

## Professional awareness among English language teacher educators: individual and collaborative reflective practice

Vera Lucia Lima Carvalho<sup>1</sup>

RESUMO: Estudos envolvendo prática reflexiva em educação geralmente focam em professores-alunos ou novatos. A pesquisa aqui reportada envolveu educadores de professores em nível superior, refletindo como indivíduos e como uma comunidade, enquanto a pesquisadora investiga o papel e as limitações da cooperação para o refino da auto-percepção profissional. Os participantes engajaram-se em um processo não-longitudinal de auto-avaliação, apoiados por três atividades-guias: auto observação e observação em pares, sessão de feedback e encontro de grupo. Assim, blocos de discurso, estudados como *sub-corpora*, foram analisados em si e em referência a outros *corpora* existentes. A análise combinou métodos quantitativos e qualitativos, com abordagem predominantemente qualitativa, envolvendo análise descritiva, exploratória e explanatória. Os métodos analíticos combinaram análise do discurso e da conversação com suporte da linguística de *corpus*. Os resultados mostraram que o impacto de modos colaborativos de prática reflexiva sobre a auto-percepção individual depende pesadamente da natureza das interações, níveis de experiência, engajamento prévio em prática reflexiva e resistência a mudanças. Além disso, os resultados enfatizam a necessidade de as pesquisas envolverem mais frequentemente todos os níveis de experiência, como forma de manter o desenvolvimento contínuo do profissional em quaisquer estágios de sua carreira.

Palavras-chave: educação de professores; prática reflexiva; auto-percepção profissional; auto-avaliação; observação em pares.

ABSTRACT: Studies involving reflective practice (RP) in Education generally focus on student or novice teachers. The research reported on here involved higher level language teacher educators, reflecting as individuals and as a community. The researcher investigates the role and limitations of cooperation in the refinement of professional awareness. The participants engaged in a non-longitudinal process of self-evaluation, supported by three data-led guidance activities, as external frames of reference, namely, self and peer observation, post observation peer-feedback and group socialization. Blocks of discourse, studied as sub-corpora were analyzed as independent units and also in reference to other existent corpora. The analysis combined quantitative and qualitative research methods, taking a predominantly qualitative approach involving descriptive, exploratory and explanatory analysis. The analytical methods combine conversation and discourse analysis supported by corpus linguistics. The results showed that the impact of collaborative modes of work on individual professional self-awareness depend heavily on the nature of the interactions, individual levels of experience, previous RP engagement and resistance to change. Moreover, the results highlight the need for RP research to be more frequently extended to all levels of teaching experience, as a way to maintain continual development at any stage of an individual's professional career.

Keywords: language teacher education; reflective practice; professional awareness; self-evaluation; peer observation.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in TESOL at the University of Limerick (2013 – 2017) under the supervision of Dr Fiona Farr;

Presently working as a Lecturer at the Universidade do Estado da Bahia (UNEB), continuing research on self-evaluation of language teacher educators. Previous teaching experience in both private and public sectors, including language schools and language institutions in Brazil. Main area of interest: Language Teacher Education (LTE). E-mail: veralucialimacarvalho@gmail.com

## **Reshaping reflections for increasing awareness**

The present research explores the voices of six experienced higher level English language teacher educators from a public university in Brazil, reflecting on their own practice as individuals and as a community of practice (LAVE; WENGER, 1991; WENGER, 1998). In this way, the study supplements previous Reflective Practice studies (RP) (DEWEY, 1938; FARRELL, 2012; SCHÖN, 1983), which are generally confined to the realm of student or novice teachers (TSUI, 2003). Both the RP process and the data analysis were guided by theoretical frameworks of RP (discussed below) in the field of language teacher education (LTE). Readers are invited to consult the original thesis for a fuller description of the theoretical foundations, analytical procedures and results.

In the research under discussion, RP was based on principles of social learning, as a way to support individual reflection (MANN; WALSH, 2015). The concept was taken as a structured way to contemplate specific contexts, practices, or issues directly relevant to professional development. Structured as a non-longitudinal RP program, the project created space for engagement in critical reflection and offered the researcher a chance to explore discourses that were revealing of a particular element whose roots seem to be intrinsically related to RP, namely, professional awareness. This is understood within the study as the desirable end to professional development, while reflection would be the means to reach it.

