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"It is Easy to Fall into a Monotonous Routine": Reflections of an EFL Teacher in Central America

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study that examined the principles and practices of one novice English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher at a prominent English language institution in Central America. More specifically, this qualitative study sought to contribute to the discussion of the perceived interdependent influences of English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' thoughts, identities, and behaviours through five stages of self-reflection in Farrell's (2015) framework for reflective practice. The participant engaged in evidence-based reflective practice in order to subject his principles to critical analysis and interpretation expressed through his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. Overall, the findings suggest that the teacher's stated principles related to his philosophy, beliefs and theory converge with his classroom practices; however, areas of divergence were also observed. Results suggest the need for all EFL teachers to explore their principles in relation to their classroom practice through reflective practice so that they can make informed decisions about their practice.

Reflective practice has proliferated in recent times throughout various fields of professional practice and education as a mark of professional competence. Within different disciplines, however, what is understood by 'reflective practice' and how it should be implemented varies considerably. Thus, over the years 'reflective practice' has been called a "fuzzy concept" (Collin & Karsenti, 2011, p. 570) because of the plethora of approaches and frameworks that have (re)emerged since the mid 1980s (Farrell, 2018a,b). Although the concept has also gained

recognition in the field of TESOL as an essential component of language teacher education, scholars have continuously struggled to come to a consensus on how to implement or operationalize reflective practice for language teachers (Mann & Walsh, 2013). One problematic issue that Farrell (2019) has recently highlighted is that many of the frameworks that have been offered thus far limit reflection to a retrospective activity where the participants engage in answering questions about what has happened in their classrooms without much reference or awareness of the teacher who is doing the reflection. Such a focus on 'post-mortem reflection' according to Freeman (2016), "limits reflection to a process of problem solving rather than reflection to achieve self-awareness and understanding" (p. 201). Such a narrow, one-dimensional approach to reflection neglects the being or person who is teaching and engaging in reflection and has led to the separation of mind and body in many of these approaches and frameworks (Erlandson, 2006).

With the above in mind, Farrell (2015) developed a more holistic framework for reflective practice specifically for teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) that includes spiritual, moral, and emotional non-cognitive aspects of the inner life of teachers who are doing the reflection. Whereas many other approaches limit reflection to intellectual, cognitive, and meta-cognitive aspects of practice, Farrell's (2015) approach includes reflection on the teacher's identity through reflection on philosophy, a more heightened awareness of principles, intuition into appropriateness of lesson design through reflection on theory, self-monitoring of their teaching practices, and critical thinking skills to understand problems beyond teaching practice. This paper outlines and discusses a case study of an EFL teacher in a central American country using Farrell's (2015) framework to reflect on his practice.

Reflective Practice

In general education studies, reflective practice as Zwozdiak-Myers (2012, p. 3) has pointed out, is crucial to a teacher's development because it helps practitioners "to analyse and evaluate what is happening" in their lessons so that they can not only improve the quality of their instruction, but also provide better opportunities for their students to learn. Reflective practice in TESOL generally means that language teachers take on the responsibility of examining their professional practice, and their underlying philosophy, beliefs, and theories that shape that practice, both inside or outside the classroom, so that their professional practice can become personally meaningful to them (Farrell, 2015, 2018a,b). Such reflective practice offers a way into the "less accessible aspects of a teacher's work" according to Freeman (2016, p. 217). However, just as in the field of general education, in TESOL we still cannot agree "what it actually is and how it might be developed" (Walsh & Mann, 2015, p. 351), and additionally, we still cannot agree on what TESOL teachers should be reflecting on (Akbari, 2007). For example, many of these approaches are retrospective in nature and purport to offer a structured way for teachers to reflect on their practice by asking them to answer simple questions mostly focused on their teaching behaviors, but nothing about themselves as teachers (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019). Reflective practice is not just simply wondering about a situation or a means to emphasize power relations, it involves teachers gathering evidence about practice both inside and outside the classroom in their particular context (Farrell, 2015). Thus, a more holistic approach to reflective practice is necessary - where language teachers are considered whole people, and language teaching is multi-dimensional including reflection on the moral, ethical, and political aspects of practice. One such holistic approach that focuses reflective practice in

the field of TESOL for language teachers is Farrell's (2015) *framework for reflecting on practice*.

