Inverted Curriculum for ELT Teacher Development

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Reflection has been adopted in teacher development as a powerful resource for language educators to improve their teaching (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Ellis, 2006). However, conventional reflective approaches are criticized for being too structured and lacking in collaborative elements (Farrell, 2015). This paper introduces and evaluates an alternative teacher-training curriculum for native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in an EFL context, which we call the "inverted curriculum," as it reverses the NESTs' teaching context in two ways: their role from teacher to student and the target language from their L1 to their students' L1. In the spring of 2014, a workshop using the inverted curriculum was conducted at a private university in Tokyo. Classroom observation notes and a questionnaire about the workshop were used to evaluate the curriculum. An evaluation of the inverted curriculum is presented, as well as some benefits and considerations.

省察は，語学教育者が自らを客観的に観察し，教授法や教育の信念を省みる上で大いに役立つとして教員研修に何年も用いられてきた（Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Ellis, 2006）。しかし，伝統的な省察方法は限定的で共同的な側面に欠けるとの批判もある（Farrell, 2015）。そこで，このプロジェクトは非英語圏（EFL）で英語を母国語とする語学教育者（NEST）を対象とする代替的教員研修カリキュラムを考案し、その効果を確かめた。NEST自身の教育現場の2側面（役割を教師から学習者に、学習言語を教師のL1から学習者のL1に）を反転したことにより、このカリキュラムを「反転カリキュラム（inverted curriculum）」と呼ぶことにした。2014年春に東京の私立大学でこの反転カリキュラムを用いてワークショップを実施した。アンケート結果と授業観察日誌を比較することで，言語反転学習の語学教員研修としての効果を確認し、言語反転カリキュラムの利点と問題点を含む効果について述べた。

Within the field of second language teacher education, reflective practice has emerged as an evidence-based approach that encourages critical reflection on teaching. While engaging in reflective teaching, teachers "actively collect data about their teaching beliefs and practices and then reflect on the data in order to direct future teaching decisions" (Perfecto, as cited in Farrell, 2015, p. 8). The popularity of reflective practices has led to the development of teacher training programs based on various reflective frameworks, strategies, and practices. In keeping with this trend, we suggest an alternative second language teacher-training curriculum for native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in an EFL context.

Teachers' Language Learning Experiences as Reflective Development

During the last two decades, more and more educators have acknowledged and recognized the value of teacher knowledge generated through non-hierarchical reflective conversations rather than consulting prescribed knowledge by experts in the field. Reflection is often referred to as a series of activities occurring in a fixed order: identifying a problem, examining the problem through data collection, acting on the problem, and monitoring the results (Farrell, 2015, p. 19). Nevertheless, it is in this structured aspect that most traditional reflective frameworks have failed to provide opportunities for spontaneous reflection. A more productive form of reflective teacher development is facilitated when teachers can reflect flexibly with other professionals through nonhierarchical reflective dialogues. One way to provide such reflective opportunities is to have teachers learn a language themselves.

Teachers' second language learning experience has been used in the field of language teacher education as a tool to encourage more effective reflection (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001; Ellis, 2006; Lowe, 1987; McDonough, 2002; Ransdell, 1993). Ellis (2006) argued that teachers' second language learning experience is a valuable tool "to enable

trainees to see the learning process from the perspective of students and to integrate theoretical (received) and experiential knowledge" (p. 2), as well as to promote teachers' reflection on culture shock, and teaching styles and techniques. Similarly, Ransdell (1993) referred to teachers' second language learning experience as "a more dramatic eye-opener" (p. 40) in contrast to other types of teacher development, such as classroom work, journals, and conferences.

In addition, existing studies suggest that the role reversal from teacher to student that occurs when teachers learn a second language allows teachers to gain alternative views of their own teaching. McDonough (2002) described "the apparent dissonance between teachers' and learners' pedagogic value system" (p. 404). He explained the discrepant views of teachers and learners: "A learner's interpretation of classroom events is to some extent 'bottom-up,' responding to individual activities, whereas teachers will naturally approach a class with 'top-down' planning in mind" (Woods, as cited in McDonough, 2002, p. 410).

