                      | Female        | 37         | Senior<br>High            | 13                                       | High<br>Academic          | English<br>Linguistics                                 | 10 mths in<br>USA<br>6 weeks in<br>Can.          | Self-<br>request                                | Reading                      |
| Chikato                   | Male          | 38         | Senior<br>High            | 17                                       | High<br>Academic          | English<br>Literature                                  | 2 wks<br>sightseeing<br>in USA<br>& Canada       | School<br>Board                                 | Vocabul-<br>ary              |
| Akimi                     | Female        | 36         | Senior<br>High            | 13                                       | High<br>Academic          | Inter-<br>national<br>Relations/<br>English<br>Culture | 8 mths in<br>UK                                  | School<br>Board                                 | Vocabul-<br>ary              |
| Yamato                    | Male          | 41         | Senior<br>High            | 19                                       | High<br>Academic          | English<br>Linguistics                                 | None                                             | School<br>Board                                 | Writing                      |

**6. 1 RESEARCH QUESTION #1 – In what way does the reflective cycle (the PDD process) contribute to the development of dispositional competencies of these Japanese teachers of English?**

These are identified as knowledge/awareness of any of any of the following (Haddock, 2006):

- The process of L2 development
- TESOL methods
- The principles of TESOL course design and curriculum development
- Factors affecting language learning
- The impact of L1 on language teaching
- Broader principles of teaching
- The principles behind materials development and selection
- Different learning styles

As indicated in the case studies presented in Chapter 5, the JTEs enrolled in the U of O programme were able to improve their dispositional competencies in a number of the areas outlined above. Table 2 below provides a summary of the various dispositional competencies developed by the JTEs as outlined in the narrative in Chapter 5. The left hand column of the table identifies the main competency, while the right hand column identifies the particular learning (derived from theory, practice, observation, etc.) that appears to have contributed to the development of a given competency. When a similar learning was identified for more than one JTE, the number of JTEs to which that learning applied is indicated in brackets. A description of those competency developments shared by the majority of the JTES (also highlighted in bold in the following table) is provided following the table.

**Table 2: Dispositional Competencies – Knowledge/Awareness of...**

| Competency                                | Skill Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The process of L2 Development             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communicative activities are an essential part of L2 development as they promote autonomous learning, which is needed because students will not be able to become fluent through classroom instruction alone (6)</b></li> <li>• Vocabulary development requires a holistic approach (knowing what a words means, how to use it, how it sounds, etc.). Lack of this knowledge can impede ability to use (2)</li> <li>• Reading theory – linguistic and cognitive processing</li> <li>• Process vs. Product writing – important to engage students in the process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| TESOL Methods                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CLT – focuses on fluency and emphasizing meaning , rather than focus on mastery of bits of language (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>CLT -Teacher acts as facilitator, while student is active player in the learning process (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>CLT – promotes authentic communication (6)</b></li> <li>• Blended Methodology Approach – an optimal way to address all of the students’ learning objectives - Engage, Study, Activate (2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| The Principles behind TESOL Course design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers need to clearly understand students’ learning objectives in order to plan a suitable lesson- not all teachers in Japan really understand MEXT goals or students and only focus on objectives in textbook, or passing the entrance exam (2)</li> <li>• Need to make activities easy to use (1)</li> <li>• Need to design activities such that students have a genuine need to talk with one another (6)</li> <li>• Skills such as reading and writing are also communicative skills and thus should be taught communicatively whenever possible (2)</li> <li>• Learners need to focus on grammar and vocabulary skills as well as communication skills in order to develop both fluency and accuracy (2)</li> <li>• Lessons should be designed so that they promote both conscious and unconscious learning (2)</li> </ul> |
| Factors Affecting Language Learning       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of linguistic and cognitive processing skills will increase the language learning burden</li> <li>• Linguistic stretch between L1 and L2 can also cause learning burden</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| The Impact of L1 on language Teaching     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much use of L1 can be a barrier to acquisition of communicative abilities in the L2 (target language) (2)</li> <li>• L1 can cause learning burden in vocabulary development (similar sounding words, different meaning, linguistic stretch to L2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Broader Principles of Teaching            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Teachers as facilitators of learning rather than instructors – very contrary to Japanese classrooms, but ideal for promoting student centered learning (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Teacher feedback – error correction, praise, - increase student involvement, increase student confidence (4)</b></li> <li>• Teacher questioning – promotes communication (3)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>U-shaped classroom is ideal for encouraging student involvement, pair work, communication (5)</b></li> <li>• A variety of activities over one lesson is useful for keeping students' attention, especially lower-level learners (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| The Principles Behind Materials Development and Selection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making speeches and having Q and A – good way to promote more authentic communication between students (2)</li> <li>• Practice of useful expressions through small talk – provides confidence and more authentic communication</li> <li>• Pre-listening, during listening, and post-listening activities needed to lessen the language burden and promote deeper learning</li> <li>• Pre-reading (activate schemata), during reading (knowledge check), post reading activities (deepen understanding of meaning)</li> <li>• Skimming and Scanning (activate schemata, knowledge check)</li> <li>• Teach vocabulary strategies to enhance vocabulary skills (collocations, synonyms, prefixes, suffixes, definitions)</li> <li>• Need to integrate learning of multiple skills in one lesson (2)</li> <li>• Vocabulary trees, word association, focus on frequency lists</li> <li>• Use of discussion, brainstorming, mind mapping to activate and develop students' schemata for writing preparation</li> <li>• Use of discussion, brainstorming, mind mapping – activates and develops students' schemata for writing and further communication</li> </ul> |
| Different Learning Styles                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No references made directly to this competency</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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### 6. 1.1 The process of L2 Development

According to the data, all JTEs increased their knowledge of the underlying processes that can affect L2 development. Developing an understanding in this area is important since it provides a base for building capacity competencies as teachers who have this knowledge are better able to understand how the theory they use or the activities they employ can either hinder or foster language acquisition.

Accordingly, all six JTEs identified that communicative activities are an essential component in the process of L2 development. As with most other second language classrooms, the number of teaching hours available for instruction in Japanese classrooms is insufficient for truly developing fluent language skills. For this reason, the JTEs agreed that it was important to teach students communicative skills as well. They felt that once the students were able to communicate with others using various strategies, they would be able to extend the learning process outside the classroom and

thus increase their exposure to and use of the language knowledge they have acquired during class time.

### 6.1.2 TESOL Methods

CLT methodology was the most common area of study during the programme. This is not surprising as it was the one methodological approach covered as a key component in the in-service programme (as required by MEXT's objective to improve the teachers' awareness of this teaching approach). Interestingly, the group approach to learning and writing about this topic resulted in a shared vision for all. In fact, many of the JTEs have almost identical introductions for this section of their PDD (which was also an intentional part of the programme as it allowed them to build shared knowledge about paraphrasing, referencing, etc.).

All six JTEs noted that that language teaching should have a focus on meaning rather than mastery of bits of language. Because of the emphasis on using language rather than learning about language, CLT helps to promote authentic communication between participants. The teacher's role in a CLT-based classroom was also identified as being quite important. Teachers are expected to act as facilitators of language development by ensuring that the balance of activities and approaches taken in the classroom provides an environment that fosters confidence in students to become more independent learners who are expected to take a very active role in the learning process. All six JTEs came to recognize that CLT was not necessarily in conflict with skill-based instruction.

This shared vision of CLT became the base from which they further explored their own areas for development. Despite the various skill areas that were researched, the one learning that was consistent for all was again related to communicative language teaching: if you want to make your lessons more communicative you need to design the activities such that students have a genuine reason to communicate. According to the JTEs, this approach was quite contrary to the traditional teaching approach in Japan where the focus is on providing students with knowledge through a lecture

based approach that has fairly predictable content. As indicated in the case studies in Chapter 5, most JTEs felt that introducing a more communicative approach as outlined above would also motivate students to become more engaged in the learning process.

#### 6.1.3 Factors affecting language learning and development:

Many of the JTEs did not emphasize learning in this area. Individual areas of knowledge development included the role that linguistic stretch between the L1 and L2 can have on learning and development as well as the need for both linguistic and cognitive processing skills. Basically, when the L1 and L2 are very different, there will be an increased learning challenge as learners cannot easily rely on L1 knowledge to make connections in meaning in the L2. In this case the need for linguistic and cognitive skills will be even more important (especially when the cultures are also quite different). This was an important area of study for those JTEs who were studying how best to teach vocabulary skills or improve reading comprehension.

#### 6.1.4 The impact of L1 on language teaching:

While this topic was also not emphasized by most JTEs, at least a few developed a better understanding of the impact that L1 can have on language teaching, especially in regards to the development of communicative abilities and vocabulary learning. Rather than focus on the impact of L1 on language teaching, most participants focused on the impact that use (or lack of use) of L2 can have on language teaching. This was most often related to the teacher's role in ensuring a balanced learning environment with sufficient exposure to and use of the target language. This will be discussed in Research Question #2. See Table 3 for additional details.

#### 6.2.5 Broader principles of teaching:

One of the most commonly noted items in the various reflection worksheets was the role the teacher plays as a facilitator of language learning, rather than simply an instructor of language knowledge. Through their experiences in a student-centered learning environment, both as students



and as observers, the JTEs came to realize the importance of including the student in the learning process. This was likely such a main topic of interest for the JTEs because the role of the Japanese English language teacher is still quite traditional and lecture-based and so this was a very obvious difference for them to observe and experience. In the beginning of the in-service programme, the JTEs were clearly unaware of their expected role as participants in creating the learning experience. Many of the U of O instructors commented frequently on the lack of participation from the group in the early weeks and it took some time before the JTEs understood and took up their role as visibly active agents in driving and creating the learning process (Post-training interviews with mentors).

The use of teacher feedback, such as error correction and praise were identified by the JTEs as being key teaching strategies for promoting improved student-teacher interaction. The JTEs noticed the importance of teacher feedback for encouraging student participation as well as providing students with insight into their own learning progress. Most teachers noted that Canadian teachers often gave feedback immediately, but in a way that encouraged students to continue to participate and even motivated them to do so more often in some cases.

‘Teacher questioning’ and classroom set-up were also identified by the majority of teachers as being key elements in promoting communication. During school observations the JTEs noticed that strategic questioning was used to involve participants in the learning process and build their communicative confidence. At first, the teachers were quite surprised by the level of active participation of the Canadian students. However, as the semester progressed, they came to recognize that ‘teacher questioning’ played a significant role in driving participation in the class. Interestingly, they noted that this was done with all levels of students and in all subjects (even some of the non-language based classes they observed).

One aspect of the reflection sheet was to draw the JTEs’ attention to classroom setup and to reflect on the impact this can have on promoting or limiting communication. In the vast majority of

language classes observed by the JTEs, a U-shaped classroom was the norm. The JTEs reflected on the usefulness of this setup for increasing communication between students, as well as between the students and the teachers. In such a setup, students can work more easily in pairs or small groups and the teacher can more easily communicate as ‘part of the group’, rather than ‘to the group’. This was noted as a main difference between Canadian and Japanese classrooms, which are mostly set up in rows.

One JTE also commented on the fact that language teachers in Canada had their own classrooms and students came to them. As a result, they could post many interesting pictures and texts on the wall. She felt this was beneficial for providing external support to the learning process and improving the overall classroom environment.

#### 6.1.6 The principles behind materials development and selection:

The JTEs were able to develop a number of individual competencies in this area as a result of the research and development of activities required for their PDD. Given that the research focus was very different across the JTEs, the competency development in this area was specific to the individual JTE’s teaching needs. However, the one area of common learning was related to CLT activities in general. Given their research efforts, all teachers agreed that any skill could benefit from being taught in a more communicative approach, especially given the Course of Study’s revised goals to create students with communicative abilities. As a result, the focus of most activities should be to promote a genuine need for communication. Therefore, activities such as information gaps, debates, presentations, role plays and discussions of interesting topics are ideal activities that can be used in any lesson plan and with any topic to promote more communication with students. All of the JTEs used these underlying concepts as the foundation on which they developed or selected their particular teaching activities.

### 6.1.7 Research Question #1 - Summary

As summarized in Table 2 above, the JTEs attending the U of O programme were able to increase their knowledge (dispositional competencies) in many areas. The area in which there was the most shared learning across participants was in regards to CLT theory or methods and general teaching principles. This is expected as formal instruction on these topics was an integral part of the programme for all participants. What is interesting about the results presented here is that the U of O programme appeared to provide participants with a framework to develop a general understanding of the CLT approach, while still allowing students to personalize and customize the learning process to meet their own needs via the PDD research process. The importance of this approach will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

### ***6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION #2 – In what way does the reflective cycle (the PDD process) contribute to the development of capacity competencies of these Japanese teachers of English?***

These are identified as the skills/judgments needed to...

- Assess and use appropriate resources/TESOL methods
- Provide a balanced programme
- Facilitate independent learning
- Provide constructive and sensitive feedback to facilitate learning
- Monitor learner progress
- Accommodate varying levels and abilities
- Provide appropriate models of language in context
- Use a variety of teaching strategies
- Carry out a needs analysis
- Develop suitable assessment tasks (both formal and informal)

As well as *Attitudes* which...

- Create a classroom environment conducive to learning
- Encourage teacher-student rapport
- Ensure contribution to professional development
- Ensure the students know what they are doing and why  
(Haddock, 2006)

As indicated in the case studies presented in Chapter 5, the JTEs who were part of the U of O programme were able to improve their capacity competencies in a number of the areas outlined above. Table 3 below provides a summary of the various capacity competencies developed by the JTEs as outlined in the narrative in Chapter 5. The left hand column of the table identifies the main competency, while the right hand column identifies the particular skill development or attitude shift that appears to have contributed to the development of a given competency. When a similar skill/attitude was identified for more than one JTE, the number of JTEs to which that skill/attitude applied is indicated in brackets. A description of those competency developments shared by the majority of the JTES (also highlighted in bold in the following table) is provided following the table.

