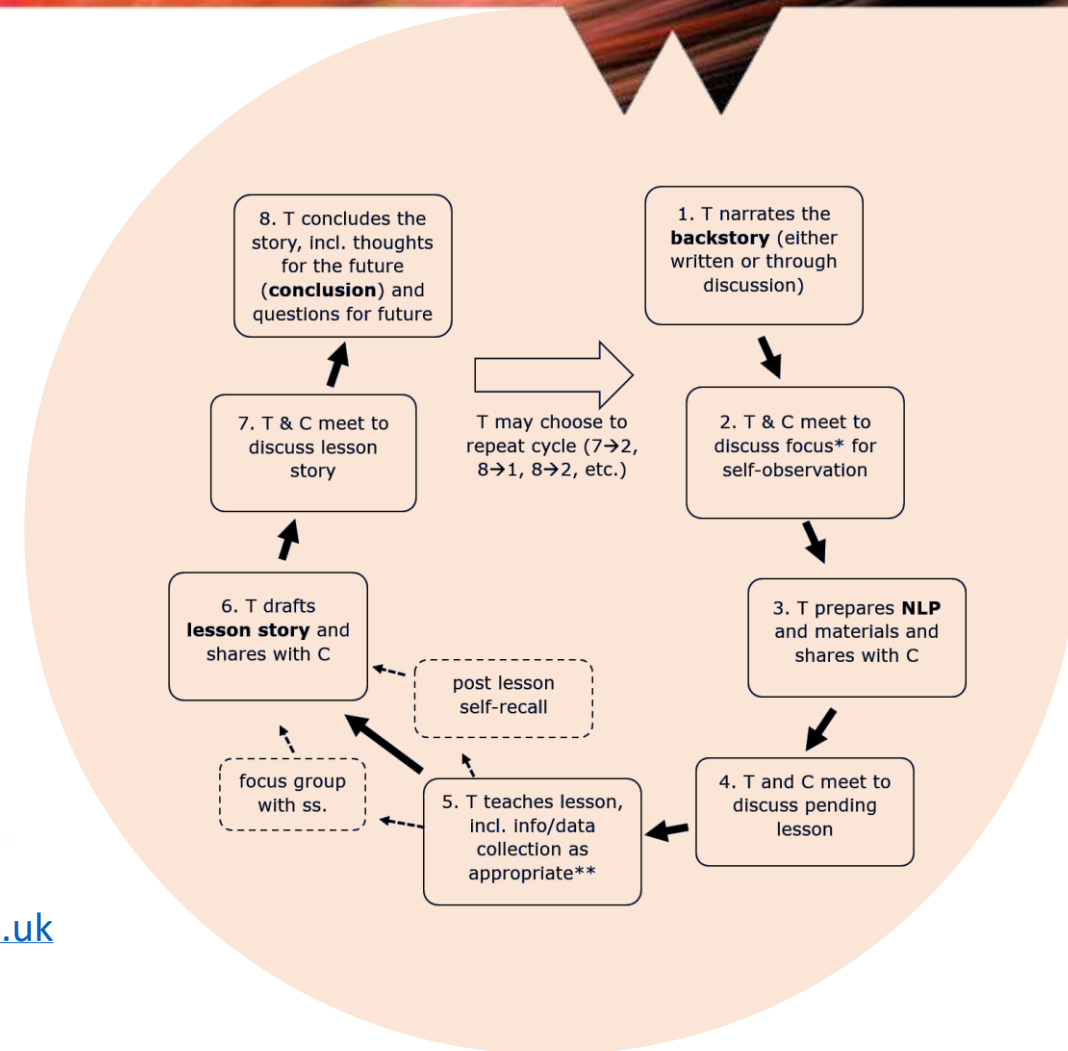# Narrative self-observation

A new teacher research and professional development tool

Dr Jason Anderson | University of Warwick   jason.anderson@warwick.ac.uk

Dr Jaber Kamali | Ibn Haldun University   jaber.kamali@ihu.edu.tr

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APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Plan for the workshop

1. Introductions
2. Discussion activity 1
3. Background to NSO
4. Theoretical underpinnings
5. NSO framework
6. Discussion activity 2
7. Proof of concept study (method, impact, practicability)
8. Limitations of NSO
9. NSO toolkit and invitation to try out
10. Questions, comments, critique

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In memory of Mario Rinvolucri (1940-2025)

Today our work builds on one of his many amazing ideas: Unseen observation

Introductions

Jason

- Teacher educator, writer, methodologist, researcher, based at University of Warwick, UK.

