Reflective Language Teaching

2nd edition

Practical Applications for TESOL Teachers

Thomas S. C. Farrell

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Reflective Language Teaching

Chapter Outline

Introduction

One day a young girl was watching her mother cooking a roast of beef. Just before the mother put the roast in the pot, she cut a slice off the end. The ever-observant daughter asked her mother why she had done that, and the mother responded that her grandmother had always done it. Later that same afternoon, the mother was curious, so she called her mother and asked her the same question. Her mother, the child's grandmother, said that in her day she had to trim the roasts because they were usually too big for a regular pot.

This adapted story is relevant for language teachers in that teaching without any reflection, such as the nonreflecting child's mother when dealing with the routine of cutting the slice off the roast each time before she put it in the pot, shows that experience is not enough for effective teaching, for we

do not learn much from experience alone as much as we learn from reflecting on that experience. Such continuous repetitive actions can also lead to burnout on any job. Dewey (1933) noted that teachers who do not bother to reflect on their work become slaves to routine (such as the mother in the above story) and their actions are guided mostly by impulse, tradition, and/or authority rather than by informed decision-making. This decision-making, Dewey (1933) insisted, should be based on systematic and conscious reflections because teaching experience when combined with these reflections can only lead to awareness, development, and growth. More recently, Zeichner and Liston (1996: 24) returned to Dewey's original ideas when they distinguished between routine action and reflective action and suggested that for teachers "routine action is guided primarily by tradition, external authority and circumstance" whereas reflective action "entails the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge." One of the only ways for teachers to identify routine, and thus help counteract the possible burnout, is to engage in reflective teaching. When teachers reflect on their teaching, they generally take the time to stop and think about what is happening in their practice to make sense of it so that they can learn from their professional experiences. This introductory first chapter provides a brief background to the origins of reflective teaching, explains what reflective teaching is, and then outlines and describes what reflecting language teaching is for second language teachers.

Reflective teaching

Origins of reflective teaching

Many years ago Dewey (1933: 9) called for teachers to take reflective action that entails "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads." Dewey (1933) identified three attributes of reflective individuals that I think are still important today for teachers: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. Open-mindedness is a desire to listen to more than one side of an issue and to give attention to alternative views. Responsibility means careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads. Wholeheartedness implies that teachers can overcome fears and uncertainties to critically evaluate their

practice in order to make meaningful change. The education community did not really hear about reflective teaching again until the early 1980s and it was not until the last 35 years that research interest in reflective teaching proliferated with the work of such educators as Donald Schön (1983, 1987). This renewed interest in reflective teaching was also due to a press for the empowerment of teachers and out of the need to find some way to counteract a resurgence of teacher burnout in the teaching profession. At that time Schön's (1983) work centered on the notion of practitioner-generated intuitive practice. For Schön (1983, 1987), when a practitioner is confronted with a problem, he or she identifies the problem as being of a particular type and then applies an appropriate technique to solve the problem. However, he also asks what happens if these problems are non-routine problems. In this case Schön says that practitioners engage in a process of problem setting rather than problem solving. Clarke (1995: 245) explains this process of problem setting as follows:

> When confronted by non-routine problems, skilled practitioners learn to conduct frame experiments in which they impose a kind of coherence on "messy" situations. They come to new understandings of situations and new possibilities for action through a spiraling process of framing and reframing. Through the effects of a particular action, both intended and unintended, the situation "talks back." This conversation between the practitioner and the setting provides the data which may then lead to new meanings, further reframing, and plans for further action.

In recent times, reflective teaching has become something of a buzzword and is promoted in most teacher education and development programs worldwide, and most educators agree that some form of reflection is desirable for all teachers.

Definitions of reflective teaching

Today, one can find many different definitions of reflective teaching. However, most of the definitions can be contained within two main stances to reflective teaching, one that emphasizes reflection only on classroom actions, while the other also includes reflections on matters outside the classroom. Concerning the former approach, Cruickshank and Applegate (1981: 553) have characterized this reflection as a process that "help[s] teachers to think about what happened, why it happened, and what else could have been done to reach their goals." Schulman (1987: 19) concurred and suggested that

reflection happens when a teacher "reconstructs, reenacts and/or recaptures the events, emotions, and the accomplishments" of his or her teaching. However, Zeichner and Liston (1996) maintain that these definitions excluded the issue of linking teaching to the larger community called critical reflection. For Jay and Johnson (2002: 80) such critical reflection involves the broader historical, sociopolitical, and moral context of schooling so that reflective teachers can "come to see themselves as agents of change." Within this latter definition then, if teachers want to reflect on student performance in their classes for example, they should not only consider the perspectives of the obvious main players (the teacher, the student, and the parents), but also the school culture that includes the context in which the schooling is taking place.

Reflective practice has also impacted the field of second language education and especially the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Since its emergence in TESOL, reflective practice has become a very popular term in many pre-service and in-service programs worldwide. Although most educators still agree that some form of reflection is a desirable practice among teachers, there is still less agreement on the precise definition of reflective practice—how to do it—and as yet no overall framework exists that all teachers can implement. Hence the main reason I have written this book is because of the many different approaches to reflective teaching that exist and so I believe that it is necessary for *each* teacher to define for themselves the concept of reflective teaching after reading this book. That said I am now able to offer a definition of reflective practice based on the culmination of the work I have done for the past 35 years on this complex concept that teachers can consider as they read the contents of the book. For me, reflective practice is:

> A cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect data about their practice, and while engaging in dialogue with others use the data to make informed decisions about their practice both inside and outside the classroom. (Farrell, 2015: 123)

Types of reflective teaching

There are said to be three major types, or moments, of reflective practice where teachers can undertake reflection. The first moment happens during the event, such as classroom teaching and is called reflection-in-action. The second moment is thinking about the event after it has happened and this is

called reflection-on-action. While the third moment is where teachers think about future actions and this is called reflection-for-action.

1. *Technical rationality*: The first type is where teachers engage in examining the use of skills and immediate behaviors in teaching with an established research and theory base (Chien, 2013).
2. *Reflection-in-action*: The second type, of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983, 1987), happens when teachers take for granted their tacit knowledge of teaching because many of their actions have become routine while teaching. In order for teachers to carry out these routine actions they must employ a kind of knowing-in-action (Schön, 1983). According to Schön, knowing-in-action is crucial for teachers because they cannot constantly question every action or reaction while they teach; otherwise, they would not be able to get through a class. So a teacher's knowing-in-action works similar to when we recognize a face in a crowd but we do not list and/or try to consciously piece together each separate facial feature that makes a person recognizable to us. We do not consciously think, "Could that be . . .?"—we just know. In addition, if you were asked to describe the features that prompted this recognition, it might be difficult because, as Schön (1983) has pointed out, that type of information usually remains at the subconscious level of our thoughts. However, when a new situation or event occurs and our established routines do not work for us, then according to Schön (1983), teachers use reflection-in-action to cope. There is a sequence of moments in a process of reflection-in-action:
    - **a.** A situation develops which triggers spontaneous, routine responses (such as in knowing-in-action): For example, a student cannot answer a question about a topic that he or she easily answered during a previous class such as identifying a grammar structure.
    - **b.** Routine responses by the teacher (i.e., what the teacher has always done) do not produce a routine response and instead produce a surprise for the teacher: The teacher starts to explain how the student had already explained this grammar structure in the previous class and that this current silence is troubling the teacher. Suddenly the student begins to cry.
    - **c.** This surprise response gets the teacher's attention and leads to reflection within an action: The teacher reacts quickly to try to find out why the student is suddenly crying by questioning the

student or asking the student's classmates why they think the student is crying.

d. Reflection now gives rise to on-the-spot experimentation by the teacher: The student may or may not explain why he or she is crying. The teacher will take some measures (depending on the reaction or non-reaction) to help solve the problem: ignore the situation, empathize with the student, help the student answer the question by modeling answers, and so forth.