**Table 3: Capacity Competencies – Skills/judgments**

| Competency                                                         | Skill Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assess and use appropriate resources/TESOL methods                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increased theoretical understanding of materials currently used. Better able to select the right activity for teaching a given objective (6)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Provide a balanced programme                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increased ability to mix and match activities/methods to provide a learning programme which helps to prepare students for university/high school exams, covers the content in their book, and also introduces communicative aspects required from the MEXT course of study (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>CLT is a useful way for promoting a more balanced programme between a focus on language and a focus on using language (5)</b></li> </ul>                             |
| Facilitate independent learning                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Asking for students' opinions (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Providing strong oral communication skills (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Use of more communicative activities provides students with communication skills needed to be more autonomous learners (5)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Provide constructive and sensitive feedback to facilitate learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning students about opinions can promote deeper thinking (3)</li> <li>• Praising students when they have done a good job – now have useful phrases, strategies to do this (3)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Monitor learning progress                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of questioning can be an informal way of assessing students comprehension as you progress through a topic or a lesson (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Adjust instruction to meet various skill levels                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vary question/interaction approach to better suit student's level. Use yes/no questions with lower level students; use more content based or opinion questions with higher level students (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Provide appropriate models of language in context                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japanese teachers need realistic language role models for their students (use more English in class, show that you can communicate with right level and strategies(3)</li> <li>• Use L1 and L2 appropriately – sometimes L1 is necessary to reduce learning burden and accelerate learning process (1)</li> <li>• For vocabulary teaching, word frequency is critical in determining the most appropriate language models to learn and expose students to (1)</li> </ul> |
| Carry out needs analysis                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None of the JTEs emphasized development in this area</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Develop suitable assessment tasks                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None of the JTEs emphasized development in this area</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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| Attitudes which.....                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Create a classroom environment conducive to learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use of multiple methodologies and teaching activities will create a classroom that increases learning and involvement of students (5)</b></li> <li>• Increased use of the target language to discuss and learn about features of the target language is an option for Japanese high school teachers to promote a learning environment more conducive to communicative activities (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     |
| Encourage student /teacher rapport                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Teachers should not only teach ideas, they share their opinions with students and also ask for students' opinions – they should be genuinely interested in learning more about their students (5)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Ensure contribution to professional development      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Important that teachers return from this opportunity and share what they have learned with their peers back home to help them develop their teaching skills as well (4)</b></li> <li>• <b>Important to continue to challenge yourself as a teacher when you return home by trying out new approaches/activities (even if it is very slow progress) (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Continue to challenge yourself through discussion with others about what is the best approach to language teaching/learning given your teaching context (5)</b></li> </ul> |
| Ensure students know what they are doing and why     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping students to understand the objective of each activity will get them to see the relevance of what they are doing and how this helps them meet their overall learning needs (2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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### 6.2.1 Assess and use appropriate resources/TESOL methods:

As indicated in Research Question 1 above, one of the major benefits of the in-service programme was an increased understanding of TESOL methods and resources. Throughout the PDD process, the JTEs were frequently asked to reflect on how their new learning related to the individual teaching contexts (their texts, their students' needs, MEXT objectives, etc.). The result of this process was that all six JTEs in this study developed an increased understanding of the materials they were currently using in their classroom. They came to realize that their textbooks already contained a number of CLT-based activities and they also came to understand how they could manipulate these activities to target specific learning objectives. In addition, they came to realize that many of the

communicative activities they had learned during shorter professional development workshops in Japan were not only good for motivating students to participate (because they are usually game-oriented and fun), but also had a genuine learning benefit. This understanding allowed the JTEs to develop more acceptance of the CLT approach.

#### 6.2.2 Provide a balanced programme:

The increased understanding and acceptance of the TESOL methods noted above also provided the JTEs with an increased ability to mix and match activities and methods in such way that would allow them to provide a more balanced learning programme that reflected the Course of Study's requirement for increased communicative skills, while at the same time continuing to address the needs of those students required to participate in university level entrance exams.

As most Japanese students need to prepare for the grammar-based university entrance exams, especially at the high school level, all JTEs must focus a good percentage of their time on developing such skills. However, increased knowledge and understanding of CLT methods (and other methods) provided the JTEs with an ability to better understand how many CLT-based activities can actually help to improve their students' knowledge of specific skill-based language competencies as well, not just in communication. The JTEs learned that these skills would allow them to provide a balance between a focus on language learning as well as a focus on language use. This realization made the teachers more accepting of integrating these newer concepts into their classrooms as they would now be able to explain to their students the benefits of such activities/methods. The teaching activities described in their PDDs and outlined in the previous chapter are examples of the various ways in which the JTEs were able to internalize this knowledge and generate potential teaching activities and lesson plans for their students.

### 6.2.3 Facilitate independent learning:

One of the greatest insights that all of the JTEs developed during the programme was the realization that providing students with more communication skills could allow them to become more autonomous learners, both in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. If students could develop strong communication skills, they could then use these to interact with others which could be beneficial in many ways. First, students would be able to practice newly-learned skills and knowledge by engaging in conversation with others. Second, they would be able to assess additional learning needs as a result of communication challenges/gaps. Finally, communication with others provides learners with additional input that increases their own knowledge and skills. Most of the JTEs realized that teaching such skills to their students would help them to become more active participants in the learning process and provide them with the resources needed to develop a level of fluency that cannot be easily obtained from classroom instruction alone, especially given the limited time available for English classes in Japanese junior high and high schools.

### 6.2.4 Provide Constructive and Sensitive Feedback:

The use of questioning and praise of students, as a tool for promoting better teacher-student interaction as well as extending students' communicative abilities, were two strategies that the majority of JTEs highlighted as key areas of learning during the programme (see Research Question 1 above). However, only three of the JTEs actively reflected on how they could use these strategies going forward in their own classrooms. For these teachers, the use of questioning would be an ideal way to extend their students' oral output. This was especially important for Hana and Tomimo who teach at the junior high level and who have clear Course of Study Objectives to increase students' communicative skills in these areas. In addition, the use of questioning was thought to be an ideal way of promoting a deeper level of comprehension, providing the questions require more than yes/no responses from the student. Three of the JTEs who taught at the high school level did not believe that



such strategies would be as successful with their students as Japanese students at this level are too focused on language form and are not accustomed to this approach from their teacher.

#### 6.2.5 Monitor Learning Progress:

Only one JTE emphasized strategies that could be used to monitor students' learning progress. As indicated in Table 2, it was believed that questioning was useful for this process as it would provide insight into exactly what level of understanding the student has, and indicate further learning and instructional needs for the group.

#### 6.2.6 Adjust instruction to meet various skill levels:

Varying instructional level was not a major area of focus for any of the JTEs. The only reference to this was the type of questions a teacher might ask. For example, a teacher could ask yes/no questions to lower level learners, but use 'wh' questions with higher level learners.

#### 6.2.7 Provide appropriate models of language in context:

This was also not a main concern for the JTEs. One reason may be that all the JTEs in this programme use prescribed text books which are designed to target a specific level and provide appropriate models for their students. In addition, levels in Japan appear to be determined by grade/age level, rather than actual language level. Finally, many of the JTEs also have an assistant language teacher in their classroom at various times in order to provide a model of native speaker use. However, at least three JTEs did note that Japanese teachers need to also consider their role as 'realistic' language models for their students. Not only can they provide an example of how one can communicate without being a native speaker, they can also provide a model of a somewhat altered student-teacher dynamic as the lecture-based approach to teaching in Japan appears to be one of the biggest deterrents for increasing communication from students.

#### 6.2.8 Encourage student-teacher Rapport:

As was just hinted at above, several of the JTEs reflected on the negative impact that a teacher-centered class can have on language learning. At least four of the JTEs noted that they felt strongly about the need to change their role in the classroom and encourage more student interaction by asking them their opinions or encouraging them to share information with their peers. They felt that increasing student-teacher and student-student interaction in their classroom would be necessary to get their students more involved in the learning process and they planned to do this through questioning and praise.

#### 6.2.9 Create a classroom environment conducive to learning:

The JTEs believed that the use of multiple methods and teaching activities could help to vary the more lecture style approach to teaching commonly found in Japanese classrooms. They felt such an approach would also induce students to become more involved and interested in the learning process and, along with improved student-teacher interaction, would create a classroom atmosphere that is more conducive to language learning and development.

#### 6.2.10 Encourage contribution to professional development:

Most of the JTEs felt that the PDD process helped them to develop their own professional competence and that it was important that they share what they have learned with their peers back home so that they too could help to improve language teaching practices in Japan. Most of the JTEs clearly believed by the end of the programme that real change in language teaching in Japan would need to be driven by the teacher. They recognized that when they returned to Japan, they would have challenges to overcome (exams, student expectations, pressure from peers, etc.), but if they continued to make small changes in their teaching practice, they could help to move the process along bit by bit.

Most of the JTEs also indicated that the opportunity to participate in a programme such as the U of O programme was a great honour and also carried with it a great sense of responsibility to not

only share what they had learned with others (with school peers as well as at conference presentations), but to continue to challenge themselves and their peers to include a more communicative approach to teaching as required by the MEXT Course of Study.

#### 6.2.11 Ensure students know what they are doing and why:

This was not a major area of reflection for most of the JTEs. However, two JTEs did come to the realization that by helping students to very clearly understand the language learning objectives of a given activity, they would help students to understand the relevance of such activities and thus increase their motivation and participation with these activities. This was especially true for CLT-based activities at the high school level where students are very concerned about preparing for traditional grammar-based exams and thus are wary of ‘fun’ communicative activities that seem unrelated to their longer term goal of preparing for the exam. As Yamato indicated, if they can make others realize that communicative-based activities will not decrease their performance in their required skill areas they will have a better chance of getting them to accept the new activities. He felt this could be done by sharing what they know with both their students and their teaching peers.

#### 6.2.12 Research Question #2 – Summary

As summarized in Table 3 above, the JTEs were able to increase their capacity competencies in many areas. The increased knowledge and awareness of various TESOL methods and approaches not only increased the JTEs receptiveness to using more communicative approaches in their language classroom, it also provided them with the skills needed to select appropriate resources and provide a more balanced programme for their students. In addition, the JTEs developed a better understanding of their role as language facilitators and learned a number of strategies and teaching activities that would help them provide feedback and encouragement to their students. This, combined with their improved TESOL knowledge, would allow them to encourage changes in student-teacher rapport and create a classroom environment that is more conducive to learning. In addition, the JTEs also

developed a strong sense of responsibility to not only change their own practice, but also to share their knowledge with their peers and engage in dialogue with colleagues about how best to improve language teaching in Japan given their particular teaching constraints. The importance of such developments in the overall development of capacity competencies will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

***6.3 RESEARCH QUESTION #3 – On a four point scale (Very Useful, Useful, Somewhat Useful, Not Useful) how do participants rate the usefulness of the various components of the reflective cycle in enabling them to develop their dispositional and capacity competencies?***

These components include:

- The Professional Development Dossier (PDD)
- The reflection logs
- The various reflection worksheets
- The school observation sessions and reflections
- The practice teaching sessions and reflections
- The small group discussion sessions
- The poster project session
- Their mentor

As indicated in the case studies presented in Chapter 5, the JTEs in the U of O programme found most of the elements of the reflective cycle helpful (or very helpful) in assisting them to increase their professional development throughout the programme. The rating provided for each element is listed in Table 4 below. The number below each rating indicates the number of JTEs who agreed with that particular rating for the respective element. The way in which each element helped the JTEs is indicated in the far right hand column of the table. When a particular benefit or use was identified by more than one JTE, the number of relevant JTEs is indicated in brackets. A brief discussion of each element is provided following the table. Those items that had most agreement amongst the JTEs are highlighted in the table below.

**Table 4: Elements of the Reflective Cycle**

| Element                             | Very Useful | Useful | Some-Useful | Not Useful | How/Why?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PDD                                 | 6           |        |             |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exposure to new, targeted theories about language teaching (6)</b></li> <li>• Improve research skills (2)</li> <li>• Improve writing skills (2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                |
| Weekly reflection log               | 3           | 1      | 2           |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For some very useful as it helped them to review/reflect on what they had learned over the week (4)</b></li> <li>• For some( not useful) as purpose of activity not clear – what should go into the log? How is it different than other reflection activities? (2)</li> <li>• Too much of a writing burden (1)</li> </ul> |
| Classroom observation               | 2           | 4      |             |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Practical knowledge about how to engage students in the learning process (4)</b></li> <li>• <b>Similarities and differences between teaching in Japan and Canada (6)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       |
| Reflection on classroom observation | 1           | 5      |             |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opportunity to look back on what they had learned and assess/consolidate (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Remember important information (5)</b></li> <li>• Took a lot of time because of language burden (2)</li> <li>• Busy with other tasks, did not always have time to complete reflections sufficiently (2)</li> </ul>         |
| Small group discussions             | 1           | 3      | 2           |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opportunity to share ideas with teachers from the same background, and get feedback on ideas and learn from one another (4)</b></li> <li>• Not necessary as students discuss often outside of class informally (1)</li> <li>• Not relevant as no other teachers working on the same topic (1)</li> </ul>                  |
| Practice teaching with Peers        | 5           | 1      |             |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opportunity to get feedback on the activity as well as teaching approach (6)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                     |   |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Practice teaching<br>ESL students   | 4 | 1 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opportunity to challenge oneself and teach a whole lesson in English (4)</b></li> <li>• <b>Increased confidence to use English or teaching in Japan (4)</b></li> <li>• <b>Learn more about the effectiveness of the activities they have developed (4)</b></li> <li>• Not useful as context is too different to Japan (1)</li> </ul> |
| Reflections on<br>Practice Teaching | 4 | 3 |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opportunity to look back on what went well, what didn't and how to change the activity for their students (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Share experiences of other peers (5)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                  |
| Poster Project                      | 5 | 1 |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opportunity to summarize the PDD (5)</b></li> <li>• <b>Opportunity to reflect and understand the theory in PDD more deeply (4)</b></li> <li>• Opportunity to continue learning process with other teachers' feedback (3)</li> <li>• Opportunity to practice oral skills (1)</li> </ul>                                               |
| Mentor                              | 6 |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Help to organize PDD process (6)</b></li> <li>• <b>Help understand theoretical knowledge and challenge one's beliefs (6) (<i>mentor's logs and mentor questionnaires</i>)</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                             |

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### 6.3.1 Professional Development Dossier (PDD):

All of the JTEs found the PDD to be a very useful element of the reflective process. The research process exposed them to new, targeted language teaching/learning theories that they could use to improve their individual teaching practice. As can be seen in Research Questions 1 & 2, the PDD research process provided a base of knowledge from which the JTEs could reflect on past, current, and future teaching practice. A few JTEs also indicated that the PDD was useful for helping them to develop their research skills (which would allow them to continue to improve their practice in

the future through ongoing research) and their English writing skills (which was also useful for increasing their own knowledge and confidence in using English).