Framework for Reflecting on Practice in TESOL

The inspiration for Farrell's (2015) framework for reflective practice can be drawn back to the works of John Dewey and Donald Schön. Dewey (1933) recognized that teachers who do not reflect become slaves to routine as their decisions are made based on authority, tradition, and impulse. In order to overcome this, informed decision making from Dewey's (1933) point of view needed to be systematic and conscious. This rational approach leads to practice that is aware, developed, and open to growth which is similar to the evidence-based approach of Farrell's (2015) reflective practice framework. In the 1980's, reflection was used to prevent teacher burnout (Farrell, 2018a,b). Schön (1983, 1987) noted the importance of how professionals in the medical field think in action and that these implicit beliefs can only be inferred from observable actions – something which is also present in the framework for reflective practice outlined by Farrell (2015).

Farrell's (2015) framework acknowledges the inner life of teachers and thus includes the spiritual, moral and emotional non-cognitive aspects of reflection. Such an approach to reflective practice has benefits such as exploration of teacher identity through reflection on philosophy (Lim, 2011), heightened awareness of principles (Farrell & Bennis, 2013), intuition about the appropriateness of lesson design through reflection on theory (Wyatt, 2010), self-monitoring of their teaching practices (Fahim, Hamidi, & Sarem, 2013), and critical thinking skills to understand problems beyond teaching practice (Chi, 2010). By participating in reflective practice, teachers take responsibility for examining their practice so that it can be personally meaningful to them and they can reap benefits not available in top-down approaches. Farrell's (2015) evidence-based framework for teacher reflection includes five interconnected levels: philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. This framework involves teachers clarifying and understanding their principles, beliefs, values, and how these relate to their practice (Farrell, 2019) as well as, "enhancing subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, self-awareness, understanding of learners, curriculum and materials, career advancement, and language upgrading" (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019, p. 2).

Philosophy

The first stage of the framework, *philosophy*, examines the *teacher-as-person* because a teacher's basic philosophy has developed since birth. This stage can be considered a "window to the roots of a teacher's practice because a philosophy of practice means each observable behavior has a reason that guides it even if it is implicit" (Farrell, 2019, p. 84). By talking about past experiences that may have shaped their philosophy, teachers obtain self knowledge by reflecting on their background (i.e., heritage, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, family, and personal values) (Farrell, 2015). While teachers can simply write an in-depth autobiography, one way to engage teachers in this stage is through narrative frames where they tell a story of their experience or accounts of their life through prompts (i.e., I became a teacher because…). Narrative frames offer insight into the past "to uncover preconceived theories about teaching and learning" (Taggart & Wilson, 1998, p. 164) as well as to help second language teachers answer, "who am I?" through making sense of claims about identity. Philosophy includes the teacher in a personal manner because teaching is multidimensional as it matters who the teacher is.

Principles

The second stage, *principles*, encompasses a teacher's reflections of assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions about teaching and learning – *reflection-on-practice*. According to Farrell (2015), assumptions are ideas that we accept as being true despite a lack of evidence. Although assumptions are somewhat difficult to articulate, it can be described as having an intuition about what makes 'good' or 'bad' teaching. To access assumptions, teachers can reflect on teacher *maxims* as these guide instructional decisions (i.e., maxim of empowerment – give learners the control). In contrast to assumptions, beliefs are accepted to be true by an individual, can be unconsciously held, originate from a number of sources, and may or may not converge with practice (Phipps & Borg, 2009). To articulate beliefs, teachers can use images, metaphors, or choose statements that best reflect their beliefs about teaching and learning. Clandinin (1986) noted that metaphors can be valuable clues to the way teachers view teaching and a guide to the way they act in the classroom. When teachers interact with this stage of reflective practice, they have an opportunity to explore whether their values are transferable to practice.