- Interest in (among other things) CPD tools, esp. those promoting reflection and criticality.

Jaber

- Teacher educator, Trinity CertTESOL and DipTESOL course director, journal editor-in-chief, based at Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye

- Interest in teacher education in general and specifically teacher cognition, identity, and classroom discourse.

Discussion activity 1

Teachers: Recall the last time you were observed, either by a colleague, line manager, inspector, etc.*:

- How typical was it of your teaching?

- What do you recall learning from it (if anything)?

- Was there anything that the observer didn't know that they needed to know? (what, why, etc.)

OR:

Teacher educators / academics / others:

- To what extent do you feel we need different procedures for teacher observation as part of teacher development for experienced teachers as opposed to other purposes for observation (e.g., for appraisal, 'inspection', initial training)?

*perhaps exclude observations by trainee teachers

Background to NSO

- The Initial Inspiration
  - my article *"'Procrustes' Bed' and the Language Teacher Training Classroom"* (Kamali, 2020; The Teacher Trainer Journal);
  - rigid observations and their limitations for teacher development;
  - autoethnography and teacher identity;
  - discovery of unseen observation (O'Leary, 2024).

- Collaboration & Concept Refinement
  - reaching out to Jason, whose work on teacher development resonated with me;
  - challenging norms and integrating diverse perspectives;
  - multiple iterations shaping a more robust framework.

- Naming & Evolution
  - initially named Critical Autoethnographic Unseen Narratives (CAUN);
  - changed to Narrative Self-Observation (NSO) after discussion with Jason;
  - eight drafts of the NSO cycle before settling on current version (dynamic, evolving model)
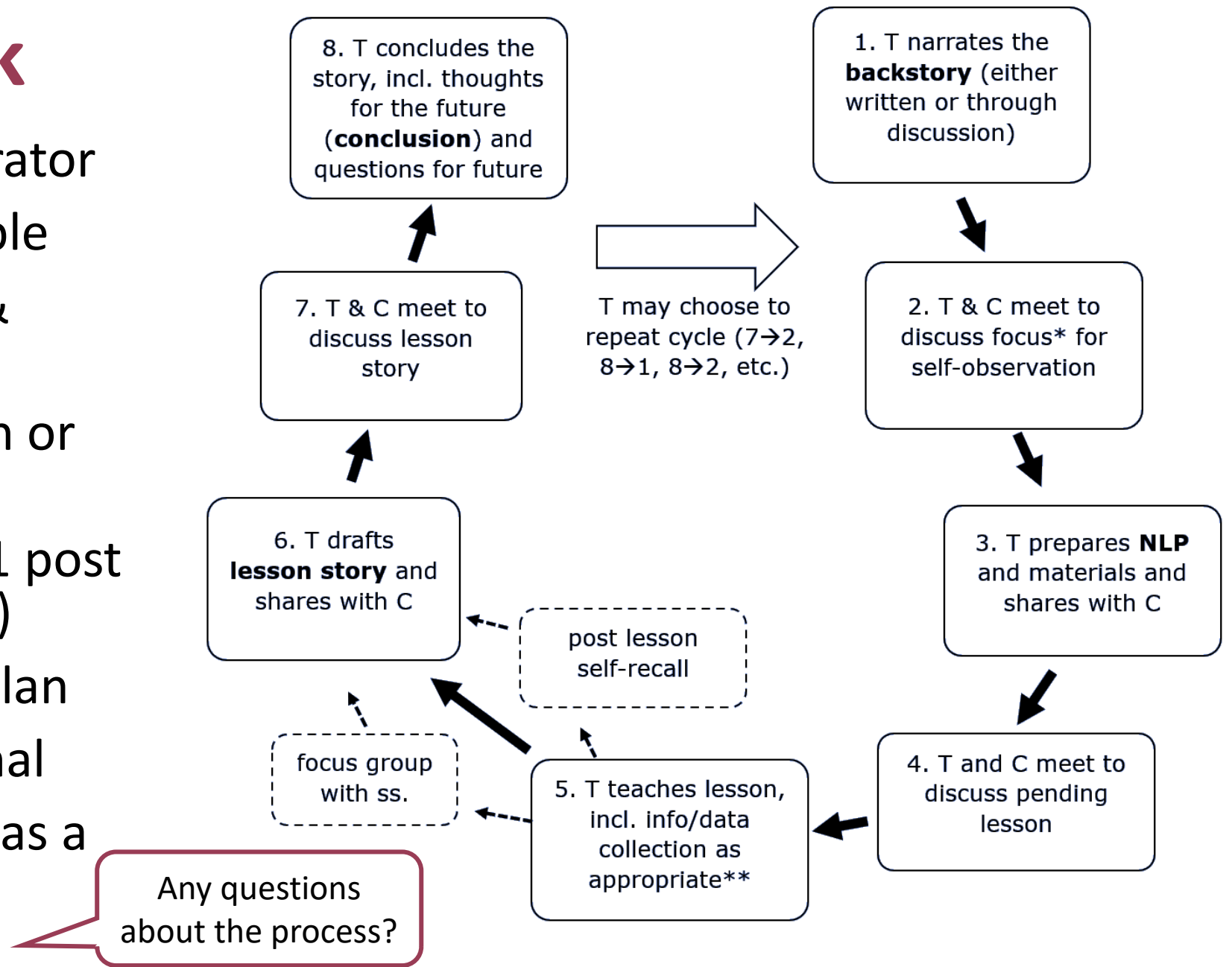
Theoretical underpinnings