According to Schön these sequences of moments are all present and lead to reflection-in-action. Experienced teachers can use their repertoire of teaching routines to experiment in order to solve the dilemma, but novice teachers may have a problem reflecting-in-action because they have not built up such an advanced schema of teaching routines.

3 *Reflection-on-action*: The third type of reflection is called reflection-on-action and involves thinking back on what was done to discover how knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected action (Hatton and Smith, 1995). Here, teachers reflect on their classes after they have finished. Reflection-on-action focuses on the cognitive processes of teaching that depends on retrospection for analysis. So, reflection-on-action would come to mean some kind of metacognitive action, while reflection-in-action is the ability to frame problems based on past experiences, a type of conversation that takes place between the practitioner and an uncertain situation at the time of the occurrence of that situation.

4 *Reflection-for-action*: The fourth type of reflection is called reflection-for-action. Reflection-for-action is different from the previous types of reflection in that it is proactive in nature. Killon and Todnew (1991: 15) argue that reflection-for-action is the desired outcome of both previous types of reflection; they say that "we undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing (both noble reasons in themselves) but to guide future action (the more practical purpose)." Teachers can prepare for the future by using knowledge from what happened during class and what they reflected on after class.

5 *Action research*: The fifth type is action research (see also Chapter 8) as reflective practice and is self-reflective enquiry by participants in social settings to improve classroom practice mostly but can also involve critical reflection outside the classroom (Crooks, 2013).

As Stanley (1998: 585) suggests, all three above is what "reflective practitioners do when they look at their work in the moment (reflect-in-action) or in retrospect (reflect-on-action) in order to examine the reasons and beliefs underlying their actions and generate alternative actions for the future."

Levels of reflection

Connected to the different types of reflection outlined above is Day's (1993) notion of teachers acting within three different hierarchical levels of reflection: the first is where teachers focus their reflections on behavioral actions (P1), the second (P2) is where teachers also include justifications of these reflections based on current theories of teaching, while at the third level (P3) teachers include the first two and look beyond theories and practices to examine their meaning within ethical, moral, and social ramifications. P1 is where teachers reflect at the level of classroom actions, the reasons for these actions are at P2, and justification for the work itself is at the level of P3. These three levels are called: *descriptive* (P1: focus on teacher skills), *conceptual* (P2: the rationale for practice), and *critical* (P3: examination of sociopolitical and moral and ethical results of practice). Jay and Johnson (2002: 77–79) have neatly summarized the three levels outlined above although they use slightly different terminology for the second level (they call it *comparative reflection*) as follows.

- *Descriptive reflection* involves describing a situation or problem.
- *Comparative reflection* involves thinking about the situation for reflection from different perspectives. Teachers try to solve the problem while also questioning their values and beliefs.
- *Critical reflection* involves teachers looking at all the different perspectives of a situation/problem and all of the players involved: teachers, students, the school, and the community.

Day (1993) maintains that most teachers will find themselves planning and acting (constructing practice) at the descriptive, P1 level and less on observation and reflection (deconstructing practice) at comparative level P2 and/or critical level P3; in addition any change that may occur as a result of reflection happens mainly at the P1 action level. Day (1993) also criticizes Schön's (1983) notion of reflective practice (outlined above) because he says Schön fails to deal with discourse; he says that the dialogical dimension of learning can only emerge from the process of confrontation

and reconstruction. Day's (1993) main point here is that reflection needs to be analytic and involve dialogue with others.

In a more recent criticism of the dominance of written reflection at the expense of dialogical reflection, Mann and Walsh (2017: 12), agreeing with Day (1993) above, maintain that experiential knowledge is "supported by collaborative discussion where thoughts and ideas about classroom practice are first articulated and then reformulated in a progression toward enhanced understanding." They suggest that such an approach includes discussions with other practitioners and thus does not take place in isolation. Mann and Walsh (2017) do however recognize the importance of various written approaches to written reflection such as narratives (see Chapter 4), introspective journals (see Chapter 9), and online written forms of reflection (see Chapter 14). In this book I maintain though that these can be used in combination with other tools to help trigger overall reflection for teachers. Some teachers may have more preference for one particular tool over another and so academics must be careful of co-opting approaches and tools to reflection that may represent their desired approach but not necessarily the teachers who are engaging in reflection. We still have a long way to go in determining appropriate approaches and tools, but I do not think we can suggest a "one size fits all" approach for teacher education and development programs. I believe that dialogue and collaboration among teachers are covered in this book and in fact in a review of the first edition of this book, influential scholar and author David Nunan (2010: 474) pointed out: "While the focus [of the book] is on reflection, collaboration also features prominently, particularly in the chapters on teacher development groups, classroom observations, and critical friendships." Indeed, Chapter 10 on teacher development groups outlines how teachers can use dialogue in a collaborative group manner in order to facilitate individual teacher's reflection in addition to journal writing, classroom observations, and critical friendships.

Benefits of reflective teaching

Why should language teachers look at what they do and reflect on their work beyond the quick after class muse of "That was a good class" or "The students were not very responsive today"? While these reflections are a necessary start, they are not very productive in that we do not know why the class was a good one (or even if the students learned anything or enjoyed it). Likewise, we should find out why the students were not responsive—it could be that

the teacher was at fault, the time of day was not conducive to having a class (after lunch or 5 p.m. on a Friday), or a host of many other possible and complex reasons. We need to know equally why a class was responsive or not responsive. We need to know what teachers believe to be good and bad teaching as well as what teachers do in their classrooms in order to be able to discuss teaching beyond mere preconceptions of what good teaching is or is not. Reflective teaching benefits teachers in the following ways:

- It frees the teacher from routine and impulsive action.
- It helps teachers become more confident in their actions and decisions.
- It provides information for teachers to make informed decisions.
- It helps teachers to critically reflect on all aspects of their work.
- It helps teachers to develop strategies for intervention and change.
- It recognizes teachers as professionals.
- It is a cathartic experience for practicing (and novice) teachers.