In other words, teachers' second language learning experiences are considered effective in raising teachers' awareness of daily classroom moments that are usually unexamined. Compared to using traditional structured reflection, we believe that having teachers engage in second language learning can be effective to reflect at a level that is valuable to each teacher-in-training.

An Inverted Curriculum

In order to investigate the potential of role reversal in promoting reflective teaching, we consulted previous studies on teachers' second language learning experience and incorporated role reversal into designing a teacher-training curriculum for NESTs. Ellis's study (2006) showed some possible limitations in designing a curriculum like this: It tends to "be short, based on formal class teaching at beginner level, conducted with purposes other than actually learning an L2, and posing little threat to the identity, academic success, or material advancement of the learner" (p. 2). Because of these limitations, creating a genuine learning context might be difficult, but that is always a challenge in institutional in-house teacher training. In addition, Lowe (1987) also conducted an experiment where teachers learned a foreign language and reflected on their experience in confidential diaries. His study illustrated some key factors in adopting teachers' second language learning experience as part of teacher training.

The first factor to consider is the choice of target language. In Lowe's (1987) experiment, Mandarin Chinese was taught to NESTs in London because of the language's "exotic" and "difficult" aspects (p. 89). However, compared to the ESL context of Lowe's study, the choice of target language in EFL settings should be much simpler. In order to develop a broader knowledge of the students, their hardships, and their perceptions of teaching techniques, the NESTs in EFL contexts should learn their learners' L1 (Ransdell, 1993). Another factor to consider is the kinds of tasks included in the training process. As mentioned earlier, conventional reflective tasks in teacher training tend to be solitary, as in Lowe's (1987) diary study, which could limit the trainee's opportunities for reflection. For more provocative reflection, collaborative reflections such as reflective discussions should be adopted. These considerations might make the language-learning experience more immediate, collaborative, and memorable for teachers-in-training.

With these two points in mind, we designed and conducted a language learning workshop in which we translated the materials and activities NESTs use to teach English. We called this curriculum the "inverted curriculum," as it reverses two aspects of the NESTs' teaching context: their role, from teacher to student, and the target language from their L1 (English) to their students' L1 (Japanese). With increased opportunities for spontaneous collaboration with other teachers-in-training and agency regarding the reflective practice as teachers-in-training, we attempted to create a holistic mode of reflective practice.

In order to evaluate the quality of reflection in the inverted curriculum, "three basic levels of reflection" that Farrell (2015) proposed were adopted. The first level, *descriptive reflection*, focuses on teacher skills that are usually involved in describing a situation or problem in the classroom. The second level, *comparative or conceptual reflection*, is the rationale for practice that involves thinking about a particular situation from different perspectives. The third level, *critical reflection*, is the examination of broad factors such as the socio-political, moral, and ethical results of practice (pp. 9-10). The following questions were investigated to evaluate the effectiveness of the inverted curriculum:

RQ1. In what ways did this workshop affect the participants' understanding of the linguistic and cultural differences between English and Japanese?

RQ2. To what degree did the participants' experience of the workshop affect their teaching?

Curriculum

Participants

The participants were NESTs teaching at a private university in Tokyo. The number of participants in the workshops varied from three to eight, and their nationalities were American, Australian, British, and Canadian. The total number of valid responses collected from the participants was four ($n = 4$), three from men and one from a woman.

Workshop

The inverted curriculum was designed to reflect the English Discussion Class (EDC) offered at the university. The EDC is one of the mandatory English classes for all 1st-year students at the university. Class size at the university is small, with seven to eight students, in order to maximize student-student interaction time. Students have opportunities to work on improving fluency, learn new language (see Table 1), practice the new language in pairs and in groups, and have two group discussions based on the topic of the homework reading in their textbook. The teachers teach the lessons following a unified curriculum that uses a textbook created at the university. The textbook includes materials designed for classroom activities as well as questions for the students to discuss in that particular lesson. There is an English-only policy in the classroom.

