Teacher Autonomy and Professional Teacher Development:

Exploring the Necessities for Developing Teacher Autonomy in EFL

Japanese Contexts

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine how EFL Japanese teachers can develop teacher autonomy. Teacher autonomy is related to various components including both individual teacher's psychological factors such as motivation, stress, or job dissatisfaction and social factors which include school systems or educational policies provided by the government. Likewise, working time, workload and wage have affected teacher autonomy (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). In order to achieve the purpose of the study, this paper will first define what 'teacher autonomy' is and then explore what components are included within the concept. Also, it will discuss how teacher autonomy can be fostered from both viewpoints of career-long English language learners and professional teacher development. Finally, this study will provide some suggestions for developing teacher autonomy. The study is researched from a micro aspect, meaning that it focuses on what EFL Japanese teachers can do in their given contexts.

Key words: teacher autonomy; professional teacher development; EFL Japanese contexts

English language teaching (ELT) in Japan has been gradually changing over the past five years. With a goal, set by the Ministry of Education, of 'fostering Japanese who can use practical English', the focus of ELT has shifted from teaching the grammatical aspects to developing communicative language proficiency. However, there are many teachers who apply traditional approaches such as Grammar-Translation Method or Audiolingual Method into their own contexts, because the fact remains that grammatical knowledge of English is a key component to passing entrance examinations. From this viewpoint, students are motivated to study English by memorizing as many vocabulary items and grammatical points as possible, not by developing communicative language ability, because receiving a better test score is a shortcut to being accepted into better schools and at the same time, it is an efficient way to survive in society.

The fact is that many teachers struggle with their given situations. Some teachers have a dilemma between what they want to teach and what they have to teach; other teachers are irritated by the situation in which they want to devote their own time to exploring and developing their teaching but they cannot. This is due to their heavy workload, which is often directly unrelated to teaching English such as coaching a baseball team in school, participating in regular teacher's meetings, or monitoring students to maintain school discipline. Still others struggle with serious gaps between the goals of ELT and the students' needs of language learning. Likewise, it is true that language teachers must teach English following both a national curriculum and school policies. In these contexts, how can language teachers maintain and develop their motivation to teach? How can language teachers teach the English effectively to achieve the goal in ELT? Ultimately, how can language teachers foster teacher autonomy under those dilemmas?

This paper describes teacher autonomy from two aspects: developing teacher autonomy as continuous English language learners; and fostering teacher autonomy as professional teacher development.

Definition of Teacher Autonomy

The concept of teacher autonomy in second and foreign language teaching is comparably new, and has a broad meaning. The theory of teacher autonomy which, in general, involves a high degree of abstraction, may intersect with the definition of learner autonomy which is generally situated within a specific context of 'what I am doing and why I am doing so' (Benson, 2002).

The fundamental perspective of teacher autonomy is, as Shaw (2002) defined, "the capacity to take control of one's own teaching" (p. 2). Likewise, Little and Tort-Moloney have considered teacher autonomy to be a "teacher's capacity to engage in self-directed teaching" (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 1). In other words, teacher autonomy refers to the 'capacity' to manage one's own teaching. However, the concept of teacher autonomy varies depending on researchers. There are two different dimensions of the concept: teacher autonomy refers to freedom or isolation from any powers from others; and autonomy implies interaction, negotiation, and collaboration.

Little has stated "essentially, autonomy is a capacity-for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action" (as cited in Benson, 2002, p. 2). Benson's definition of teacher autonomy has referred to "right to freedom from control" (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 1). In other words, the first dimension is to regard autonomy as being independent of control by others. In contrast, the second aspect includes the notion of 'interdependence' and the social significance. Holliday (2005) used the term, 'social autonomy' to argue the significance of language teachers being constantly critical and aware of the social influences and implications of what they do. Smith (2003) also argued the necessity of collaboration, such as sharing ideas or discussing problems with one's peers. The definition of teacher autonomy, in detail, was described in the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) conference held in 2001: "… teacher autonomy is a socially constructed process, where teacher support and development groups can act as teachers-learner pools of diverse knowledge, experience, equal power and autonomous learning" (as cited in Barfield et al., 2002, p. 5). That is to say, collaboration, negotiation, and interaction are the essence of teacher autonomy, and those factors construct the process of encouraging

language teachers to become autonomous.