Reflective teaching and professional development

Reflective teaching as it is discussed throughout this book differs from traditional professional development in that traditional professional development assumes that teachers can (or should) improve their classroom practices as a result of gaining new information and knowledge from taking a workshop or course. This top-down approach relies on the applications of research conducted by others as a framework for teaching and assumes that the transmission of knowledge (usually from an outside expert) in a workshop or the like will change classroom teaching behaviors. In reality though workshop sessions of this nature have little actual effect on classroom teaching as not much change happens and if it does, it does not last long. Although reflective teaching shares the common goal of improving teaching, as it is outlined in this book, it also provides a platform for teachers to change their level of awareness of their current practices so that they can consider if these are still appropriate to them after such awareness. So this reflection can result in affirming current practices rather than making any behavioral teaching changes. Awareness of current practices is very important because as Freeman (1989: 33) says, "One acts on or responds to the aspects of a situation of which one is aware." Thus, reflective teaching involves looking at what is happening now in a teacher's life rather than ingesting new

information or knowledge about teaching methods or assessment (although this too can aid a teacher's reflections).

In more recent times, within the field of education, reflective practice has had a major impact on virtually all areas of a teacher's life from teacher education programs for novice teachers to professional development programs for experienced teachers. Indeed, in the field of education Zwozdiak-Myers (2012: 3) emphasized that reflective practice is central to a teacher's development because it helps teachers "to analyse and evaluate what is happening" in their classes so that they can not only improve the quality of their teaching, but also provide better opportunities for their students to learn.

Reflective language teaching

Language education embraced reflective teaching later than other areas within education and it is now considered an essential part of many language teacher education programs worldwide. Pennington (1992: 51) first proposed a general reflective/developmental orientation for language teachers "as a means for (1) improving classroom processes and outcomes, and (2) developing confident, self-motivated teachers and learners." She described reflection for language teachers generally as "deliberating on experience, and that of mirroring experience" and she also related teacher development to reflection where she maintained "reflection is viewed as the input for development while also reflection is viewed as the output of development" (Pennington, 1992: 47). The focus here is on analysis, feedback, and adaptation as an ongoing and recursive cycle in the classroom. However, and as in general education programs, the precise definition of reflective language teaching remains vague (Roberts, 1998). For example, in its weakest version, reflective language teaching is said to be no more than thoughtful practice where teachers sometimes, as Wallace (1996: 292) suggests, "informally evaluate various aspects of their professional expertise." This type of informal reflection does not really lead to improved teaching and can even lead to more "unpleasant emotions without suggesting any way forward." A second stronger version of reflective language teaching proposes that teachers systematically reflect on their own teaching so that they take more responsibility for the actions they take in their classrooms. Richards and Lockhart (1994: 1) emphasize this version when they say that teachers

should "collect data about their teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching." Richards (1990: 5) maintains that such type of self-inquiry and critical thinking can "help teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking." The contents of this book embraces the latter stronger version of reflective language teaching where there is conscious recall and examination of the classroom experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action. In addition and for the purposes of this book, I use the terms reflection, reflective practice, reflective inquiry, reflective thinking, and reflective teaching interchangeably indicating they hold the same meaning.

Thus within the field of second language education reflective practice has emerged as an approach where teachers actively collect data about their teaching beliefs and practices and then reflect on the data in order to direct future teaching decisions; thus the stronger version of the above definition is beginning to take root. This evidence-based approach to reflection encourages teachers to avoid making instructional decisions based on impulse or routine; rather, teachers are now encouraged to use the data they have obtained so that they can make more informed decisions about their practice (Farrell, 2015). Richards and Lockhart (1994: 1) summarize this evidence-based reflective approach where teachers "collect data about their teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching."

Reflective language teaching, as it is discussed in this book, is a bottom-up approach to teacher professional development that is based on the belief that experienced and novice language teachers can improve their understanding of their own teaching by consciously and systematically reflecting on their teaching experiences. It starts with the internal rather than the external and the real center of the process is teaching itself, and it uses the teacher's actual teaching experiences as a basis for reflection. By making systematic reflections on teaching, teachers can become free from making too many impulsive decisions about what to teach, when to teach, and why to teach it. Teachers should move beyond designing routine activities for their students to complete just because they have always done these. Reflective teaching enables teachers to act in a more deliberate and intentional manner.

Reflective practice means that teachers must subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to *critical* examination, by articulating these beliefs and comparing these beliefs to their actual classroom practices to see if there are any contradictions between practice and underlying beliefs. Hatton and Smith (1995: 35) note however, that the term *critical* as used in critical reflection "like reflection itself appears to be used loosely, with some taking it to mean more than constructive self-criticism of one's actions with a view to improvement" (p. 35). For example, in language teaching Pennington (1995: 706) has defined critical reflection as "the process of information gained through innovation in relation to the teacher's existing schema for teaching," but she does not include the broader society in her definition of critical reflection. However, Bartlett (1990: 204) sees a need to include the broader society in any definition of critical reflection within language teaching. He says that in order for language teachers to become critically reflective, they have to "transcend the technicalities of teaching and think beyond the need to improve our instructional techniques." For the purposes of this book the term critical in teaching includes "making judgments about whether professional activity is equitable, just, and respectful of persons or not" (Hatton and Smith, 1995: 35). In addition, a language teacher is considered to be reflective when he or she seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What and how is he/she doing in the classroom (**method**)?
2. Why is he/she doing this (**reason**)?
3. What is the **result**?
4. Will he/she change anything based on the information gathered from answering the first two questions (**justification**)?

In order to answer the first question posed above, teachers must first decide on what topic they want to reflect on and then systematically gather data about that topic. Topics that teachers can choose from to critically reflect on include:

- Aspects of their life and work by engaging in self-reflection (Chapter 2).
- Their beliefs and classroom practices (Chapter 3).
- Critical incidents and case analysis in their teaching and careers (Chapter 4).
- Their use of metaphors and maxims (Chapter 5).
- Communication and interaction in their classrooms (Chapter 6).
- Reflecting on teaching young learners (Chapter 7).

There are a number of procedures from which teachers can choose to facilitate this reflection over the course of their professional careers. Each procedure can be used alone or in combination with other procedures depending on the topic of investigation. For example, teachers can:

- Conduct an action research project to bring about change (Chapter 8).
- Write accounts of their experiences in teaching journals (Chapter 9).
- Join other teachers to discuss their teaching in teacher development groups (Chapter 10).
- Engage in classroom observations (individual, pairs, groups) (Chapter 11).
- Form collegial friendships in team teaching or peer coaching arrangements (Chapter 12).
- Use concept mapping to focus their reflections (Chapter 13).
- Use social media and online modes (Chapter 14).