Although RP underlies all the research, the investigations do not place either the analysis of teaching practice or the promotion or evidence of results of critical reflection as its main goal. The proposition is to search for connections between reflections and language teaching awareness. This refers to language teachers or teacher educators becoming aware of their practices, attitudes, teaching beliefs, and their own identities, that is being conscious of these factors and entities (EDGE, 2011; FREEMAN, 1982; UNDERHILL, 1992). The notion of professional awareness as applied in the research is now more closely discussed before the presentation of the research design and its specific aims.

## **Awareness as a pre-requisite for teacher development**

A pre-requisite for development, awareness is considered as the state of consciousness related to the individual perception (FARRELL, 2012; 2015; UNDERHILL,

1992). According to Underhill (1992), individual perception lies in two central pillars, namely primary and secondary perspectives of reality. Primary perspectives are offered by what one can tell from his/her own observation and reflection; secondary perspectives are offered by what others can tell about one's practice and its effect. The gain from secondary perspectives works to the degree that a professional is prepared to make sense of them and to extend the initial mapping offered by the primary perspectives:

From myself, my felt sense, my intuition, and my clarifying understanding of my present performance, I can begin to hone a definite, tangible image of the fully functioning teacher within me. From others, particularly from those with whom I share a co-operative and mutual interest in development, I can gain caring and insightful feedback, and support and encouragement that can affirm the higher qualities of my practice, and strengthen my aspiration to shift perspectives and move on rather than keep repeating the same experience.

(UNDERHILL, 1992, p.75)

In accordance with the tangibility of self-discovery through mutual perspectives, the tasks were designed, intercalating individual and collaborative modes of work and with a dialogic and data led approach to RP (MANN; WALSH, 2015). Such tasks provided opportunities for the participants to reflect, express, discuss and reconsider reflections, allowing for the exploration of the way they articulate their reasoning, portraying and refining their self observation. A state of awareness or a process of awareness raising can be captured in the participants' effort to express their thoughts in relation to their practice, their view of themselves, of the students and of the community. This is explained by Edge (1992, p.62) as follows:

We learn things in different ways. One well-known distinction is between understanding intellectual learning and experiential learning (...) and both are important. Beyond experience and understanding, however, there is a third vital element in our learning and knowing. That is the expression of our experience and understanding, the articulation of what we think and feel (Dilthey, 1976). That is to say, we learn by speaking, by trying to put our thoughts together and express them so that someone else can understand them. It is in this way that we bring together intellectual and experiential knowledge into a coherent, individual statement which we learn as we formulate. Through this formulation, we can also prepare to act. Through action, we learn again.

The terms “expression”, “articulation” and “statement” directly refer to the act of speaking (or writing) about thoughts and action, which is exactly what the tasks in the study involved. It is very important to highlight that this was not a longitudinal study that would permit an investigation of reflection over time. The tasks allowed “snapshots” of the construction of professional awareness. The subjectivity of the theme, the short length of the RP process and the complexity of the discourse analysis do place limitations to the analytical process. Moreover, any sort of “measurement of accuracy” of awareness was not deemed plausible. The focus was on progress, in terms of the development of the self-evaluation process, which involves aspects such as coherence, clarity, objectiveness, transparency and adaptability.

### **The research design**

Following guidelines of ethical procedure, the six invited lecturers engaged in a 3-stage process of reflective writing, re-elaborating short drafts of individual self-evaluation (about 500 words each), supported by three tasks, deemed as valuable forms of RP (FARRELL, 2015; PARTINGTON; DUGUID; TAYLOR, 2013; ZWOZDIK-MYERS, 2012): a) Self-observation through video-recording of classes; b) Classroom peer observation (PO) with a feedback discussion; c) A group discussion.