- **Unseen Observation**
  (e.g., O'Leary, 2024)

- **Autoethnography**
  (e.g., Kamali, 2024; Yazan, 2024)

- **Storying and Narrative Inquiry**
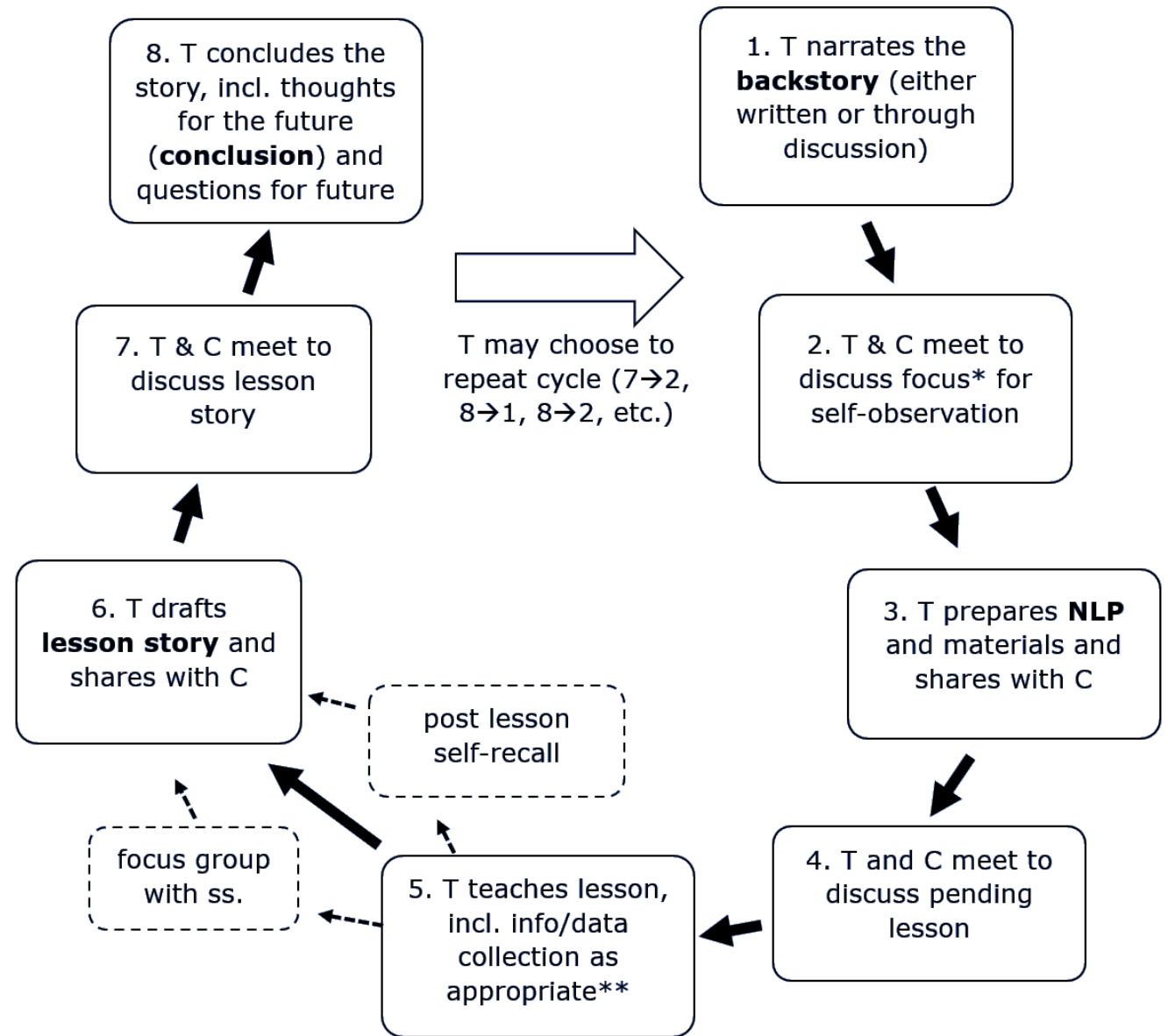 (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2008, 2017)