Much of the discussion of reflective teaching thus far assumes a positive relationship between reflective language teaching and teacher effectiveness. However, education has a long but disappointing history of attempts to relate personality variables, styles, or qualities in teachers to student learning outcomes. Consequently, reflection and reflective practice has not escaped from its share of criticism. For example, a number of scholars have urged caution as to the applicability of reflective practice to real classroom situations. Some researchers have suggested that reflection and teaching are incompatible; reflection would paralyze a teacher from action and result in a dysfunctional classroom. Stanley (1998: 587) has cautioned language teachers that when they engage in reflective teaching, they may have some "emotional reactions to what is uncovered through investigation." Consequently, teachers should be emotionally ready to face what they may discover after they begin their reflections. Hoover (1994: 83) also wondered that "the promising acclamation about reflection has yielded little research qualitatively or quantitatively." He did not, however, rule out reflection in teaching, but he says reflection is a learned activity; he says it is "a carefully planned set of experiences that foster a sensitivity to ways of looking at and talking about previously unarticulated beliefs concerning teaching" (Hoover, 1994: 84). He also says that this self-analysis requires time and opportunity. I agree that reflection is a learned activity and I hope the contents of this book provide many different opportunities and tools for teacher learning to reflect on their practice.

Reflection

- Are you a reflective teacher? How do you know?
- What kind of reflections do you do immediately before and after teaching a language class?
- Do you reflect during class? If yes, how do you do this?
- What is your definition of reflective practice?
- Compare your definition with the definition of other teachers. Can you see any patterns in the different definitions (if they are different)?
- What is critical reflection and how is it different from reflection?
- Dewey mentioned the following dispositions of a reflective practitioner: *open-mindedness*, *responsibility*, and *wholeheartedness*. What is your understanding of each of these?
- Which type or moment of reflective practice (from the three types outlined above) would be most difficult for you to implement? Why?
- How can experienced teachers perform reflection-in-action as they teach?
- How can reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action lead to reflecting-for-action?
- Detail one of your reflection-in-action moments as outlined in the steps discussed above in reflection-in-action
- Which level of reflection do you think you are operating at—P1, P2, or P3? How do you know?
- Do you think it is worth it to reflect on your practice even if you do not discover new teaching or assessment methods and just gain a better understanding of what you are doing now? Explain.
- How would you attempt to answer each of the four questions on the method, reason, result, and justification for your teaching decisions posed above?
- Which question would be most difficult for you to answer and why?
- How do you think method, reason, result, justification are all interrelated?
- Try to answer the four questions posed by Hatton and Smith above.
- Oberg and Blades (1990: 179) maintain that the potential of being reflective "lies not in the theory it allows us to develop (about practice or reflection) but the evolution of ourselves as a teacher. Its focus is life; we continually return to our place of origin, but it is not the place we left." What is your understanding of this statement?

- Do you think it is unreasonable to expect language teachers consistently to engage in reflection? If no, why not?
- If yes, how often should teachers engage in reflection?
- Why do you think teachers should reflect on their practice?
- There still remain some unanswered questions (below) about reflective teaching that teachers may want to consider as they reflect (adapted from Hatton and Smith, 1995: 34–36). What are your answers to these questions:
  - Is reflection limited to thought processes about action, or more bound up in the action itself?
  - Is reflection immediate and short term, or more extended and systematic?
  - Is reflection problem-centered, finding solutions to real classroom problems, or something else?
  - How critical does one get when reflecting?

Conclusion

Reflection for teachers as it is outlined in this Introduction (and indeed the book) is much more than taking a few minutes to think about how to keep students on task. Reflective language teaching involves teachers systematically gathering data about their teaching and using this information to make informed decisions about their practice. It thus implies a dynamic way of being in the classroom. I suggest this book not be read as a prescription for reflection; rather, individual, and groups of, teachers should build on what is presented in the book and generate further examples of principles and practices of reflection that best suit their particular situations and contexts.

Chapter scenario

A group of experienced TESOL teachers were interested in developing professionally. The first teacher has to achieve rapid improvement in her students' communicative competence. As in most other countries around the world, the country she was teaching in sees the need to internationalize and the government is starting a drive to achieve this. The problem is it

also has to recognize that the education system's commitment to producing students who are able to understand English and to express themselves in the language has not been met because of the university entrance exams and old teaching techniques, among other things. This present discrepancy between the goals and the reality of English language education puts her under a lot of pressure to teach in ways that will result in great improvements in her students' speaking and listening ability. She seeks to become a better teacher. But it is not enough for her to know only which material should be taught, in what order it should be presented, and how the teaching process should be guided. She must also be able to find herself as a teacher by systematically looking at what she already knows and does, examining all the ideas presented by her, and then answering her own problems on the basis of her own experience.

The second teacher feels TESOL still do not have a very good idea of what we are doing when we teach. The concepts that dominate most TESOL theory seem to him only vaguely connected with the experiences of learners and teachers in the classroom. He thinks teachers have not been able to develop a dialogue with their experiences. Confronted on one side by theory and on the other by experience, we have only been consumers of other people's theory and not producers of the public data on which theory is dependent.

The third and fourth TESOL teachers were teaching for about 10 years and were both feeling burned out, and were not sure about what they were doing or where they were heading as TESOL teachers. They both realized that it would be a good idea to engage in some kind of professional development at this stage of their careers but were unsure about how or what to do.

The four teachers felt that TESOL teachers need to share their own experiences more to a clearer understanding of what it is to be a TESOL teacher and of how they can become better at what they do. Confronted by these complicated problems, the teachers were (separately) on the lookout for a group in which they could find answers. They all knew T (Tom) separately as he was facilitating reflection with teachers they knew in other locations and so they all asked him if he would facilitate their professional development through reflective practice.

With T's help the group decided to meet regularly and write a journal to write down their thoughts and their feelings about what they had done in the classroom. The four participants met together as a group once a week and brought journals for each other to read. At the eleven group meetings, which were supportive, T led a discussion about things that had concerned the

members during the week. The diverse subjects included life experiences, inability to deal with large classes, students' responses to questions in class, handling uninvolved students, material for conversation classes, giving feedback, and the concept of what it is to be a teacher. These meetings continued for one semester.

The teachers reported that they felt empowered as a result of this process of reflection. They noted that the refreshment of looking back on their teaching with an open mind gave them the chance to develop. Whether this help actually resulted in any development was up to the individual. That is the cornerstone they noted as they were still in the process of development. All three suggested that one semester is too short a period to expect any major development except for boosting or encouraging each other with different experiences. They all believe that they are more efficient teachers as a result of these reflections. As one teacher noted:

> We believe we can more easily understand our students' point of view. But does this mean we really are better? We wanted to be better. We did try. If trying means one becomes better, then we are now better teachers. We did do a lot of talking about our problems in different school settings and from different perspectives and if sharing knowledge helps then this also means we are better teachers.

Reflection

- Are you interested in reflecting on your teaching with a group of other teachers?
- How would you go about organizing such a group?
- What topics would you be interested in reflecting on?
- Would you like to write a journal to help you reflect in addition to regular group discussion?
- What do you think of the group of teachers above and their organization of a group to reflect on their work?
- The group suggested that one semester is not enough time to make any changes as a result of reflection. What do you think? How long would you be willing to reflect?
- What do you think of the topics they reflected on: life experiences, inability to deal with large classes, students' responses to questions in

class, handling uninvolved students, material for conversation classes, giving feedback, and the concept of what it is to be a teacher?
- What is your understanding of feeling of empowerment the teachers mentioned above?
- The teachers believe they are more efficient teachers as a result of their reflections. What is your understanding of this and the comment they made after that above?
- Do you believe that teachers must change and this change must be behavioral in the classroom or can it be cognitive as a result of reflecting on your practice?