### 6.3.2 Weekly Reflection Logs:

For three of the JTEs, the weekly reflection logs were very useful as they provided a structure for reviewing and reflecting on the relevance of what they had learned over the week. This also allowed them to remember important information related to their PDD in one location. However, for at least three JTEs, the purpose of the reflection log was not completely clear. They used it as a place to note the topics covered during the week, rather than to reflect on what was covered in those lessons or how the information applied to their own PDD research. Clear instructions were provided when the logs were introduced and followed-up on mid-way through the session, but this did not have any significant impact on their use. For at least one of the six JTEs, the language burden of recording information in the reflection log in English was a difficult task. As noted in the methodology chapter, this was also an area of concern for two other JTEs, who volunteered to be part of this study, but were not able to participate sufficiently in the reflection process.

### 6.3.3 Classroom Observation:

All of the JTEs found the classroom observation sessions to be useful for allowing them to develop practical knowledge of how to more fully engage students in the learning process. They were able to observe the benefits of using CLT in practice as well as learn about various strategies, such as asking question, giving feedback, and praise. The JTEs were also able to examine many of the similarities and differences between teaching in Canada and Japan. This experience helped to challenge their beliefs about the role of the teacher in the classroom as well as the role that students play in the learning process. Most of the JTEs reflected frequently on the impact the teacher can have on creating a positive learning environment and encouraging student autonomy by adopting more CLT approaches and applying many of the strategies noted above in their daily practice.

### 6.3.3 Reflection on Classroom Observation:

All of the JTEs also found that the reflection tasks related to the classroom observation sessions were helpful as they gave them an opportunity to ‘look back’ on what they had observed and assess or consolidate their experience in light of their own teaching context as well as the more theoretical knowledge they were acquiring during the programme. These reflection tasks also helped the JTEs to remember important observations or other information that they might have forgotten had they not been asked to review the observation session fairly soon after. As with the reflection logs, some of the JTEs found that the language burden of writing these reflections in English was quite high. Since it took extra time to write their reflections in English, this made some JTEs feel stressed, especially as the programme advanced and they had many other tasks to do at the same time.

### 6.3.4 Small Group Discussion:

The majority of the JTEs (4/6) found the small group discussions to be quite useful. These sessions provided them with an opportunity to share ideas with fellow JTEs and challenge their own beliefs. They felt this was important as their peers really understood their teaching context in Japan and could relate better to their teaching challenges than the instructors from Canada. As a result, they felt the feedback they got from their peers during these sessions was especially useful in helping them to develop an understanding of what is possible (or not possible) in Japan and thus to address their teaching challenges. Only one JTE felt that these sessions were not useful as she felt they had sufficient time to discuss outside the classroom on a regular basis. Another JTE found these sessions sometimes challenging as there was no one in the class who had the same research topic she did. However, she felt she was still able to benefit from the feedback during her discussions with peers.

### 6.3.5 Practice teaching with peers:

All of the JTEs found this part of the programme especially useful. Not only could they learn new skills and approaches from watching their peers teach, they could also get constructive feedback



from their peers on the reality of their teaching activities and teaching approach for their students in Japan, which they felt would allow them to improve their overall teaching practice.

#### 6.3.6. Practice teaching with ESL students (from U of O):

All but one of the JTEs found the practice teaching to ESL students to be useful. For most JTEs, they said that these teaching sessions were the first time they had actually taught a whole lesson in English. This provided them with increased confidence in their ability to teach in their own classrooms using more English. They also found that these teaching sessions were a good opportunity to try out some of the new activities they had developed as part of the PDD and revise them accordingly based on feedback from the ESL students and the supervising instructor. Only one JTE felt that these sessions were not that useful as the context was too different from her classroom in Japan.

#### 6.3.7 Reflections on practice teaching:

As with the other reflection worksheets, all of the JTEs found that this reflection task was useful as it encouraged them to look back on what went well during the teaching sessions and where they could improve. As they were also able to share their reflections with their peers following the practice teaching, they felt it was a good opportunity to learn more about their peers' experiences and use this information to improve their own practice. These sessions also gave them an opportunity to discuss the reality of using these same activities in their Japanese classrooms.

#### 6.3.8 Poster project and presentation:

All of the JTEs found the poster project and presentation session to be useful as it provided them with an opportunity to reflect on and summarize the main elements of their PDD. They felt this allowed them to internalize the concepts more deeply. Three of the JTEs said that they appreciated the opportunity to continue the learning process by sharing their projects with their peers and other teachers and to receive additional feedback which they could use to further develop/improve some of

their activities. One JTE especially liked the opportunity the presentation session gave him to continue practicing his oral skills. Another JTE liked the fact that it gave him an opportunity to practice presenting his findings as he would be required to do so when he returned to Japan.

#### 6.3.9 Mentor:

All of the JTEs found their mentor to be a very useful and important resource in the PDD process. Their mentors not only helped them to organize their PDD, they also helped them to understand the theoretical knowledge and to challenge their beliefs about the usefulness of the research to their individual teaching needs. Most of the JTEs indicated that they would have struggled a great deal more during the PDD process if they had not had their mentor to guide them and point them in the right direction.

#### 6.3.10 Research Question #3 – Summary:

A review of the above indicates that the various elements of the reflective cycle as implemented in this programme have contributed to the development of both dispositional and capacity competencies for these JTEs.

The PDD and the classroom observations were instrumental for providing the JTEs with a structure for developing their dispositional competencies by exposing them to new ideas or teaching approaches, while the various reflective tools provided a structure for the JTEs to think about and consider these new ideas in relation to their own teaching needs, classroom challenges, past practices, and even personal dispositions.

The practice teaching sessions were a valuable opportunity for JTEs to try out new activities or approaches and receive feedback from colleagues and instructors on how they could improve their teaching skills. Along with the activity section of the PDD, these teaching sessions gave the JTEs the practice needed to continue to try and challenge their beliefs further, a main component of the reflective cycle.

The group reflection sessions and meetings with mentors also allowed the teachers to share their thoughts with others and further reflect on these varied experiences. This process was especially helpful for challenging their beliefs about a given topic and thus, along with the personal reflections noted above, contributed to the development of reasoned judgments, skills and attitudes which are an essential component of their professional competence.

## CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION

### ***7.0 INTRODUCTION***

While there has been much research in recent years on the benefits of inquiry-based or teacher research for promoting reflective practice, there has been little investigation into the individual benefits of the various components of either of these much espoused approaches for professional development. There has thus been a lack of understanding in the literature as to the unique role that the various components of both the inquiry-based approach and reflective process can play in furthering the professional development of teachers attending in-service programmes. This study was meant to address, at least partially, this gap in the literature by wrapping a reflective process as outlined by Wallace (1991) (see Figure 1) around a teacher research project and examining the role that the various components of this approach can have for developing six JTEs' professional competence during a 4 month in-service programme in Canada

As will be discussed in more detail below, this research study also provides support for Carr's (1993) theory about the need to think of professional competence in terms of both dispositions and capacities and thus address both aspects of competence as part of any professional development programme. This study demonstrated how the development of dispositional competencies supports the development of capacity competencies, and the other way around, and the instrumental role that the various components of an inquiry based reflective process can play in the overall development process of both aspects of professional competence.

### ***7.1 DISPOSITIONAL COMPETENCIES: a foundation for Professional Competence***

#### ***7.1.1 The knowledge gain:***

Prior to attending the U of O programme, most of the JTEs did not have a clear understanding of TESOL course design and material selection which presented a constraint on their ability to

communicate knowledgeably about how to meet their students' needs and to develop a more communicative teaching environment. As a result of their participation in the PDD research project, the biggest area for development amongst the six JTEs was an increased awareness and understanding of TESOL methodology, such as CLT, and how this approach could be blended with other methodologies to address many of the teaching challenges the JTEs had outlined in their PDDs. Next to developing a better understanding of CLT and other TESOL methodologies, was an enhancement of their knowledge of the principles underlying TESOL course development, such as designing activities that provide students with a genuine reason to communicate, which could be done by using such activities as role plays, discussions, presentations, and debates (the principles underlying TESOL material and selection). As a result of their experience as students in a student-centered teaching environment and observers of the various classroom observation sessions they attended, the JTEs also came to develop an understanding of some broader principles of teaching such as the teacher's critical role as a facilitator in learning.

A key development from this learning process (which involved their PDD research as a base for small group discussions and meetings with mentors) for the JTEs was a realization of the lack of understanding that exists amongst Japanese teachers (themselves included) about what CLT is all about and how this has negatively affected their attitude towards the implementation of CLT-based methodology in their teaching approach (Tomimo, PDD; Chikato, PDD). There seemed to be frequent surprise amongst the JTEs that CLT was not in conflict with teaching non-oral skills such as reading (Naka), writing (Yamato), and vocabulary acquisition (Chikato, Akimi), and that contrary to what the JTEs believed prior to the programme, CLT could actually help them develop these other skills by reinforcing the learning process and providing a genuine need to use what they had learned to communicate with others.

The development of this foundational knowledge was very important for the group as Gorsuch (2000) notes that in Japanese schools, many teachers are reluctant to adopt practices they feel run contrary to students' expectations or perceived needs, because they do not want to risk non-cooperation from their students. Given this reality, it is clear why so many teachers in Japan have been reluctant to consider the use of more communicative practices in their classrooms. However, as the old saying goes 'knowledge is power', in this case, the power to change. By the end of the programme, the JTEs consistently indicated that having a better understanding of how CLT-based activities could improve their students' skills in the required areas was critical as they could pass this information along to their students (and peers) and hopefully get their buy-in to use these activities in the classroom (End of Session Reflections for all JTEs).

#### 7.1.2 The critical role of formal learning (vs tacit learning) and alternative role models for improved practice:

The lack of TESOL knowledge and teaching skills in general amongst the JTEs is not surprising given the approach to teacher education in Japan. Most English language teachers in Japan have majored (or minored as is the case for many) in either English literature studies or linguistics. Focus in such programmes is usually centered more around study about the language rather than study of TESOL methodologies, language acquisition theory, or teaching techniques (Cook, 2009b; Nagasawa, 2004; Yonesaka, 1999). In addition, the insufficient time allotted for practical experience (two weeks in most cases) and lack of teacher in-service or professional development opportunities means most teachers rely on their own experiences with language learning (most often grammar translation) as a model for teaching their classes, or follow the advice of lead teachers or peers in the school whose knowledge is often similarly out of date with current TESOL theory (Hagger and McIntyre, 2006).

The strategy of copying the practices of other teachers as a means of both survival and social integration is a common practice amongst new teachers (Attard, 2007; Griffin, 2003; Weiss and Weiss,

2001) and was clearly the induction to teaching experienced by most of the JTEs in this programme (only two obtained degrees in teacher education, Hana and Tomimo). While all JTEs had some form of teaching practicum, it consisted of two weeks or less. As a result, they had to learn how to teach on-the-job from watching those around them, and trying out these ideas in their own classroom (JTEs' Reflections, August 28; September 24). These practices then became habits that eventually turned into underlying theories in action that guided their performance (Dewey, 1910; Schön, 1983). While developing habits can be good as it allows teachers to free up cognitive space for more demanding tasks, it can also block them from understanding or seeing other possible alternatives. The JTEs' attitudes about CLT prior to participating in the U of O programme are a perfect example of the negative impact that such a tacit approach to learning can have on one's practice and is exemplified by Yamato's experience as already noted in the case study in Chapter 5 and repeated below.

After a few months of researching on how to improve his writing classes, Yamato returned to his writing textbook to examine how he could enhance the writing tasks in the book to be more effective and engaging for his students, one of the key tasks in the reflective PDD process: to apply theory to practice. Given his newly-acquired knowledge, Yamato was able to see his text in a new light. He was surprised to realize that many of the activities in the text were already designed to promote a balanced teaching programme that focused on both form (preparing for university entrance exam requirements), and communication, the two main learning goals for his students. The various pre-writing activities not only provided a communicative framework, they also focused on strategies such as brainstorming and activating schemata that would help his students to generate ideas, vocabulary, and appropriate structures for the writing tasks ahead of them. Since Yamato and his colleagues did not fully understand the value that a focus on communication could have for improving their students' writing (until he studied such methodology as part of the in-service programme), he and his peers had viewed the more communicative activities in his text as a waste of time that would take away from the

real learning their students needed to pass the university entrance exams (i.e., a focus on form), so they skipped over them (Observation, November 12). In fact, a more thorough review of the other Japanese teaching texts used in his other classes and those of his peers revealed the same results.