From each of the above phases, blocks of discourse were collected and organized as sub-corpora that were analyzed in the light of referential RP frameworks, through a combination of discourse analysis (DA), conversation analysis (CA) and corpus assisted discourse analysis (CADS) to discover patterns, explore meanings and understand both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the discourses (BAKER, 2006). An initial questionnaire was applied, addressing the participants’ motivation and the value of the research project for them, their expectations and preferences with regard to interacting with their colleagues. A final questionnaire was also applied and references to the information from these instruments were made throughout the analysis. The following diagram offers a visualisation of the tasks that generated the data collected:

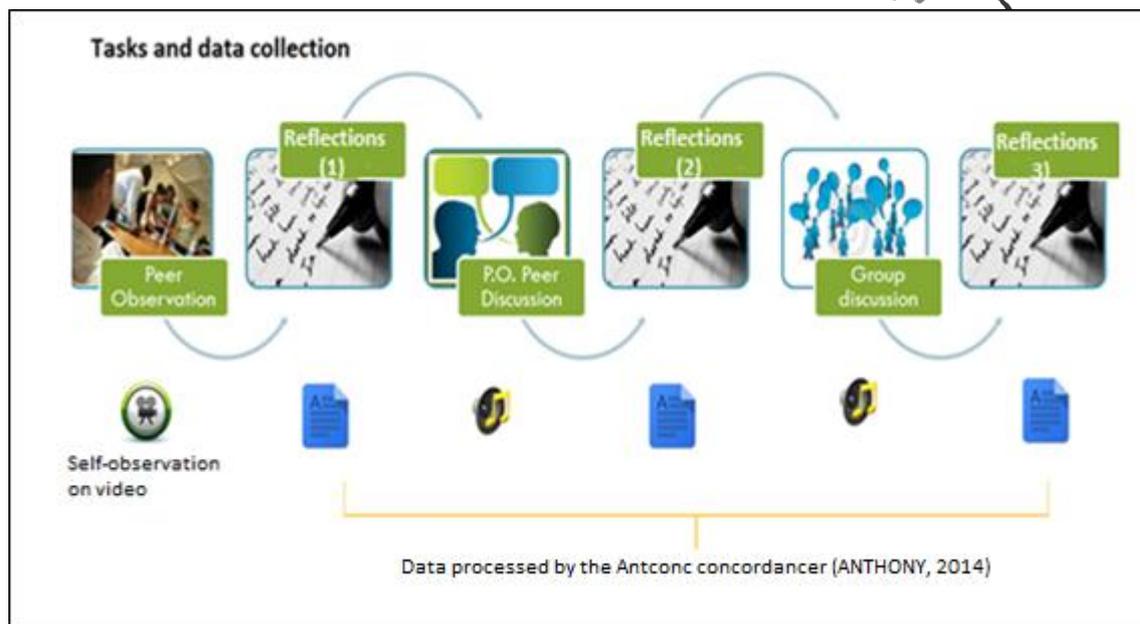


Figure 1: The RP tasks and data collection

### The research aims

The main aim of this research was to investigate how professional awareness develops through individual and collaborative forms of RP. The interest relies on how the participants reconsider the individual self-evaluation assessment of their practice, when they are offered the support of external frames of reference. This central aim raised the following research questions:

- a) What sorts of content and types of reflection are integrated in self-evaluation?
- b) How do the participants reveal self-perceptiveness in relation to the portrayal of identities, assumptions and reflective development *per se*?
- c) What is the role of the supportive nature of peer work in raising the participants' self-awareness? What is the level of interactivity? What themes are discussed? What is the role of politeness and face? (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987; COPLAND, 2011)
- d) What is the role of the group's interdependence and promotive interaction (EDGE, 2002; ROGER; JOHNSON, 1994; WARREN LITTLE, 2002) and how is this reflected in self-evaluation?

Beyond an interest in the phenomenon of individual professional awareness, there was genuine interest in whether the educators would aspire encourage reflective approaches among their student teachers (DINKELMAN, 2003), which can be seen as a practical application of the research at the site where it was initially developed.

