Education and learning aimed at a reflective practitioner – Practices at the Graduate School of Japanology

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This thesis aims to examine reflective education and learning, which is based on lecturers’ education practices by reviewing the conventional Japanese language teaching framework that has been used in a class and graduate school students’ language learning practices at the eastern European graduate school of Japanology.

Eastern Europe, with its tradition of Japanology and Japanese language education, has included preparation for conducting specialized research in its curriculum on language learning. However, there is a growing demand for a review and reconstruction of new learning in terms of how to learn with different people, as graduate students with different interests and topics learn together.

In this thesis, Chapter 1 summarized the thesis background and purpose as well as presented its overall structure. Chapter 2 provided an overview of the challenges facing Japanology at the Eastern European graduate school. It then raised questions about language learning, shifting the focus from a one-dimensional framework in which basic knowledge is imparted and then applied to specialized fields to a framework in which people cultivate knowledge by situating learning within society and circumstances centering on individuals.

Chapter 3 discussed the topic of “reflection” as an outcome of the questions pertaining to learning that were raised in Chapter 2. Based on this, Chapter 3 outlined reflection theory as a genealogy of theoretical questions. In Japanese language education, the status of language as empowerment to observe organizations and the belief that society tends to remain within the scope of “better practice of individual orientation” are pointed out it then presented learning aimed at reflective practice as the concept that underlies reflection in Japanese language education. It was indicated that learning by all the participants, including students, educators, and people involved in the practice, would be viewed based on multi-layered reflection.

Chapter 4 overviewed the characteristics of adult learning and confirmed the concepts of "learning from cultivating learning" that educators, students, and practitioners learn through individuals, organizations, and society. The development of learning of the author and of the graduate school students through the author’s reflection is also considered.

Chapter 5 explained the details of activities in the field of research and in practice and summarized the research framework in this thesis. In addition, it described the research project and the methodology used.

Chapters 6–9 covered research on activities by using blogs as a resource as included in the practice. Chapter 6 reflected on the author’s practice, including how she became involved in activities using blogs. It traced the process of the author’s practice as a reflective educator and practitioner. It was confirmed that this process included an
individual’s life and society comprehensively and was not merely a one-way layer that supported learning from individuals to society, but an ecological process that formed a cycle from society to individuals, from individuals to collaboration between individuals to fulfill a meaningful societal goal, and from society again to individuals.

Chapters 7–9 covered research on graduate school students’ activities by using blogs. Chapter 7 examined the learning process of the participants having different interests who participated in personal activities using blogs. As a result of analyzing the participants’ degree of participation per month during the semester, it was observed that they learn continuously about each interest through activities using blogs, while expressing empathy, conflict, and doubts about other people’s interests. This type of learning that stems from intuitive interest is not long-lasting, and it was suggested that they could promote learning on a long-term basis by sharing their learning with others and reflecting on any interest that could become their subjective “theme” or focus. The participants’ blogs also indicated that they learn together with others while discovering the effects of “boundary objects” (Star & Griesemer, 1989) that enable them to learn across different contexts, approaching and connecting different fields.

Chapter 8 examined the development of personal learning by one of the bloggers discussed in Chapter 7. Throughout the activities, the construction of language that is not the specified language, support for others, and the learning she develops by interacting with others were observed.

Chapter 9 discussed personal learning from activities using blogs that have no reviewing activities in class and learning that spreads across society. It was suggested that the blogs discussed in Chapter 9 tend to attempt transformation with conviviality, creating mutual learning with others. It also indicated that the development of this type of learning involves a collaborative exploration that requires reflection on themselves and others.

Finally, Chapter 10 summarized the language learning discussed in this thesis as 1) the development of learning that creates a situation of conviviality whereby people cross interpersonal and social boundaries and accept each other’s conflict and doubts, 2) the transformation of consciousness and reflection on the development of learning, and 3) the importance of a place for mutual reflection with collaboration although it is associated with difficulties. It then indicated that to develop such learning, it is necessary to consider 1) creating opportunities that allow people to view and learn individual themes on a long-term basis and in a comprehensive manner; 2) designing a place and a framework of learning that lead to mutual reflection, which is boundary-crossing and collaborative; and 3) promoting mutual collaborative exploration and reflection.