When you have answered these questions return to your answers after you have read the complete contents of the book and see if they still hold true for you as a reflective TESOL teacher.

12

Collegial Friendships

Chapter Outline

Introduction

The previous chapter on observation briefly addressed the idea of language teachers entering into critical friendships as a means of reflecting on their teaching. This may especially be important for teachers who have undergone such self-monitoring (Chapter 11) of their classes and self-reflection (Chapter 2) in general it may be difficult to confront the self without such support. This support can come from other colleagues in the arrangement

of having another teacher act as a critical friend (Stenhouse 1975), team teaching and/or peer coaching whereby both collaborate in the exploration of teaching and learning language. This chapter discusses the process whereby language teachers can come together in collegial friendships, team teaching and peer coaching in order to reflect on their work.

Collegial friendships

Critical friendship is a term first discussed some time ago by Stenhouse (1975) when he recommended that another person could work with a teacher and give advice as a friend rather than a consultant in order to develop the reflective abilities of the teacher who is conducting his or her own reflections. Teacher critical friendships entail entering into a collaborative arrangement with another teacher "in a way which encourages talking with, questioning, and even confronting, the trusted other, in order to examine planning for teaching, implementation, and its evaluation" (Hatton and Smith, 1995: 41). Such critical friends can give voice to a teacher's thinking like looking into a mirror, while at the same time being heard in a sympathetic but constructively critical way. In addition, Farrell (2001b) reminds teachers that the word "critical" in such a collaborative friendship arrangement does not, and should not connote any negativity, as the word tends to do in everyday conversation. Research has indicated that critical friendships:

- Reduces the sense of isolation teachers may feel.
- Promotes collegiality.
- Promotes shared observation and associated benefits.
- Take time to evolve.
- Trust must be negotiated and earned between the teachers involved.

Team teaching is a type of critical friendship arrangement whereby two or more teachers cooperate as equals as they take responsibility for planning, teaching and evaluating a class a series of classes or a whole course (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Stewart, Sagliano, and Sagliano (2002) discovered that successfully implementing a team teaching arrangement in an English-medium four-year university in Japan where partners were equals demands a lot of time, patience, and honest reflection by the teachers and administrators. In addition, Sturman (1992) noted positive outcomes of a team teaching arrangement in Japan where native and non-native teachers teamed up to teach English. Although the Japanese teachers had initially expressed low

expectations about the whole idea of team teaching, as the project progressed beyond the pilot scheme, they began to feel more positive about their experiences. The native speaker teachers also had positive impressions of the team teaching experience beyond the pilot scheme as they felt that everyone gained from the experience. In addition, the students believed that their English was improving and that they had enjoyed this way of team teaching. Overall, research suggests that team teaching arrangements can have the following benefits for both teachers and institutions in which they occur:

- It provides opportunities for teachers to discuss their teaching.
- It promotes recognition and appreciation of alternative methods and techniques of teaching and evaluating lessons.
- It provides a ready-made classroom observation situation but without any evaluative component.
- It provides an effective means of teacher development.
- It provides more opportunities for individual student interaction with a teacher because there is more than one teacher in the room.

Although similar in many ways, peer coaching (another form of critical friendship) is actually different than team teaching because its main aim is for one teacher to help another improve his or her teaching. In a peer coaching arrangement there is no evaluation, no supervising, just a professional collaboration in which one teacher wants another peer to observe his/her class in order to obtain feedback on one specific aspect of teaching or learning. It focuses specifically on the process of teaching and on how two teachers can collaborate to help one or both teachers improve some aspect of their teaching. Peer coaching has the following characteristics: two teachers decide on a collaborative relationship; the two plan a series of opportunities to explore teaching collaboratively; one adopts the role of coach or "critical friend"; they undertake a joint project or activity that involves collaborative learning; and the coach provides feedback and suggestions (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Research has indicated that peer coaching benefits language teachers because:

- It provides opportunities for teachers to look at teaching problems and to develop possible solutions.
- It is a useful way of helping beginning teachers learn from more experienced colleagues.
- It provides a supportive context in which teachers can try out new teaching strategies or methods.
- It helps develop collegiality between teachers.

Case study I: Non-native speaker teacher and native speaker critical friend

The first case study presented in this chapter presents the outcome of a critical friendship where the teacher, Mee-Hee (a pseudonym), a female Korean EFL teacher wanted to reflect on her work with a critical friend (Farrell, 1999b). Mee-Hee was observed for six classes during the semester, which were audio-recorded. Mee-hee also wrote a teaching journal in order to help her further reflect on her teaching. After her first class, Mee-Hee said that she was a little uncomfortable with her actual teaching methods and this was why she wanted a critical friend to observe her teach: "I try to change my teaching method but I can't. I follow the text habitually . . . I always do that way because I learned such a way from my professor." In reaction and after talking about this with her critical friend, Mee-Hee decided not to prescribe a book for her speech class; instead, she said she would bring in her own materials. The second class had a student standing at a podium reading a prepared speech for thirty-five minutes and after Mee-Hee asked all the questions until the end of class. After this class, Mee-Hee said that her lesson objective had been for the students to make a ten-minute speech followed by question and answer period by the other students. When her critical friend shared his observation notes, Mee-Hee commented that her class may need some change: "I need to establish rules for the discussion and speech. Before class the speaker should give a handout of vocabulary list to the students and have time to go over the words." She also said that she would like to know the times in the class when she asked questions and gave instructions. Both decided to use a modified version of a SCORE (Seating Chart Observation Record) chart (see Chapter 11) because Mee-Hee was familiar with this instrument. Figure 12.1a outlines the SCORE analysis after Mee-Hee's third class.

The SCORE shows a lot of back-and-forth flow of communication between the speaker and the students (after the speech) in the form of questions and answers. Mee-Hee was surprised to find out from this SCORE analysis that she had asked forty-five questions during the class as she said she had thought that she was "a silent participant as a listener in my classes." She continued, "Until now I had no realization about my questioning pattern." She decided to change these patterns. The SCORE analysis of Mee-Hee's fourth class is shown in Figure 12.1b below.

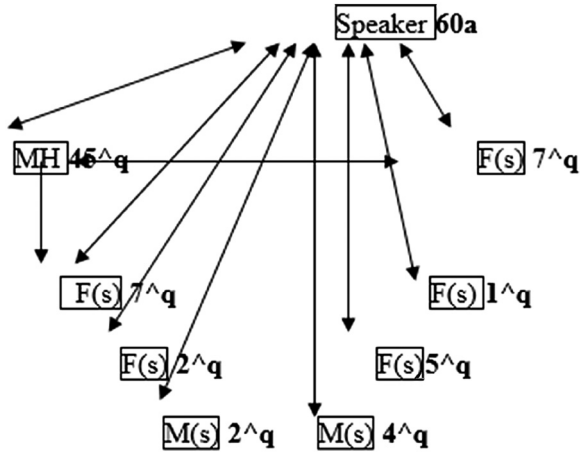

Figure 12.1a SCORE Analysis of Mee-Hee's third class.