This brief example highlights another serious limitation that such a tacit approach to professional development can create and thus adds further caution against an over-emphasis on practice (at the expense of formal knowledge and reflection) as promoted by practitioners such as van Manen (1995) and Beckett (1996). As Cook notes, “socialization in schools is a very influential factor on Japanese teachers’ practices” (2009b: p. 111). Teachers who fail to form rapport with colleagues will generally experience working challenges and potentially a lack of opportunities for further development (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Yonesaka, 1999). As a result, teachers in such contexts quickly develop tunnel vision about what should be considered appropriate teaching practices. This appears especially true in Japanese academic high schools. Throughout the in-service programme, Yamato, Akimi, and Chikato all noted the importance of reaching consensus with their school-based teaching peers as a critical element in their teaching decisions. As will be seen in the following section, a lack of such consensus may have been the ultimate barrier to Chikato’s ability to implement certain teaching practices once he had returned to Japan (Cook, 2009b).

Given that most of the JTEs in the 2007 in-service programme appeared to have quite basic knowledge in what are considered to be the “core competencies” of language teaching (Haddock, 2006), it is not surprising that they would also lack understanding of the importance of such activities and confidence in their own abilities to work with these new approaches and thus revert to the more traditional approaches of teaching that are more within their comfort zone (Cook, 2009b). As Tomimo noted in his PDD, without a sufficient understanding of this basic information it is difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to engage in discussions about what is ‘good teaching’ with their colleagues and thus challenge or move beyond the status quo. The need to have such basic knowledge



is an argument supported by Carr (1993). Without this, teachers will not have sufficient information to be able to exercise their professional judgements.

### 7.1.3 Is 'knowledge of' enough for professional competence?

Yamato's experience shows that exposure to theory played a key role in providing him with foundational knowledge about TESOL methodology that helped him to better understand the different ideas and activities in his textbook. While it is true that learning/knowledge gain is a precursor to changing habitual practice, simply understanding or knowing about how to do something does not imply change (Attard, 2007; Guskey, 2002). In fact, most of the JTEs in the 2007 in-service programme had been able to add to their TESOL knowledge in prior years by attending various other in-service workshops sponsored by MEXT or local TESOL associations (Hana, Tomimo, Naka, Chikato, and Akimi). These ranged from one day professional development sessions to longer three week intensive study programmes. However, the lack of contextualization and theoretical knowledge in these workshops limited their ability to promote sustained change in beliefs or professional practice as exemplified below.

In his PDD, Tomimo indicated that he had learned about many games from attending these workshops over the years, but he never really understand how to integrate them into his classroom and felt they were basically one-off type items (games) and thus he never practiced these activities with his students. The same was true for Hana. Over the years, Hana had developed a small repertoire of more communicative activities through a variety of sources such as the workshops she had attended, observation of peers, or even her assigned teaching texts. Some of these activities worked quite well for her and both she and her students enjoying using them from time to time. However, midway through the U of O programme, Hana realized that she had had no real understanding of the theoretical basis for the activities she was using. It is not that she did not think about what she was doing, but rather that her thoughts about why she was using the activities were quite limited (similar

to Dewey's third sense of the meaning where one applies knowledge to a given context without serious consideration as to why). As she started to learn more about the various methodologies and respective teaching activities, she said she had a number of 'Aha!' moments where she began to understand why some of the activities worked so well and others didn't (Reflection, October 15). She said that she felt the knowledge she had acquired throughout the programme would enable her to better select appropriate activities for her students. In other words, it would allow her to be more intentional about the learning process with her students.

This example reveals an interesting reality about teacher education. Grangeat and Gray (2007) suggest that in order for professional development to occur, teachers not only need to know about new methods, but also about the underlying knowledge which justifies their use. While most teachers in Japan are aware of CLT, they do not fully understand why and how it can be useful, thus they are not able to fully utilize these methods to improve their practice. As can be seen from the examples above, even when the JTEs were able to apply some previously learned CLT activities in their classes, their lack of understanding about 'why' these activities were beneficial, severely limited their ability to further reflect on similar challenges in their practice, make choices across options, or direct their teaching intentionally (Schön, 1983, 1987; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). For these reasons, some formal knowledge is essential for the continuous development of professional competence (Carr, 1993).

Like so many other teacher education programmes and workshops, it is clear that the PDD research process was useful for increasing the teachers' core competencies in regards to knowledge about TESOL methodologies and general teaching practices. One only needs to review the completed PDDs to see this learning gain. However, as has been indicated elsewhere in this dissertation, it is important to keep in mind that the ultimate goal of professional development programmes is not simply for teachers to develop more information or learn new activities, but rather for them to critique

their own practices and learn how to make the best use of new information to act professionally rather than simply react (Atay, 2008; Attard, 2007; Dewey, 1910; Grangeat and Gray, 2007; Grangeat and Gray, 2008; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Schön, 1983). This ability to act non-habitually and make informed choices is one of the most critical skills learned as a result of participation in the reflective process (Carr, 1993) and will be the focus of the next section of this discussion.

## ***7.2 CAPACITY COMPETENCIES: the facilitator of change***

As indicated above, the main purpose of professional development programmes such as the one in this study is “to promote innovation and change” (Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008). In order for this to happen, it was suggested that teachers need to be willing to move outside their comfort zone and change their deep-seated beliefs and behaviours. Chapter 3 indicated that an inquiry-based reflective process could be instrumental in helping these JTEs to critically assess new information as well as past practice and can therefore play a major role in preparing them to have the necessary skills needed to promote more communicative language teaching in Japan, when the time and circumstances are right. Evidence in this and other current studies (Atay, 2008; Attard, 2007; Cook, 2009b; Johansson et al., 2007; Grangeat and Gray, 2007; Grangeat and Gray 2008; Grierson and Gallagher, 2009; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008; Stillwell, 2009; Sowa, 2009) supports this claim.

### ***7.2.1 Changes in attitude and practices:***

Similar to the various studies cited in Chapter 1, the JTEs in the U of O programme developed a better understanding and more favourable attitude towards using communicative-based activities in their classrooms, and expressed a desire for changed practice (Pacek, 1996; Lamie, 2001; Lundy, 2003; Kurihara and Samimy, 2007). However, unlike these previous studies, most of the JTEs

observed in this study appear to have been successful at actually implementing several changes into their teaching classroom following the four month in-service programme in Canada.

A follow-up study conducted by Cook (2009b) with four of the six participants from this study (Hana, Tomimo, Yamato, and Naka), showed that there was sustained change in the adoption of various methods and teaching practices of these teachers for at least six months following the end of the U of O programme (identified as Mr. T, Ms. J, Mr. H. and Ms. H). The tables below show the results of the findings from the Cook (2009b) study which was based on the analysis of reflective worksheets, questionnaires and interviews that were conducted during the in-service programme, before the JTEs returned to Japan, and six months following their return.

Table 5 below is taken directly from Cook's (2009b) study and summarizes "the theories, practices, or other items the JTEs felt they would be able to incorporate into their classrooms or would influence their classroom practice immediately upon their return to Japan" (ibid: p. 106). Interestingly, the majority of these were also identified in this study by Lundy as key areas of professional development for the JTEs during the U of O programme (see case studies in Chapters 5 and 6). The consistency between the findings in both this study (by Lundy) and Cook's (2009b) study adds an additional measure of reliability for each.

**Table 5: Immediate Post-Programme Expected Changes in Classroom Practice (Cook, 2009b)**

| <b>Theory</b>                                    | <b>Classroom Practice/Organization</b>                                 | <b>Other</b>                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Activating background schema (4)                 | Communicative activities based on an individual teachers' textbook (2) | School visits<br>Presentations by other teachers |
| Task-based learning (2)                          | Pair work                                                              | Trips                                            |
| No one "best" method                             | Debating                                                               | How to behave as a teacher (smiling, praising)   |
| Motivational concepts                            | Grammar games                                                          | Giving students time to think/express themselves |
| Communicative theory                             | Writing activities                                                     |                                                  |
| Topic choice                                     | Speaking activities                                                    |                                                  |
| Transfer of activities among skills              | Listening activities                                                   |                                                  |
| Information-gap                                  | Poster presentations                                                   |                                                  |
| Explaining the purpose of activities to students | Group discussions                                                      |                                                  |
| Characteristics of good tests                    | Movies and songs                                                       |                                                  |

While Table 5 above summarizes what the JTEs hoped to implement in their classrooms following the U of O programme, Table 6 (also taken directly from Cook's 2009b study) summarizes what they said they were actually able to incorporate "as is" (as they had developed in Canada), incorporate with modification, or unable to incorporate into their classroom practices" (Cook, 2009b: p. 107) during the six month period following the in-service programme. With the exception of Ms. J., (who, as identified by Lundy, was unable to decide on a teaching challenge until the final weeks of the programme and thus was unable to engage sufficiently in the reflective process to be part of the case studies cited in Chapters 5 and 6), the other four JTEs appear to have integrated most of what they had aimed for either 'as is' or with 'some modification'.

While the findings noted in the Cook study are limited as they are based on self reports of the JTEs rather than actual observation, the fact that there was sufficient recall of their intentions six months following the end of the in-service programme provides some support regarding the development of the capacity competencies by the JTEs (judgments about/skills and attitudes to) as outlined by Lundy in this research study (see Chapters 5 and 6). This also suggests that the JTEs'

engagement in the inquiry-based reflective process as implemented in the U of O in-service programme may have been beneficial in helping them to bridge the gap between training and practice. A discussion on the role that the reflective process may have played in this transition is presented next.

**Table 6: Incorporation of Theories or Practices Post-Training Application, (Cook, 2009b)**

| Incorporated<br>“as is”                                                                                                                                                          | Incorporated<br>with<br>modifications                  | Unable to<br>incorporate                                                                 | Rationale for<br>inability to<br>incorporate                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mr. T. Readers’ Theatre                                                                                                                                                          | Pre-reading<br>activities<br>Pre-writing<br>activities | Task-based<br>learning<br>Five<br>communicative<br>activities related<br>to the textbook | Entrance<br>examination<br>demands<br>Demands to<br>keep pace with<br>colleagues<br>Silent students<br>A belief in own<br>language<br>insufficiency<br>Student<br>passivity |
| Ms J. Sound test<br>construction<br>Listening cloze<br>Pre-, while, and<br>post-reading<br>activities<br>Classroom<br>English<br>CALL activity                                   |                                                        |                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Mr.H. Writing letters<br>Interesting<br>speaking<br>activities<br>Speech-making<br>Student-made<br>flashcards<br>Games<br>10 criteria for<br>effective teaching<br>CLT checklist |                                                        | Skimming and<br>scanning                                                                 | Too difficult for<br>junior high<br>school students<br>Demands to use<br>prescribed texts                                                                                   |
| Ms H. Picture diary<br>Self-history<br>Skimming and<br>scanning<br>Test evaluation                                                                                               | P.D.D.<br>activities                                   |                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Ms D. Poster project                                                                                                                                                             |                                                        | 16 speaking<br>activities                                                                | Entrance<br>examination<br>demands<br>A new textbook                                                                                                                        |

### 7.2.2 Reflective Practice as a catalyst for change:

One of the main differences between the U of O programme and other similar teacher education programmes was the emphasis on an inquiry-based or context-based reflective practice. This programme took on what some call a normative-re-educative strategy (Cook, 2009a; Cook, 2009b; Hayes, 1995; Kennedy, 1987; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008). In this programme, the JTEs didn't simply learn about new teaching approaches, they targeted specific areas of improvement in their own practice through active research, reflection, discussion with others, and practice, followed again by more reflection and discussion. The basic approach followed in the in-service program was based on the reflective cycle outlined by Wallace (1991). The results of this research study suggest that the reflective cycle presented above allowed the JTEs the structure needed to challenge their own beliefs and practices and try out new ideas in a safe and supportive environment, away from the challenges and pressures of their regular teaching context.

By engaging in discussions with their peers and mentors, observing others, and practicing new ideas, the JTEs came to develop the skills needed to assess and select appropriate resource methods while simultaneously recognizing contextual restrictions such as the use of assigned textbooks and the need to keep up with peers or prepare students for exams. Consideration of these potential barriers up front allowed most of the JTEs to incorporate newly-acquired activities and methods that would work with their own personal teaching style and teaching needs.

In addition, it was important for the JTEs to incorporate new activities in a way that could provide a more balanced learning programme for their students by introducing newer activities that could allow them to meet MEXT's requirements for improved communicative practice, but at the same time maintaining the familiarity of a traditional grammar-based teaching approach (with a focus on form). The JTEs felt that when implemented slowly, such an approach could then be used to help motivate their students to accept such methodologies and would also help them to create a classroom

environment that was more conducive to learning overall as it would help to foster the skills their students needed to become independent learners both inside and outside the language classroom (see case studies in Chapters 6 and 7). As a result of these developments, the JTEs showed an increased confidence as EFL teachers and an equally increased responsibility and motivation for their role as facilitators in transforming language learning in Japan.

In summary, it is believed that the reflective process (learning, reflection, practice, reflection, more learning ...) helped the JTEs to enhance their knowledge and skills as described above and thus acted as a catalyst for a sustained change in attitudes and teaching practices. The way in which the various components of the reflective cycle contributed to this process will be discussed in the following section.

### ***7.3 THE INQUIRY-BASED REFLECTIVE PROCESS: How do the various components contribute to professional development?***

#### ***7.3.1 The Professional Development Dossier (PDD)***

As shown in chapters 5 and 6, the PDD was an instrumental tool in promoting the development of professional competence. As discussed in chapter 3, the inquiry-based or problem-solving approach is now accepted by many researchers to be beneficial for promoting critical reflection which is why the inquiry-based approach to professional development is gaining increasing support as being a critical requirement for teacher in-service education programmes (Bax, 1997; Govardhan et al., 1999; Johansson et al., 2007; Liyange and Bartlett, 2008; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008; Sowa, 2009). Inquiry-based research is thought to be successful because it links learning to the individuals' immediate contextual needs, thus helping them to bridge the theory/practice gap. Requiring teachers to focus on a particular teaching challenge provides an opportunity to have them question the success of their own teaching practice which is helpful for creating the destabilization needed for development. When their normal presuppositions about how



things should work are halted and questioned, the teachers are then forced to seek solutions to their problems, which will make them more open and receptive to the theoretical component of the teacher education programme.