### **The RP tools chosen to foster reflection**

The RP tools deemed as appropriate to generate discourse from which to investigate professional awareness as the result of individual and collaborative reflection included: reflective writing, peer observation with a feedback provision and group discussion. The merits of each of these tools have been discussed in terms of how they can foster reflection and professional development, as discussed below.

In the late 1990s, Van Manen (1994) explained that narrative self-reflection allows personal identity to be brought to self-awareness. More recently, Crookes (2003) explained that narrative is an archetypal form of knowledge and “a way we represent ourselves to ourselves” (p.24), not only addressing who we are, but who we are becoming. Moon (2006) offers a general framework for reflective writing, inviting the reader to recognize levels of increasing metacognitive stance (awareness of one’s reasoning). More recently, Farrell (2013) reassures us that writing is a strategy that particularly suits self-reflection and self-discovery, especially within teacher development groups.

Classroom observation can be seen as “one way in which the art and skill of teaching are acquired” (FARR; CHAMBERS; O’RIORDAN, 2010, p. 49). Combined with feedback provision, it is a socio-cultural approach to teacher education (FARR, 2010; FARRELL, 2015; FREEMAN, 1982; 2004; RANDALL; THORNTON, 2001). When structured as peer work, the process is facilitated by a non-threatening (or at least less threatening) atmosphere (Randall and Thornton 2001), with a supposedly non-judgmental approach. The benefits will depend, to a great extent, on the discourse which develops within the feedback session (COPLAND, 2011; DONAGHUE, 2015; FARR, 2010), as testified in the data analysis.

RP activity in groups is the strategy that most clearly involves the principles of social learning (LAVE; WENGER, 1991; VYGOTSKY, 1978; WENGER, 1998), and it has been argued that RP can very often take an individualistic focus (MANN; WALSH, 2013). The

group discussion allows that the participants themselves “evaluate the influences of the group on their personal and professional growth” (FARRELL, 2013, p. 107). The analysis demonstrated that as they shared experiences, they gained awareness of their common and their diverging assumptions, beliefs and conceptions of teaching and learning (BROOKFIELD, 1995; FARRELL, 2015).

### Referencial RP frameworks

Three specific frameworks were used to guide the analysis, rather than providing a structural platform for engaging in RP. To minimize biased results, these frameworks were not presented to the participants, and there was no “training” or providence of examples of “good” or “right” practice and forms of conducting interactions, This was a way of getting as close as possible to the community’s regular way of conducting their practice.

Zwozdiak-Myers’s (2012) Framework of RP was designed to guide and structure evidence of RP in self-study for teacher’s professional development. Three types of discourse (descriptive, comparative and critical) can be captured from nine dimensions incorporating different patterns of thinking. It accommodates different levels of experience, rather than representing a progressive way of “becoming reflective”:

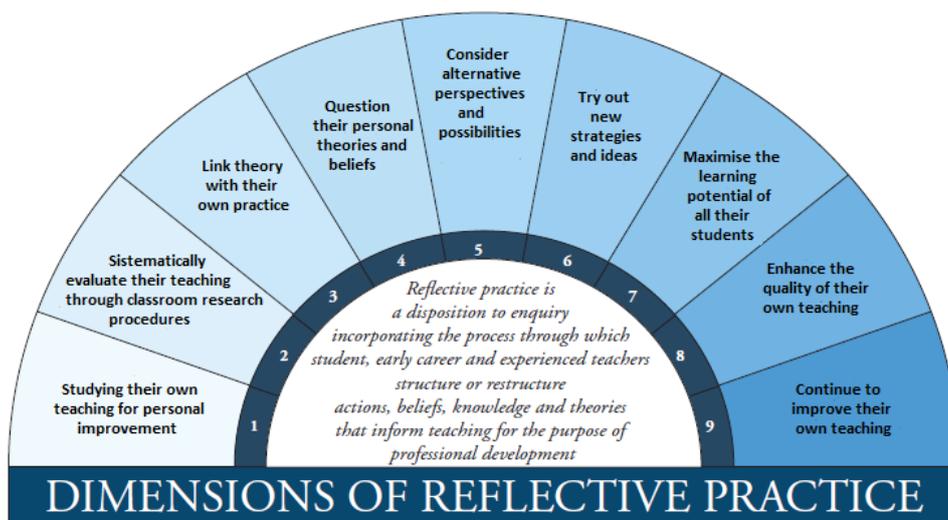


Figure 2: Zwozdiak-Myers’s Framework of Reflective Practice (2012, p.5)

This framework was used in combination with the two other discussed below, to make sense of the way participants construct their self-evaluations, analyzing their own practice and also considering the need for change, on the basis of their current awareness.