Theory

The third stage requires teachers to reflect on theories that underlie their practice, whether those are based on hunches, teacher training, books, journals, etc., to see how they translate in the classroom. A theory is "something we use to give understanding and attempts to answer the question 'why?' in order to increase knowledge of practice and realign thoughts regarding this" (Farrell, 2015, p. 67). At this stage, the teacher focuses on how they plan their lessons, more specifically, their planning (i.e., backwards, forwards, or central planning) and choice of activities, techniques, and methods. By reflecting on *theory*, one is able to label what happens in the classroom and understand how it influences the role of both the teacher and students during a lesson.

Practice

The fourth stage, *practice*, is what constitutes the tip of the iceberg and examines observable actions while teaching. This stage is strongly connected to the first three stages as development of awareness of the convergence or divergence between belief and practice is the start of "a process of reducing the discrepancy between what we do and what we think we do" (Knezevic, 2001, p. 10). The convergence of beliefs and practice can be impacted by situational constraints, experience, changes in beliefs preceding changes in practice, incompatible propositions, conflicting beliefs and tensions between core and peripheral beliefs (Breen et al., 2004; Fang, 1996; Phipps & Borg, 2006). Classroom observations can be used to compare what a teacher says they do and what they actual do using category instruments, or audio and video recordings. This stage of practice can bring to light the reasons for convergence or divergence by helping teachers draw connections between their philosophy, principles, theory, and practice to develop the ability to reflect during a lesson (reflection-in-action), after a lesson (reflection-on-action) and reflect prior to teaching (reflection-for-action).

Beyond Practice

The final phase, *beyond practice* or *critical reflection*, explores the moral, political, emotional, ethical, and social issues that impact teachers practice both inside and outside the classroom. These issues are not examined much in TESOL; however, teachers deal with them on a daily basis. In fact, "TESOL classrooms are embedded in and reflect important institutional, societal,

and global discourses in subtle and nuanced ways" (Rich & Troudi, 2006, p. 616). All teachers hold beliefs about their work, students, subject matter, and roles and responsibilities (Pajares, 1992), however this stage of reflection helps teachers understand the deeply-rooted power dynamics in education and question beliefs which may have been externally imposed (Farrell, 2015). With the knowledge gained from this stage, teachers can "contribute to social change for the betterment of students, colleagues, community, and society at large" (Farrell, 2015, p. 86) as well as reflect well beyond classroom teaching practice (i.e., textbook, syllabus, curriculum, working conditions).

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach in order to gain insight about how reflective practice affects novice teachers' experiences in Central America. An exploratory case study approach (Merriam, 2009) was the chosen research method due its consistency with the descriptive and heuristic nature of reflective practice (Maxwell, 1992) as well as the ability to shed light on complexities of teacher reflections due to the rich contextualization within a specific population and setting. Although generalizability of case study research to the general population can be difficult (Mackey & Gass, 2015), it has been successfully applied by other TESOL scholars (e.g., Lamb, 2007) and researchers investigating reflective practice (e.g., Farrell & Kennedy, 2020; Farrell & Yang, 2019) as those using Farrell's (2015) framework (e.g., Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Farrell & Macaplinac, 2021).

Participant & Context

The participant in the study, Felix (a pseudonym), a male English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, had been teaching in a prominent institution in Central America (for anonymity we will not name the country) for two years. Felix always wanted to be a teacher since he was a child and completed a bachelor's degree in English teaching. EFL teachers are contracted to teach up to three, three-hour length classes, every day except Sunday. Classes typically had ten students and were taught fully in English, occurring up to three times a week depending on the level and course. He expressed that he would love to teach for the rest of his life but that it depended on job security, and the stability of the local economy.