According to Guskey (2002), providing teachers with a clear understanding of how in-service programmes can help them to improve their practice is one of the best ways of motivating them to become an active part of the learning process. Identifying a challenging area in their teaching and then working towards addressing the challenges is one way of doing this. This is now a common practice in professional development programs in business as well. As the studies cited throughout this thesis have shown, when a professional development programme is relevant to an individual's perceived needs or simply appeals to them for some other reason, they will pay closer attention to the information contained within. On the flip side, when the learning does not appear to be "immediately relevant, is highly abstract, or is perceived as being far away from the realities [one] faces, it is either ignored or just accommodated" (Attard, 2007) within one's comfort zone and rarely challenges one's habitual practices or beliefs and will therefore rarely result in any change in practice (Johansson et al, 2007; Liyanage and Bartlett, 2008; McGee and Lawrence, 2009; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008; Sowa, 2009). As noted earlier, this was likely the weakness of many of the earlier workshops these JTEs attended in past years.

In this study, an inquiry-based approach to learning proved to be a very efficient way of getting these JTEs to become involved in the learning process. The theory they acquired provided them with the foundation needed to engage in practice and reflection, which eventually led to changes in belief and/or behaviour as outlined in chapters 5 and 6 (Dewey, 1910; Guskey, 2002; Schön, 1983; Mezirow, 1998; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

### 7.3.1 Observation

The benefit of observation for promoting changes in teaching practice was highlighted in the studies cited earlier in Chapter 3 and has been demonstrated once again in a recent study called *Seeing is believing: creating a catalyst for teacher change through a demonstration classroom professional development initiative* (Grierson and Gallagher, 2009). This study confirmed that teachers, who participated in structured observation sessions about required new curriculum practices, were far more likely to adopt the practices in their own classrooms than teachers who had only learned about such practices through in-service programmes. The teachers who had participated in the observation sessions found that they were better able to understand the practices after attending the observation classes, than from instruction on such practices alone. In addition, observing the classes provided them with a model of how to apply the theory in the classroom, and since they were also able to see the positive impact of using the new teaching practices on the students, they were more receptive to trying out the practices in their own classroom. This is an important component, as Guskey (2002) notes that for changes in belief to occur, teachers must first see that such changes will result in improved performance for their students.

Being immersed in a more student-centered learning environment was an instrumental part of the development process for the JTEs in this study. As students in a Canadian learning context for almost six months, the JTEs were able to observe (and be part of) a vastly different teaching style from what they were accustomed to in Japan. Like the practice teaching sessions discussed below, this experience provided them with an ability to understand the impact of CLT methodologies on the learning process of students. Many of the JTEs also commented on the differences in student-teacher rapport between Canada and Japan and how they felt that the Canadian teachers' interaction and encouragement of the student with praise and acknowledgment was a major factor in making students more interested and involved in the learning process (School Observations).

These observations caused all but Akimi, to more closely examine their own practices and question the relationship they currently foster with their students. Chikato even questioned whether he liked teaching as much as the teachers in Canada (Observation, October 24). Like the other JTEs, Chikato was deeply affected by these observations and called for all the JTEs to look deeper inside themselves and find or renew their passion for teaching. He suggests that developing an understanding that the “Japanese way is one way of teaching, not the only way”, and that Japanese teachers need to be more reflective about what they teach and how they teach it if they want to improve language teaching in Japan (End of Session Reflection, November 28). This heightened awareness of the dispositions needed to be an effective teacher has also been shown to be a positive outcome of other similar studies that have examined the impact of inquiry-based reflective practice during teacher education (Atay, 2008; Grangeat and Gray, 2007).

This brings to the fore an interesting question regarding the learning context of the 2007 in-service programme. While teaching in a North American context presented some limitations for the reflective process (i.e. language burden; lack of detailed knowledge about the JTEs’ teaching context) which will be discussed in the next chapter, this context was also beneficial as it allowed the JTEs to be immersed in a context that was quite different to their own (as outlined by Cook, 2009a) and be exposed to completely new perspectives on teaching, over a sustained period of time. This was important, as being immersed in an English speaking context can be beneficial for promoting critical thinking about one’s own context in relation to others (Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008) and thus contribute to transformative learning experiences (Mezirow, 1998). This appeared to be the case for the JTEs in this study. They felt they benefited greatly from being immersed in a different teaching context, away from the pressures of their daily work. Not only did they learn about language teaching, but they were also able to experience a different culture and improve their own English language skills at the same time (see case studies, Chapter 5), all of which gave them a renewed perspective on

teaching and an increased motivation for them to become English language mentors to their students and their peers, one of the main objectives for having them participate in these in-service programmes (MEXT, 2003).

### 7.3.3 Practice (teaching)

As described by Wallace (1991; 1998), 'practice' is a critical element of the reflective cycle and a necessary component for professional development. According to Guskey (2002), it is nearly impossible to see any real change in belief or attitude about specific teaching practices without an opportunity for practice. Teachers need to see firsthand (either personally or by observing others) that an approach can work, before they can believe in it. Of course, they need to buy into the concepts at least initially in order to even try them out, but this was the intent of the PDD and the observation sessions, to get them interested in exploring ideas. However, without an opportunity for practice any acceptance of such ideas would result in what Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) call espoused theories, which are merely changes in beliefs at the surface level, but rarely direct our practice. In other words, it is only through practice that the JTEs were able to fully reflect on and internalize (or reject) the various new learning theories they encountered throughout the programme.

During the four months at U of O, the JTEs were given various opportunities to engage in practice teaching. As a component of their regular classes, they were required to instruct their peers in a number of activities that they had created themselves. In addition, they were required to develop several activities for their PDD and try out a few of these with their peers as well as with EIP students. Finally, they presented all of their activities to professors and other visitors during a poster project presentation at the end of the session. In the end of session questionnaire, the JTEs said they found these experiences to be useful in several different ways.

First, the practice teaching with peers was beneficial as it gave the JTEs an opportunity to learn from one another. They were able to increase their repertoire of activities and examine their

own approach by observing their peers teach. Likewise, they were able to get very valuable and ‘honest’ feedback from their peers so that they could improve their own practice. The benefits of such collaborative efforts to assist teachers in learning from one another have also been supported by other studies and will be discussed in the next section.

Teaching with the EIP students provided a different benefit all together. Five of the six JTEs, said the practice teaching session was the first time they had conducted a whole lesson in English. Interestingly, all of the other practice teaching activities with their peers during the semester were also done completely in English, yet they did not seem to count these opportunities as ‘teaching’ ...nor using English to conduct a whole lesson. This may go back to Guskey’s (2002) point that they need to see the impact of the new approach with ‘real students’ before they have confidence in either the activity or their ability to deliver it. This idea is supported by the fact that the JTEs said that their ability to successfully teach a whole class in English, with such a varied group of learners, greatly enhanced their confidence to be able to teach English using English in their own classrooms (again ... they did not indicate that the practice sessions with their peers had the same effect on their beliefs or confidence). This suggests that it is critical in any professional development programme for teachers to have an opportunity to practice with ‘real students’ if the goal is for them to actually internalize new theories or practices.

Finally, the poster project sessions allowed the JTEs to explain their teaching activities, and the theory behind these, to several professors and education students from U of O. The JTEs felt this was a great opportunity to review and summarize the theories and activities in their PDD. They were also able to get feedback from their peers and others which they could use to further refine their beliefs and activities. They also found these poster project sessions to be a valuable opportunity for them to get a more detailed overview of the final research findings of their peers and thus further develop their own knowledge on topics outside of their own research interests. At the end of the

session, all the JTEs requested that the individual research papers be collated into one electronic file that they could share with one another and with some of their peers back in Japan.

As shown in the reflective model proposed by Wallace (1991), practice is one of the main links for transforming received/formal knowledge into professional competence. As Eraut (2004) asserts, new practices cannot just be learned, they need to be re-created by the learner if they are going to be internalized in any way. These practice sessions were instrumental in helping the JTEs to do just that. As changes in practice are dependent upon “the teachers’ ability to acknowledge the need to modify their own practices” (PDD and feedback from peers) and their “self-perceptions of their abilities to do so” (Grierson and Gallagher, 2009: p. 568), the experience and confidence they gained from these varied practice session was also important for encouraging the JTEs to reconsider the use of more CLT activities in their classrooms (Attard, 2007; Guskey, 2002; Liyanage and Bartlett, 2008; Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis, 2008).

#### 7.3.4 Collaborative Reflection

Dewey (1910), Schön (1987), Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) and a host of others would likely claim that the experiences above were only part of the incentive to change and that the main catalyst for change was reflection on these experiences. As Wallace’s (1991) model shows (see Figure 1), reflection is the other half of the equation for transforming knowledge into professional competence. As Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) would say, a change in behaviour and beliefs (professional development) is derived through the practice of returning to the experience, attending to feelings about the experience, and re-evaluating and integrating the knowledge gained through this process into one’s existing schemata and beliefs.

While reflection of oneself, by oneself can be beneficial, it is limited as we may have trouble identifying the underlying theories that keep us stuck in a rut of habitual behaviour (Attard, 2007; Schön, 1983; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Wallace, 1991). As noted in the case studies presented

in Chapters 5 and 6, the JTEs in the U of O programme found it very beneficial to share and discuss their experiences with their peers and their mentor. They felt the feedback on their PDD and their practice teaching helped them reflect further on their own practices and thus revise their beliefs or practices accordingly. The JTEs indicated on a number of occasions that it was especially important for them to get feedback from the other JTEs as they understood their teaching situation in Japan. The theory of ‘practical reason’ provides good insight into why this collaborative reflection or dialogue may also have been a significant catalyst for the adoption of teaching beliefs and changes in teaching practice (as highlighted in the case studies in Chapter 5 and supported by the findings in Cook, 2009b) by the JTEs in the U of O programme.

Practical reason is “a process of contemplation through which people make decisions about actions” (Penlington, 2007: p. 1306). According to current psychological and philosophical theory, “reasoning is not something we do alone. Rather it is a process that we develop through our interactions with others – interactions that are primarily dialogic in nature” (see Penlington, 2008: p. 1306 for a more detailed account of this theory). It is through your discussions with others that you come to question your beliefs or way of being. So, if your colleagues never question your approach, and exhibit pressure on you not to question theirs, it is unlikely you will ever go on to question your own practices either. As a result, you will never be prompted to address problematic situations, and thus never fully engage in deeper thinking or reflection. On the contrary, if you are in an environment like the one at U of O, where the JTEs were constantly being asked ‘Why?’, and were encouraged to ask the same ‘Why?’ back (about new knowledge, peers’ beliefs, etc.), you would then begin to internalize this form of dialogue with yourself as well, and thus encourage the process of change within.

Hana’s End of Session Reflection highlights this theory quite well. During the various observation classes she attended, as well as the in-service programme in general, she noticed that

teachers in Canada challenged students often by asking them ‘Why?’ In fact, during her practice teaching session in the EIP programme, the students in the class had learned this procedure so well that they began questioning her choice of responses to the game she had created. At first this was quite a frightening experience for Hana as students in Japan “never question their teachers”. However, once the experience was over, Hana came to realize that this had been an excellent way of extending her own knowledge of the topic as she had to think deeply and search for answers in collaboration with the students. She felt it also helped her to teach the concepts more deeply than she would have done otherwise. Hana was so influenced by this approach for her own development that she planned to slowly introduce this concept into her classes when she returned to Japan.

Interestingly, all of the JTEs noticed that teachers in Canada (even those in the U of O programme) ask their students a lot of questions. It is one of the most consistent observations across the group. The JTEs found this strategy to be a very effective way of encouraging further conversation from the students and an instrumental approach for building student-teacher rapport. In addition, they observed that asking questions can also be a useful approach for extending the students’ knowledge or comprehension of a topic and assessing a student’s level of knowledge. Likewise, they found that discussions and feedback from their peers also prompted the same deeper learning for them as well. All but one of the JTEs indicated that they planned to use questioning as a key strategy in their classrooms upon their return to Japan. A few of the JTEs also indicated that they wanted to implement reflective worksheets or a reflection log for their students to encourage them to become more independent at reflecting on their progress and needed areas for improvement (Hana, Tomimo, Naka).

In essence, what practical reasoning suggests is that the way we dialogue with others and the way they dialogue with us in return has an important influence on “what we do within ourselves” (ibid: p. 1309). In recent years, many studies have indicated that collaborative inquiry is a useful way of enhancing reflective self-study as it helps to identify unforeseen insights, alternative perspectives,



additional areas for reconciliation and problem solving, and an increased awareness of professional responsibility, all of which can extend one's professional development. Collaborative dialogue also has the benefit of ensuring we are able to link our own self-constructed ideas of best practice within a larger community of practice. It is for these reasons that Carr (1996) insists that collaborative dialogue is needed for the development of capacity competencies. Not only does it help you to develop 'practical reason' (both on an individual and collectivist level) but it can also help to identify areas for 'further problem solving' which can prompt the search for new knowledge and begin the reflective cycle once again.

By far the most important competency the JTEs in this programme have learned is the ability to utilize the inquiry process (which of course, requires both dispositional and capacity competencies). If they choose to exercise this ability through ongoing reflection with colleagues on their teaching practices, then their journey towards Professional Competence will be never-ending.

#### ***7.4 SUMMARY***

The lack of inclusion of capacity competencies in competence models in the latter half of the last century, only presented a partial picture of competence which ultimately led to dissatisfaction with the competency movement of that time. Similarly, the lack of focus on the development of capacity competencies is believed to be one of the main weaknesses of past teacher education programs.