(*Note* F(s) = female student; M(s) = male student; MH = Mee-Hee (the teacher); ^q = ask; a = answer question. The long arrows show the directional flow of the questions and answers).

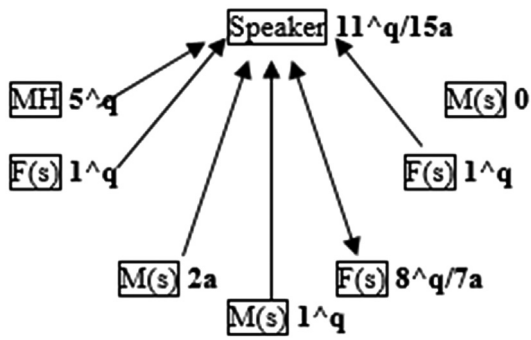

Figure 12.1b SCORE Analysis of Mee-Hee's fourth class.

(*Note* F(s) = female student; M(s) = male student; MH = Mee-Hee (the teacher); ^q = ask; a = answer question. The long arrows show the directional flow of the questions and answers).

This SCORE analysis shows a dramatic change in the communication pattern. The critical friend's observation notes showed that at the beginning of the class when the speaker and the other students realized that Mee-Hee was going to stay silent they got on with the class themselves and the discussion after the presentation even included a sustained competitive discussion between one female student (on the right of the SCORE analysis figure) and the speaker.

Case study I reflection

- Discuss what you think of the critical friendship process as outlined in the case study above.
- What was the role of the critical friend in this case study?
- Why do you think Mee-Hee was able to look at her classroom practice more critically and move beyond descriptions of what she was doing?
- How do you gauge how many questions you ask in class?
- Mee-Hee says that she wants to personalize topics to Korean culture. What do you think about personalizing topics that are in the textbook?

Case study II: Native speaker teacher and native speaker critical friend

The second case study presented in this chapter concerns another example of a critical friendship which lasted over a period of sixteen weeks. An Australian EFL teacher in Korea and a native speaker critical friend (this author) came together, to consider the professional development of both participants. This example will focus only on the reflections of the EFL teacher in the critical friendship dyad and report the results. The initial goal of the critical friendship was to talk about teaching in general and the teacher's teaching a set of specific classes in a private company in particular and all at the teacher's request. The teacher also kept a teaching journal and wrote whenever he wanted to. The teacher, Greg, was teaching an English conversation class, which was part of a private company's on-going education program. The objective of the course was to increase the students' (who were all company employees) English conversational ability.

Greg invited the critical friend to visit his classes and observe with the use of a video camera (both negotiated this and agreed it would be good for the reflection process. No specific role was discussed for the critical friend except to manage the observation process of his teaching and to try to stimulate discussion of the teacher's teaching after observed classes. The discussions after each observed lesson usually started with the teacher evaluating his lesson either positively or negatively. He then tried to

interpret the students' interactions and/or problems he perceived that they had encountered. For example, in one meeting, he started with a negative evaluation of his lesson. He said that he was disappointed with the class. He continued:

> I must work harder on the lead in to my introduction, but still I am unsatisfied, I had wanted them to talk more. I was not happy with Y.S., speaking a lot of Korean. A good lesson for me is when students are talking together; today they were not talking, so it was not a good lesson.

On one later occasion he asked the critical friend for suggestions on how to check what his students' had learned in each class. The critical friend suggested he use a short questionnaire that he had used in his own classes that asked four short questions as follows:

1. What do you think you learned today?
2. What was easy for you?
3. What was difficult for you and why?
4. What did you enjoy?

He decided to use the questionnaire at the end of his following class near the end of the reflection process. In his teaching journal he wrote that the students gave less than flattering answers: "Two [out of a class of seven] did not understand the first question, and one answered he did not enjoy anything, and said nothing was interesting." Even though this he was surprise with these answers, the process of asking his students for their perceptions caused him to reflect on his teaching in general; "I haven't looked at my teaching. I haven't been looking at my class and my teaching closely, only vague and theoretical." As a result in the final discussion he said he would try to change: "I am trying to develop a new teaching method because I don't want to continue the same old way. I have to work harder."

Case study II reflection

- Discuss what you think of the critical friendship process as outlined in the case study above.
- What was the role of the critical friend in case study II?
- The teacher in case study II above said that he would follow his lesson plan even if the class was not going well. What is your opinion of this?

- The teacher also said that he judges the success of the class with how the students react. What is your opinion of this?
- What is your opinion of the short questionnaire that the critical friend gave to Greg?
- How do you judge if your teaching is successful?

Case study III: Group critical friends

This case study the experiences of three female novice ESL teachers during their first semester teaching in a university language school in Canada. I present a summary of their first experiences (Farrell, 2014—see also Chapter 9 for other details on this group). The teachers, all very experienced ESL teachers with advanced degrees, met over a two-year period with weekly group meetings during the academic terms of the first year and follow-up meetings during the second year in order to reflect on their practice. I report here on their realization on the importance of critical friendships while teaching ESL.

During the group discussions one teacher said that she realized that teaching is an isolated act and that teachers are isolated within their classrooms when she remarked that, "So often you are out on your island 'Oh my God! Here I am by myself. Am I the only one having this issue?'" She then noted that she always knows that she can talk to another colleague about any issue and that her colleagues do not judge her. Another example was when another teacher talked about working with an ESL teacher in the same institution (but outside this teacher group) about her struggles teaching the same level class so that they could help each other. As a result of this collaboration, the teacher said that she realized that she now viewed this other teacher "in a whole new role" as a as a "critical friend." She added that she was happy that her colleague took on a mentor role for her because she had not had any experience teaching at that particular level before, but the colleague had. The teacher continued: "She clicked into almost a mentor mode because she had taught speaking so much more than I have recently and then she came up with these [teaching] ideas."

This critical friendship made her realize the value of colleagues collaborating; she continued: "It just started to hit me that as we were talking that we could do more together than this; that's what you need between colleagues to get this kind of thing going." As a result she said that she tried

to meet other colleagues to discuss her teaching: "I'm meeting with other teachers and we're talking about our teaching. We're trying to become better teachers. I like to share what I learn with them." The other teacher in the group of three also reflected on the value of collaborating with other colleagues and how she found these collaborations "reassuring" for her. She added: "It was nice to see that people have some sort of common characteristics and you have to understand how each is working together as a staff." Thus all three teachers were collaborating with their colleagues in critical friendships so that they could reduce their feelings of isolation.

Case study III reflection

- Discuss what you think of the critical friendship process in groups as outlined in the case study above.
- Why do you think teaching can be an isolated act?
- How can reflecting with a critical friend reassure your practice?
- Have you ever "clicked" with a colleague?
- If yes, did it lead to a critical friendship for both of you?
- If no, are you willing to seek out a colleague as a critical friend?