Table 1. Examples of New Language in the EDC and JDC Lessons: Opinions / 意見

EDC		JDC	
Asking	Sharing	意見を尋ねる	意見を述べる
What's your opinion...?	Personally speaking, I think...	(あなたの)考えは何(ですか)?	私は…と思います。
What do you think...?	I'm not sure, but I think...	皆さんはどう思いますか?	個人的には…と思います。

Note. EDC = English Discussion Class; JDC = Japanese Discussion Class.

The Japanese Discussion Class (JDC) mirrors the EDC in many ways. It follows a Japanese-only policy. Portions of the EDC textbook have been translated into Japanese so that the NESTs can learn the Japanese equivalents of the language items they teach their students in the EDC. One of the differences between the English textbook and the Japanese material is that the latter includes no homework reading passages. Instead, a vocabulary list consisting of topic-specific words and phrases considered useful for discussions is presented with usage examples from the homework reading in the EDC textbook. The vocabulary choice is based on words frequently used by the EDC students. A second difference is that there is only material for one group discussion, which is the same as one of the two group discussion question sets in the EDC textbook.

There are a few differences in how the JDC workshop is conducted compared to the EDC. One difference is the duration of the lessons: The EDC lessons are 90 minutes but those in the JDC are 60 minutes. The second difference is that the JDC consists of six sessions over a period of 3 months, unlike the EDC's 14 sessions. Each JDC session is coordinated, so the language being learned in the JDC is the same as what the NESTs are teaching in the EDC (see Table 2). The workshop is conducted after the NEST participants have experienced teaching the material a few times. The aim is for them to compare and contrast their own experience learning the new Japanese language with what they have observed of their students when they teach the same language items in the EDC. The third difference is that the last 10 minutes of the 60-minute workshop is allocated for reflective discussion. The NEST participants discuss what they thought of the workshop, about learning and using the language items in Japanese, and how they relate the JDC experience to what they observe of their EDC students. (See Appendix A for some examples of the questions that are asked.) This part of the JDC workshop is not part of the EDC curriculum.

Table 2. Lesson Schedule for EDC and JDC

Lesson No.	EDC	JDC
1	Introductory	-
2	New Language	New Language
3	New Language	New Language
4	Review	-
5	Test	-
6	New Language	New Language
7	New Language	New Language
8	Review	-
9	Test	-
10	New Language	New Language
11	New Language	New Language
12	Review	-
13	Test	-
14	Review	-

Note. EDC = English Discussion Class; JDC = Japanese Discussion Class.

Evaluation

Data Collection

In order to evaluate the success of the workshop we collected two types of data. Classroom observation notes were taken during the workshops and a questionnaire was conducted after all the sessions were finished. Both researchers were present in each workshop. One of us taught while the other took observation notes. Items such as what aspects of teacher talk the participants reacted to, and what language items the participants used during the workshop, were documented as much as possible on paper. The reflection sessions that were held during the last 10 minutes were recorded as part of the classroom observation notes.

After all six sessions were finished, a questionnaire containing 20 five-point Likert-scale statements and four open-ended questions was sent out to the participants to be completed electronically and returned to the researchers via email (Appendix B). Five statements asked about the participants' experience of the workshop from a student's perspective. Five asked about cultural aspects of communication. Ten statements asked about what the participants, as teachers, thought of the workshop itself and how it influenced how they prepared for, executed, and thought about their own teaching of the EDC.

Analysis

The Likert-scale responses were examined to identify if the participants had a positive attitude toward the JDC or not. Comments from classroom observation notes and the responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire were quantified, categorized, and analyzed using Farrell's (2015) three levels of reflection. The coding of categories was conducted by both of us. When we agreed on the theme of an entry, a label such as *realizations*, *practical*, and so forth was given. When we did not agree on the theme of an entry, a follow-up interview was conducted with the NEST participant to confirm what the participant meant.