The study commenced in 2020 shortly after the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Felix had already been teaching in traditional classrooms. Upon receiving news of government-mandated school closures, Felix and his colleagues transitioned all instruction to synchronous online learning beginning in March 2020. Students in existing classes were expected to participate in virtual classes from their home computers using a video conference platform for the remainder of the academic term.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data collection was one-month long and included transcribed semi-structured interviews and follow-up interviews, written reflection tasks, and virtual classroom observations in line with the reflective framework (Farrell, 2015). A total of six interviews were conducted: one pre-interview to clarify basic information and five follow-up interviews following each stage of reflective practice framework. All interviews were conducted and recorded via zoom technology and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and then transcribed (Maxwell, 1992). In addition, three different classes per week were observed and recorded on zoom and each class was later transcribed. Felix also completed 6 written reflection tasks that explored his

philosophy, principles, theory, and beyond practice. Written work was then emailed to the researchers and later used as a springboard for questions to be asked in follow-up interviews.

Data analysis consisted of seeking responses to Felix's reflections on his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. Data analysis started with inductive discovery to primarily deductive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009) while coding. In order to make sense of the data, recurring patterns were then grouped and compared against the research question. Member checking was used as a means of confirming the validity of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this stage of the process, the findings were shared with the participant to allow him to confirm or refute the accuracy of the data reported in each section of the findings.

Findings

The findings are presented as answers to the main research question: What are one novice EFL teacher's reflections as expressed through his philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice?

Philosophy

This philosophy section examines the findings from Felix's reflection on the self. Overall, Felix describes himself as an extrovert and empathetic due to past experiences. Felix remembers that as a child he loved explaining things to his mother as a technique to study. He believes that this helps him as a teacher now because he has "developed a lot of patience" to describe concepts to a diverse set of students in different ways until they understand them. Felix described a positive role model during high school. He said that he developed a sense of "availability and openness for students to come to you and talk to you about who they are" because of a teacher that cared for him when a close family member passed away. This moment was critical for him, as it gave him the strength to enroll in university and complete a degree in English Language Teaching.

Principles

Table 1. Felix's Principles

Theme	Principles
Language Teaching	• Teachers give 'tools' to students to be independent.
	• Teacher is a 'doctor.'
Language Learning	• Students are 'driving school trainees'
	• Use of L1 should be a last resource.
Teaching L2 Speaking	• Rule-based approach (i.e., correcting oral errors and teaching lesson explaining why depending on the level).
	• Skills-based approach (i.e., follow language patterns of native-speakers but retain accent for identity).

As summarized in Table1 above, Felix expressed various principles, the first of which is related to language teaching where he said he believes that teachers should "give students tools to be independent and capable when their teacher is not around." Felix said that he is aware that "the teaching process and learning process are different" which means that "you can teach but it doesn't mean that your student is learning." Successful language teaching according to Felix, involves "not only transmitting content, but helping students find answers when they are not explicit." Felix described himself metaphorically as a 'doctor' "with patients who are healthy, happy with the attention they received, and aware that they have to take the pills (do practice, study) to be healthier." When asked to elaborate on his choice of metaphor, Felix expressed that "some teachers believe they are good teachers because their students have to struggle a lot to pass the course" but in the same way "doctors are not happy because some patients die."

The second theme that emerged were principles about language learning in which Felix expressed that "students are like driving students who want to learn techniques, theory and strategies necessary to drive safely." Felix views language learning to be synonymous with taking risks; he remarked:

> *I've told them guys you have a Ferrari but you are just taking this Ferrari to the supermarket and I need you to take it to the track and run. Cause you have the structure, you have the vocabulary, you have the grammar but yet every time you you're hesitating. I need you to trust your Ferrari. They tell me okay teacher I know that's true.*

Felix also expressed that he "feels guilty" regarding the use of L1 in an L2 classroom. L1 is a "last resource" in Felix's classes because he "tries every other possibility and if at the very end the students are not getting the idea, I'll use the L1." Although there is "initial resistance" from students, Felix expressed that it is "totally normal that you'll feel lost like with any other new thing that you learn." Overall, Felix "doesn't feel comfortable using the L1 because it gives students the sensation that it is okay to translate" which inhibits the language learning process.