As discussed in this chapter, the case studies in this research paper provide support for Carr's (1993) theory about the need to think of professional competence in terms of both dispositions and capacities and to address the need to focus on and develop both aspects of competence as part of any professional development programme. The analysis of the case studies presented in chapters 5 and 6 clearly shows that the development of dispositional competencies supports the development of

capacity competencies, and the other way around and that both are necessary for professional development.

The analysis in this chapter also exemplifies the instrumental role that the various components of an inquiry based reflective process can play in the overall development process of both aspects of professional competence. The inquiry-based approach to teaching implemented within this in-service programme required the JTEs to assess their own teaching and identify a specific area for development. This requirement helped them to focus their attention during the programme and made learning more intentional rather than accidental (Kelsey, 1993). It also made the JTEs more open to the possibility or need for change which allowed them to be more reflective and more receptive to the information they encountered (Attard, 2007; Dewey, 1910). The collaborative and structured reflective process ensured that the JTEs took time during the inquiry process to not only try out new ideas in a safe and supportive environment, but to also challenge and fully understand their individually constructed perceptions of best practice within a larger community of practice (the other JTEs as well as the U of O instructors).

Finally, the combined inquiry-based reflective approach provided an opportunity for programme organizers to provide the JTEs with differentiated learning experiences that were more ideally suited to their individual teaching requirements, while at the same time still providing a consistent reform message about the need for increased CLT practices (as required by MEXT) (Chard, 2004; Fullan et al, 2006).

## CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

### ***8.0 INTRODUCTION***

While this study has provided additional insights into the positive role that an inquiry-based reflective in-service programme can play in promoting the development of professional competence, there are, as with all studies, some limitations to the findings presented which will be discussed further in this final chapter. Likewise, it is important to remember that the findings presented in this study are bound by the knowledge available when developing and thus analyzing the research questions posed for this study. Since embarking on this project, new perspectives and alternate ways of understanding or analyzing the data have emerged both in terms of reflective practice and the cultural role of reflection in countries such as Japan which naturally lead to new areas for exploration not addressed in this study. These will be explored here briefly for others to consider as a means of extending the findings presented in this study and thus further contributing to our overall understanding of the various factors in play when creating professional development programmes for foreign language teachers, both pre-service and in-service.

### ***8.1 LIMITATIONS***

For the case studies presented in chapter 5, the selection of participants was done purposefully, based on those who had participated sufficiently in the numerous written reflective tools presented throughout the programme. While purposeful selection is common practice for qualitative studies, it is worth addressing here, even briefly, as this approach necessarily had an impact on the findings presented here and brings into questions the tools and resources used for data collection. While written journals, portfolios, etc. are a common approach used for promoting reflection in North American education programs, a recent study suggests that this is not so in Japan, where reflection is “supported by talking to others” (Izumi-Taylor et al., 2010). Because evidence of reflection was

mostly collected in written form, two of the JTEs who volunteered to be part of this study were not included because of limited data available for analysis as the language burden of completing the various reflective worksheets was too much for them to maintain throughout the programme.

However, this does not mean that these two students were not as reflective as the others. In fact, a conversation between the researcher and Tomimo about one of these students, about mid-way through the programme, suggests quite the opposite. In response to the researcher's concerns that Tomimo's friend might be struggling with the whole development process (because of his limited language abilities), Tomimo noted that his friend was actually absorbing a great deal from the programme and had some very interesting perspectives on educational reform in Japan. He also noted that his friend was reflecting often, just not in the ways being measured by the researcher. He noted that his friend actually challenged him and his colleagues frequently in their 'talks' with one another in Japanese and was a good source of inspiration for them as well.

The conversation above not only provides support to the findings by Izumi-Taylor et al. (2010) that discussion with others is perhaps a more natural approach to reflection for Japanese students, it also highlights the limitations of the data collection approach used in this study. While the findings in this study support the importance of an inquiry-based approach for engaging one more fully in the learning process, more varied research and data collection methods (i.e. oral discussions or written reflections in the first language) in this area would provide further insight into the overall effectiveness of the various components of the reflective process (i.e. problem solving approach vs. the various reflective tools). In this light, future programmes should also examine to what degree professional competence can be enhanced (or deterred) by allowing teachers to reflect in their first language rather than their second language, or orally vs. written, as was done in the U of O programme. It would be interesting to allow teachers to have the choice of medium for reflection (oral, written, L1, L2, etc.) and examine the benefits of each for different groups of participants.

Similarly, the homogenous make-up of the participants also calls for an element of caution when interpreting the usefulness of the various aspects of the reflective process for generating critical reflection and thus contributing to the overall professional development of the individual. While the small group discussions appeared to be very successful for this group of Japanese teachers, again supporting Izumi-Taylor et al.'s (2010) claims about the role of discussion with others as a key tool for reflection in Japan, the whole group discussions did not generate much input from the group. Culture may have played a key role in this lack of participation as Japan also tends to be a very hierarchical society, with deference to those with more experience or seniority. This seemed to be the case for this group of JTEs. That being said, this might not be the case for other groups of students as the researcher's experience working with teachers from other cultures suggests that such an environment works well with participants from Latin America or the Middle East. Therefore, further studies with different cultural groups, age groups, etc. are needed before one can conclude that whole group discussion is not one of the more effective approaches to generating critical reflection and professional development.

A third limitation of this study is the timeframe during which it was conducted. This study was limited to a four-month period and only focused on changes in attitude/behaviour that occurred during the in-service programme without considering the longer term impact or sustainability of those changes. While this was simply a matter of maintaining the scope of this research project to a manageable level and within a reasonable time frame, this approach limits the strength of the findings of this research project. According to Guskey (2002), a sustained change in belief requires that teachers continue to see a positive impact in their classroom post-training. If at any point they fail to see the benefits of the new practices, they will begin to lose faith and revert to their old ways of working. According to Cook's (2009b) study, this actually appeared to be the case for one of the JTEs.

“Mr. T said that it was difficult for him to use some pre-reading activities he had prepared in Canada because his students were unusually silent and he had no way of determining if they were learning what he was teaching.” (p. 110)

While the overall findings in Cook’s (2009b) study lend some support to the findings in this study (that a contextually-based inquiry programme can be instrumental in promoting changes in the teaching practice), the findings in Cook’s study also need to be taken with caution as the goal for that research was more focused on understanding the impact of local contextual factors on promoting or discouraging changes in teaching practice, rather than the role of reflective process itself. It does not appear that the JTEs were ever asked to indicate how their experiences in the U of O programme prepared them (or not) for the challenges they would return to in Japan. Given this lack of information we really do not have any clear conclusions about the dynamic role that teacher education combined with context can play in a teacher’s ability to transfer learning into practice. More holistic research over a longer period of time is needed if we want to really understand the long term impact of the types of inquiry-based reflective programmes cited throughout this thesis and the role that context plays in either promoting or discouraging longer term changes. This is an issue that will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Finally, the researcher’s role as a participant is a limitation that must be highlighted once again. While there are many benefits of this dual role as outlined in chapter 4, it is likely that the researcher’s findings are biased, as is the case in most qualitative studies. Despite the use of multiple data sources and repeated and extended analysis of these sources over a period of close to seven years, from sometimes differing perspectives (due to ongoing feedback from committee members), the researcher’s closeness to the participants and her constructivist epistemology surely frames the angle from which the data were analyzed and interpreted. While this does not negate the findings presented

in this study in any way, it is simply important to emphasize as this participant role may have limited the researcher's ability to clearly see additional areas for analysis or development in the U of O Programme. To address these concerns the researcher also refers to suggestions for improvement to the U of O programme provided by Cook (2009b) as guidance for others working with similar in-service programmes. Cook's perspective is especially important for those developing programmes for Japanese teachers as her first hand experience as a resident researcher in Japan gives her a unique opportunity to see the longer term impacts of such programmes.

## ***8.2 FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS***

As we outlined in the first part of this thesis, most studies on teacher-education tend to be focused either on the immediate output of the programme itself, such as this study, or on the impact of the programme post-training, as in Cook's (2009b) study. Future studies should attempt to take a more holistic approach to examining the longer term impact of teacher education on professional development. This should include some form of teacher observation, before, during, and after participation in such programmes (for perhaps a year or longer) as well as a detailed analysis of the various contextual factors that play a role in the development process both during and after.

For example, Mr. H., who Cook (2009b) cited as being able to successfully transfer learning, indicated that he had a very supportive teaching environment that encouraged and supported his willingness to try new approaches. However, Ms. H, who was also able to make similar changes didn't seem to have a support network at all as she was the only language teacher in her school. So the obvious question is: what was the main reason that both were able to make changes in their teaching practice? Was it a result of participation in the reflective process, the ability to have a supportive supervisor, the lack of a supervisor who might discourage such innovation or some other factor such

as personality or prior teacher education, neither of which were fully considered in either this study or the Cook (2009b) study?

Similarly, teaching in an academic high school and the need to prepare students for university exams was considered a barrier to change for Mr. T (Cook, 2009b). Yet, Ms D, who also teaches in a very highly regarded academic school, appeared to be more successful at overcoming the same barriers. What was the underlying reason for this difference in success? Was it possible that Ms D was more critical of herself during the reflective process than Mr. T, and therefore more able to fully recognize and reconcile the barriers to change? Or did Ms. D simply have a more supportive school environment, or more knowledge and confidence, and thus the process of change was easier? It is also possible that the level of high school being taught could be a factor as earlier grades might not face as much exam pressure as later grades.

The reality is that answers to such questions will never be known until we embark on more holistic studies that attempt to look at the synergies between teacher education, context, teacher experience, etc. to see how all these factors combine to either encourage or discourage changes in teaching practice. Findings from this type of research could suggest different types of training for different groups of teachers. For example, if the findings by Joram (2006), that teachers of different tenure perceive educational theory in different ways, is valid then it might be beneficial to allocate teachers into development programmes based on specific demographic information such as teaching level or teaching tenure.

In addition, it is necessary to examine what role time plays in encouraging or discouraging the implementation of new ideas. When the JTEs return to their classrooms in Japan, they are overloaded with catching-up, both personally and professionally, as they have been gone for six months. Cook noted that Mr. T and Ms. D both felt that they were prevented from immediately incorporating many of the activities they had prepared in Canada due to pressures to help their students prepare for



imminent university examinations. Both felt they would be better able to incorporate new ideas in the following semester (2009b). In addition, the Japanese students have summer holidays not too long after the teachers return to Japan and some JTEs have to change teaching levels following the summer break, all of which disrupts the overall learning/teaching cycle. Adjusting to all of these changes is likely to be more demanding for some teachers than others and thus might delay the application of new teaching approaches.

The various factors noted above, combined with the fact that professional development is a process that takes time (Guskey, 2002), might suggest that a six-month study is too limited in its ability to measure ‘sustained’ change (or lack of it) in professional development following training. Thus a more reasonable approach might be to consider measuring change in practice that takes place during the next full academic teaching year when teachers have had a chance to plan appropriately for their given context.

Likewise, future studies that look at the impact of similar in-service training programs should also remember that professional competence is a multi-faceted concept. All too often, these studies have focused on changes in beliefs towards a particular methodology or changes in observed practice as evidence of success. What the vast majority of these studies fail to examine are the subtle, but equally meaningful, changes that might occur in the teachers sense of identity as a result of their participation in in-service programmes such as the one sponsored by MEXT.

For example, the U of O in-service programme impacted the JTEs in a number of ways. Not only did the JTEs end up with a better understanding of the theory underlying so many of the teaching activities being encouraged by MEXT and some practice developing and delivering more communicative activities, they also developed more confidence in their abilities as English Language Teachers as a result of their engagement in the overall reflective process. This is not an uncommon outcome of similarly designed in-service programmes, but it is not the outcome that has been assessed

most often. This is unfortunate as recent studies have shown that engagement in similarly designed collaborative and reflective process can have a significant impact on a teachers' sense of self-identity as a professional and their sense of belonging in a larger community of practice which can result in increased job satisfaction and willingness to invest more in their professional practice by experimenting with new ideas in their classroom as part of their own ongoing reflective practice (Woolhouse and Cochrane, 2010).

The extent to which the JTEs in this study were equally affected in terms of identity shift or sustained reflective practice was not formally studied in this research project as the focus was on the various components of an inquiry-based reflective process as tools for developing professional competence rather than the actual development of the individual. As suggested above, there is growing research on the link between professional competence and identity construction as part of the professional development process and this is an area worthy of consideration in future studies concerned with understanding the development of professional competence. When reviewing the individual case studies presented in chapter 5, it is clear that there is an identity shift taking place for many of the teachers and it would be interesting to re-examine the case study data from this theoretical perspective as an ongoing analysis of the ways in which an inquiry-based reflective process can contribute to professional development.

Likewise, the role that culture can play in reflection should also be further understood. For example, the study by Izumi-Taylor et al mentioned earlier, suggests that "reflection was perceived to be a disposition by American pre-service teachers [that was developed as part of the education program], whereas their Japanese counterparts viewed it as a skill that they had already learned from early childhood" (2010; p. 131). Likewise, the American pre-service teachers most often saw reflection a self-oriented activity, a means of improving their teaching skills. On the contrary, the Japanese pre-service teachers usually related their reflections to moral development, especially as it

related to one's relations with others. Again, reviewing the case studies in chapter 5 from this angle might provide some unique insights into why certain components of the reflective process were more beneficial than others for this particular group of students and why there was so much emphasis on interpersonal needs in so many of their reflections, either as a means of building better relationships with their students or building consensus with their teaching peers.

Another area of research that could present an interesting dimension from which one could re-examine the data in this study as well as for further research is the growing emphasis on anticipatory reflection (Collier, 2010; Conway, 2001) as a means of bridging the learning-practice gap.