This study takes both dimensions, and defines teacher autonomy as the capacity for language teachers to take charge of and explore their own teaching and in a given context using both individual and social process. Reflecting on EFL Japanese contexts, the fact is that language teachers must teach English under a high degree of control from government and their respective school. Taking just the first dimension may be only an ideal, because every teacher belongs to a community and teaches the language as a member of the community. 'Isolation' or 'independence' can be a negative aspect in the society where the idea of 'group' is being highlighted. However, it is a true that the notion of 'independence' for developing teacher autonomy is important in terms of establishing and taking responsibility for one's own teaching. In other words, a principal perspective of the concept is for language teachers to keep a balance between personal autonomy and social autonomy.

Necessity to develop Teacher Autonomy

A primary reason why the concept is necessary for Japanese teachers of English is to keep up with the innovation of ELT in Japan. Many changes are seen in every aspect. For instance, even in the entrance examination, the National Center Test for University Admissions started to include a listening comprehension test two years ago. Likewise, the Ministry of Education has identified several public and private high schools as Super English Language High Schools (SELHi) every year, in order to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities'. These schools are directed to develop effective English teaching methods and curricula within three years depending on their own goals of ELT. Along with the SELHi project, English classes will be required starting in the 5th grade in elementary schools by 2011. In this way, the English educational system has evolved its main goal: to foster Japanese who can use practical English.

With the reformation of the educational system, local teachers are required to adjust to the new structure. Here, the concept of teacher autonomy is necessary for those teachers. Vye et al. (2002) described that language teaching is contextually

situated, and teacher autonomy is the process of exploration of how language teachers can foster students' learner autonomy by grasping and coping with many external restrictions and adjusting them into opportunities for change. So, language teachers are expected to develop the flexibility to use teaching approaches that are the most appropriate for their given contexts.

Another reason for the necessity to foster teacher autonomy is due to the ultimate goal of ELT in Japan: learning the target language while fostering learner autonomy. Developing autonomous learners is one of the overall goals of the Japanese educational system. In this situation, language teachers are expected to be models of successful language learners and are required to promote learner autonomy as EFL learners. Little, McGrath, Smith, and Tort-Moloney have claimed that "teachers who themselves are not autonomous language learners may have a negative influence on the development of autonomy in their students" (as cited in Sert, 2006, p. 186). From this viewpoint, teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are inseparable for language teachers. Smith (2003) used the term "teacher-learner autonomy" for the relationship and emphasized the significance of applying 'pedagogy for teacher-learner autonomy' to prepare teachers appropriately for their own engagement in a pedagogy for autonomy with students (p. 6). EFL teachers are language teachers and at the same time, language learners. Therefore, it is essential to develop both sides of autonomy.

The "apprenticeship of observation" used by Lortie can be the other reason (as cited in Sert, 2006, p. 187). This is a so-called 'banking system', which is the idea that language teachers teach a language like they are taught as learners. Almost all of the current English teachers were taught the language through Grammar Translation Method, and they may be inclined to use the same approach. This is the completely contradictory method to develop students' communication skills and foster learner autonomy. If current teachers would not apply a different approach, prospective teachers might teach as they have been taught. This phenomenon would bring about a much more serious gap between the policies issued by the Ministry of Education and the perspectives of local teachers, and a variety of useful teaching approaches would be just an 'ideal' for them. To avoid this situation, language teachers are required to

become aware of teacher autonomy. Autonomous teachers are those who can take control of their own language teaching (Shaw, 2002) and who can gain awareness of exploring their own teaching in terms of professional teacher development.