Another theme that emerged were principles related to teaching L2 speaking. Using a skills-based approach, Felix said that he encourages his learners to follow the patterns of native-speakers; he stated:

> *There have been some situations in which students say teacher why do we say 'proud of you,' teacher you told us we always need a subject why does 'proud of you' not have a subject? I tell them yes guys the structure is I am proud of you but, and then I start looking for examples, you can see here, you can see here, here, here. Like try to learn from those who use the language.*

Felix explained that although he uses a skills-based approach, he believes that his learners should not strive to be like a native-speaker or as he put it: "sound standardized." He noted instead that learners should, "accept having an accent and being choppy because the purpose is to communicate in English, express yourself, and write professional emails."

Felix mentioned that he adapts a rule-based approach depending on the level he is teaching. With lower levels, Felix said that he hesitates to correct oral errors because he thinks that "they haven't internalized the structure and don't understand it," whereas with higher levels he said that he is "sure they will understand their mistakes." Felix finds reflected that he finds it useful to notice trends of mispronunciation and then "stop and take 30 minutes to tell them they have

been making mistakes." Overall, these approaches are important to Felix because he realizes that "English is a language with so many rules and exceptions to pronunciation."

Theory

Felix reflected on his theories of teaching in the third stage of Farrell's (2015) framework by describing his teacher planning approaches and recalling critical incidents experienced in his classroom. According to Felix, his theories about lesson planning have changed dramatically over the past two years. He said that he used to believe that plans were like a "recipe" that you had to follow strictly in order to get the same outcome. Recently, however, he expressed that "they have been humans for longer than they have been students" which resulted in him catering lessons based on student needs. When asked to elaborate on this, Felix noted that he experienced a critical incident while his lesson was observed by administration of the institution. Felix handed in his lesson plan but quickly realized that the class he was teaching was after lunch, the weather was gloomy, and many of the students were "sleepy" and would not benefit from the writing exercise he planned. He abandoned the plan to play charades instead because "maybe in the future they won't remember the sentence they were supposed to write but they'll remember the meaning of something from charades." He described that his lesson planning or "recipes" are now more flexible; he continued:

> *In the moment I changed the recipe, I practically destroyed the other recipe and created a new one like right in the moment but the materials, the ingredients, were the same. And I think that the outcome was better.*

Practice

As mentioned in the methodology section above, or the practice stage of reflection three lessons all three-hours in length were observed. All lessons, topics, vocabulary, and grammar structures are predetermined on a course syllabus given by the institution. The teacher is required to cover the syllabus but has the freedom to design activities to present the material. Observations of Felix were done in his level 5 and level 9 classes. Topics in the level 5 classes included 'saving the environment' and survival skills with a focus on vocabulary and grammar structures such as 'I wish', and conditionals. In the level 9 class, the topic was 'sustainability' with a focus on vocabulary and speaking skills such as 'stating a position.'

Table 2. Felix's Observed Practices

Observed Practices	**Lesson 1** (Level 2)	**Lesson 2** (Level 12)	**Lesson 3** (Level 12)
• Follows lesson plans	**N**	**N**	**N**
• Gives feedback to students	**O**	**O**	**O**
• Corrects errors	**O**	**O**	**O**
• Clearly states instructions	**O**	**O**	**O**
• Is available to students	**O**	**O**	**O**
• Engages in informal interactions with students	**N**	**O**	**O**
• Teaches language through repetitive drills	**N**	**N**	**N**

Note: **O**: Observed, **N**: Not observed

As Table 2, above, indicates during his lessons Felix was observed to have diverged from the stated original lesson plans and activities in each of the three lessons observed, and he said most of this was related to timing. For example, during the third observed lesson, Felix realized he forgot to take up feedback as a group after a grammar activity. When asked what change he would make if he could do the lesson again, he said that he would dedicate more time to see their examples but that he was under time pressure to have students complete their satisfaction surveys. During the second lesson, when asked to reflect on his motivation behind letting some activities run longer than planned, Felix said that giving his students more time to speak allows for more contact with the language. Most notably, Felix predicted that he would diverge from his lesson plan in terms of time before observations took place. When asked how his first lesson went, Felix commented as follows:

> *I am happy but at the same time, it's like I put the mixture in the oven and tomorrow I am going to get the result. Tomorrow I am going to see how well it cooked and does it make sense. I need to see the final result to see if I'm satisfied. But so far I felt like they had a good time, I felt that they had enough contact with new language and they asked me questions. They were in contact with new structures and new language and I think that's something that is useful. Did you see my prediction was right? We didn't have time.*

Felix was also observed correcting errors in each class as well as providing positive feedback and engaging informal interactions and making himself available to his students. Felix said that his motto for his students is that they are 'humans before they are students' and strives to show empathy by getting to know them. Felix uses various classroom management strategies in order to make himself available. When asked to reflect on how he views his students as humans, he mentioned a moment in the higher-level class when a student emailed him asking for the recording of a lesson due to sickness in the family. Felix is aware that many people are going through many changes in their lives due to the Pandemic just as he has and therefore willingly sends lessons under special circumstances. Further, Felix's motto is demonstrated through a high number of questions unrelated to the lesson. For example, at the beginning of every lesson as students enter the Zoom session, Felix asks each of them how they are as well as other personalized questions regarding the individual lives of students. When asked to reflect on themotivation behind this, he commented as follows:

> *Well, I want them to know that I notice they're here. It's not just that you connect and the teacher continues. Yeah, I know that you're here. Cause that's something that I would do in a physical classroom right?*

Indeed, Felix also said that he views himself as a human before he is a teacher, and in the same way he views his students as humans dealing with many aspects of life. Felix highly values creating a friendly relationship with his students and as a result bases many of his teaching decisions on the phrase "if I were a student, I would like xxx." He also believes that some teachers 'underestimate how important good rapport is' and that his classroom is a 'safe environment for students to share who they are and their opinions.' When asked to elaborate on how he tries to be empathetic, Felix stated:

> *I have sometimes found myself in a situation where a very good person is not being the best student he/she can be, and I discovered that sitting with them and explaining why the results were not the desired ones was very effective at the time. Students would listen*

more carefully to somebody they identify with, somebody who listens to them, somebody who shows them their learning is important.

Beyond Practice

For this level of beyond practice, Felix explored how he perceives power dynamics

of Central American society related to his life as a language teacher. Felix explained that Latin American society pushes people to finish school as fast as possible but, those that complete school are "discriminated and bullied" for being successful. A unique challenge as a teacher in Latin America for Felix is to "make it clear that education is one of the most powerful tools" because he "really cares about how much students need language to improve in our competitive society." When asked to elaborate, Felix explained as follows:

> *So on one hand, be the first, finish sooner than the rest but on the other hand if you do it you're going to be bullied because you don't go with the flow. But at the same, students have to be the best, the first, to graduate as soon as possible even if you're not mature enough to work. You're going to graduate, you're going to start, you're going to go to university, and you need to look for a promotion. But what If you don't like to study or what if you just wanna learn English and not go to a call center but to travel abroad.*

Although Felix recognizes that being bilingual in a Central American society can create better job opportunities, he also recognizes that English language learning has become advertised on television as "come study here and you will speak in six months." This rhetoric in society is problematic for Felix because he doesn't view the pathway between language learning and success as so linear. For example, "you can get 100s but you cannot lie to an ear that doesn't understand," meaning that language learning should not focus solely on grades. Overall, Felix found that reflecting on power dynamics in regard to society is "a very important tool" because teachers "are not totally ignorant" and who he is, influences how he teaches.

Overall, the findings from this study indicate that Felix's principles about language teaching and learning mainly converged with his classroom practices despite transitioning to an online learning environment. There could be several reasons for this convergence. Felix's principle regarding language learning is to prioritize student needs and ultimately create a student-centered environment. Felix said that he attributes this to his upbringing. Felix suffered the loss of a family member while studying English and recalled a positive role model who looked at him "as a human before a student." In terms of theory, Felix plans for the role of adapting teaching approaches to match student needs. For example, Felix adapted activities through 'NearPod' because he said, "it gives my students the ability to personalize characters." More specifically, regard for student needs were demonstrated in his practice as it was observed that he makes himself available even when in an online environment. Felix monitored the 'call' notification in zoom while students were in 'break-out rooms' to ensure all questions were answered. During the beyond practice stage, Felix reflected on how the transition to an online classroom affected his students. Felix said that he was initially stressed and received "many emails from students regarding technological problems" which he realizes is "not their fault." Despite these environmental changes, Felix's principles about language teaching and learning converged with his practice due to his upbringing, and personal experiences which resulted in building rapport with students online.

While there were consistencies between reflections with actual practice, there were also areas of divergence. Felix's principles regarding teaching L2 speaking diverged from his classroom practices. Although Felix said that he believes in not focusing too much on grammar when teaching L2 speaking, it was observed during two lessons that Felix showed a photo with the structure of the target grammar topic and did not follow-up with functionally contextualized use of the structure. When asked if he would make any changes to the lesson, Felix commented that "I think they got to interact with the grammar in a meaningful way" and this is influenced by standardized exams that require students to know certain grammar topics at each level. An area of convergence is with regards to L2 speaking. Felix believes in using a skills-based approach to teach speaking. In all three lessons, it was observed that Felix made connections to how native English speakers would say something. For example, Felix commonly asks students to refer to their "pronunciation dictionary" in their heads to consider things like intonation and connected speech which he says is in line with the institution/s motto to "bring language to life."

Envoi: Felix Reflects

The purpose of encouraging EFL teachers to reflect on their practice is *not to look for best practice*; rather it is to get a holistic view of oneself as a TESOL professional through the lens of the five-stage framework for reflecting on practice. Felix can use the results of his reflections to make his *own* informed decision on his future practices. Felix made the following comments after reading the above findings:

> *In this job, it is easy to fall into a monotonous routine in which classes tend to be the same or the work itself seems repetitive. Reflecting, stopping from time to time, and thinking twice about what is being done can have a powerful effect on how teaching and learning English is.*

Conclusion

Similar to the use of the framework in the case studies outlined in the work of Farrell and Kennedy (2019), and Farrell and Macaplinac (2021), we also took a deductive approach to reflecting on practice by encouraging Felix to reflect from a theory-into-practice and beyond mode, or starting from stage/level 1, philosophy through the different stages to stage/level 5, beyond practice. Other researchers and teachers may want to use a practice-into-theory approach to see if the reflections may differ. Overall, Felix's reflections through the framework for reflecting on practice (Farrell 2015) have confirmed that his principles about language teaching and learning mainly converged with his classroom practices despite having to transition to an online learning environment in the middle of the semester. Felix can use these findings as a means to make more informed decisions about his practice rather than following hunches not based on any concrete evidence. As Felix himself noted the value of reflection after seeing his findings:

> *I absolutely took advantage of the reflective character of the meetings, the questions, the answers. I could see myself reflecting on my teaching during the week between one session and another, and that made me realize aspects of my work that sometimes can be easy to forget.*

Though generalization is always difficult from case studies such as this, there is every reason to believe that readers may find much of what is discussed here has relevance for their particular

contexts, practice and reflections. We leave the last words to Felix: “I think more reflective practices could be very educational for teachers to think over what they do and how they do it.”

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