Anticipatory reflection is defined by Van Manen (1995) as future-oriented reflection before action. A review of the findings in Chapter 5 from this particular research lens suggests that one of the benefits of the reflective approach used in the U of O programme may have been the emphasis on projecting towards the future. Within most of the various reflective worksheets and activities, the whole goal of reflection was less for the purpose of understanding and much more for the purpose of future change. This is especially true in regards to the second half of the PDD where the intent was to drive the inquiry process from the level of understanding to anticipated implementation through the development of various teaching activities and lesson plans. The discussion of potential barriers, and possible solutions to overcome these barriers, was also a consistent topic during the small group discussion sessions with peers, individual discussion sessions with mentors and the end of session interviews between the researcher and the JTEs. Interestingly, a secondary review of Cook's (2009b) research study also suggests that her own research approach may have encouraged (unintentionally) the JTEs to engage even further into the anticipatory reflection process. As shown in chapter 6, Cook asked the teachers to itemize the theories or activities from the in-service program that they felt they could successfully implement upon their return to Japan. It is possible that the anticipatory emphasis

of the various reflective activities in which the teachers were involved was one of the key elements in driving change for the JTEs in this study.

A study by Conway (2001) might explain why this anticipatory approach and other components of the reflective process were beneficial to the JTEs in this study. Conway's (2001) study suggests that one of the greatest benefits in engaging teachers in anticipatory reflection is that it provides teachers with hope which drives teachers forward with a sense of optimism and motivation to take on the challenges facing them in the classroom. As long as this optimism is grounded in an accurate assessment of one's personal skills and knowledge and the complexities of the teaching context and teaching in general, then their chances of being successful will be much higher. As suggested in this study, the role of collaborative discussion and practice may have been instrumental in ensuring that teachers left the U of O programme with a more realistic view of their competencies as well as a clear idea of what is possible for their context and what is not. Coming to this understanding in a supportive and low-risk environment may have reduced the sense of turbulence the teachers faced when trying out new ideas in their classrooms back home. The JTEs in this study certainly felt that the practice teaching sessions with their peers and the U of O ESL students were especially helpful in preparing them in this regard.

### **8.3 SUMMARY**

The findings from this study suggest that an inquiry-based approach to teacher education which focuses on critical reflection, observation, mentoring, and practice can be instrumental in assisting teachers to develop both dispositional competencies (knowledge of..) as well as capacity competencies (*skills to...* and *attitudes which...* facilitate changes in practice over time). There is a growing body of literature that outlines the role that these various reflective elements can play in promoting teacher development. Those in charge of designing teacher education programmes may

especially want to consider the key role that observation, practice, and mentoring can play in promoting changed behaviour. Such programmes should also consider the impact of such experiences while teachers are on the job, rather than simply during teacher education. Integration of such resources and support with actual teaching tasks may help to further bridge the theory-practice gap and will be essential for sustained change in teaching beliefs.

This study also suggests that the development of professional competence requires development of both dispositional and capacity competencies. While dispositional competencies lay the foundation for the development of capacity competencies, the reflective nature of capacity competencies helps one to identify when more dispositional knowledge is needed for further development. Understanding the role that both can play is critical in contexts such as Japan, where a lack of adequate teacher education may be a more significant barrier to changed teaching practices than large classrooms or university entrance exams. If teachers do not have the foundational knowledge of teaching theory or practice, it will be difficult for them to critically examine their own teaching or even make use of available resources (i.e. textbooks, ALTs, TESOL workshops, etc.) to their fullest. Those teachers who had at least some foundational knowledge in teacher education, seemed to be better positioned to maximize their learning in the U of O programme and to improve their teaching practice upon their return to Japan.

A better understanding of the teaching demands, contextual constraints, and any unique cultural traits of the teachers by in-service programme organizers would also be beneficial for creating education programmes that maximize the participants' experience. For example, those working with Japanese teachers might want to consider the impact of oral reflection (during discussion with others) over written reflection. In addition, future programmes might want to consider the benefits of anticipatory reflection for highlighting potential barriers to change in the teacher's actual context and developing constructive ideas for overcoming them.

Cook (2009b) also presents a number of considerations for programme planners at U of O and elsewhere to ponder if they plan to host future in-service programmes for MEXT, which are worth repeating here as well. U of O programmers need to be more cautious when it comes to interpreting MEXT's goals for the programme. They need to more fully understand MEXT's expectations for implementing more communicative teaching approaches. This can be done by a study of MEXT's Course of Study. Understanding of the JTEs' curriculum requirements might help U of O instructors (mentors) to provide more realistic examples of CLT that can be integrated in a Japanese context and better assist the JTEs in targeting their research efforts as well. This includes developing a better understanding of the 'real world' (constraints) of the JTEs in their programme, and examining their own cultural biases about teaching English as a foreign language. In other words, programme administrators at U of O and elsewhere, need to continue to assess and reflect on the impact of their own teaching practices for improving the teaching abilities of the JTEs.

In addition, this study suggests that a more holistic and longitudinal approach to building professional development programmes and measuring the results of such programmes is needed if we are to more fully understand the interaction between teacher education and practice. If professional development is a process, then that needs to be more clearly reflected in the way we approach teacher education. We need to remember that professional development is not an event, but rather a series of interactions between knowledge, experience, and reflection, over time. More teacher education programmes need to reflect this reality. In an ideal world, in-service programmes such as those at U of O should contain a follow-up element where JTEs can continue to have access to mentors as they attempt to integrate new ideas in their teaching context. This will help to prolong the reflective process to include actual contextual teaching, rather than simply practice teaching. In fact, Guskey (2002) suggests that a lack of follow-up is one of the main problems with many current professional

development programmes. He goes so far as to suggest that there should be local pressure to see that newly-learned concepts are at least tried out in the teaching context.

Finally, future studies on the impact of in-service programmes should include details on both the teacher education context and the teaching context to better understand how they can affect one another. This will not only help administrators to develop more contextually-applicable education programmes and it will also shed light on real contextual changes that are required to maximize the impact of the professional development process on the teachers' development of professional competence.

#### ***8.4 END OF A JOURNEY?***

The insights generated by this study add to the growing body of literature on teacher education, professional development, and reflective practice. It has been claimed for years that reflective practice is an integral component of professional development and that the lack of such emphasis in many teacher education programmes may be the underlying reason why many teachers are unable to build a bridge between teacher education and practice, especially in regards to foreign language teacher education in countries such as Japan. Developing a better understanding of the role that inquiry-based reflective practice can have on the development of professional competence was the main goal of this research study.

Similar to many of the JTEs in the U of O programme, the author of this study is left with more questions than answers. While this may seem discouraging on one level, the author would argue that from a professional development perspective, this is a sign of success. It is only through this process of intense critical reflection that she and the JTEs are aware of what it is they still do not know. This will in turn direct future investigation on this topic. The other day, in conversation with a colleague (regarding a coaching programme being developed for sales managers), he noted that

“Coaching is not really difficult, it only requires that one know how to ask ‘Why?’ and continue to do so until they get to the root cause of the situation” (personal conversation). The author would argue the same is true for professional development. If one can continue to ask him/herself, “Why?”, and be prepared to seek out the answers, the journey towards professional competence will never end.



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## APPENDIX A - MEXT QUESTIONNAIRE

### **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M/☒F  
 (Family name) (First name)
2. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Date) (Month) (Year)
3. Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Japan \_\_\_\_\_  
 (City) (Country)
4. Present Home Address: 5-2-16-9, Teine-honcho, Teine-ku,  
Sapporo, Japan
5. Postal Zone: 006-0025 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. School (or Office) Name: \_\_\_\_\_
7. School (or Office) Address: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Position : ( ) Junior High School Teacher ( ☒ ) Senior High School Teacher  
 (Please tick) ( ) Other
9. Married/☒Single Children: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Children: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (number)
10. Major field of study at the college/university you graduated from:  
English Education
11. Describe your professional interests:  
I'm interested in how I can improve students' reading skills effectively.
12. Describe your leisure interests:  
I like to travel abroad, to watch movies, to go skiing and to play tennis
13. Living or studying abroad experience (please give details of country and length of time)  
Tennessee, USA (10 months) Calgary, Canada (6 weeks)



14. Do you smoke? Yes/No. If "yes," cigarettes a day.

15. Do you drink? Yes/No. If "yes," times a week.

16. Is it okay living with pets? Yes/No. If "no," please specify.

I'm sorry, but I don't like animals very much.

17. Is there any food you cannot eat? Yes/No. If "yes," please specify.

18. Are you in good health? Yes/No. If "no," please specify.

19. Do you regularly take any medicine? Yes/No. If "yes," please specify.

20. If you have an allergy to any foods or other items, please note specifically what you are allergic to: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Did you write a graduation thesis at university? Yes/No.

If "yes,

• what was the theme of your thesis?

Pseudo-Cleft Constructions in English: Focusing on "Connectedness" Phenomena

• how many pages did it cover? 103 pages.

• give a brief outline of your thesis.

My thesis tried to explain the syntactic connectedness phenomena in pseudo-cleft sentences. This leads to revealing one of the aspects of UG(universal grammar) through the concrete investigation. I hoped that my study would offer one suggestion for approaching the aim of transformational generative grammar.



## APPENDIX B - MEXT QUESTIONNAIRE

### **PROPOSED RESEARCH THEME**

Proposed Research Theme: Effective Ways to Improve Students' Reading Skills

|            |                                                                                   |      |                                                                                     |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prefecture |  | Name |  |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**① The present situation and the problems of my lessons**

I have often wondered whether my students truly appreciate English essays, novels, and literature since I became an English teacher. They check the meanings of the new words, learn the grammatical points, and translate English into Japanese. The end!

The first grade students have (only) three English I lessons a week, so they aren't able to finish reading their textbooks (though they might not have to). The second grade students have four English II lessons a week, but they must read through their textbooks as early as possible to then move on to the Reading textbooks in their next stage. The third grade students concentrate on preparing for the entrance examinations of the universities, so it seems impossible for them to enjoy reading.

Regrettably, they don't seem to comprehend the writers' messages. I hope for my students to read quality English passages and that they will be impressed by them, which I believe elevates their minds.

**② The way I have tackled the problems so far**

Firstly, I give my students some materials which help them to understand the stories. For example, I show them videos or photos which give them the social or cultural backgrounds.

Secondly, I ask my students some questions in order for them to comprehend the story more deeply. I also give them work sheets which have various types of questions such as multiple-choice questions, completion tasks, or short-answer questions.

Thirdly, in our school, the students have a weekend assignment; we call it "reading marathon." The students read an English story and then answer some questions on it. They also read a long story during the summer vacation and write an essay to give their impressions on it. This way, they are able to take their time and peruse the stories at their own pace.

**③ The proposed research theme and the brief outline of the research**

In the 2007 Six-month Overseas Study Program, I would like to research on how to improve the students' reading skills effectively. I hope for them to enjoy reading the stories in English and thereby enrich their own lives.

Before this program starts, I will look through the theories on reading instruction which have been suggested so far. I will survey the reading ability and consciousness of my students. I will also study the culture, the system of education, and the English teaching methods of Canada or England through books and on the Internet.

During this program, I would like to attend lectures on English education at the university, and obtain new ideas and tools for developing reading skills. In addition, I hope to visit elementary, junior high, and/or high schools to observe the English classes of both native and non-native students. After I come back to Sapporo, I want to apply some of their teaching methods to my classrooms. During my research, I hope to be able to talk with many foreign people and learn other cultures, which will become a very important experience in my life.

## APPENDIX C - ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

### **AT THE START OF THE PROGRAMMEME**

**START OF SESSION**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007**

Questions:

1. What is your main teaching challenge/problem that you want to research? Can you give some examples of how this affects your students?
2. Why do you think this challenge exists? Is it cultural? Is it due to contextual factors? Is it your teaching style? Etc.....
3. How have you worked with this challenge in your classroom up till this point? Can you give some examples?
4. While you were in Toronto as a language student, did you experience any activities or observe some teaching techniques that you think might be useful for helping you to deal with your teaching challenge?
5. How do you think this training programme will help you to solve your teaching challenge?
6. How do you feel about doing this research project?
7. What do you think will be the most difficult part of the project?

## APPENDIX D - REFLECTION LOGS

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR REFLECTION LOGS**

**September 4th, 2007**

### **Purpose:**

Throughout the semester, you will come across many sources of information that might be valuable in helping you to complete your research project and to deal with the other teaching challenges that you have in your classroom. While you will certainly find information during your independent research sessions, you might also discover information during your methodology sessions such as a teaching approach or activity that is related to your PDD or some other teaching concern that you have. Likewise, this information might come from discussions with your peers, your mentors, or possibly even your host family. The purpose of this reflection log is to create an awareness of the various resources available to you during your research project and to help you keep track of this information as you come across it.

### **How to use the reflections logs:**

During the week, keep the reflection log with you. Whenever you come across information (e.g., theory, practical activities, suggestions for future research, insights from colleagues or mentors) that is related to your teaching challenges, take a few moments to note down the information and why it is important. If you do this consistently, you will acquire several resources that you can either use directly in your research study or that might provide you with ideas about useful information you need to look up. This process will help you gather information related to your teaching challenge and help you be better prepared to write your research project.

### **Weekly Reflective Discussion Sessions:**

On Monday afternoon of each week, you will have the opportunity to share the information in your logs with your peers. This activity will not only give you an opportunity to review what you have discovered, it will also give you an opportunity to obtain information and suggestions from your peers. For example, if you have had trouble identifying information during the content sessions that is useful for you, your peers might be able to make suggestions. Another benefit of the reflection sessions is that it will also provide you with the opportunity to share information on similar topics with your peers. Finally, the reflection sessions will give you a forum in which you can share your research and learning experiences with your teaching peers.