Factors Affecting Teacher Autonomy

As discussed above, teacher autonomy refers to the ability of language teachers to take charge of and explore their own teaching, but the ambiguity of the concept remains. This section discusses various factors of teacher autonomy focusing on the following viewpoints: what factors can promote and impede teacher autonomy; and who is referred to as autonomous teachers.

   Shaw (2002) discussed four factors which can influence teacher autonomy: policy factors, institutional factors, conceptions of language, and language teaching methodologies. Policy factors consist of elements external to the school. In the Japanese context, a national curriculum or educational system determined by the Ministry of Education can be seen as one of the principle factors restricting teacher autonomy. Institutional factors are based on components internal to the school. Each school sets up the educational rules following educational policies issued by the government, and teachers are required to follow these limitations. Conceptions of language include dominant ideas regarding what English is or ideologies of standard usage of the language, and these notions can be imposed by the system, the institution or teacher's colleagues (Shaw, 2002). Language teaching methodologies dominated by the above three factors, especially standard language ideologies refer to constraining factors on a teacher's freedom to make the right choices for learners (Shaw, 2002). In this way, the perceptions of autonomy are interrelated to various factors within working environments, and the development of teacher autonomy depends on the will of the students and teachers' adaptability to the contexts of teaching and learning where they find themselves (Benson, 2001).

   Pearson and Moomaw (2006) discussed teacher autonomy in terms of teacher's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: intrinsic factors which consist of individual satisfaction such as desire to assist students to accomplish goals, desire to make a

difference in society and sense of achievement when students learn; extrinsic factors which are comprised of external elements including wage, nonmonetary fringe benefits and recognition of performance. The U.S. National Institute of Education reported that "intrinsic rewards are much more powerful for motivating teachers than are extrinsic rewards, such as merit pay" (as cited in Pearson & Moomaw, 2006, p.44). In other words, intrinsic motivation, especially job satisfaction, contributes to the degree of teacher autonomy, while job dissatisfaction including stress, pressure or teacher burnout results in negative outcomes for teacher autonomy. In addition, Davis and Wilson (2000) argued that "the more intrinsically motivated teachers are, the more motivated and satisfied they are with their jobs and the less stress they experience" (as cited in Pearson & Moomaw, 2006, p. 45). Furthermore, the high degree of autonomy perceived by language teachers indicates current job satisfaction and a positive reaction to teaching and suggests the willingness to enter teaching again if confronted with such a decision (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). In this way, autonomy and intrinsic motivation depend much on metacognitive awareness in language teaching. As motivation has both positive and negative impacts on fostering learner autonomy in second language learning (Harmer, 2001), it is also one of the crucial factors to determine success or failure to develop teacher autonomy.

Components of Teacher Autonomy

A variety of factors affect the development of teacher autonomy. However, having considered the concept from both theoretical and practical aspects, two questions come up: what components are included in the concept of teacher autonomy; and more specifically, who can be regarded as autonomous teachers.

Barfield et al. (2002) proposed that teacher autonomy involves the following elements: negotiation skills; institutional knowledge to start to discuss efficiently limitations on teaching and learning; willingness to deal with institutional barriers in socially appropriate ways to turn constraints into opportunities for change; readiness to engage in lifelong learning to the best of an individual's capacities; reflection of on the teaching process and contexts; and devotion to promoting learner autonomy. From

this viewpoint, a teacher can be regarded as autonomous not only by being a professional teacher but also by being a lifelong language learner. In terms of being a professional teacher, language teachers are required to engage in professional teacher development through the exploration of many possibilities to develop their teaching in their specific teaching contexts. Likewise, language teachers, especially EFL Japanese teachers are language learners, and they are expected to become a 'model' of successful and autonomous language learners in their class. Smith (2000) mentioned that it is unreasonable to expect language teachers to develop autonomy in their students if they themselves do not know what it is to be autonomous learners and how they can nurture learner autonomy. Hence, it is necessary for language teachers to develop awareness of both teacher and learner autonomy. Becoming aware of their interpretation of learner autonomy and of their beliefs of language teaching is the essence of nurturing learner and teacher autonomy (Martinez, 2002).