Practical applications for TESOL teachers

Critical friends

Critical friends are teachers who collaborate in a two-way mode that encourages discussion and reflection in order to improve the quality of language teaching and learning. This collaboration incorporates Schrange's (1990: 40) depiction of collaboration as "the process of shared creation" wherein "two or more individuals with complementary skills [interact] to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own." This type of collaboration requires teachers to embark on reflection; however, not all teachers are ready to reflect (Moon and Boullon 1997). Therefore, the readiness of the teacher should be considered before the process begins. Since critical friendship means self-disclosure and

some process of change, the person who is reflecting should be in a good personal psychological state in order to be able to confront any inconsistencies that may occur. It should be understood that reflection can cause doubt, and that for this reason some people may not want to face any further uncertainties at this stage of their life.

That said, it may also be necessary within the friendship when trust has been established that the friend not be afraid of challenging the teacher if he or she observes instances where the teacher could be challenged. As Hatton and Smith (1995) suggest this challenging by the critical friend may be very necessary for a deeper examination and evaluation of teaching. In case study II outlined in this chapter the teacher said that he judged successful teaching on his students' reactions (or lack of reactions) and when they exhibited any signs of boredom (such as yawning or glazed eyes) he evaluated these signs of distress or noninvolvement as his inability to entertain the students; he commented:

> It is a reflection on you if they are not involved. I must entertain them. If they are not involved, it is a reflection on you as you are not popular and we must get more people to come. I am interested in attention getting; there is no learning if there is no interest. Entertainment is a performance, not like music, like theater. I must get more interesting topics.

When challenged by the critical friend that he may want to consider changing his lesson plan, Greg was not convinced as he said he would "stick to the lesson plan even if it wasn't going well." In a later discussion he said that he was still concerned with his students' silence and he became very sensitive to their reactions in his class. The critical friend challenged him again to not look at each specific reaction and Greg agreed that "Maybe I am too sensitive but a slight indication of tiredness, yawning or eyes not focused or not looking at the book is a sign of distress" for him. He said he would work at reconciling this. When challenged about his theories of teaching, he said that he was somewhat confused. He continued:

> I do not really know what I am doing. I do not plan in advance; it is not that I am not organized; it is a problem of knowledge about teaching. Sometimes I am grasping at straws. I want to fill up the time. Now I want to get down to work and leave theory behind. It is necessary to go further in ESL, but I do not know how.

As it turned out, he started a Master's degree in education around the same time and possibly as a way to look deeper into his teaching. Even though the

critical friendship did not produce any observable change in the teacher's teaching behaviors, it was, nevertheless, successful in providing him with a forum to begin probing his teaching theories and beliefs; he seemed comfortable when talking with me after his class, although these discussions were general in nature. In his journal he wrote: "Conversation with the critical friend after class was a meeting of the minds. We were on the same wavelength and it was possible to say what I thought and I felt good after it." Similarly, in case study I outlined in this chapter Mee-Hee's reflections six months after her experiences with the critical friend were mostly positive. Although she said it was difficult for her to look at her own teaching, she nevertheless said that she is now "a more empowered teacher." As Francis (1995) says, "Critical friends can stimulate, clarify, and extend thinking . . . and feel accountable for their own growth and their peers" (p. 234).

Team teaching

In language teaching critical friendships can be formed as a stand-alone general reflective arrangement outlined above, or in a more focused team teaching or peer coaching arrangement. Teachers who come together to team-teach a course (or a lesson) must first consider what roles each will play within the team so that they can collaborate successfully. Richards and Farrell (2005) outline some of the following team teaching arrangements that teams can choose from depending on what best meets their needs:

- *Equal partners*: both teachers see themselves as having an equal experiences and knowledge and so all decisions are shared equally for all stages of the lesson: planning, delivery, monitoring, and checking.
- *Leader and participant*: one teacher is given or assumes a leadership role because he or she has more experience with team teaching.
- *Mentor and apprentice*: one teacher is recognized as an expert teacher (and thus take more responsibility) while the other is a novice.
- *Native/Advanced speaker and less proficient speaker*: in some situations (such as in Japan's JET program and Korea's KET program) a native English language speaker or an advanced speaker of English may team-teach with a less proficient speaker. In some cases the native/advanced speaker takes responsibility for those aspects of the lesson that are more linguistically demanding but in many cases the lesson takes place in the less proficient speaker's class so he or she must take responsibility for setting up the lesson.

Next, teams should realize that team teaching is just that, a team, not two individuals, approach to planning the lessons, deciding and preparing the activities, delivering the lessons, and evaluating the effectiveness of the lessons. Both members of the team should take equal responsibility for every stage of the teaching process and trust each other throughout. Of course, team teaching must also allow for teachers who have differing personalities, teaching styles and even planning styles. In order to accommodate such differences, Struman (1992: 169) suggests that the team consider "The principle of flexible equality" whereby teachers with different personalities acknowledge these differences and not to try to avoid or bury them. Instead, the teachers can define their roles and responsibilities that are most suitable for their own individual needs and situations. Teachers in a team teaching arrangement must then decide more specific day-to-day actions that take into account such logistical issues as who will begin each class and who will finish the class if they decide both will teach each class. Alternatively, the team can decide that one teacher will teach (and possibly plan) one complete class. If this is the case, then the team must decide what (and where the other teacher will sit or stand and if the teacher will join in or not) the other teacher's role will be. One useful exercise here would be for the team to ask the students in each class what they would prefer in such arrangements because they are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries of a team teaching arrangement. The best of all worlds here would be a combination of all the has been discussed above at least for the first few classes so that both the team and the students can decide which arrangement best suits teaching and learning needs.

If team teaching is adopted by the administration of a school, as is sometimes the case, Richards and Farrell (2005) suggest that it is very important that each team knows what the overall aim of the team teaching program because team teaching may not be for everybody. It is important then for the administration to inform their teachers about certain aspects of team teaching such as:

- If it is voluntary.
- If one gets to choose who to teach with or not.
- How much time it will take.
- The amount of extra work it will involve.
- How conflict between teachers in a team will be resolved.
- How the students will be briefed about the team teaching process.
- How the teams will be evaluated.

Stewart, Sagliano, and Sagliano (2002) outline and interesting institutionally arranged team teaching situation in which prior to each term the teachers choose partners by making a ranked selection of desired co-teachers. Administrators then set the teams by matching first and second choices. Each teaching pair negotiates their own procedures for developing and teaching a course. Then as equal partners, co-teachers jointly create materials, teach simultaneously in the classroom, and determine grades. The authors concluded that successful implementation of team teaching demands time, patience, honest reflection, by both teachers and the administration.

Peer coaching

A peer coaching arrangement takes place so that the observed teacher can develop new knowledge and skills and a deeper awarness of his/her own teaching. To make the peer coaching work successfully, each participant must recognize that he or she has a specific role to follow in the peer coaching relationship. For example, the peer coach can help their less experienced teachers in the following general ways (adapted from Bova and Phillips, 1981):

- To encourage less experienced teachers in setting and attaining short- and long-term goals.
- To teach less experienced teachers the skills necessary to survive and promote career-scope professional development.
- To protect less experienced teachers by limiting their exposure to responsibility.
- To provide opportunities for less experienced teachers to observe and participate in their work.
- To act as role models.