## REFLECTION LOGS

|      |                                                                                                                                                              |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date | Methodology Classes                                                                                                                                          |
|      |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Date | Independent Research                                                                                                                                         |
|      |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Date | Meeting with Mentor                                                                                                                                          |
|      |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Date | Conversations with Peers (during reflections sessions or at other times)                                                                                     |
|      |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Date | Presentations during school visits, Micro-teaching sessions (during the semester for content classes or for PDD activities), and Poster Project Presentation |
|      |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Date | Other                                                                                                                                                        |
|      |                                                                                                                                                              |

## APPENDIX E - REFLECTION WORKSHEETS



**REFELCTIVE TEACHING ACTIVITY**  
**EXPERIENCE and PRACTICE**  
**August 28, 2007**

1. Which has been more important to your development as a teacher: Knowledge or experience?

In what specific way has your formal training shaped your teaching?

In what specific way has your experience helped you to develop as a teacher?

**REFELCTIVE TEACHING ACTIVITY**  
**CLT**  
**September 24, 2007**

In what ways, if any, does your teaching reflect the principles of communicative language teaching (as discussed in Amelia's class)?

Elaborate.

Which one(s) of these ideas describe the direction in which you would like your teaching to change?

Elaborate.

## IN-CLASS REFLECTION ACTIVITY

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007

How did you learn to teach English? (Training courses? How long? Other teachers? Reading about teaching?)

When you have challenges in your classrooms (such as the ones you wrote about before you came to Canada), how do you normally find solutions for these challenges?

The distinction between teacher training/teaching education and teacher development is described as follows:

*“Training or education is something that can be presented or managed by others;  
whereas development is something that can be done only by and for oneself”*

What do you think the quote above means?

How do you think it relates to this training programme? For example, do you think our objective in the programme is to educate you or provide you with tools for professional development? Is it possible for you to develop professionally during the programme? Explain your answers.

How do you think the quote above relates to the PDD that you are working on?

Work in groups of 2 or 3 with people who are researching similar teaching challenges as yours. Using your weekly reflective logs, discuss any new information that you have found since last week (i.e., ideas from your mentor, information found in textbooks, your own thoughts about the project or information you are reading and how it relates to English teaching in Japan, etc.). When you are finished discussing this information, take a few minutes to summarize any new information that is relevant or useful for your own PDD.

## **REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

### **Due Monday, October 15<sup>th</sup>**

***Please complete the following questions. You will share your answers with your peers during our reflective class on Monday. I will collect your answers for review after class on Monday.***

1. Are you using your reflective logs regularly? If yes, explain what type of information you are putting in the log and why. If no, explain why not.
2. Do you find these reflective logs helpful for keeping track of information related to your PDD? Please explain your answer.

Questions 3-4 not relevant for this study.

5. By now, you and your mentor have had a chance to examine and discuss some theory related to your individual teaching challenges. For this question, I want you to think about how this theory relates to your teaching situation in Japan. First, briefly (in one paragraph), explain one of the main theoretical concepts/ideas you are planning to include in your PDD. Next, I would like you to examine what part, if any, of the concept/idea is something that is already influencing your teaching in Japan (even if you did not know about this concept before). Then, identify, which part(s) of the concept is not present in your teaching classroom and briefly discuss if you think you could realistically implement this teaching idea/concept in your classroom.

For example, you might be looking at the 3 elements of “engage, study, and activate” promoted by Harmer in his text “How to teach English”. First you need to explain what this concept is. Next, look at the three separate elements and compare them to the way you teach in Japan. Do you already do some of the elements? If so, which ones? Are they part of your textbook or are they something you do on your own? Are they useful? How? Finally, look at which one of the elements is not currently being used in your classroom. Could you implement it? Can you make it part of your lesson? Do you think it would help the students? If yes, how?

***Note: You can look at more than one idea in this way and I will be happy to give you feedback on your analysis if you want me to, but you are only required to look at one aspect of your theory for our class on Monday.***

**SUMMARY REFLECTION**  
**Classroom Observations**  
**Due Monday, November 12th**

*Over the last several weeks, you have had many opportunities to observe various types of teaching during our one day visits to five different schools in Canada. I would like you to think back on these visits and reflect on the following questions:*

1. In what way is teaching (languages or other subjects) in Canada similar to teaching in Japan? Why do you think these similarities exist?
2. In what way is teaching in Japan different than teaching in Canada? What do you think is the main cause or causes for these differences?
3. If you assessed the teaching you observed in Canadian language classroom using the CLT checklist you developed with Amelia, how would you rate the teaching you observed? Was the teaching, overall, more communicative or more focused on form and structure? What types of activities tended to be more communicative? Which tended to be more structure focused?
5. Have the observation sessions influenced your view of teaching in any way? If yes, explain in what way you have been influenced?
6. Is there anything that you observed that you would like to emulate in your own teaching classroom? If yes, please explain what and why you would like to do so.
7. In what way were the observation sessions valuable for you as a teacher?
8. How would you rate the amount of observation that was provided in the training programme?

|                                                                      |            |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <i>It was sufficient, given the length of the training programme</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|

|                                                  |            |           |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <i>There should be more time for observation</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|

|                                                |            |           |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <i>There were too many observation session</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|

## APPENDIX F - END OF SESSION INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (PARTICIPANTS)

## END OF SESSION REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Wednesday, November 24 or 28<sup>th</sup>

**This questionnaire will help us to review the PDD process and to understand which aspects of the process are most useful and why.**

1. What was the focus of your Professional Development Dossier (PDD)? Did your topic change at all since the beginning of the programme? If yes, explain how it changed and why.
2. In what way has your view of your previous classroom activities changed now that you have completed the PDD? Why?
3. Do you expect to change your classroom approach (teaching style, activities used, in any way as a result of your experience with the PDD? If yes, please explain what you would like to change and why?
4. Do you think you will face opposition, barriers, challenges to making these changes? If so, how do you expect to deal with them?
5. What professional/academic skills do you think you have acquired as a result of working through the PDD process?
6. When you look back at the research topic you chose for your PDD, do you think it was a worthwhile topic to study? Why? Would you change anything about your topic if you could? If yes, what and why?
7. Below is a list of activities that were part of the PDD process. Using the descriptors below, rate the usefulness of each of these activities for helping you to complete your PDD (from 1-4).

***For each item, please give a brief comment, explanation or example of how or why the activity was or was not helpful for you?***

|                                                                        | Not<br>Useful<br>1 | Somewhat<br>Useful<br>2 | Useful<br>3 | Very<br>Useful<br>4 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| The weekly reflection logs:<br><b><i>Explain:</i></b>                  | 1                  | 2                       | 3           | 4                   |
| The school observations:<br><b><i>Explain:</i></b>                     | 1                  | 2                       | 3           | 4                   |
| Reflection sheets<br>on school observations:<br><b><i>Explain:</i></b> | 1                  | 2                       | 3           | 4                   |
| Small group discussions                                                | 1                  | 2                       | 3           | 4                   |

with peers related to shared research topics and reflections:

***Explain:***

|                             |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Your meetings with mentors: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|

***Explain:***

|                                 |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Practice teaching to your peers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|

***Explain:***

|                                   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Practice teaching to ESL students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|

***Explain:***

|                                       |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Reflections on this practice teaching | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|

***Explain:***

|                             |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| The poster project session: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|

***Explain:***

8. What other kinds of feedback or assistance would you have liked to receive during the PDD process? Explain how you think this would have helped you.
9. At the beginning of the semester, you completed a reflection on the importance of theory vs practice in your own teaching, has your view of either of these changed since then. If so, explain how it has changed and why.

## APPENDIX G - END OF SESSION INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (MENTORS)



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Instructors in the MEXT programme

#### ***Background questions on the class you taught for the MEXT programme:***

1. How many years have you been working with this programme?
2. In your opinion, what are the overall goals of this training programme?
3. What component of the programme did you teach?
4. What were your main teaching objectives or goals for the students? Please provide a course outline for me.
5. During your classes, did you have the students complete any reflections? If so, what were the objectives of the reflective activities / tasks you gave them? Did the students discuss these reflections with each other? Did you provide any feedback for the students on these reflective tasks? Please provide examples of the reflective tasks you assigned.
6. Did the students do any practice teaching in your class? If so, could you provide a copy of the guidelines you gave them for this task. What was / were the objective(s) of the practice teaching activities? What type of feedback did they receive on these activities?
7. During your class, did you do any activities that might have helped students to make connections between the content of your class and the other classes in the programme? If yes, please provide an example(s).
8. During your class, did you do any activities that might have helped the students to make connections between the content of your class and their individual research projects? If yes, please provide an example(s).

#### ***Questions related to Mentoring:***

9. Which students did you mentor?
10. What do you think was your role as a mentor?
11. Did your students have any difficulty choosing a topic? If so, what do you think was /were the reason (s)? Did anyone change his/her topic during the semester? If yes, what do you think was the reason for the change?
12. Do you think the topics were useful for your students? Why?
13. What process did you use to help your students clarify their teaching challenge, identify relevant solutions, and complete the PDD?

14. In your discussions with your students, did it seem like they were able to make connections between what they were learning in other areas of the programme (i.e., their content classes, school visits, guest speakers, practice teaching) and their PDD? If yes, can you think of any examples?
15. In what way, do you think the students' perceptions of teaching (related to their specific topics) may have changed as a result of their participation in the PDD?
16. Do you think the students that you mentored will be able to make changes in their classrooms based on what they have learned? Please explain your answer.
17. What professional/academic/pedagogical skills do you think your students acquired as a result of participating in the PDD process?
18. What do you think is the most challenging part of the PDD process for these students?
19. What changes, if any, do you think could be made to the PDD to make it more meaningful and manageable for both the students and the mentors? Why?
20. Did you use the black notebook provided by me to help record/summarize the content of your mentor meetings? If yes, did you find it useful? If you did not use it, why not? Did you use some other approach?

## APPENDIX H - CONSENT FORMS (PARTICIPANTS AND MENTORS)

## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

### **MEXT 2007**

Name of researcher:

Name of Supervisor

**Volunteers needed.** All students who are part of the six-month MEXT training programme being supervised by the University of Ottawa, from August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007, can participate in this research project. Since many foreign language teachers participate in training programmes similar to the one you are involved in, I would like to learn more about your experiences while you were in Canada. In particular, I would like to know how the reflective process implemented in this training programme helped you to clarify your teaching challenges, find solutions that can solve those teaching challenges, and complete a research report that summarizes both the challenges and the solutions that you can use to deal with these challenges in your teaching classrooms. This study will be done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. Second Language Teaching and Learning at the University of Ottawa.

**What will volunteers do?** Participants will be asked to allow the researcher to have access to various sources of information generated as a result of their participation in this training programme. I would like to have access to the questionnaires and research statements prepared for MEXT, prior to the training programme. I am also interested in resources related to your participation in the reflective sessions (reflective logs, questionnaires, and taped conversations that take place during the reflective sessions) and any documents related to the completion of your research project (summary logs kept by mentors, drafts and original copies of your research project, as well as other written activities completed during the programme that are related to your research project). I would like permission to have copies of your reflective logs and the mentor summary logs that were completed during the teaching programme. I would also like permission to access the audio tapes made of your initial one-on-one reflective session with me, the weekly reflective sessions with your peers, as well as the one-on-one interview regarding your perceptions of the benefits or disadvantages of participating in a reflective process such as the one implemented in this training programme, which you will have with me at the end of the programme.

**Why you might like to participate?** As a participant you will have the opportunity to extend your learning beyond the formal classroom by sharing problems and solutions with another experienced English teachers (the researcher) who is interested in improving English as a foreign language teacher training programmes. These discussions may also be a useful tool for helping you to reflect on your long term teaching and learning goals. In addition, the findings from this study may be helpful in developing future professional development courses for other English as a foreign language teachers from Japan.

**Your rights:** You may withdraw from the study at any time and you will be given the opportunity to black out or delete information on the tape-recorded transcripts without questions or problems. Your real names will never be used at any time, and only my supervisor and I will have access to the data obtained during this study. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All data will be kept in the

supervisor's office and will be destroyed five years after the research report has been written. You will also be presented with two copies of this consent form. You will be asked to sign one copy and keep the remaining copy for your records.

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**Agreement to participate:**

**I understand the above conditions and agree to allow the researcher to interview me as specified above and to have access to my journals, questionnaires, and language assessments.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of student volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name and local address

**Thank you for your help with this research project.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of research supervisor and Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

## MENTOR/INSTRUCTOR PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM MEXT 2007

Name of researcher:

Name of supervisor:

**Volunteers needed.** All mentors/instructors who are part of the six-month MEXT training programme being supervised by the University of Ottawa can participate in this research project. The research component of the MEXT training programme is not only a required component of the training programme, it also provides an ideal opportunity for the trainees to adapt knowledge acquired during the training programme to their individual teaching contexts. Learning to make connections between acquired knowledge and experiential needs is a major step in promoting professional self-development. Therefore more research is needed to determine how teaching programmes can make this research project less stressful and meaningful for the trainees. This study will be done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. Second Language Teaching and Learning at the University of Ottawa.

**What will volunteers do?** Participants will be asked to allow the researcher to conduct a 30-60 minute open-ended interview with them following the end of the training programme. Questions for the interviews will be developed throughout the programme in relation to the mentor's perceived benefits or disadvantages of including a reflective process into the training programme.

**Why you might like to participate?** The research gathered from this study may be helpful in developing future professional development courses for other English as a foreign language teachers from Japan or elsewhere.

**Your rights:** You may withdraw from the study at any time and you will be given the opportunity to black out or delete information on the tape-recorded transcripts without questions or problems. Your real names will not be used for the data analysis, and only my supervisor and I will have access to the data obtained during this study. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All data will be kept in the supervisor's office and will be destroyed five years after the research report has been written. You will also be presented with two copies of this consent form. You will be asked to sign one copy and keep the remaining copy for your records.

Participants can request information on ethical conduct for the project from the Protocol Officer for Ethics and Research.

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**Agreement to participate:**

**I understand the above conditions and agree to allow the researcher to interview me.**

Signature of the volunteer mentor

date

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Printed name and local address

**Thank you for your help with this research project.**

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Signature of researcher

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date

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Signature of research supervisor and Date

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date