Farrell’s framework for reflecting on practice was adapted from his earlier framework (FARRELL, 2004), in order to be suitable for teachers at all levels of development. It is an evidence based approach for teachers “to reflect on their philosophy, beliefs, values, theories, principles, classroom practices, and beyond the classroom” (p.20).

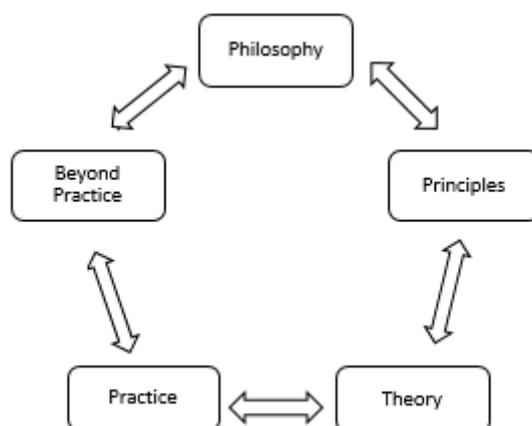


Figure 3: Farrell’s Framework for Reflecting on Practice (FARRELL, 2015, p.22)

The five areas in the framework can be summarized as follows:

The “philosophy” stage consists in exploring the background behind personal values, which involves ethics and assumptions that underlie a person’s practice; Accessing “principles” requires to examine assumptions, beliefs and conceptions, and how they translate (or not) into classroom practice; Within “theory”, teachers consider aspects of lesson planning, such as content, techniques, activities, routines and goals; “Practice” involves reflection on tangible parts of teaching. taking the form of reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action. “Beyond practice” takes on a socio-cultural dimension, with critical reflection, involving moral, political and social issues that impact a teacher’s practice. This enables teacher to develop an understanding of foundational theories and allows for contributing to society at large. Farrell’s framework aids the

comprehension of awareness raising, particularly because of the idea of the overlaps of these stages/levels of reflection.

Edge's framework of cooperative development (EDGE, 1992; 2002; EDGE; ATTIA, 2014) has non-judgmental communication as its central idea, as it derives from the humanistic approaches to psychology, most specifically from Rogers's (1992) fundamental proposition, that it is "our natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove the statement of the other person, or the other group" (p.28). Cooperative development can promote successful articulation, on the condition that the listener helps the speaker to better articulate his thoughts, by agreeing to avoid a competitive stance and follow principles of respect, empathy and sincerity. The speaker has the chance to increase self-awareness with the help of the "understander". Here lies the value of this framework for the discourse analysis, as the researcher takes into consideration the extent to which the colleagues discourse may offer (or not) support for individual reflections and self-understanding. This framework allows for the assessment of the supportive aspects of the interactions, being applicable to the analysis of the peer observation feedback, while also illuminating the analysis of the group discussion.

### **Analytical procedures**

The educators' written reflections were analyzed in conjunction with the spoken discourse from the final two phases, with the investigation of linguistic features and pragmatic strategies within the interactions. The full corpus compilation amounted to 10,509 words, derived from the discourses from each RP phase, which were studied as the following sub-corpora:

- Written drafts of self-evaluations: 5801 words
- Post observation peer discussions (POPD) - all sessions: 2672 words
- Group discussion (GD): 2036 words

The analytical procedures combined quantitative and qualitative research methods, taking a predominantly qualitative approach. The data analysis was developed through corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS) (PARTINGTON; DUGUID; TAYLOR, 2013), oriented by pragmatics and by theories of conversation and discourse analysis. Corpus linguistics was used in an "applied" way, as a tool to allow more precise data exploration, to highlight linguistic features and to allow comparisons with other existing corpora. Having

collected the data from the tasks developed during the RP process, the following analytical procedures were undertaken:

- 1) Frequency lists<sup>2</sup> of each set of data were generated: i) drafts of self-evaluation; ii) transcriptions of all the Post-Observation Peer Discussions (POPDs) and iii) transcription of the Group Discussion (GD);
- 2) Frequency lists of the corpora used as reference were generated: i) the BNC Baby (BNC 2007), a sampled version of the larger British National Corpus, ii) the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (L-CIE) (FARR; MURPHY; O'KEEFFE, 2004) and iii) the Post-Observation Trainer-Trainee Interactions (POTTI) (FARR, 2010);
- 3) Keyword lists<sup>3</sup> were generated, as follows:
  - a) Keywords per sets of draft of self-evaluation – in order to have an idea of how the sets of drafts compared to each other, the corpus of reference used was the total set of drafts of self-evaluation;
  - b) Keywords per participant per draft - each participant's first, second and third drafts in comparison to a general corpus (the one used was the BNC Baby (BNC 2007) (spoken part discarded for improved compatibility);
  - c) Keywords of the Post observation peer discussion (POPD) in comparison to the Post Observation Trainer-Trainee Interaction (POTTI) (FARR, 2010);
  - d) Keywords of the GD in comparison to a general corpus, namely the L-CIE (FARR; MURPHY; O'KEEFFE, 2004).

The analysis of the written drafts of reflection was carried out through intensive repeated reading, analogies to the corpus linguistics findings (frequency and keyness) and to the questionnaires applied before and after the tasks. In conformity to the frameworks discussed, the following aspects were investigated, for being deemed as related to professional awareness:

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<sup>2</sup> Frequency lists are lists of all the words or sequence of words (clusters) in a corpus together with a count of how many times each of them occur (McEney and Hardie 2011)

<sup>3</sup> Keywords are words which are significantly more frequent (positive keyness) or less frequent (negative keyness) than in a reference or comparison corpus (Baker 2006).

- a) The content reflected upon - discussed in terms of the content nature, with reference to frameworks of reflective practice that categorise issues brought into reflection (JAY; JOHNSON, 2002; VALLI; AGOSTINELLI, 1993; VAN MANEN, 1977; ZWOZDIK-MYERS, 2012);
- b) The perception of practice - this refers to how participants display their perceptions of action during the class taught or in their practice in general (for example, strategies, effectiveness, achievements, considerations or conclusions about their practice).

The POPDs were examined in order to uncover the collaborative aspects of peer work in relation to its supportive nature (which is particularly useful for awareness raising), especially within the second draft self-evaluation. The analysis focused on:

- a) Interactivity, presented in terms of the percentage of talk, considering the number of words uttered by participants in relation to the total number of words in the feedback session, the number of turns and the utterance length;
- b) Topics discussed, referring to which issues/aspects were focused on;
- c) The ways of performing appraisal and criticism, mostly seen in terms of face and politeness (BROWN; LEVINSON, 1987);
- d) Performing the role of an understander (EDGE, 2002): refers to how the feedback provider helps the peer to develop their practice via their own means, by helping them to articulate their own view.

The analysis of the GD accompanied the ways in which the participants discuss the experience of RP as a professional community. There was especial interest in the group's interdependence and promotive interaction (ROGER; JOHNSON, 1994; WARREN LITTLE, 2002), because these may affect the third drafts of self-evaluation. For this purpose, intensive reading, with the support of the corpus linguistics findings (lists of frequency and keyness), allowed the researcher to notice emerging themes.

Familiarization with the data (derived from the processes of transcription and intensive repeated reading) allowed the researcher to make inferences and connections during the corpus based analysis (with the observance of frequency and keyness), and from these, investigate specific items in concordance lists, as demonstrated below.