Likert-Scale Responses

The statements in the questionnaire were evenly divided between three sections: student perspective, cultural aspects of communication, and influence on one's own teaching. Statements were written so that strong agreement was a positive response. In the student perspective section, 30% of the responses were *strongly agree*, 15% were *agree*, 20% were *neutral*, 30% were *disagree*, and 5% were *strongly disagree*. The cultural aspects of communication section had similar results with 35% of the responses *strongly agree*, 10% *agree*, 10% *neutral*, 30% *disagree*, and 15% *strongly disagree*. In the influence on one's own teaching section, 42.5% of the responses were *strongly agree*, 5% were *agree*, 2.5% were *neutral*, 5% were *disagree*, and 45% were *strongly disagree*. The pattern of responses to the third section was distinctly different than that to the first and second sections. The responses to the third section (statements 11 to 17; see Appendix B) were split evenly, with strongly agree and strongly disagree being selected by two participants each. Reasons for these results are explored in the classroom observation notes and responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Class Observation Notes and Open-Ended Questionnaire Responses

In order to better understand the participants' levels of reflection about an inverted curriculum, Farrell's (2015) three levels of reflection—descriptive reflection (the first level), comparative reflection (the second level), and critical reflection (the third level) — were employed to analyze the categorized and quantified statements from the classroom observation notes and responses from the open-ended section of the questionnaire. The first level of reflection occurred when a participant described a situation or problem in the classroom. The second level of reflection occurred when a participant looked at a particular event from different perspectives. The third level of reflection occurred when a participant examined a particular event from a broader perspective, which is the level of reflection often encouraged by scholars (Farrell, 2015).

The first question guiding the evaluation was "In what ways did the workshop affect the participants' understanding of the linguistic and cultural differences between English and Japanese?" There was one incident of reflection at the descriptive level, one at the comparative level, and six at the critical level. An example of a comment categorized as descriptive reflection came from Chris (all names are pseudonyms), who stated, "Yes, I think it was definitely helpful, especially with regard to how our students might manage conflict or group dynamics since this is one of the biggest differences in discourse styles." An example of reflection at the critical level was Jessie's reply to Question 4 of the questionnaire, "I think learning about cultural differences is vital for instructors to teach empathetically in Japan. Perhaps if instructors are teaching in their home countries, this is not as important."

The second question was "To what degree did the participants' experience of the workshop affect their current teaching?" There were 62 incidences of reflection at the descriptive level, 10 at the comparative level, and 47 at the critical level, with several categories occurring at each level of reflection. Usefulness was one such category. At the descriptive

level, when asked about the contents of the translated material one participant said, "The review of language items was very useful." At the comparative level, when asked how he felt about the workshop leaders walking around them to monitor their activities, one participant replied, "Being able to confirm vocabulary was useful." At the critical level, in answering Question 1 on the open-ended section of the questionnaire, Brett stated, "I feel a renewed belief in the use of important vocabulary for each lesson. By having key words on the board, as a student, I feel more confident and comfortable having that aid." This was reflection at the critical level, because he was thinking about how a method not commonly used by teachers in the EDC could be beneficial, based on his experience in the JDC.

Discussion

The analysis using three levels of reflection showed that the teachers-in-training reflected at the higher levels of reflection. Some of the responses implied both the benefits and the drawbacks of the inverted curriculum.

The class notes and responses from the participants illustrated the positive results of the interplay between their experience under the inverted curriculum and their teaching experience. First, teachers-in-training seemed to reflect critically and gain insight into linguistic and cultural differences between English (their L1) and Japanese (their students' L1). For example, most participants tended to mention factors that most language learners find challenging: written texts ("Written texts are overwhelming!"), learning about new vocabulary ("The JDC handout [especially the vocabulary and pre-set discussion questions] was very helpful for in-class activities"), nuance ("Students might leave uncertainty in new phrases or vocabulary. I didn't know the *yomigana* or meaning for function phrases and I didn't care"), and cultural or linguistic problems ("Yes, I think it was definitely helpful, especially with regard to how our students might manage conflict or group dynamics since this is one of the biggest differences in discourse styles").