Barfield et al. (2002) have also insisted that promoting teacher autonomy overlaps with principles of developing learner autonomy, and the interrelationship between two concepts becomes apparent "when the values of co-learning, self-direction, collaboration, and democratic co-participation are consciously highlighted" (p.6). From this point of view, many researchers emphasize the significance of the following three critical principles for teacher autonomy: critical reflective inquiry, empowerment, dialogue (e.g. Barfield et al., 2002; Vye et al., 2002; Smith, 2003). These three principles can allow language teachers to develop institutional knowledge and flexibility within their individual teaching contexts. Processes through which these principles of action can be reached are based on observing, inquiring negotiating, evaluating, and developing through collaboration with students and teacher peers, and these processes are made explicit through dialogue and critical reflective inquiry, the richness of which empowers teacher autonomy and assists in developing the concept further (Barfield et al., 2002). Consciousness of fostering teacher autonomy can be raised by conducting research within teacher training or professional teacher development in a given context (Martinez, 2002).

In this way, the concept of fostering teacher autonomy consists of the following

two viewpoints in second or foreign language teaching: fostering learner autonomy as a life-long learner and professional teacher development as a teacher. As learner autonomy can be nurtured by self-monitoring and self-reflecting on the process of language learning including planning, implementing, and assessing (Scharle & Szabo, 2000), awareness of teacher autonomy can be raised through the process of self-reflecting on one's language teaching in terms of how it works or how it does not work, and exploring various possibilities to make one's own teaching better by using collaborative approaches with colleagues. From this point of view, autonomous teachers can be regarded as those who have a high degree of capacity for self-directed professional teaching and for self-directed teacher-learning, establishing freedom from control over their teaching (Smith, 2003).

How Teacher Autonomy Can Be Fostered

The concept of teacher autonomy is necessary for EFL Japanese teachers from both standpoints: as a learner and as a teacher. The fact is that veteran teachers are inclined to have access to participate in self-directed professional teaching and self-directed teacher-learning while novice teachers have few opportunities to become autonomous due to their lack of teaching experience. In this situation, how can novices gain a greater awareness of teacher autonomy? This section discusses, from practical aspects, how teacher autonomy can be promoted in a given teaching context, especially how EFL Japanese middle and high school teachers can develop autonomy while coping with some constraints that they encounter.

Developing Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is defined as the capacity to take responsibility to decide what to learn, when and how to learn it by taking charge of one's own learning (Sert, 2006). EFL Japanese teachers are required to become 'models' of autonomous and successful language learners in class. Likewise, they are expected to demonstrate how they have developed their learner autonomy and to teach their students how to be autonomous learners. Since their students, learning styles and even backgrounds are different from

each other, language teachers need to show their students various approaches to nurture autonomy in their own language learning. Hence, it is necessary for teachers to reflect on their own language learning and to become aware of exploring alternatives in their learning process. Cotterall (2000) regarded reflection as a "metacognitive activity of reviewing past and future learning experiences in order to enhance learning" (p. 112), and reflection is one of the necessary processes for language learners to move on to their future learning, especially in terms of planning their learning.

A point of disagreement is the way language teachers self-reflect on their own language learning within a limited time. Each researcher is inclined to use a different phrase: 'record booklet' (Cotterall, 1995), 'self-reports' (Wenden, 1991), and 'learning journals' (Harmer, 2001), and 'keeping diaries' (Thanasoulas, 2000) but the concept of these phrases is almost the same. It refers to 'keeping journal entries' and the journal is comprised of both self-assessment and self-monitoring.

Keeping journal entries provides learners with opportunities to self-monitor and self-reflect on their own learning. One of the fundamental perspectives of the application is that language teachers as learners need to keep journals with the preparation of one specific solution as well as other possible resolutions for issues, because their students might encounter the same problems as the teachers also had when they were at the student's level of English ability. By doing so, their students can have multiple chances to explore their own ways to learn English through the process of attempting to use various approaches. This idea reflects the notion of 'learner choice' mentioned by Lee (1998), in which learner autonomy is composed of making decisions in learning, such as setting goals, defining progressions, choosing strategies and approaches, monitoring learning processes, and evaluating the outcome of learning. One practice that language teachers need to keep in mind for this application is to take notes on what they did and what happened in their learning process with descriptive stances. Judgmental and prescriptive comments prevent language teachers from exploring many opportunities to become autonomous learners, and the limitation of possibilities can have negative impacts on the development of

autonomy in their students.

There are many approaches for language teachers to develop their language proficiency, but a vital influence which determines the approaches they use in their learning process is their metacognitive skills. The primary idea of fostering autonomy refers to the development of metacognitive skills. Therefore, it is significant for language teachers to nurture learner autonomy through self-reflection or self-monitoring in their own language learning process.

Developing Teacher Autonomy

The concept of professional teacher development may come from teachers breaking some teaching rules to see their own teaching differently (Gebhard & Oprandy, 2005). Accordingly, EFL Japanese teachers can gain awareness of different perspectives of language teaching. Seeing their own teaching from different aspects can allow them to discover some clues to make their teaching more effective and to develop their autonomy. Professional teacher development can be carried out in both individual and collaborative ways.

One of the useful approaches for teacher development is action research (Benson, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Daoud, 2002; Erdogan, 2002; Gebhard & Oprandy, 2005). In fact, a great deal of research on autonomy has been based on reflection and reasoning (Benson, 2001). In addition, Daoud's (2002) study indicates that action research contributes to teacher autonomous learning and teacher autonomy assists in promoting learner autonomy. The goal of action research is to find resolutions of problems posed and identified (Gebhard & Oprandy, 2005). Action research includes a series of procedures language teachers can engage in to improve some aspects of their teaching (Harmer, 2001), more specifically, the processes to achieve the goal set by problem-posing. In other words, action research allows teachers to develop their teaching through the process of discovering, posing, and possibly solving problems in language teaching. Cotterall and Crabbe (2002) also argued the effectiveness of using a problem-solution framework which enables teachers to explicitly explore and discover possible solutions to specific student's learning difficulties in class.

Likewise, since action research can be a community effort, it can allow language teachers to work collaboratively through the discussion with colleagues who provide their support and experience (Gebhard & Oprandy, 2005). This feature is crucial for the concept of teacher autonomy, because this method enables language teachers to obtain new ideas to determine what they could do in the classroom. Action research which provides language teachers with chances to make more informed teaching decisions, to develop skills for posing and solving teaching problems, to expand reflective skills, and to create a forum to discuss teaching issues can encourage them to become aware of their own teaching. In this way, action research includes the three components necessary for developing teacher autonomy, which are critical reflective inquiry, empowerment, and dialogue.

Self-observation is another way to develop teaching. The primary purpose of self-observation is for language teachers to construct and reconstruct their own knowledge about teaching (Gebhard & Oprandy, 2005). The notion of the approach is to find patterns of teaching and explore alternatives for teaching, so, different from action research, at the starting point of self-observation, it isn't necessary to identify problems in language teaching. Through a process of videotaping (or audiotaping), describing, analyzing, and interpreting the teaching, language teachers can develop an awareness of and learn more about their own teaching. In this way, self-observation is a useful approach, but it may be more effective for language teachers to incorporate the notion of 'collaboration' into the approach by going beyond the concept of 'self'. This is because teacher autonomy is a socially constructed process and it can be strengthened by "collaborative support and networking both within the institution and beyond" (Barfield et al., 2002, p. 5). A possibility is to create opportunities to meet with colleagues and discuss their self-observation reports. Dialogues with teacher peers can allow language teachers to get new perspectives and to reconstruct knowledge about teaching by sharing and discussing various issues that they have encountered in their own teaching. Negotiation, thus, constructs an integration of the process of fostering teacher autonomy.

Peer observation is another technique. Peer observation is conducted with peer

teaching. One formal approach is that two teachers organize a lesson, and one teaches while the other observes the class; and after the lesson, both teachers describe what happened in the classroom and detail their experience of the lesson, and discuss how the lesson could be modified next time on the basis of the descriptions; and for the next class, the role is reversed (Harmer, 2001). Peer observation enables two teachers to explore their own teaching and collaboration helps the participants develop as teachers. Dymoke and Harrison (2006) pointed out how peer observation provides language teachers, especially novice teachers, with chances to develop their own teaching by being observing and receiving feedback from peer or veteran teachers. However, language teachers must keep in mind that both self and peer observation should be conducted with descriptive and non-judgmental agendas, not prescriptive stances (Gebhard & Oprandy, 2005). In addition, teacher peers must have equal power (Harmer, 2001). Prescriptive, judgmental, and even unequal stances can prohibit language teachers from engaging in professional development and those factors can result in a bad relationship between teachers. The principal idea of peer observation is for language teachers to explore various possibilities for their own teaching and expand their knowledge of teaching. Therefore, language teachers are required to recognize the purpose, goal and principal notion of the approach.

In addition to action research, self-observation, and peer observation, there are several other useful approaches for professional teacher development. For instance, reading professional literature or journals such as *TESOL Quarterly, ELT Journal, Asian EFL Journal, JALT Journal* etc. enables language teachers to gain awareness of what is currently happening in the field of ELT all over the world and to construct new knowledge about teaching and conducting classroom research. Attending conferences sponsored by JALT, JACET, or ELEC is also an effective way to develop as teachers. Such conferences can offer language teachers many opportunities to make a presentation of their own topics, to observe and discuss peer's teaching practices videotaped, to share ideas with critical peers, and to create a new social network in the ELT realm. This network can provide a collaborative teacher-support group beyond the institution. Furthermore, the application of the Internet provides new spaces for

developing teacher autonomy (e.g. Schwienhorst, 1999; Harmer, 2001). Internet correspondence creates a 'virtual community' and language teachers can exchange information with other language teachers all over the world. The use of the Internet or virtual community enables language teachers to interact, discuss, and negotiate a specific topic on a real time, and to reach authentic information resources (Schwienhorst, 1999). Many websites relevant to ELT provide the place to do so (e.g. *Dave's ESL Café, TESL-L*).

Another opportunity for professional development is to take additional courses or teaching practices in TESOL programs by attending not only Japanese (e.g. Sophia University, Tokyo) but also American graduate schools (e.g. Teachers College, Tokyo; Temple University, Japan Campus). It might be difficult for all language teachers to do so because of various constraints (e.g. the heavy teaching load, time limitations on the participation of programs), but this can provide them with great opportunities to explore alternatives in their teaching practices, more specifically, to develop their teaching approaches by combining new theories with their own teaching. Attending graduate schools can allow language teachers to expand their knowledge of teaching as well as to gain more awareness of how to engage in professional teacher development within a given context.

Compiling a teaching portfolio is another approach to professional teacher development. Richards and Schmidt (2002) mentioned that keeping a portfolio shows "evidence of mastery of knowledge" (p. 407) and allows language teachers to access and reflect on their work so that the portfolio, as a collection of work, illustrates their efforts, progress, or achievement in language teaching. Language teachers can add to their portfolios not only their teaching materials used in classes but also their analysis papers gained through action research, self-observation, or peer-observation. Most importantly, compiling a portfolio involves in deciding what to include in the portfolio according to their personal goals. It is, therefore, crucial for language teachers to focus on a specific point in their teaching and to use their portfolio as a reflective piece for their future teaching.