In addition, Gottesman (2000: 37) suggests the following roles for the teacher in a peer coaching relationship:

- Be committed to peer coaching to analyze and improve instruction.
- Be willing to develop and use a common language of collaboration in order to discuss the total teaching act without praise or blame.
- To request to enter into a peer coaching relationship (e.g., by requesting a classroom observation visit and to observe as a coach if so asked).

- Be open-minded and willing to look for better ways of conducting classroom business.
- Act as a colleague and as a professional.

Classroom observations can be phased-into peer coaching in a typical developmental classroom observation four-step sequence of pre-observation discussion, actual classroom visit, post-visit discussion, and general review of the process. The teacher can take the first step in a peer coaching situation by requesting a visit from a more experienced or knowledgeable peer to come to his/her class for a limited period of time. At this pre-observation stage both the teacher and the peer coach should attempt to establish common ground rules about the process during this phase so that there is no misunderstanding. For example, the teacher and the coach should make sure what kind of feedback will be given to the teacher after the classroom visit. The teacher then teaches a class where a peer coach is also present but does not get involved in any way. The classroom visit may be audio-recorded and/or video-recorded depending on the issue of investigation and a lesson transcript may also be prepared for later discussions if both teacher and coach think it useful for their purposes. The two teachers later meet and discuss what was written and what was achieved. This discussion initially focuses on the information that the coach collected as was agreed to in the pre-observation meeting. After, the information has been shared the teacher can ask the peer coach to make specific suggestions for further development of the issue under scrutiny and they can enter into another cycle of observation after this to see if the new suggestions have had an impact on the teacher's teaching. Teacher and coach can then review the whole process especially if they want to switch roles—the teacher becomes the coach for his/her fellow teacher.

Reflection

- Have you ever experienced a critical friendship relationship? If yes, describe your experiences.
- What is your understanding of the term "critical" in critical friendship relationships?
- When teachers meet as critical friends, they should focus on the more on the friend and less on the critical. Discuss this approach to critical friendship.

- Have you ever experienced a team teaching relationship? If yes, describe your experiences.
- How was the relationship set up, and what were the different roles played by each team member?
- Do you think it is possible for two teachers to take equal responsibility for planning and teaching a class? If not, why not?
- How can the students benefit from having two teachers teach the same lesson?
- Both teachers in a team teaching relationship have certain roles to play. Discuss these different roles and outline possible problems that may arise within each role.
- How can peer coaching benefit the teacher, the coach and the school?
- Richards and Farrell (2005) suggest that feedback in a peer coaching relationship should take the form of "No Praise, No Blame." What is your understanding of this?
- The peer coach has a specific role to play in a peer coaching relationship. Discuss this role and outline possible problems that may arise between the teacher and the coach.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined three different arrangements in which language teachers can collaborate to reflect on their teaching. The three collaborative arrangements are critical friendships, team teaching and peer coaching. The main idea of entering a critical friendship is that two (or more) teachers can gain from having a trusted other comment on their teaching in a non-judgmental manner. The main purposes of peer coaching is to support a teacher's existing strengths rather than to evaluate him/her. Peer coaching can help inexperienced teachers learn from more experienced colleagues in a supportive environment so that they try out new teaching methods and get feedback. In a team teaching arrangement usually two teachers equally share the responsibility for teaching and evaluating a class so that each teacher can learn more about the strengths and expertise of their colleague. All three collaborative arrangements follow Robbins' (1991: 1) ideas of colleagues working together "to reflect on current practices, expand, refine, and build new skills, share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace."

Chapter scenario

Anna and Carmen are both American teachers teaching in a private institute in Taiwan. They each teach four classes but team-teach one of them. For that class, they plan the class together. They divide up the activities in each unit of their textbook deciding who will teach which exercises and which exercises they will present together. They plan each of their lessons to determine their roles within the lesson. They are both present for every lesson and share the teaching time. They both enjoy their team-taught lessons and feel that both they and their learners benefit from them. The following example shows how Anna and Carmen planned an intermediate level reading class:

Lesson Objectives:

- To teach the students to skim to find the main idea of a passage.

Prior Knowledge:

- Students have learned how to locate information by reading and finding the main sentence of each paragraph. This lesson is to practice increasing their reading speed within scanning and skimming for information.

Materials:

- Reading materials—a passage from their textbook on sports plus supplementary materials.
- Overhead projector.

Lesson Plan:

- **Stage I**: Opening (5 to 10 minutes): Introduction to the topic sport. Anna activates students' background knowledge on sports and asks students to suggest as many different kinds of sport within 3 minutes. Anna asks students to rank their favorite sports in order of importance. As the students call out their answers Carmen writes them on the board.

- **Stage II**: Anna distributes handouts on sports schedule from the newspaper and worksheet. Carmen asks the students to read it quickly and answer the true/false questions about it within 3 minutes. Carmen goes over the answers. At this stage of the lesson Carmen wants to focus on the concept of skimming for general gist with authentic materials.
- **Stage III**: Carmen discuses skimming to get the general meaning or gist of a passage. Anna asks students to turn to a text on sports in the textbook. Anna asks the students to read and answer the true/false questions within 5–7 minutes. Anna asks students for answers and writes them on the board.
- **Stage IV**: Closing: Carmen summarizes the importance of reading a passage quickly first in order to get the gist. Carmen gives homework of reading the next day's Newspaper front-page story and writing down in four sentences the gist of the story.
- **Follow-up**: Carmen and Anna meet briefly after class in order to evaluate the lesson they just taught.

Post-Lesson Discussion

- Carmen and Anna discussed their lesson in the staff room immediately after class. They decided to look at what they thought went well and what they were unsure about. Both were pleased at the way the students were able to follow their instructions and directions. Anna, however felt that Carmen's instructions for the skimming phase of the lesson were a bit fast, as some of the students near her did not do what was required of them until they asked Anna for clarification. Carmen had not realized this. They also realized that the changeover from Carmen to Anna to use the text in stage III did not go smoothly. So they decided to make two changes for the next team teaching session: (1) to back up oral instructions with written instructions on the whiteboard in future so there would be fewer misunderstandings and (2) to decide on one of them to take responsibility for each stage with the other teacher acting as a resource person like distributing handouts, or writing answers on the board (as happened in stage II). This way, they hoped the students would not become confused about who was teaching them and who to answer when asked questions. Overall, though, they were very pleased with the way the lesson went and looked forward to the next session.

Reflection

- What do you think about this team teaching arrangement?
- Think up a different possible post lesson discussion between Anna and Carmen.
- Try to experience a similar critical friendship and/or a team teaching arrangement and/or a peer coaching arrangement with colleagues in your school or district.
- How can a school/institution best support a critical friendship arrangement in a school?
- How can a school/institution best support a peer coaching arrangement and/or program in a school?
- How can a school/institution best support a team teaching arrangement and/or program in a school?
- What would be the main concerns of the teachers in a school where a team teaching and/or peer coaching program was implemented by the administration?
- How can the administration best address these concerns?