In addition, the participants' positive and negative experiences as learners seemed to impact their actual teaching. During the reflective session, some participants mentioned that they had decided to lower their expectations and not require that students use a range of phrases: "I found that students tend to stick to one phrase, 'Does anyone want to comment?' for convenience [not because they did not learn other phrases properly]." Another participant commented that he had reevaluated the importance of wait time: "I needed more time to process ideas." One participant wrote that something that was not conventional in their teaching context was actually useful: "Vocabulary lists were definitely useful!"

On the other hand, the qualitative data also revealed several weaknesses of this workshop and the inverted curriculum. One of the biggest weaknesses seemed to be the voluntary nature of the workshop, which meant some participants could not receive the full benefit of the workshop. This led to unsuccessful reflection and mixed responses in the data. For instance, one participant responded in the questionnaire, "I think I missed too many of these to have much valuable to say on the topic." Also, logistically, there was difficulty in accommodating different proficiency levels and different levels of exposure to their learners' L1 culture. One participant who had more experience with Japan and Japanese wrote in the questionnaire, "I did not find these [discussions on intercultural differences in the workshop] as valuable as others might have because of my personal history of intercultural experiences." This suggests that participants should be streamed and their participation made mandatory to maximize the effectiveness of the workshop.

In addition, the mixed results from the questionnaire indicate that not all aspects of the curriculum were perceived to be effective. However, this could also mean that the participants had autonomy in selecting when to reflect on the inverted curriculum. The varied responses of the participants to the inverted curriculum could mean that each teacher-in-training reacted differently to his or her language learning experiences. From a facilitator's point of view, this uncertainty could be a problem. It is difficult to make conclusions from the mixed responses to the questionnaire. At the same time, this might indicate that the flexibility and freedom in the process of reflection are strengths of the curriculum.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the possibilities of an alternative second language teacher-training curriculum for NESTs in an EFL context. The curriculum uses the materials and activities NESTs use to teach English to their students, but reverses the teacher's daily experience in the classroom in two ways: the roles of teacher and student and the target language. We call this an inverted curriculum because it mirrors the experiences of their students. The findings show that reflection within the same teaching context after inversion of the teacher's language, the teacher's role, and the materials could become an alternative to existing reflective teacher training, if it is planned and implemented with careful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

One benefit of the inverted curriculum is that experience-based reflection encourages teachers-in-training to reflect at higher levels. Teachers-in-training can develop greater awareness of linguistic and cultural differences between their L1 and their students' L1 from more than their one perspective as a language teacher. Another benefit is that the

curriculum naturally supports reflective dialogue among teachers-in-training within a particular curriculum and context (Zeichner & Liston, 2014). Through collaborative dialogue, teachers can reexamine their teaching context more critically and act on their reflective experience.

One weakness of the inverted curriculum appears to be the uncertainty of measuring the effectiveness of reflective experiences due to its personal and reactive nature. Unlike other structured and solitary conventional reflective practices, such as observation, the inverted curriculum provides freedom for the participant to decide when and what to reflect on. This can be seen as flexibility within the curriculum, but it also exposes the difficulty in attaining the same quality of reflection for all teachers-in-training. In addition, in order to provide an appropriate second language learning experience, some form of class placement in terms of language proficiency, learning experiences, and length of stay in the country is recommended.

Future studies of inverted curricula would benefit from larger sample sizes and mandatory participation, both of which might provide a better understanding of its benefits and drawbacks. Future work could also focus on the effects that the inverted curriculum has on teachers' classroom practice such as collaborative reflection and the timing of reflective practice. Hopefully, this paper sheds light on collaborative reflection based on language teachers' language learning experiences.