NSO Framework

- T = teacher; C = collaborator
- Up to 8 stages, repeatable
- Teacher-led incl. focus & style/modality
- Narration can be written or spoken
- 2 pre-lesson meetings, 1 post (but no live observation)
- NLP = narrative lesson plan
- Data collection is informal
- Focus is on observation as a tool for CPD, not M&E

8. T concludes the story, incl. thoughts for the future (**conclusion**) and questions for future

1. T narrates the **backstory** (either written or through discussion)

7. T & C meet to discuss lesson story

T may choose to repeat cycle (7→2, 8→1, 8→2, etc.)

2. T & C meet to discuss focus* for self-observation

6. T drafts **lesson story** and shares with C

3. T prepares **NLP** and materials and shares with C

post lesson self-recall

focus group with ss.

5. T teaches lesson, incl. info/data collection as appropriate**

4. T and C meet to discuss pending lesson

Any questions about the process?

Discussion activity 2

1. What are your initial impressions of NSO?

2. What advantages do you think it might have over 'live' observations?

3. What drawbacks and limitations do you think it might have?

Any further questions, feel free to raise your hand and one of us will try to help.

8. T concludes the story, incl. thoughts for the future (**conclusion**) and questions for future

1. T narrates the **backstory** (either written or through discussion)

7. T & C meet to discuss lesson story

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Proof of concept study: Methodology

- Research questions:

1. In what ways did engaging with the NSO process impact on the participant teachers, considering practical, developmental, reflective and affective perspectives?

2. What insights were afforded into the practical implementation of NSO as a procedure for use in continuing professional development and teacher appraisal procedures?

- 3 experienced teachers in Turkish University; Jaber was Collaborator and line manager

- Qualitative analysis (general inductive approach) of data (stories, meetings, interviews) by both researchers (emic and etic); 2 stages of participant validation.

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Proof of concept study: Impact of NSO

- NSO felt more valid and relevant to practice than traditional observation
- Teachers felt greater freedom and willingness to experiment
- Concrete insights were learnt that can be taken forward
- Honesty to self
- Teacher reflection during NSO was deep and meaningful
- Teachers experienced greater confidence and empowerment during NSO
- Evidence of transformational impact (on identity?):