## **Results**

The results are organized per blocks of tasks developed, which is also a means to avoid repetition and any possible confusion:

### ***First drafts of self-evaluation***

In the first drafts, the participants' textual construction varies in clarity and objectivity, which is especially noticeable when it comes to defining themes and formulating problems. Affirmation of current practice is done indirectly and self-criticism appears less frequently than in the subsequent drafts. 40% of the keywords can be classified as pedagogic or metalinguistic items, which is expected, as metalanguage is typical of a TESOL community (FARR, 2010) and possibly also because of an overlap with the specific course subjects and themes involved in the classes taught (for example, *text, comprehension, sounds, language, consonant, continuous, emphasized, fluent, etc.*). There is also an overlap with their chosen focus for classroom observation or the issues involved: *focus, deal* (as in take action), *decided, discussion, methodologies, participated, comprehension*).

17% of the keywords can be seen as linked to processes of reflection, in terms of noticing, considering and evaluating. Despite a few occurrences of comparative and critical types of reflection (JAY; JOHNSON, 2002; VALLI; AGOSTINELLI, 1993; VAN MANEN, 1977; ZWOZDIK-MYERS, 2012), the first drafts were mainly constructed as a descriptive account of classes, and also a descriptive account of the matters involved, including technical and practical rationality (HATTON; SMITH, 1995; VALLI; AGOSTINELLI, 1993; VAN MANEN, 1977).

At this stage, the lecturers are starting their process of reflection in what could be considered a contemplative way (FARRELL, 2015). It can be said that the first drafts are limited in terms of the direction and depth of the reflections (ZWOZDIK-MYERS, 2012). This can possibly be attributed to the fact that the participants had not had their feedback sessions yet, which would provide an external point of view on their practice and possibly require responses to comments and criticism (FARR, 2010).

### ***Post observation peer discussions (peer feedback sessions)***

The length and wordcount for the feedback sessions was below the researcher's expectation (maximum duration of 6 minutes and 15 seconds and total corpus wordcount of 2672 words). This could possibly be associated to the novelty of providing teaching feedback, as well as to issues of politeness and face (COPLAND, 2011; VÁSQUEZ, 2009). The issues discussed between the pairs centred on the agreed topics of observation, but the sessions varied from highly interactive to completely non-interactive. Signals of tension and anxiety were identified within most of the sessions, which was in conformity to the findings from the initial and final questionnaires. Most participants provided feedback in a directive and prescriptive way, despite the inclusion of politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987), such as hedging or mitigation.

There were very few instances of the listener performing the role of an understander (EDGE, 2002), which is, helping the speaker to develop or clarify his/her own ideas and discover where they lead. Negative criticisms were mostly given directly; they outnumbered the instances of positive criticism.

### ***Second drafts of self-evaluation***

The second drafts all include reflections upon issues discussed in the feedback sessions, sometimes directly portrayed as new to their awareness. Some issues are re-analyzed, reframed or elaborated upon. However, the second drafts reveal varied levels of openness to criticism and willingness to change. Participants may respond defensively, justifying their actions more or less reasonably. In general, it can be observed that while re-elaborations of reflections are constructed in different ways by each participant, on the whole, they do take the feedback criticisms into consideration and reconsider problems. The portrayal of awareness cannot be fully attributed to the feedback received, but it is possibly triggered by it: there is review and recall of practice, and conclusions of reassurance or assertion of beliefs (BROOKFIELD, 1995; FARRELL, 2015).

### ***Group discussion***

Three themes emerged from the GD discourse, as the analysis developed: 1) Emotional perspectives; 2) Acknowledgement of the value of feedback and video self-

observation; 3) Cooperation and individual written reflection. The analysis suggested a correlation of these themes with the participants' process of awareness raising.

Among the GD keywords, there was a high proportion of words directly retaking the experience of classroom observation and feedback provision. These testify a focus on the RP activities developed. Emotion related words were found as part of the descriptions of the participants' feelings as they engage in observing, being observed, providing and receiving feedback. Farr (2010) also talks about cathartic words, and a comparison to her work was done in the study. The words also refer to what was deemed as positive from the engagement in RP: *difficult, shy, felt, uncomfortable, worried, easier, butterflies, confidence thinking, different, interesting, constructive, terrible, hiding, painful, nervous, God, exposing, stressful.*

Interactive tokens indicate mutual engagement and listenership (FARR, 2003): *mmhm* (agreeing), *mmm* (thinking), *yes* (sometimes agreeing, sometimes confirming listenership or understanding). Their presence reinforces the interactivity of the discussion. In summary, the keywords of the GD conform to reflecting about reflection (FARRELL, 2012), with a shift from initial individual issues in name of more generalized reflections.

### ***Third drafts of self-evaluation***

Within the keywords from the third drafts, only 4% can be classified as pedagogic or metalinguistic items, a percentage in continual decrease when comparing the first (40%), second (13%) and third drafts (4%). This is indicative of a less descriptive focus, which now turns into a more critical version of reflections (JAY; JOHNSON, 2002). 9% can be linked to the RP tasks of peer observation and feedback provision or other similar experiences, with some overlaps with words that define their group as a community of practice (for example, pronouns related to 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural (*we, us, ourselves*), and items such as *peers, co-workers, colleagues, coordinator*). This represents an increase in comparison to the second drafts, as the percentage of words linked to the RP tasks was only 4%. 28% of the keywords can be seen as linked to processes of reflection in terms of noticing, considering and evaluating their practice (in bold font on the table). This represents an increase in comparison to the rate of 17% revealed in the second drafts.

The keywords characterising the participants' feelings during the RP included "negative" aspects (for example, *stressful, judge*), and also "positive" aspects, related to

the gains associated with the process (for example, *helpful, interesting, broaden*). There were also words indicating awareness of progress, improvements and achievements (for example, *before, improve, accustomed, achieve, aiming, beyond*). These match the results from the post questionnaire, where the lecturers revealed self-consciousness while being observed, caution while providing feedback, and interest and curiosity when receiving feedback. They also reported on the extent to which they thought the post observation feedback helped them to notice aspects of their teaching that they had not noticed before.

On the whole, the reflections on the third draft correspond to reflecting on reflection (FARRELL, 2015) and this could also be associated with perceptions of more subjective levels, or a process of *phronesis*, as described by Korthagen and Kessels (1999), in which strengthened awareness allows attention to be focused on perceiving more in a particular situation.

## **Conclusion**

The research reaffirms Underhill's (1992) assertion that, within the field of education, professional self-awareness has an effect on the learners, on colleagues and on oneself because it shapes actions, behaviour, teaching techniques, procedures, attitudes and the psychological atmosphere which, as a whole, has an effect on those whose learning should be facilitated: the students.

Before presenting the conclusions, it is important to recognize that the study was an intervention into the participants' practice and also into their student teachers' routine and it certainly had an effect on the participants (COPLAND; CREESE, 2015). However, the tasks provided opportunities for:

- articulating reflections;
- sustaining and invigorating individual reflection;
- sharing the burden of individual concerns with the community;
- integrating insights and support from members of the community;
- broadening levels of perception of practice and increasing levels of the perception of self as educators;
- reflecting on reflection.

The results show that professional awareness is a key element in reflective practice. It triggers attention to attitude, skills and knowledge (FREEMAN, 1989). However, the direction and the depth of reflections vary with the influence of levels of experience, quality of interactions and also vary in accordance to levels of resistance to change.

Feedback sessions characteristics, such as politeness, level of interactivity, and use of non-judgemental criticism seem to have an impact on the supportive affordance of the encounters, however, this also depends on the participants' previous TP experience and previous experience with feedback provision (FARR, 2010). Responses to external points of view, comments and criticism may happen more or less immediately, but they carry potential for further reanalysis and maturation.

Moreover, the research contributes to the expansion of the understanding of communities of practice in relation to the group's contextual reference and, most importantly, in relation to the situated nature of learning (LAVE; WENGER, 1991; WENGER, 1998). In relation to the central concepts of the Theory of Situated Learning (ibid), it was made clear that the effects of participants' mutual engagement in their individual development meet individual limitations and are dependent on goals, preferences, effort and commitment to improve practice. Most importantly, the study points to the need to expand research to address the reflections of more experienced professionals in education more frequently.

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