Bio Data

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Appendix A
Questions Asked During Reflection Sessions

- How was the dialogue comparison experience? How did you feel?
- How did you find this week's function (learning it as a student)?
- (Did you notice any) unusual content from your class?
- Did you face any issues in teaching the language for this week?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of teaching this week's function phrases?
- How did you find the brainstorming activity?
- How did you feel about teachers walking around and intervening during the lesson?
- How did you felt about the structure (of the lesson)?
- How did you feel about having these phrases taken off of the whiteboard?
- If we had a second discussion, would you feel more conscious about remembering the phrases?
- How do you support your students?
- How did you feel about the "fluency position" within the lesson? (structure)

- What did you think of having a function review section in the material?
- When is the best time for reviewing previous functions?
- For certain topics, do you cover vocabulary? What do you think about it?
- Do you push your students to use check understanding ("How do you say...?")
- Is a vocabulary list a good idea?
- Any issues in this lesson?
- What were some challenges for this week's lesson?

Appendix B
Questionnaire
Part 1

Please highlight the one that best describes how you feel about the following statements.
1: Strongly agree, 2: Agree, 3: Neutral, 4: Disagree, 5: Strongly disagree

Questions	Answers
1. This workshop enabled me to understand how target phrases were useful for structuring a discussion in Japanese.	1 2 3 4 5
2. As a student, learning the differences in nuances of the different functions was useful to differentiate target phrases.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Thinking and learning about the differences in grammar and logical structure between English and Japanese was helpful in learning new target phrases.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I was able to recognize that some difficulties I experienced during the lessons were due to my lack of knowledge of the cultural background of English and Japanese.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I felt I could participate in discussions more effectively after understanding the different cultural backgrounds between English and Japanese.	1 2 3 4 5
6. This workshop was useful for understanding differences in how Japanese and English behave as a language.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I was able to understand differences in how equivalent target phrases were used in the two languages of English and Japanese.	1 2 3 4 5
8. I was able to adjust my language behavior to match how the target phrases would be used by native Japanese speakers.	1 2 3 4 5
9. I was able to adjust my non-content communication behaviors to that of native Japanese speakers (e.g. reactions, speaking turn initiation and timing).	1 2 3 4 5
10. I felt the formal forms of target phrases that were covered in each lesson would be useful for me to communicate with people outside the classroom in the future.	1 2 3 4 5
11. This workshop was useful to understand what students might be experiencing in my class.	1 2 3 4 5
12. This workshop influenced my lesson preparation in a positive way.	1 2 3 4 5
13. I was able to understand the difficulties students may be feeling in using target phrases.	1 2 3 4 5
14. I was able to understand the difficulties students may be feeling with vocabulary and grammar.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Experiencing function presentations in Japanese helped me understand how my students may feel during lessons.	1 2 3 4 5
16. After experiencing this workshop, I became more conscious about how I present target phrases in my own class.	1 2 3 4 5
17. After experiencing this workshop, I became more conscious about what and how I give feedback to my own students.	1 2 3 4 5
18. After experiencing this workshop, I understand the psychology of students better. For example, why they can be reticent or dominant during discussion.	1 2 3 4 5
19. This workshop enabled me to notice L1 transfer/influence in my Japanese students' typical misusage of English.	1 2 3 4 5
20. After experiencing this workshop, I was able to better foresee the cultural hindrances my students face.	1 2 3 4 5

Part 2

Please tell us your thoughts on the following questions.

A. When you faced situations that you thought were difficult at this workshop (if any) as a learner, did those situations match what you thought your students in your current class may find difficult? If yes, can you give some examples?

B. Can you think of some examples of how your experience as a language learner at this workshop influenced your (current) teaching, if any?

C. As a student, what helped you think and discuss in Japanese? Did you think the supplementary materials such as a vocabulary list and visual aids were useful?

D. What did you think about discussing intercultural differences during the workshop? Was it helpful for you? (e.g., learning Japanese / teaching English to native Japanese speakers)?