Conclusion

Suggestions for fostering Teacher Autonomy in EFL Japanese contexts

As mentioned above, teacher autonomy is influenced by various factors. The fact is that many EFL Japanese teachers face a dilemma between what they want to do and what they have to do, because of these constraints. Japanese contexts are comprised of the following elements: a national curriculum, an educational policy determined by the government, entrance examinations, a school curriculum, a school policy, students' needs or goals, the pressure from their parents, the power relationship between veteran (older) and less experienced (younger) teachers. EFL Japanese teachers are required to develop teacher autonomy with those limitations. Autonomy doesn't refer to isolation or independence from those factors. Those who try to ignore those aspects and pursue their own ideal risk their occupational future in Japan, a society where the idea of 'group' is heavily emphasized. It means that language teachers must develop not only personal but also social autonomy, and keep a balance between the two. However, one of the crucial questions is how EFL Japanese teachers can do so under those constraints.

An effective perspective is how language teachers can incorporate the three principles of fostering autonomy, which are critical reflective inquiry, empowerment, and dialogue, into their own teaching contexts. Language teachers can cope with this issue in two phases: establishing the process of self-directed language teaching; and creating a social network for professional teacher development. An important thought for teacher autonomy is, as Benson (2001) mentioned, that "[a]utonomy cannot be the result of the application of a method. The development of autonomy depends upon the will of the learners and our own adaptability to the contexts of teaching and learning in which we find ourselves" (pp. 177-178). In other words, it is necessary for EFL Japanese teachers to first modify and then apply approaches to be the most suitable for their context. Through the process of both language learning and professional teacher development, they need to attempt to find their own way to foster teacher autonomy. It is also indispensable to highlight the significance of 'process' rather than 'product' in their engagement, because this idea can allow language teachers to become aware of 'critical reflection' which is one of the key principles for promoting

teacher autonomy.

It is recommended that EFL Japanese teachers consider striving for more autonomy, both as language teachers and as language learners. What approach they use for developing autonomy doesn't matter at this point, rather it will be crucial to gain awareness of the concept of autonomy and understand their own teaching contexts. Reading professional literature or journals can provide them with principal ideas for teacher autonomy and can help them understand what they need to do. Whatever approaches EFL Japanese teachers use for their engagement, keeping journal entries will be helpful for their own language learning and teaching, because the journal will be one of the important resources for their own development and create a place to self-reflect on both language learning and teaching. Self-observation may be a good starting point for those who have no idea regarding what to do for their development. As mentioned above, self-observation is not a problem-solving approach but an opportunity to find patterns in language teaching. If language teachers have some issues in their self-observation, they could apply action research for their development. Likewise, taking notes in their journals of what happened in class and how they coped with issues they had encountered can allow them to reflect on their own process of teacher development as well as to be ready to discuss the topic with peer teachers. In this way, keeping journal entries is for their own personal use but it can be a helpful resource for collaborative learning as a personal 'voice'. In addition, language teachers can address a series of teacher development projects in conferences sponsored by JALT, JACET, or ELEC. Attending conferences can provide them with chances to construct or expand a social network for collaboration with peer teachers beyond their institution, and opportunities to share and discuss their ideas with peers who have a high degree of motivation of language teaching and attempt to achieve their goals to become autonomous teachers.

This is just one example for developing teacher autonomy. However, since there is no one best way to foster autonomy, it is crucial for EFL Japanese teachers to explore various ways for teacher development and find approaches to best fit into their own styles. Similar to language learning, language teaching including teacher development

is also an on-going process. It is a cycle of identifying, solving, and reflecting on problems which language teachers encounter in class. Depending on the given context, language teachers are expected to flexibly apply different teaching approaches with consideration of possible limitations. Therefore, EFL Japanese teachers need to develop a greater awareness of teacher autonomy while maintaining a high level of motivation to teach English, in order to keep up with the on-going innovation of ELT in Japan.

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