

INTRODUCTION

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causa

Vergil

At the end of the seventeenth century Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote *Hagakure – the code of the samurai*. It was a manual, which consisted of a series of short anecdotes and reflections for the samurais. Three centuries later the book was translated into English. One of the entries in that book reads:

A certain swordsman in his declining years said the following: “In one’s life, there are levels in the pursuit of study. In the lowest level, a person studies but nothing comes of it, and he feels that both he and others are unskillful. At this point he is worthless. In the middle level he is still useless but is aware of his own insufficiencies and can also see the insufficiencies of others. In a higher level he has pride concerning his own ability, rejoices in praise from others. This man has worth. In the highest level a man has the look of knowing nothing. These are the levels in general. But there is one transcending level, and it is the most excellent of all. This person is aware of the endlessness of entering deeply into a certain Way and never thinks of himself as having finished. He truly knows his insufficiencies and never thinks that he has succeeded. Throughout your life advance daily, becoming more skillful than yesterday, more skillful than today. This is never-ending” (Tsunetomo 1671).

These words may be considered as an interesting example of the seventeenth century reflective approach. What is more, they sounded very similar to words of Rogers (1969: 104), who said that: “The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure; that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security”. However, those words were said three centuries later. Dakowska (1999) said that the process of language teaching and language learning in school conditions cannot be treated only as a sphere

of practical activity but should also be valued as an object of reflection for cognitive reasons. Every learning experience should be seen within the context of helping learners to develop a sense of personal identity and making students aware of the future goals, i.e. learning should be *personalized* as far as possible. In other words, teachers in modern classrooms are responsible for identifying the individual learner's needs and understanding the ways in which students make sense of the world. At the same time, in order to become self-actualizing, learners should be helped and encouraged to make their own choices on to what and how to learn. Humanistic education starts with the idea that every individual student is unique in his or her behavior and it strives to help students become more like themselves and less like each other (Hamachek 1977).

The traditional understanding of teaching as a rather passive *transmission of knowledge* or *providing* the students with information, explaining grammar structures and vocabulary, which is still present in some language teachers' minds, today seems to be highly inadequate in the case of cognitive concept of psycholinguistics. Language acquisition is realized in the natural context as well as in the educational context, mainly through the process of language communication. The fact that the language acquisition happens in formal conditions does not make it an artificial process but only cultivated. Cultivation means taking care of, assisting and eliminating obstacles for the natural development. Its main goal is to help the students to survive in a foreign language environment. For the teacher it means adopting the role of the *leader*, who should be understood as someone who has the vision of the future, and who can convince the group that some actions are necessary in order to reach the anticipated goal.

Assuming such a role, the teacher should gain awareness of the global character of the enterprise, foresee the future actions, precisely understand the steps which are necessary for achieving the goal as well as to present the way he/she had taken before (Dakowska 2001). Stevick (1980) believes that it is essential for teachers to develop reflective awareness by taking into consideration what goes inside and between their students. He advises teachers to get to know their students' psychology, treating each of them as an ordinary person, a cordial, interested fellow human being, since by doing so they will learn about their students' attitudes to learning. This will allow teachers to modify their teaching appropriately. Stevick also recognizes that people often learn best when they have some control over, and input into, their own learning.

One of the main goals of the contemporary education should be the facilitation of change and learning. In the modern classroom *learning how to learn* is more important than *being taught* by a teacher who unilaterally decides what should be taught and learnt. Such an approach towards education creates new demands for modern classroom teachers. It requires from them to become real facilitators of learning, and one can only facilitate by establishing an interpersonal relationship with the learner. Teachers, in order to be facilitators, must be real and genuine, discarding masks of superiority and omniscience. Teachers must also have genuine trust, acceptance, and approval of the student, as a worthy, valuable, ready to cooperate individual. Contemporary teachers need to develop *reflective awareness* of themselves, and to communicate openly and emphatically with their students. They need to become reflective practitioners. Such teachers will not only understand themselves better but will also be effective teachers, who, having set the stage and context for learning, will succeed in the goals of education.

Cruickshank (1981: 4) defines reflective teacher as: “the teacher’s thinking about what happens in classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims; he sees it as means to provide students with an opportunity to consider the teaching event thoughtfully, analytically and objectively”. Zeichner and Liston (1985) propose a different perspective. A reflective teacher is defined as one who assesses the origins and consequences of his or her work at all levels. In teaching, if the discrepancy between the teacher’s expressed beliefs and the ways in which that teacher acts professionally is large, learners are likely to receive confused and confusing messages. In an effort to improve teachers’ critical self-awareness in this respect, some educational theorists introduced the notion of *critical reflection* (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985).

Schon (1983: 49) draws a distinction between *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on action* and he contends that “each individual’s knowledge is mainly tacit and implied by the ways in which they act, such that our knowing is in our action”. We do not necessarily have to think about how to act appropriately as teachers in any situation before we do so. When we ‘think on our feet’ or make spontaneous decisions about how to act, then we can be seen as reflecting-in-action, which in turn gives rise to the application of ‘theories-in-action’. Such theories underpin each professional’s own unique way of working rather than externally imposed knowledge. The main task of the reflective practitioner is to develop his or her reflective awareness by

such means as continuous reflection on action, raising questions and evaluating the emerging theories with the use of personal experience and the reflections of other teachers.

In this case, what is needed is a reorientation of teachers' beliefs and roles. First, teachers need to become effective mediators. Second, they need to be able to take on such roles as advisors, facilitators, consultants, co-communicators, partners and joint problem solvers. Third, teachers need to become aware of the value of learning strategies, which proved to be an effective means for developing students' autonomy. When incorporating critical thinking into the classrooms, it is important for teachers to focus not only on helping students become more aware of information but also on becoming reflective participants in a global partnership of involvement in seeking solutions. Sometimes teachers use different teaching methods and think that they are therefore employing different classroom practices. At the same time their actual classroom practices reflect a pool of common instructional behaviors (Richards 1990: 119). This may imply that teachers' beliefs about the nature of language and language learning are of primary importance. However, presenting learners with a set of language training materials and making them practice various learning strategies is not sufficient enough to raise their awareness. As Bruner (1966: 53) writes: "Instruction is a provisional state that has its object to make the learner or problem-solver self-sufficient. Otherwise the result of instruction is to create a form of mastery that is contingent upon the perpetual presence of a teacher".

The lack of reflective awareness among teachers in the time of greater responsibility shift from teachers to students may be a very serious factor contributing to the failure of effective learning. Sometimes, even teachers who are aware of the ongoing changes refuse to change their teaching routines. As Appel (1995: xiv) writes: "An emphasis on change does not necessarily combine well with one on practice. The practicing teacher's resistance to educational change has often been the subject of complaint". The problem may be even bigger taking into consideration the fact that many teachers are often convinced that they are 'doing their job'. There is a difference between: 'I do not know' and 'I think I know'. If the teachers agree to submerge into the system, if they consent to being defined by others' views of what they are supposed to be, they give up the freedom to see, to understand, and to signify for himself/herself. If they are immersed and impermeable, they can hardly stir others to define themselves as individuals. If on the other hand, the teach-

ers are willing to create a new perspective on what they have habitually considered real, the teaching may become the project of a person vitally open to the students and the world. The teachers will be continuously engaged in interpreting the reality forever new, feeling more alive than they ever have before.

The main aim of this thesis is to rectify the problem of reflective awareness deficit among language teachers through a thorough analysis and description of the information gathered from the entries in the dialogue journals, which were used as a means of collecting data during the study. An attempt will be made to determine, whether, and to what extent, the dialogue journal writing influences the teachers' reflective development. An additional attempt will be made to examine which elements of the classroom interaction are influenced and which are ignored by teachers during the process of reflective development through journal writing. The implications will be utilized in assessing the effectiveness of dialogue journals as an effective means of lyceum teachers' reflective development. Assuming that most teachers have never tried to reflect with the use of dialogue journal, additional goal of the following dissertation is to present the teachers with the procedures behind the journal writing, and, by doing so, encourage them to try journal writing as one of the effective means of developing reflective awareness.

The present volume consists of four chapters, the first three of which provide the relevant theoretical background and the last presents and discusses the findings of a study carried out in the context of Polish educational context among foreign language teachers from secondary schools. Chapter One, attempts to present the changes that occurred in the roles performed by language teachers through history of language teaching. Additionally, readers are presented with the shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness. Focal point of Chapter One is occupied by roles played by teachers in the contemporary classroom. The predominant concern of Chapter Two is an attempt to describe teachers and the process of teaching. This rather lengthy chapter begins with detailed description of various models of language teacher education. It is followed by sections devoted to teacher's beliefs concerning learners, learning, language teaching and themselves. The successive parts of the second chapter are entirely devoted to various decisions teachers make in their everyday work. One of the sub-chapters includes description of good language teacher with all the characteristics. Subsequent sections present the characteristics of teacher's motivation to teach and the negative

outcome of teaching, professional burnout. The final sub-chapter deals with the issues related to professional development. Chapter Three explores the process of becoming reflective teacher. Chapter Three includes sections devoted to various means that can be used in developing reflectivity, including action research, observation or journal. The chapter closes with issues related to journal writing such as reasons for keeping journals, journal writing skills and strategies and types of journal writing. Chapter Four reports the results of a study which focuses on the use of teaching journals as a means of exploring teaching practices and developing reflective awareness in teaching. The study was conducted among language teachers from secondary schools in Konin. The subsequent section of this chapter includes additional conclusions and suggestions for further research. Due to the author's long teaching experience and the setting in which the research project was conducted all the pedagogic proposals are primarily meant to apply to the development of reflective development.