"This experience has been an eye-opener for me. It has allowed me to realise the power of systematic self-observation and how useful it can be alongside traditional observation. It has also made it possible for me to understand the power of looking back at my journey as an English teacher, how I started, where I am now and where I can go in the future. This vision becomes much clearer by documenting it." (Mina*, Story)
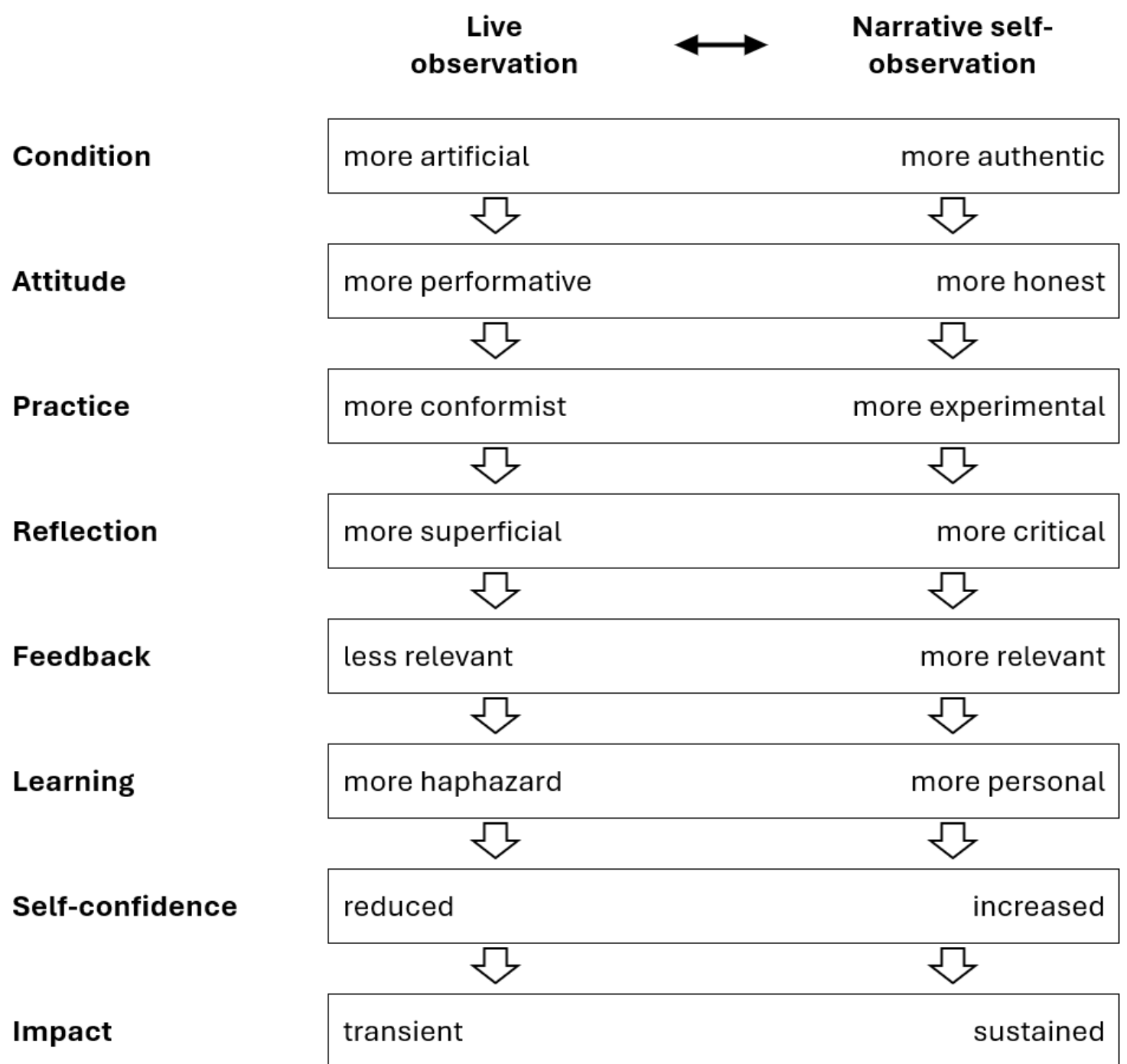
*pseudonym

Proof of concept study: Practicability of NSO

- The NSO process was logical and relatively easy to implement
- NSO has potential for long-term developmental impact esp. through multiple cycles
- Collaborator time commitment only slightly increased (because of no live observation)
- Some critical reflections
  - ✓ Traditional observation is still necessary / useful (the two are complementary)
  - ✓ Expertise of live observer is often useful, esp. for less experienced teachers
  - ✓ More prompts and support for story writing and data collection

Comparing potential impact

© Kamali & Anderson (under review)

	Live observation	⟷	Narrative self-observation
Condition	more artificial		more authentic
	⬇		⬇
Attitude	more performative		more honest
	⬇		⬇
Practice	more conformist		more experimental
	⬇		⬇
Reflection	more superficial		more critical
	⬇		⬇
Feedback	less relevant		more relevant
	⬇		⬇
Learning	more haphazard		more personal
	⬇		⬇
Self-confidence	reduced		increased
	⬇		⬇
Impact	transient		sustained

Potential limitations of NSO

- Absence of observer in lesson means:
  - Self-diagnosis may be wrong
  - Danger of specific issues going unaddressed
  - Underestimating and overestimating one's abilities (e.g., self-confirmation bias)

- Risk of surface-level engagement (e.g., if teachers lack reflective skills)

- Potentially more time-consuming

Hence NSO is intended as a tool to be used alongside TO, not to replace it.

Toolkit for NSO, feedback and collaboration opportunities

We are interested in:

- feedback on the workshop – see feedback form where you can also leave email for future opportunities
- anecdotal feedback (if you try it out, let us know how it went - please email us
- collaborations with both individuals and institutions interested in use of and research into NSO - please email us

Our emails:

- jason.anderson@warwick.ac.uk
- jaber.kamali@ihu.edu.tr

Questions, comments, critique

Feedback form (1-3 minutes only!):
https://forms.office.com/e/nfhdN5j8LB

Slides and toolkit here
https://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/talks.htm

Emails
jason.anderson@warwick.ac.uk
jaber.kamali@ihu.edu.tr

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NSO toolkit: