Reflective Writing
A Way to Lifelong Teacher Learning

Edited by

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PREFACE

Writing as a means of teacher learning is the focus of *Reflective Writing: A Way to Lifelong Teacher Learning*. As the editors, we wanted to showcase writing reflectively about practice as

- A lifelong learning resource for teachers
- A powerful tool in any form of inquiry-based teaching, such as reflective practice and action research
- A flexible process, capable of providing professional support and stimulus to teachers in any teaching circumstances

We believe that writing reflectively is an enjoyable but rigorous way in which teachers can learn how to be more effective teachers in their own unique settings.

The teachers who write reflectively in this book are language learners, teachers of English and other languages, teacher educators, and higher education teachers. Their writing includes dialoguing in journals online, group journals, and using autobiography, narrative, memoir, phenomenology, and self-study. Most of the contributors use reflective writing as a class resource as well as a support for their own professional development. As practising teachers, they represent the world of TESOL in Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America. They show that reflective writing is a powerful, personal resource that encourages teachers not only to write but also to communicate about teaching outside their immediate educational settings.

The chapters comprise case analyses of teacher learning. The contexts include formal teacher education, such as short courses and graduate programs. The chapters also document professional in-service communities, informal teacher groups, pairs of teachers reflecting together, and individual teachers writing to reflect on practice at particular points in their lives, or integrating it in their daily practice.

A variety of themes is evident, such as the use of electronic technology as a writing tool, collaborative journaling, global networking, creating teacher-learning communities, and teacher-initiated research.

The first chapter provides a conceptual frame, explaining what we mean by reflective writing and the variety of ways in which it can work and sustain teachers. The following chapters offer a continuum of experience, including individual teachers using reflective writing for self-study, pairwork, small groups, classes, and finally, communities of teachers who write reflectively. Each chapter, except Chapter 1, is prefaced by a pre-reading question drawing attention to the form or aspect of reflective writing featured in that chapter. The book ends with a few suggested reflective tasks to be used for self-study or with other teachers, and a short list of briefly annotated references of resources that the editors have found useful.

We believe that, like the other writers in this book, most teachers could use reflective writing as a resource to link them with teachers in different parts of the world, to examine their own practice, and/or as a way of working with the teacher in the classroom next door. The book is thus suitable for both novice and experienced teachers to use as self-, small-group or learning-community study. It is suitable for teachers working alone or as part of pre-service education or in-service activities.

This book can be read in two ways. By checking out the pre-reading questions with Chapters 2 to 12, it's possible to read thematically, selecting according to the writing process featured in a particular chapter. Alternatively, the chapters can be read sequentially, following through the use of writing by teachers writing alone, in pairs, small groups, or in learning communities of practice.

We, the editors, write because we enjoy writing reflectively and because it helps us learn and develop as teachers. We believe this is a lifelong process—that we cannot be effective teachers if we are not

also learners. Writing reflectively has helped us rediscover how rewarding learning is. We hope that you agree, and that this book encourages you to find out for yourselves.

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Chapter 1

REFLECTIVE WRITING—GETTING TO THE HEART OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Jill Burton

Introduction

Reflective writing is a versatile resource. Writing not only supports reflection and professional learning in many teaching settings, it can also be a pleasurable and sociable activity. Many teachers are not sure what they think before they write, but find that writing about their practice brings new insights and understanding, a sense of personal and professional accomplishment, and a readiness to share insights with others.

This chapter explains and illustrates the different meanings that reflective writing can have and suggests how teaching practitioners can use it.

Writing: Pleasure or Pain?

Writing is hard, emotional, aesthetic labour. Sitting at a keyboard for hours on end is hard on nerves and bodies. (Kamler & Thomson, 2006, p. 4)

It has become part of what I do and perhaps who I am. (Burton, 2007, Response #3[1])

These quotations represent two extremes—the agony and the ecstasy if you like—of writing. How does the intense experience of writing connect with teaching? Effective teaching depends upon thinking, reflecting and evaluating, and writing can be involved in all these activities. Here are some typical examples:

Planning lessons	Designing units of work
Jotting down ideas	Note-taking
Taking messages	Recording the gist of meetings
Marking student assignments	Filling in assessment sheets
Drafting class reports	Making journal entries
Editing drafts of texts	Sending e-mails
Critiquing course books	Writing up projects … and so on

This list demonstrates several things about the nature and roles of writing in teaching. Although it can be a simple means to an end (e.g., leaving messages for others, jotting down ideas) or the focus of attention (e.g., entering report files), all forms of writing are records of some sort that are often read by others.

Second, the way something is written (a message, a reference, a journal entry or a course design) affects how it will be read and evaluated. Writing is not just a convenient tool. It produces records of activity, generates thought, and influences whether insights about teaching decisions and events are forgotten or productive.

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1   A response to a survey that I conducted in 2007 with contributors to the Case Studies in TESOL Practice series published by TESOL Publications, Inc. on writing about teaching.

Third, when information and events are recorded, writers adopt a perspective. They try to be accurate or clear or capture a point of view. Since writing involves decisions about what and how to write, it also involves some form of evaluating and reflecting; writers, consciously or not, select and analyse material to some degree. Thus, writing offers teachers a way to learn about what they do.

In these three ways, therefore, a tool that teachers use every day has the potential to be a source of professional learning. But, because writing is just one of many everyday teaching activities, its importance and versatility tend to be downplayed. The writer is often "just getting something down on paper" or "maintaining a file on disk." By contrast, writing that consciously involves reflection, such as critiquing course texts, composing reports, or reflecting on a student's progress, may create anxiety. As a result, formal writing often feels hard to do. Teachers are probably much more aware at these times of the interplay of thinking, writing, and meaning.

Regardless of difficulty, the writers in this book seem to enjoy writing, and use it as a natural extension of their thinking and communicating with colleagues and students. They do not appear to find writing about teaching stressful—although all of them are evaluating their teaching, and evaluation is often stressful. On the contrary, these writers have come to enjoy and value writing for its central role in their teaching. In the chapters here, writing is a flexible resource and a means of collaborative evaluation, or independent reflection and learning. Demonstrating the pleasure of this for teachers new to or experienced in the classroom is a feature of this book—in fact, enjoying writing reflectively and sharing insights with colleagues directly led to its development.

Writing Leads to Community

We never see one another and we never speak directly, yet through the writing our intimacy is complete. (Duncker, 1996, p. 74)

Reflective writing about teaching is a way of inviting others into our classrooms to see what is going on there and to think about the ramifications of certain problems and successes. Teaching can be an isolated and isolating experience. Reflective writing about teaching is a way of expanding our world beyond the individual classroom. (Burton, 2007, Response #50)

Seven of the 18 authors in this book have written together previously. Five of them (Rebecca Mylnarczyk, Joy Kreeft Peyton, Phil Quirke, Carla Reichmann, and Latricia Trites) answered a call for case studies of journal writing in TESOL settings for a book being edited by the other two (Burton & Carroll, 2001). When that book was launched at the annual TESOL convention in Salt Lake City, some of the seven met for the first time to give a joint presentation on writing the case studies. Thus began an annual process of colloquia presentations at TESOL conventions on different aspects of reflective writing which lasted for several years. Over that period, those seven found that they used writing in all sorts of ways to support their teaching. Through a shared interest in

> You write it all, discovering it at the end of the line of words. (Dillard, 1990, p. 7)

reflective practice and how writing could support learning as teachers, they gradually formed what might be called "a loose but strong" learning community by e-mail—to the extent that their writing, sustained by the developing efficiency of electronic communication, ultimately led to choosing this medium for publishing this book. Mirroring this, many of the chapters focus on how electronic technology can support learners to write reflectively.

Because the original community was scattered in different parts of the world—Australia, Brazil, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States—electronic technology proved an effective resource. But this experience is not unique. For example, one respondent to my survey reported:

> Much reflection takes place in online communities of teachers—we feed off each other. This results in planned group efforts or presentations with a colleague. (Burton, 2007, Response #15)

After the seven had collaborated electronically for some time, they decided to write for publication beyond the immediate group. Recently, they had not only used journal writing but other forms of reflective writing as well. Writing for each other and together had provided the means for the group to focus on and extend the ways they wrote. They had come to see how writing functioned as a learning resource through writing reflectively.

Now through the larger audience that e-book publication can provide, feedback from outside the immediate group can grow.

Contributing to the book has given each of the writers different experiences—not least that of writing for an audience beyond the initial small group of seven—which have required them to subject their teaching and earlier reflections to deeper and wider rounds of reflection.

For example, as one of the original seven, I began editing this book with two colleagues whom I met for the first time while co-editing the earlier book on journal-writing. I subsequently met one of them (Phil Quirke) in person through conference colloquia. The second colleague (Carla Reichmann) has not met Phil, Joy, or me. We have collaborated solely by e-mail over a period of eight years. We have come to know each other and our work through our writing. The third colleague (Joy Kreeft Peyton) has been with the project from the start. First encountered in person at a TESOL convention in New York, she became a critical friend and contributor to the journal writing book (Burton & Carroll, 2001), then a member of the continuing writing community and finally an editor of this book.

For other contributors who became part of this widening group of writers (the initial group of teachers from five countries has grown to include teachers from and writing about two additional countries, Austria and Peru, and another continent, Asia), writing has enabled them to collaborate with new or different teachers in their own contexts as well. In my case, since the journal writing book with Michael Carroll, I have experimented with a model of journal writing used in the United Arab Emirates (Quirke, 2001), adapting it for use in a course in Thailand. One of the course participants and I continued to e-mail each other on teaching, and later published a piece on that experience (Burton & Usaha, 2004). This experience is typical of how reflective writing can stimulate connected, but independent lines of inquiry. So the 12 chapters written by 18 teachers in this book serve to illustrate in different ways the growing connections each has made through writing reflectively on teaching.

Trying to pin down what "a community of writers" actually means to each of this book's contributors is impossible. Some contributors, for example, may not feel a sense of community with other writers in the book because their contact has been solely with the book editors or with a co-writer who is the direct link to the editors. Nonetheless, their chapters report the social and supportive roles that reflective writing has played for them in their local contexts (Chapter 10, written by Rebecca Mlynarczyk with Renate Potzman and Kunigunde Haigner, provides a rich example of this). Some of the writing communities described are course groups of teacher-learners (Chapter 7 by Tania Romero, Chapter 8 by Sylvia Correa and Deborah Skilbelski, Chapter 9 by Mary Jeannot and James Hunter, for example). Others fit into larger, meta-communities created on the page in writers' analyses as they compare groups of teacher-learners they have worked with (Chapter 4 by Carla Reichmann, Chapter 6 by Latricia Trites, and Chapter 11 by Spencer Salas). In other chapters, a pair of writers examines their own teaching-learning relationship (Phil Quirke and Eberth Zagallo, Chapter 2), another pair investigates their learning of a third language through the medium of a shared second language, and the effects of those experiences on their teaching of English as an additional language (Michael Carroll and Seiko Tatsuta, Chapter 5).

Clearly, writing reflectively does not need to be a lonely experience; the sense of community and support that it provides can be as precise or as free ranging as writers wish. For the writers here,

reflective writing has not only been a personal means of teacher learning but also has been collaborative, a reaching out for conversation (Hawkins & Irujo, 2004) with other teachers about what matters to them: how they teach and what they can learn about it from writing reflectively. This reaching out became the focus of Joy Kreeft Peyton's chapter (Chapter 12), which surveyed the original group of writers from the journal writing book (Burton & Carroll, 2001) on their perceptions of the reflective writing community experience.

The community experiences of writers in this new book, although unique in themselves, are not that uncommon (see Bailey et al., 2001; Hawkins & Irujo, 2004; and Murphey & Sato, 2005, for other examples). The strength of such communities lies in their being loose yet strong; that is, they are able to adapt according to the interests and needs of participants yet maintain their core strength and meaning. For example, they enable teachers to use time efficiently because of the flexibility of the writing medium, as other writers have commented:

> Sometimes I carry a notebook with me, and write when there's some kind of slot (doctor's office, in-between classes, etc.) (Burton, 2007, Response #9)

Participation in these kinds of writing communities is self-selecting, dependent on an individual's current interests or commitment. For instance, only a few participants may be able to attend a conference colloquium, whereas more than a dozen writers may contribute to a book (in this case, 18 writers have contributed).

The Protean nature of an effective reflective writing community is also reflected in the different kinds of writing interaction it stimulates. Rather like the list of writing activities that opened this chapter, the writing can be transactional, interpersonal, descriptive, reflective, or a mixture of any of these. The sense of community that writers establish may be transitory and for a specific focus, enduring, oriented to teaching processes in general, or deliberately contrived to investigate new ideas or directions. Writing reflectively, as the chapters here show, helps teachers find community and new points of departure as individual, lifelong learners; the chapters themselves show the process, and the satisfaction, of using reflective writing as a professional learning resource in a range of teaching contexts and situations.

I have so far argued that reflective writing, a flexible resource that teachers use every day of their lives, can lead to professional learning and community when it is part of reflective practice or inquiry-based teaching. However, a number of specialist writers and researchers have argued that different forms of writing can be used as learning tools.

Writing Leads to Learning

Writing is a way of sense-making. (Burton, 2007, Response #62)

I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it. (Richardson, 2003, p. 501)

All the writers referred to in this chapter section have in common the belief that runs through this book: *Writing helps people learn and make sense of their lives.*

Two early sets of influential work on writing originated in difficult literacy experiences at school. Elbow's (1973 & 1994) work stemmed from his not liking or feeling able to do the kind of writing expected of him. When he later wrote to please himself, he found he enjoyed writing and that it was in itself a source of learning. He went on to research and teach writing. Mayher et al. (1983), whose work was connected with the writing across the curriculum (WAC) movement (e.g., Britton, 1970), sought ways

to make writing enjoyable for school learners. They found that when learners were asked to draw on their own personal experiences they became more responsive to writing tasks.

All these writers focused on writing to learn from lived experience. Mayher et al. identify three key elements in this process: writing an initial story, writing your feelings about the story, and describing where the story fits in your life experience (p. 11).

The influence of the WAC movement is still felt today. Pelz (1982), for example, describes writing that leads to learning as exploratory. She theorizes exploratory writing as

> writing in which persons seek to probe their experience, to reflect upon it, with the intentions of discovering and developing their attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and ideas about experience . . . . [T]he audience for such writing is the author of it, as well as trusted friends and colleagues who might be in a position to help the writer carry on the exploratory purpose of the writing. . . . Its subject matter perforce draws heavily upon the personal experience and knowledge of the writer, no matter what the nominal topic of the writing might be. . . . Thus, its form is typically meditative and associative, . . . and [its] style is, therefore, casual, adhering to the natural idiom of the writer. (p. 4)

Thus exploratory writing also begins from what writers already know. However, exploring personal experience such as teaching is challenging to do if it is to lead to learning and change, and exploratory writers need the support of "a true community of writers", as Pelz had earlier recognized (1982, p. 6). Spencer Salas's writing (Chapter 11) is a vivid contemporary portrayal of communities of teachers who "write to learn teaching" with and from each other.

A somewhat different perspective on writing as sense-making is offered in Willis and Smith (2000), who use phenomenology as the starting point for their expressive writing method. Following their method, teachers respond to "what's it like?" questions and are encouraged to use metaphor in their expressions of teaching events, ideas, or phenomena. Expressive writing, however, is not free writing; nor does it necessarily have a transforming function (Willis & Smith, 2000, pp. 5–6). Expressive writing concerns capturing the essence of experience. Shelley Spencer's chapter in this book stems from an interest in phenomenology.

Writing is now also recognized as central to learning that derives from research. Golden-Biddle and Locke (1997, p. 612), for instance, describe writing as composing and identify writing "up" as an important meaning-making stage in formal research. Holliday (2002) and Kamler and Thompson (2006), however, argue that writing is central to *all* stages of research; that is, writing does much more than merely record that research was done and that learning has occurred. Kamler and Thompson (2006) acknowledge their debt to Richardson (2003), who categorizes writing as a method of inquiry that she has integrated in her teaching and researching life. She describes writing as a creative, dynamic process (p. 506) capable of evoking incidents and feelings in new, insightful ways that overcome any boundaries between narrative and formal analysis. For example, keeping a teaching journal can help teachers make sense of patterns that emerge over a teaching life so that they form "a sort of arabesque in which certain elements appear and reappear" (see Joyce Carol Oates in *Writers at Work*, 5th series [Plimpton, 1981]).

Expressive writing, inquiry-based writing, writing as method of inquiry, writing-to-learn—all entail reflection. Reflective writing therefore suggested itself as an inclusive frame. Also, reflective writing provides a direct link to reflective practice and inquiry-based teaching (e.g., Freeman, 1998); both of these forms of teaching are important in this book.

As you will see as you read the chapters that follow, reflective writing is a flexible tool, and all the writers have their own orientations to reflection and writing.

Writing in Reflective Practice and Inquiry-Based Teaching

Viewing teachers as reflective practitioners assumes that teachers can both pose and solve problems related to their educational practice. (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 4)

No matter how good a teacher education program is, at best, it can only prepare teachers to begin teaching. (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 5)

Committed teachers reflect systematically on their teaching circumstances and actions (Dewey, 1933 & 1938); reflection is a well-established tradition closely associated with teaching (e.g., Schön, 1983 & 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). According to Schön (1983), explicit reflection on action helps teachers learn from decisions made while teaching (reflection in action) and, in doing so, develop teaching expertise (Senior, 2006; Tsui, 2003). Although Schön's distinction between reflection in and on action remains contentious (Burton, 2009) and other researchers have suggested that intuition may be a more insightful term (Atkinson & Claxton, 2003), reflection is a process all teachers value (e.g., Rebecca Mlnarczyk, Renate Potzmann, and Kunigunde Haigner, Chapter 10).

Through continuing spirals of reflection stimulated by questioning, teachers can move from addressing relatively simple technical teaching questions to tackling more critical issues (e.g., Hatton & Smith, 1995; Grushka et al., 2005; Reichmann, 2001). The chapters in this book flesh out how teachers as writers and inquirers move from considering technical and practical questions of what to teach and how to implement specific curricula to pondering the critical and moral meanings of their decisions and actions in their particular settings (e.g., Latricia Trites, Chapter 6). As the chapters collectively show, reflective writing is a resource that teachers can employ to support and stimulate reflection on many kinds of questions in many kinds of ways. Moreover, although all reflection is essentially reflection *on* action *for* further action, writing itself is reflection *in* and *on* action; that is to say, reflective writing is directly involved in the learning that leads to further action.

I now describe how teachers can use this learning process themselves.

Reflective Writing

A big reason for reflective writing is that it's a means of thinking for me. Writing freely, whether it's jotting down ideas on the spur of the moment or sitting down deliberately to think and work through ideas, helps the ideas to come. And beyond that, once the ideas get down on to paper writing about them helps me to clarify them in my mind. (Burton, 2007, Response #6)

[Writing is a means of] thinking widely and deeply about what I do, and why (Burton, 2007, Response #64)

Reflective writing is presented in this section as a series of simple-to-follow steps addressed to a teacher who has not previously written reflectively. The steps involve writing responses to a short series of essential questions. They are "What happened?", "How did it happen?", "Why did it happen?" and "What does it mean?". Chapters in this book demonstrate (e.g., Tania Romero, Chapter 7) similar structured questioning processes that lead teachers to write reflectively. Table 1.1 summarizes what is involved in this process.

Table 1.1. A Reflective Writing Typology

Type	Answering Questions…	Comments
1	What happens/happened?	Recording, expressing, "getting the story down"
2	How does/did it happen?	Commenting on, attempting to explain: e.g., by adding more detail or approaching the Type 1 story from another perspective or question
3	Why does/did it happen? What does this mean outside the immediate context of action?	Theorizing on the story and reflection in Types 1 & 2, linking them to personal theories, e.g., of language, learning, and teaching
4	Are the earlier reflections credible/ reasonable? Why? Why not? What do they mean now?	A subsequent written reflection in a developing sequence of reflective writing, in which writers continue to question and maybe involve others
5	Are the earlier reflections still credible/reasonable? Why? Why not? What do they mean now in the light of subsequent experience?	After longer intervals, writers use the developing spiral of reflection (which again may include other writers: e.g. as part of an interactive journal) to re-examine initial theorizing in the light of intervening events that may have changed their perspectives.

Source: Adapted from Burton (2005).

The Reflective Writing Process

The reflective writing process begins with a description of, for example, an incident, a phenomenon observed, or an unresolved teaching puzzle. Choose a simple incident or concern (e.g., use of a teaching aid in a specific lesson).

What happens/happened?
⟶   *Write a description of the incident, topic or problem.*

This process generates Type 1 reflective writing (see Table 1.1). Just get the basic facts down, as you know them. Write as simply and clearly as you can. Your description can be a narrative, a journal entry, an account of a conversation you overheard, for example. With this piece of writing, whatever its form, you have started the process of reflection. Although what you wrote may seem to be just a simple description of a problem or something that happened, its narrative structure and presentation and content are actually the result of decisions and preferences, whether you were conscious of them at the time or not. Another teacher would write a different account.

You now have a text to examine and have positioned yourself to probe your topic more deeply. Lu (1998), reflects eloquently on experiencing this process:

Each time I read or wrote, the stance I negotiated out of these voices [in my mind or writing] would always be at some distance from the stances I worked out in my previous and my later readings or writings. (p. 81).

How does/did it happen?
→   *Write a commentary on your first piece of writing.*

With this step, reflection begins to deepen. Writing in response to a "how" question generates Type 2 reflective writing (see Table 1.1) because it enables you to comment on what you wrote before, to revise or elaborate it. But your reflection shouldn't finish here.

Why does/did it happen?
→   *Writing again, try to explain your earlier pieces of writing.*

Now write a response to a "why"-type question and generate Type 3 reflective writing (see Table 1.1). As you write on the cause, effect, and meaning of your incident, topic or problem, you will find that you are beginning to theorize and relate your writing to other events or reading resources.

What does my previous reflective writing mean to me now (and later in the light of subsequent experience)?
→   *Over time, continue to write reflectively on your earlier reflective writing in the light of subsequent experience and understanding.*

You can continue to write reflectively in response to questions such as "What does this mean to me now?" (see Table 1.1, reflective writing Types 4 & 5) as many times as you want. On each occasion, you give yourself further opportunities to deepen and broaden your reflections and link them, for example, to reflections on other experiences.

When following the process outlined above, *write systematically* and *flesh out (i.e., conceptualise) your writing*. Being systematic and contextualising what you write enable you to explain your reflections later on so that they have lasting credibility and continuing potential for further learning.

Even though reflective writing is a relatively straightforward process, it is a skill, and as with any skill or art, it can be learned and practised.

In short, the reflective writing process begins with writing what you already know, or believe, about an incident, topic or problem and then increasingly questioning the substance and meaning of what you wrote in relation to other events, resources, practices and environments. In operation, reflective writing draws specifically on the sorts of cognitive skills involved in composing (Flower & Hayes, 1980; Perl, 1979; Sommers, 1980). It thus mines a general skill that teachers have the potential to exploit. The recursive nature of writing reflectively also means that it can support cyclical processes of inquiry-based teaching (e.g., Burns & Burton, 2008; Burton, 2000; Freeman, 1998).

Points To Note

Several points need to be made about Table 1.1 and what it represents. Table 1.1 is a typology of reflective writing. It therefore simplifies the creative potential of reflective writing. The typology suggests that written reflections addressing the questions in the table will form a regular sequence over neat intervals of time. However, the types of reflective writing in Table 1.1 do not necessarily follow sequentially, especially once a teacher has begun to write reflectively with some confidence. A single piece of reflective writing can contain several types of reflective writing, as you will notice in the chapters in this book. For example,

a chapter may "revert" to Type 1 reflective writing after Type 3 and then "jump" to Type 4. Potential combinations are endless—hence the flexibility of reflective writing as a means of professional support.

In addition, time intervals between written reflections will vary. For example, a writer may produce a piece of Type 1 reflective writing and immediately write a response to it in Type 2 reflective writing. Generally, though, reflection deepens with time, and the deeper types of reflective writing (Types 4 and 5) are the result of more time and more episodes of reflective writing, which allow for greater distance, increased questioning, and more interaction and reflection.

Finally, although the process described above focuses for simplicity on one teacher writing reflectively, writing with others has advantages. Another person with different experiences may make different points and thus stimulate new lines of thinking. Writing reflectively with another colleague may overcome the isolation of working alone, as this writer revealed:

> [Writing] puts me in touch with others even though I work at home (Burton, 2007, Response #4)

Explaining something in writing to someone in a different setting may actually help you confront a teaching concern:

> [H]aving to make sense of a teaching incident for someone outside my immediate teaching context helps me look at it anew, from a different perspective—and get to the heart of my own teaching. (Burton, journal entry, 6 November 2003)

> In my interactions with Siriluck Usaha (Burton & Usaha, 2004), I noticed how over time our questions of each other changed. My questions of her quickly expanded to include "what might you do if…" type questions. Siriluck's own questions changed from "Can I…?"and "Should I…?" (questions seeking "yes/no" answers) to more speculative questions, such as "I'm thinking of doing…. Do you think it matters if…?" and statements, such as, "What I hope will happen is….". Our writing increasingly enabled us to go deeper in our thinking. (Burton, journal entry, 10 November 2003)

Although collaborative processes potentially offer wider, deeper reflections for all writers involved, I am not suggesting that self-reflection is less valuable than collaborative reflection, only that collaborative reflection may actually encourage more self-reflection.

To summarize, the following features are the essential strengths of reflective writing:

1. Documentation: Reflective writing creates a record, which you can use in later reflections and inquiries.
2. Versatility: Reflective writing enables you to adopt different approaches to teaching concerns—it's up to you what they are.
3. Analysis: Reflective writing can help you see connections and differences in your teaching.
4. Self-/collaborative study: Because reflective writing is a flexible tool, you can use it for self-study or collaborative learning
5. A lifelong professional resource: Reflective writing has the potential to be a lifelong, flexible professional support.

The Book's Organization and Content

The book is organized so that if you read straight through, you will notice a gradual shift in emphasis from reflective writing as self-study to reflections featuring pairs, small groups, and communities of teachers who write together. In reality, however, none of the experiences reported is that simple. For example, writers reflecting on communities of teachers who write together write both alone and about the collaborative writing experiences of others and themselves with them (See, for example, Chapters 4, 11 and 12). Nonetheless, the sequence of chapters will give you some sense of how applications of reflective writing can deepen and widen for teachers.

The forms and contexts of reflective writing used in this book vary, so each chapter begins with a pre-reading question that highlights the form or aspect of reflective writing featured in that chapter. The forms or aspects highlighted are as follows:

Chapter 2: Interactive journals
Chapter 3: Personal journals
Chapter 4: Memoirs and journals
Chapter 5: Dialogue journals
Chapter 6: Small-group journals
Chapter 7: Autobiography
Chapter 8: Online journals
Chapter 9: Online discussion boards
Chapter 10: Free-writing
Chapter 11: Local writing communities
Chapter 12: International writing communities

In Chapters 2 through 5, the focus is on individual learning from several different perspectives. In Chapter 2, Phil Quirke and Eberth Zagallo reflect on their experiences of journaling as teacher educator and continuing teacher learner in the United Arab Emirates and derive a set of principles for journaling practice. In Chapter 3, Shelley Spencer critiques her learning about language teaching via personal journals on being a teacher who is learning another language in different settings. Carla Reichmann in Chapter 4 charts her use of journals and memoir in several South American settings in order to show the social, constructed nature of learning and its impact on her own learning as a teacher educator. Michael Carroll and Seiko Tatsuta in Chapter 5 trace the impact on each of their understandings of language learning and teaching through their shared experience as third-language learners of Chinese through the medium of Japanese, a first language for one writer and a second language for the other, through written reflections in English, a first language for one writer, and a second for the other.

Chapters 6 through 9 can be broadly categorized as referring to small-group or whole-class groups of teachers at different stages of learning to write reflectively. Latricia Trites in Chapter 6 documents her varied experiences as a teacher educator using small-group peer journals with three classes of teacher-learners in the U.S.A., concluding with a number of suggestions for their use and a belief in their importance as a means of continuing self-support for teachers after formal tuition ends. Tania Romero, a teacher educator in Brazil, analyses in Chapter 7 a course in which experienced schoolteachers reflect in writing on their teaching lives. Sylvia Correa and Deborah Skilbelski in Chapter 8 reflect on their use of journaling in an induction program for new EFL teachers in their institution in Brazil. An online discussion board is the focus of Chapter 9 by Mary Jeannot and James Hunter, who argue that it enabled teacher-learners for whom English was a second language to contribute to and learn from class discussions with native-speaker teacher-learners in the U.S.A.

The final three chapters document collaborative reflective writing among teachers, demonstrating it as a means of creating and maintaining communities of learning (cf. Wenger, 1998). In Chapter 10, Rebecca Mlynarczyk, a teacher educator in the U.S.A., and Renate Potzmann and Kunigunde Haigner, English teachers in the offshore location, Austria, chart the transformation of participants in a transnational masters program into members of overlapping communities of teacher writers who continued to write on teaching for themselves and their program facilitators beyond the formal program. The social construction of learning is further documented in Chapter 11, in which Spencer Salas reflects on teacher learning through "writing teaching" as an American teacher educator with groups of teachers in Peru; and in Chapter 12, Joy Kreeft Peyton analyses the nature of community in a small international e-network of journal writers, the journal-writing group that is associated with the genesis of this book and whose formation was described earlier in this chapter.

The book concludes with a few suggestions for reflective writing activities and reading resources.

Conclusion

This book aims to help you visualize how teachers as reflective writers—whether starting out as teachers or seeking professional renewal—"get to the heart of teaching." Reflective writing enables teachers to be constantly alert to the nature and implications of their practice. When teachers are reflective, they can become expert teachers; their teaching is no longer routine. Further, by using reflective writing to understand their teaching more deeply, teachers also become more open to change. Writing reflectively about teaching practice therefore helps teachers to be truly wholehearted (Burton, 2009; Dewey, 1933 & 1938) about their practice (e.g., Chapter 10 by Rebecca Mlynarczyk, Renate Potzmann, and Kunigunde Haigner).

I hope reading the chapters that follow stimulates your own written reflections and assists you in getting to the heart of your own teaching.

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Acknowledgement

About the Author

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Chapter 2

MOVING TOWARDS TRULY REFLECTIVE WRITING

Phil Quirke and Eberth Zagallo

Pre-reading question: In what ways can reflective writing in interactive journals deepen our understanding of our effectiveness as classroom practitioners?

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how teacher educators can use six principles of good journaling to encourage greater depth of reflection in teachers who are writing journals as part of a pedagogical course. We hope the chapter will encourage all teachers, whether studying a course or not, to adopt reflective writing as part of their continuing professional development. We ask you as you read this chapter to match your own reflections to author Eberth's strivings for self-discovery and share in his delight at the many insights he discovered during his reflective writing journey. By reading the chapter in this way, we hope you will be able to appreciate the six principles in action and gain some insights into the process of reflective writing.

Throughout the chapter, we have used examples from Eberth's journal and have included quotations from a few others to try to demonstrate that our interaction while special to both of us was neither unusual nor atypical. Clearly, author Phil has had teachers (and students) who have not embraced journals, but Eberth's journal is typical for those who persevere with this form of deep introspection and reflective writing.

> The opportunity to learn more never stops. It is when we are in the (sometimes difficult) process of learning something new that we need focused and ongoing interaction with others, particularly with those who can lead us into new ways of thinking and expressing ourselves. (Peyton, 2001, p. 156)

Teaching Context

This chapter revolves around a teacher education course run in Abu Dhabi, and how one teacher experienced reflective journals in an e-mail forum during the course and beyond. The course in question was the Cambridge-ESOL Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA), which our centre runs from September to June, and which includes seven practical assignments, a case study, and a final exam (see Appendix 1). The centre is under the Business and Education Division at Abu Dhabi Men's College (ADM), which is one of fourteen colleges forming the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) that are the national tertiary vocational institute in the UAE. Apart from helping teachers achieve qualification, the aim of our course is to give teachers the opportunity to explore their teaching practice and link their language and learning theories to their classroom procedures. We have discovered that the most powerful tool available to us for exploring teachers' pedagogical theories is the reflective journal and the role this writing plays in raising our awareness (Schön, 1987; Elbaz, 1988, Bailey, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Therefore, for the course, each teacher's reflective journal, and the way in which it is structured, is the central tool in this exploration of the unconscious links we all build between our theories and practice.

The course upon which the data in this chapter are built had nine participants, originally from Brazil, Ireland, Egypt, the U.S.A, England, and Turkey. All were living and teaching in Abu Dhabi. The

teachers did not work together, but they quickly built a strong, cooperative team ethos. Apart from being motivated to gain the qualification, many of the teachers were hoping the course would give them the opportunity to apply to tertiary institutions in the UAE. There was a wide variety of learning styles among them; this made the input session in week two particularly valuable.

The course involved two weekly input sessions on Sunday and Tuesday evenings. All the participants were teaching full loads (20 contact hours per week) while they were studying. The density of input was largely determined by the Cambridge-ESOL syllabus, details of which can be found at: http://www.cambridge-efl.org/teaching/delta/delta_syl.pdf.

In DELTA courses, all the input sessions act as models for their topic focus. For example, an introductory session on phonology may introduce the phonemic chart as teachers do with language learners, but focus on phonological terminology rather than general English instruction in phonology. Most teachers who take the Abu Dhabi DELTA course are experienced teachers, with over five years' experience, looking for a postgraduate level practical teaching qualification. Eberth was typical of many teachers who take the course in that he had over fifteen years' language teaching experience with adults and a preparatory certificate qualification but no graduate teaching degree. The DELTA course's main aim is to give teachers a theoretical framework for their classroom practice. Phil's use of questioning within reflective journals in the Abu Dhabi course ensures that teachers do not lose sight of this aim throughout the year.

> [W]e believe that professional and profound change is only possible through introspection and reflection. This is far easier than it sounds.

Conceptual Framework

This chapter describes our experience with journaling while providing a catalyst for the reader to explore reflective writing. We believe that teacher education concerns change and how we, as teachers, manage change in our daily professional lives. As teachers ourselves, we undertake professional development activities—including the writing of this chapter—in order to examine our teaching beliefs and practices, with the aim of improving our approaches and tightening the link between what we do and what we believe as well as changing what we do based on our more clearly defined theories. We appreciate that change is not an easy concept and we do not use the term flippantly. Change can be as much about confirming beliefs as it is about adapting those beliefs to newly acquired knowledge, but to do either, teachers must have a structure upon which to examine their beliefs of language and pedagogy. Since many of these beliefs lie deep within, they need to be able to reflect in depth about what they do, why they do it, and how this mirrors beliefs they hold (Bartlett, 1990).

Therefore, we believe that professional and profound change is only possible through introspection and reflection. This is far easier than it sounds. To examine teaching beliefs in depth requires teachers to reflect honestly on themselves. The tool that equips us to delve into our practices best is the guided reflective journal (McDonough, 1994; Shin, 2003). By using reflective writing to understand individual narratives and how they impact upon teaching practices, teachers can become more rounded, confident, and effective teachers.

The paragraphs above have purposefully used the verb "believe," as they are at the core of Phil's theory of teaching, which has been developed over the last twenty years through a large amount of introspection, reflection, and journaling. His theory could fill a book, but he can boil the theory down to what he calls his five key beliefs:

1. Life is about change and challenge and lessons should reflect that.
2. Learning is an active process (Gunawardena, et al., 1997), so the teacher must involve the students.
3. Language is an expression of self (Elbaz, 1983), so the teacher must allow students to bring themselves to the classroom and use their language realistically.
4. The teacher is a catalyst for student learning, so the classroom should be about learning and not teaching. i.e. the teacher prepares while the students do.
5. Students are people first and learners as part of that persona, so teachers should never underestimate what students can accomplish and bring to the classroom.

These beliefs are sufficiently broad to encompass a range of various interpretations, but narrow enough for readers to appreciate why reflective writing is such an important part of Phil's teaching and teacher educating. Journals ensure that he can involve all his students as they bring themselves into the learning process and ensure his teaching is subservient to their learning.

Launching the Journals

This section demonstrates, through the example of Eberth's journal, how Phil put his five key beliefs into practice in the DELTA context already outlined. In this section, we pose the same questions that were asked of teachers on the DELTA course in Abu Dhabi. After each question, Phil discusses the reasons behind it in the same way as he would in the DELTA session that introduces the journals to the course participants. Eberth's responses to each question are then presented in full before his reflections discuss what he was thinking while he answered these questions. His thoughts clearly focused on the difficulties he faced in addressing these questions early in the course. Realizing that another journal writer has struggled in this way and persevered to believe firmly in the power of journals will, we hope, encourage you to explore reflective writing, no matter what your initial reservations might be, using the same questions and guidance provided to Eberth.

Question 1:

Give a brief résumé of your teaching career with particular emphasis on the types of classes and students you have taught.

In answering this question you do not need to supply a full curriculum vitae, but a brief description of your teaching experience. Are you most comfortable with advanced or elementary students? Do you prefer teaching monolingual or multilingual classes? Focus on the classes and students you find the easiest and most difficult to teach.

Eberth's Response:

I've been in EFL for about 7 years and I love it. I've mainly taught in Brazil where I am originally from. I've taught all levels from beginners to advanced, aged from 3 to … When in Brazil I preferred to teach advanced levels and exam preparation classes, I wonder if it was because I, or the students at a lower level, could always rely on our mother tongue if necessary? I've only taught monolingual classes and my first experience teaching abroad was in 1996 when I did my CELTA course in Poland, where the students were all Polish. I don't really think that there are easier or more difficult students to teach, I see it as challenges that come along in my everyday teaching. Well, the one comment I could make is that I would find it very hard to deal with obnoxious kids, though I've had no experience of that myself yet, and have taught quite a lot of kids. (Eberth 1)

Eberth's Reflection Now:

I found this question very straightforward although it was difficult to merge what I saw as three distinct questions. These were the resume, the types of classes and the types of students. Now, I think I should have said this at the time in my journal response, but probably I just lacked confidence at the start of the course. It wouldn't be a problem now. I'd definitely say, "Hey. There are three questions here!"

Question 2:
What are your favourite classroom activities?

You can make the list as brief or as extensive as you like. As a bare minimum try to give one activity for each of the following stages: warmer; presentation; controlled practice; freer practice; production; homework, and another activity for each of the following skill areas: listening; reading; writing; speaking; study; integrated.

Eberth's Response:

- Warmer: hang-man
- Presentation: through a story
- Controlled practice: cloze exercise
- Freer practice: role-play
- Production: games
- Homework: exercises in the workbook
- Listening: music
- Reading: newspaper articles
- Writing: description
- Speaking: personalized activities
- Study: developing organizational skills
- Integrated: speaking/listening leading to writing/reading (Eberth 1)

Eberth's Reflection Now:

This was a tough question, but I was really pleased that I plucked up the courage to say to Phil as early as my second entry, "How can anyone possibly pick their favourite activities with no structure to hang them on?"

Question 3:
In what areas of your planning, teaching and professional development do you feel weakest?

The response to this question can be as short as a couple of words. This question is really just a foundation stepping stone to deeper reflection on the areas which you want to explore in greater depth during the journal. The challenge is to ensure that you do not just look at your teaching but also at your planning, preparation, theoretical knowledge and professional development goals.

Eberth's Response:

Writing lesson plans can be quite tough sometimes and linking the stages well is very challenging. When it comes to accurate timing, it can be a nightmare. Finding the right material to fit your plan is not always an easy task either and that might lead to creating your own material, which I really

enjoy. My theoretical knowledge is fairly weak as I've always found it very difficult to remember specific terminology and when it comes to pronunciation I fall in a very big hole! (Eberth 1)

Eberth's Reflection Now:

I could respond to this question quickly even though I felt constrained by having to merge three different areas. Once again, I felt Phil was asking three questions in one, and I should have told him. Re-reading my entries I am actually quite proud that I told Phil as early as the second entry that I had found the task quite hard really because there was no real context to it.

Question 4:
How do you plan to approach this course and what are you hoping to get out of it?

Start with what you hope to get from the course and then, possibly based on your hopes, detail your approach. Consider reading, assignment writing, this journal and how you want to address the difficulties you noted in your answer to question three.

Eberth's Response:

I really hope to be able to cope with the scope of the course. I know it is going to be very demanding and will require a lot of studying, self-discipline, dedication, motivation, background reading, etc. Being a nonnative speaker myself, though I hold 2 Proficiency level certificates, I wonder if my language will be good enough to write the assignments up to the standard required. I will do my best—which is the best one can do. (Eberth 1)

Eberth's Reflection Now:

This was an easy question to answer fleetingly for the requirements of the journal as I understood them, but it was an impossibly difficult question given the fact that I had no real idea what the full course would really entail. I honestly felt at the time that this was a question Phil should have answered for the teachers. I was very proud that Phil adapted his guidance comments on the following year's course based on the feedback from other teachers and myself.

Question 5:
How would you describe your theory of language learning?

This is clearly a very difficult question to ask at the start of a course. However, it is also important to realise that any course or book will build upon the knowledge you possess as a teacher when you start your study. Therefore, it is equally important to try and articulate theories of language and language learning from the very beginning. These final two questions are the first steps towards clarifying pedagogical beliefs which should match teachers' practical classroom approaches.

So, what is your theory of language learning? How do you believe students learn a language? Think of your own language learning experiences as you approach this question. Remember your teaching and marking approaches. Do you focus on fluency or accuracy more frequently? How often do you use drills? All of these are pointers to your sometimes hidden theory of language learning.

Eberth's Response:
When I first studied English as a foreign language, accuracy was much more important than fluency. Drills were based on memorized dialogues and corrections were drilled to death. We were frightened to make mistakes as we knew it would lead to an embarrassing situation and exposure to the rest of the group. I learned through a grammar-based approach, which in a way I do not regret

as I knew no better at the time. But to be very honest I really learned when I first lived abroad, in the U.K., where I was exposed to the "real language" and learned much more when I started teaching. Nowadays, I think that fluency is much more important than accuracy as being able to convey meaning and ideas come first in real communication. Learners of foreign languages want to be able to use language in everyday conversation. The ideal situation is where both fluency and accuracy are balanced and this really depends on the students' needs. (Eberth 1)

Eberth's Reflection Now:
I found this an impossible question to answer as I then felt I had no theory. I did not want to seem so incompetent, so I gave it my best try, but honestly did not feel I knew what I was talking about.

Question 6:
How would you describe your theory of the English language?

This question is tied to question five, and Phil's comments after Question five above hold true for this question as well. When writing your response, think of both your use of English and your teaching of the language. Do you think that English is word-based? Sentence-based? Text-based? Is meaning more important than the accurate use of language? Is grammar, phonology or lexis more predominant in your teaching? What does this say about your theory of English language?

Eberth's Response:
I hope, on this course, I will find out all about it and I'll then be able to have my own theory as for the time being I have no theory whatsoever! (Eberth 1)

Eberth's Reflection Now:
Having felt the question on language learning was impossible, this question floored me totally, and I was truly relieved that I was able to admit this in my first entry.

Most responses Phil receives on both questions five and six are similar to Eberth's "for the time being I have no theory whatsoever." The challenge is to tease out an awareness that the teacher does, of course, have theories based on their experiences as both a teacher and a learner. The next section puts forward six principles of effective journaling, which have allowed Phil to tease out this awareness and demonstrate to the teacher-journalers that they do in fact have theories.

Six Principles of Effective Journaling

This section gives examples from throughout Eberth and Phil's journaling experience and uses them to highlight the major issues and principles that they discovered were essential in their effective use of journals. Phil has developed his six principles over the last ten years and remains convinced that they are the key to creating opportunities for teachers to reflect in depth on their teaching practice and theories (Shulman, 1988a).

The section ends with the overall aim of any effective journal: depth of reflection. However, in order to attain this reflective depth the tutor must build a personal connection with the teacher which is founded in the basic qualities of all good personal relationships. These are, in our opinion, trust, respect, honesty, openness, and transparency. To that end, the first three of the following principles (rapidity of response, praise, and active listening) address the need to ensure a strong personal connection is established. Then, once the personal connection has been established, the tutor can encourage greater depth of reflection by grounding the emerging discussion in the classroom and allowing the teacher to build from the known to the unknown (Mlynarczyk, 1991; Haneda & Wells, 2000).

1 Respond Rapidly

One of the major features of Phil's approach to journals is the priority he gives them, and his insistence on replying to all teacher entries within 24 hours. This rapidity of response was picked up on by Eberth several times in his journals:

> Hi Phil,
>
> Gosh! That's a pretty quick reply. I had not expected to hear from you for a while!!!
>
> Phil, how can you reply to the journal entries so quickly? In yesterday's session I talked to the other trainees and I was even more surprised when I realized that they had all got their replies as quick as me. WELL DONE! (Eberth 7)

And his appreciation was echoed by others:

> Wow! You are really fast on the draw! (Tracy)
>
> Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. (Jo)
> This is the first time since I've known you that I've not had a reply to my desperate e-mail within 24 hours! (Marilyn)

Eberth noted after one of his longer entries:

> I began to find at this point my answers getting longer and it was, to be honest, quite tiring. Not tiresome, but definitely tiring after a full day at work in a new job. This was also tiring because I was being pushed to go into more depth and this was definitely not something I was used to. So, the tiring aspect was as much mental strain as physical tiredness from the time needed at the end of a long working day (Eberth 10)

However, he also commented on the fact that if Phil managed to find time then he was motivated to do the same:

> I have found that getting your responses so quickly is pushing me into a corner as I feel that I should do the same myself. I must admit it is a challenge as I feel I can try and cope with it as well, especially if you can with your workload. (Eberth 4)

Phil also made a point of praising teachers when they responded quickly:

> Hi Eberth,
>
> Thanks for responding so quickly on your journal. ☺ (Phil 1)

And this leads us nicely into the second principle.

2 Always Praise

Phil's entries are peppered with praise since many teachers, as shown by their answers to questions 5 and 6 above, are not confident in their ability to express their lack of knowledge, and by praising what they do know the aim is to give them the confidence to open up and write more.

Phil always makes sure that he starts any feedback to a journal entry with a positive statement that emphasizes the supportive and constructive focus of the journal, and uses this praise as a springboard into the teacher's foundation of knowledge that is grounded in their classroom practice.

Hi Eberth,

It is fascinating to see the range of your experience, and I am sure you will have much to give on this course. Please remember that you will always take from the course as much as you give ☺

Good to see you have such a clear awareness of what the course entails ☺

I wouldn't worry about your language, just this entry demonstrates you have the ability ☺ (Phil 1)

He then continues to scatter his responses with a good dose of praise and encouragement pursuing the dual aims of increasing confidence and teasing out the theories behind current classroom practice:

OK—I see the ease of tying it all into a lesson plan, but I just wanted a quick snapshot of activities, and you certainly gave me more than I bargained for ☺ ☺ That in itself is a demonstration of the extent of your teaching toolbox ☺ and a credit to you as a creative teacher. (Phil 1)

And he takes every opportunity he can to boost the teacher's confidence with positive reinforcement.

I like your attitude of facing challenges rather than tackling problems ☺ (Phil 1)

Wow! Now that's a pretty extensive list ☺ (Phil 1)

This approach continually worked well in Eberth's case as evidenced in his responses:

Hi Phil, first of all, thank you very much for such positive feedback. It was very reassuring and boosted my confidence a bit. (Eberth 2)

It's a very nice and respectful comment from you—THANKS! (Eberth 10)

It's so real and supportive and you know the pressure we are all going through ourselves. Thanks. (Eberth 22)

Thank you very much (once again) for the psychological support.
(Eberth 7)

And examples from other journals indicate that his reaction was no exception.

Thanks for more encouragement and the positive feedback. (Jo)

Thanks for the vote of confidence. (Katrina)

One of the more interesting factors is that no one seemed to take Phil's use of praise as a distancing strategy, one placing him in the position of expert, and therefore in control. Given the variety of nationalities that have taken the DELTA course, this may be surprising; Phil believes it is because the other five principles are consistently used alongside an informal tone. Eberth certainly never felt that Phil's use of praise was linked in any way to power or control. In fact, he took it at face value and appreciated the encouragement as noted above.

3 Listen Actively

This is a fairly standard technique Phil uses when responding to dense paragraphs containing multiple points. It is an active listening technique (Edge, 1992 & 2002) that echoes the speaker's message in order to clarify that the listener (here the reader) has understood correctly.

Let me try and divide your response into the following areas:

Lesson Planning

Timing

Materials

Theory

Pronunciation

Is that a fair summary? (Phil 3)

Other examples from our journal include:

We could of course discuss each of these ad infinitum, but I would like to focus on four of them. (Phil 2)

and:

This is an excellent first response and takes a good first step in the definition of your theory on language learning. I would summarize the points you have made as:

- create a balance between accuracy and fluency.

- expose students to "real" language wherever possible.

- aim to meet student needs.

Is this a fair summary? (Phil 5)

Phil uses the active listening echo technique to clarify a paragraph dense with information and opinions:

Can you let me know what was the last "challenge" you faced in your teaching recently? (Phil 1)

This question asks for clarification through exemplification, a method Phil often uses to get a better image of the teacher as a classroom practitioner. He finds these queries very powerful when he has little opportunity to observe the teacher in action in the classroom.

Another active listening technique is used when he replies to Eberth's long answer to question one, regarding which students he does not like to teach.

And finally, what makes a kid (only kids?) obnoxious from your point of view and experience? (Phil 1)

This focus on "obnoxious" is typical in that it picks up on a word that can have many different interpretations, and asks the teacher to clarify its use. This often results in the teachers having to clarify the term to themselves. In this case, Eberth picked up on Phil's bracketed hint of "only kids?":

A kid who comes to classes sometimes to fill in his/her mother's hairdresser's time, unwilling to learn because he/she hates the language they are obliged to learn, or adults who come to class, also without any intrinsic motivation, because it's imposed on them by the companies they work for, when they would rather be learning or doing something different or that would interest them. (Eberth 2)

Further examples include:

If yes, let me ask just one follow-up question in each area. If no, please correct me and we'll follow-up in more depth at the next entry.

> Lesson planning—is it the planning itself or the lack of ideas which is the problem? If the former, what is the problem of putting down on paper the wealth of ideas you have? If the latter, I would go back to the kind of brain-storming you did when you answered question 2 J
>
> Timing—is the problem in the classroom or making your plan fit the reality?
>
> Materials—how often do you actually use someone else's material without putting your own je ne sais quoi in it?
>
> Pronunciation—you'll have to be a bit more specific about the "big hole" you are falling into. Why the worry in this area? (Phil 3)

The last section of this response on pronunciation is another example of asking teachers to clarify their use of words, and the power that simple words such as "obnoxious" and "hole" can have when they need to describe why they have used them.

The number of examples given in this section is an indication of how powerful active listening question techniques are in journaling.

4 Build the Personal Connection

Starting a rapid-fire exchange of journal entries, and building up the teacher's confidence through praise and active listening, enable a teacher educator to establish a personal connection. This is evident when both teacher and tutor entries make references outside the profession:

> Hi there,
> Hope you had a good weekend. How is Emma? (Eberth 10)

And a few days later:

> Phil—just to let you know that Vitor's [his son's] surgery was very successful. I called Brazil over the weekend and managed to speak to him. He sounded fine and is now recovering at home. Good news after all, isn't it? You know how worried I was. (Eberth 11)

When Phil asked:

> How much time are you planning to give to your DELTA studies? (Phil 4)

Eberth responded:

> As many hours as will be needed. In order to do all the background reading for the assignments, prepare for the observed lessons, attend the sessions weekly, cope with my normal 20 hours fulltime teaching, being a father/husband and finding some time for myself is going to be very tough. I will need to be very organized and well disciplined to do it all.
>
> Well, one of my main principles in life and teaching is that one should practice what one preaches, so I definitely do! (Eberth 4)

Eberth noted that he really liked his response as he saw it as more personal and found that we were beginning to create a link between the two of us. He found it fascinating that such a personal relationship could be built up so quickly via an e-mailed journal. He continued by saying that this was indescribably important to him since he is a "people person" and needs that chemistry in any professional or personal relationship. It is a sentiment echoed in the literature (Mlynarczyk, 1998, p. 55). That is what led Eberth to ask what he considered a personal question about how Phil would cope with the course:

> Now, tell me how many hours are YOU going to need to dedicate to cope with this year's course, journals, etc.? (Eberth 4)

He felt that his increasing confidence came across when he asked Phil about this, and again when he could admit finding the task difficult. If this personal connection had not happened, Eberth thought that the journal could well have remained an "I do this" missive rather than a true exploration of himself as a teacher.

This statement shows how important it is for the tutor to find this personal connection. As we indicate here, this can be done through rapidity, praise, and active listening, but it also requires the tutor to be personal and empathetic:

> Hey Stuart—shame that your QPR aren't as on the ball as you are ☺

> Bet your weekend was better than ours! I killed a scorpion, had to face one to many loonies from Sohar and spent most of the time ducking while our friends went for it! (Jo)

> Hi Phil, Today we've begun the countdown. Al Ain beckons on the 15th. After 3 hectic weekends of garage saling to entice people to buy our junk, it doesn't seem like we've gotten rid of anything!! Enough already! What's left will be picked up by Big Brothers. (Marilyn)

Once the personal connection has been built, the foundation is laid to ensure real depth in reflection through guided questions based upon the teacher's classroom practice.

5 Ground the Journal in the Classroom

The initial journal question (#2) about the teacher's favourite activities aims to start this classroom foundation and bring about this kind of practical discussion, which can then be linked to theory. In Phil's response to Eberth's answer to question two:

> We could of course discuss each of these ad infinitum, but I would like to focus on four of them.

Phil thereby narrowed the follow-up to four activities, but he could equally have chosen all or just one. It often depends on how complete the entry is and how much or how little discussion is being generated by the other questions.

1. So, Can you give me an example of how you present through the use of stories?
2. How do you set up your role-plays?
3. In what ways do you use music in your teaching?
4. How do you help students develop their organisational skills? (Phil 2)

Phil's questioning in this way allows him to start exploring the teacher's classroom approach in depth and the exchanges following on from question #2 are often the most revealing in the journal especially when a personal connection has been built. Phil's questions above allowed Eberth to respond as follows:

1. For instance, if I am to present the past simple, I tell a story of something that happened to me so that I can be more personal.

2. By giving students situational cards (either pair/group) and they have to prepare their role themselves (within a time limit) and they then perform it. I try to relate it as closely to their reality as possible.

3. When in Brazil, I used music as a listening gap-fill exercise, e.g. controlled practice of language quite often, or ordering sentences which could then lead to a group discussion, etc.

4. Here, especially, I try to show them how important having an organized file is by teaching them how to divide their files in different sections, i.e. writing tasks, reading tasks, listening tasks, create a vocabulary record notebook in alphabetical order with example sentences, etc. (Eberth 3)

Afterwards he noted that once again, he was being asked to comment on his classes and students. This he found easier since he could picture something real and concrete that he had done before.

> Can you give me an example of when you use these student prepared situational cards? How is this approach pedagogically similar to your past tense narrative stories above? (Phil 3)

Phil follows up by asking more detail on the practicalities of Eberth's approach in the classroom, which is where he is clearly most comfortable. Phil then probes further into Eberth's overall philosophy by trying to draw out parallels with other examples that Eberth gave. Once again, Phil tries to move the reflection from the practical to the theoretical with an overall aim of clarifying pedagogical beliefs, values, philosophies and theories.

> Phil's response to the other classroom activities follows the same pattern:

> I love the use of music in class. Are gap-fills the only way you use music? Do you see music as a natural form of language use, a kind of real language? (Phil 3)

Again, Phil moves from the practical (use of music) to the theoretical (music as "real" language). It is a recurrent theme and one that is consistent with the aim of many teacher journals (Porter et al., 1990; Wallace, 1996) in reaching a deeper level of reflection.

> When teaching vocabulary, I will separate 8-10 items of vocabulary and will have the words on strips of paper. Then, I start telling the story and when I need that word I try and elicit it. If they know it, all well and good. If they don't, I introduce the word with the strip of paper. I drill it and continue through the story until all ten words have been covered. That will then usually lead into the students using these words in their own stories.

> I continue the past tense lesson by eliciting one or two example sentences which then act as models for the introduction of the tense and further clarification where required.

> One of the last times I used the situational cards was with a group of students on banking. The students prepared the cards from their experience of going into banks. One group prepared customer cards, one group cashier cards and another group manager cards. (Eberth 3)

> Eberth stated that these last three paragraphs "flew off his pen" as all he was doing was visualizing situations that had happened in his classrooms before. He could literally see the situations happening in front of him while he wrote them. Eberth responded to Phil's follow-up on narratives and music as follows:

> I agree that the two approaches of narratives and situational cards are very similar, but they differ in that the narratives are teacher led and teacher fronted whereas the situational cards are student prepared and student centred. (Eberth 3)

In answering this question, Eberth realised that he was required to look at his role as a teacher in the classroom. So although he answered very practically his thoughts were driven to his role during both the preparation and teaching stages.

> As I mentioned in my previous entry, I also use music with scrambled lyrics leading to discussion on what the composer was trying to convey, and I also use this to lead onto discussing how the students felt about both the music and the lyrics. (Eberth 3)

Eberth enjoyed answering this question, as his students in Brazil always wanted to have music in the classes. So the challenge as a teacher was to find the right song for the lesson. Afterwards he wondered if this had come across in his response, but he definitely had what he would call his materials-writer hat on when he answered this question.

Most interestingly, Eberth felt that it was here he began to understand where Phil was going with this journal. It was much easier to respond to these specific questions, which related to what he did in the classroom, and he felt he could reply from a position of authority. No one knew his classes in Brazil better than he. However, the realization was dawning on him that he had specific teaching, learning, and language theories and that these were being drawn out of him through the journal, which was beginning to act as a "source of discovery" (Schön, 1983, p. 299).

6 Promote Depth of Reflection

In order to get the depth of reflection aimed for, "the personal connection" (Principle 4) needs to be linked closely to "grounded in the classroom" (Principle 5), and the first couple of examples below show how "grounded in the classroom" still drives the discussion.

> Just a couple of follow-on questions:
>
> What is your position on the use of L1 in class? Your entry seems to imply that you don't like falling back into L1 with your lower level classes. Is that true? (Phil 1)

The questions above follow Phil's overall journal aim in that they take from what the teacher has written but ask them to delve more deeply into that particular area. Eberth replied:

> I do accept the use of L1 from students when teaching lower-level classes when I myself as a teacher find it impossible after trying different ways to get meaning across to some students. That might be because most of my teaching experience was in Brazil. It didn't matter how hard I tried to convey meaning sometimes, some students were reluctant to accept that they understood the meaning and maybe it was one kind of self-assurance they always needed, to translate the meaning into L1. (Eberth 2)

> When Eberth answered this, he felt the fear of letting someone know that he allowed L1 into his classes, which he saw as a failure on his part as a teacher. This comment developed into an open discussion in the journal on the advantages of L1 use and helped Eberth feel confident that L1 can be a positive influence. He ended up with a theoretical foundation for his use of L1 and this gave him the confidence to admit it without the fear and sense of failure he had begun with.

> What follows are some other responses from Phil, which he used to springboard into similar theoretical discussions.

Theory—hopefully, the course will address your worry about the lack of theory, and I hope we can use this journal to make you realise that your theories are probably fairly strongly defined already ☺☺ (Phil 3)

This is a typical response, as Phil seizes on every opportunity to sell the journal as a vocalization tool for teacher theories. So many teachers moving into further training have theories in all that they do, but they are often unaware that these subconsciously-held beliefs and the framework around them constitute theory (Johnson, 2000). Phil believes, and he is not alone in this belief (cf. Peyton, 1990; Bean, 1996), that journals are the most effective key to unlocking those frameworks—and he hopes that this chapter has demonstrated this. An example from his journal responses to Eberth follows:

I am not convinced that you "have no theory whatsoever". Your response to the previous question already indicates you have some strong language beliefs.

You mention learning through a "grammar-based approach", so from this statement what do you mean when you say "grammar"?

You also say that "to convey meaning and ideas come first in real communication" which indicates a belief in "real" language being primary. But what do you understand and mean when you use the word "real"? (Phil 6)

The three paragraphs above respond to Eberth's answers to questions 5 and 6, aiming to guide teachers towards making theories explicit early in the course so they can develop and even change them during the year. The response is an example of how Phil ties comments in the journal together so that he can help the teacher begin this journey of self-discovery, one that will lead to explicit theories that support and mirror classroom practice.

The following example shows again how Phil tries to move the teacher into deeper reflection.

Assuming the above is an accurate summary, how would you respond to the following questions?

Where does accuracy become more important than fluency and vice versa? (Phil 5)

Accuracy becomes more important when my aim is to focus on the production of a particular language point through controlled practice activities, whereas fluency is more important when giving freer practice. (Eberth 5)

When can we expose students to real language and how? (Phil 5)

Students can be exposed to radio news, newspaper articles, story telling, interviews, etc. How? Giving them specific tasks to go with the activities. (Eberth 5)

How do we discover what student needs are? (Phil 5)

It can be done by drawing up a questionnaire, interviews, etc.
(Eberth 5)

Are these three areas the only important areas in language learning? What others do you consider? (Phil 5)

Developing study skills, general knowledge, etc. (Eberth 5)

Eberth noted later that these were nice questions to respond to since he saw that he could respond practically to an initial question that had asked about his theory. Phil's strategy was to ask the teacher to develop in more depth areas they have mentioned and ask them to try to extend their thoughts beyond that initial response. This is a first step in an ongoing quest to make teachers delve deeper and reflect on

how their experience has informed their teaching and learning theories—often subconsciously. Eberth also stated that he began to feel like a learner again, where there was a distinct dichotomy between how he learned English and how he taught it. He wishes now that he had said this to Phil in the journal.

The earlier example on narratives continued:

> Your example on the past simple through personal narrative seems to be typical of your approach—the personalization of language in context. Can you give me another example of when you do this? How do you continue in the lesson on past simple once you have told your story? (Phil 4)

This is only the fourth entry, but Phil is already trying to prompt Eberth to think beyond the activity to his theories that are becoming more evident in his journal as he verbalizes and makes conscious his teaching beliefs. This probing to link practice to theory is a recurrent theme in Phil's journals.

As a final example, here is a realization from Eberth as we continued to discuss the use of music in the classroom:

> Music is definitely a form of real and natural language use. In Brazil, this is always true as we play with the lyrics often using the language inaccurately to create rhyme and reason. In songs the composer always has a major role in linking rhymes not worrying about grammar. (Eberth 5)

This was not hard to answer, because music *is* a natural form of language. In retrospect, maybe this just brought out a strongly held language belief that neither of us realized was a "language" belief.

Reflective Development

So, what reflective development did we see in ourselves over the nine months of the DELTA course? How did we change as tutor and teacher learners?

Eberth's completed feedback form at the end of the course reads:

1 The journal helped me to think in more depth about my teaching practice as questions drove me into a deeper level of reflection and thoughts before answering them.
2 I learned and developed a lot, broke barriers, shared my weaknesses and strengths with other trainees, listened to colleagues, made friends.
3 Academically, I polished some old theories and learned a lot more. It also made me re-think and analyze my teaching principles.

And Phil wrote in an e-mail to his Director when asked why he insisted on tutoring on the DELTA:

> This past year has confirmed to me why the DELTA is such an essential part of my yearly plan despite my new administrative and strategic planning duties and responsibilities as Head: It is the DELTA and my interaction with the teachers on this professional development course which keeps me up-to-date and fresh when it comes to language, teaching and learning. The interactive journals that I run force me to reflect on my pedagogy, clarify my beliefs and ensure that they are compatible with my executive decisions and planning. They mean I maintain the respect and trust of my staff as a practitioner and am not seen as a remote figurehead. I am not sure that I could maintain my principles of language teaching and learning without the constant reflection generated by my interaction on this course.

Needless to say, Phil continued to tutor on the course without further questions.

The greatest pleasure we have had in writing this chapter together has been the renewal of a professional discourse from four years ago, and the way in which this has succeeded in making us reflect on both our previous and current classroom practices. It has brought to light areas of teaching, learning, and language that we have let lie for too long--for example, Phil's use of narratives and Eberth's use of music. Both of these are standard classroom approaches, and the chapter has made us discuss and reflect on these in far more detail than is possible to write about here. It has allowed us to once again confirm and challenge the theories behind what we are doing in our classrooms daily. These experiences have helped us since journaling together, too. Phil was Section Editor for "Out of the Box" in the TESOL journal *The Essential Teacher* for three years, and became Director of the new Madinat Zayed Colleges, Higher Colleges of Technology in the Western Region of the UAE. Eberth has become a regular presenter at conferences in Lebanon, Dubai, and Spain.

Conclusion

We hope we have demonstrated above how the experience of writing this chapter and reflecting together on our journaling experience has created new avenues of self-discovery. We have seen how the teacher-educator benefits as much as the teacher in this reflective relationship, and how our work and professional lives have developed since we shared this journal five years ago. Phil and Eberth continue to work in the UAE for the HCT where Phil is a Director and Eberth continues happily in classroom teaching and to use journaling with most of his classes.

Interactive journaling works when it is reciprocal (see other chapters in this book), when each writer has something to give and learn, and when there is enough common ground to make sharing possible and worthwhile. Our interactive journal has grown out of a relationship that was essentially teacher (Phil, as teacher trainer) to learner (Eberth as teacher learner). We hope that this chapter has demonstrated how we have each used this opportunity to learn and teach. We have used the journal interaction to shift the relationship, which was initially one-way (teacher to learner) to an open relationship in which the roles shift back and forth. We have succeeded in doing this by following the six principles of journaling above.

The writing of this chapter has been in itself a continual process of reflection for both of us. Phil has revisited the DELTA course he runs and added a discussion forum through the online content forum he has created for his latest course. He has found that many of the questions he poses to the teachers on the course have been influenced by the exchanges he and Eberth have had as they have discussed this chapter and their experiences. Eberth found the writing of the chapter different, as he felt he was not simply addressing Phil but opening up to an untold number of his peers. He felt that this influenced his reflection more profoundly and has generated changes in how he uses journals now in his classroom. He has begun opening his student journals up to peers and encouraging his students to develop their entries to a wider audience such as the college newsletter and local papers. So, while seeing the journal exchanges detailed in this chapter as effective, the writing of this chapter has extended that reflection for both of us and shown how the depth of questioning we can pose can always be continued and add to our expanding knowledge.

The exchanges we chose to use in this chapter are revealing not only in what they tell us but also in what is missing. What opportunities for reflection have we missed? This could well be an end-of-chapter task for readers. It is one that will ensure the professional discussion between the two authors continues.

Finally, we return to our title, "Moving towards 'truly reflective' reflective writing." We have chosen the word "truly" to mean depth of reflection. If you look at the typology in Chapter 1 (p. 7 of this volume, Burton), you can see how the types suggest ever deepening kinds of reflection. We hope this chapter has given you a practical example of how one tutor and teacher operated across these types. We leave you with

a final question and our response: *How deep can we look at ourselves and our approaches to teaching, learning and language?* The answer to this must be different for every individual, but it is always a beginning, it always needs to be sustained (as the two of us have done during the writing of this chapter). It is always maintained by the trust built over time between peers, a trust that is begun by following the six principles detailed in this chapter.

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About the Authors

Phil Quirke is Director of the Madinat Zayed and Ruwais Colleges, Higher Colleges of Technology in the UAE. He has been in ELT leadership positions for over a decade and professional development has always been one of his key areas of interest and research. He has published on areas as diverse as face, action research, appraisal and journaling.

Eberth Zagallo has been teaching English for twenty years primarily in Brazil and the UAE. He currently teaches at Abu Dhabi Men's College, Higher Colleges of Technology and has always worked with journals, which he believes give us greater insights into our students than almost any other medium.

APPENDIX 1—DELTA COURSE OUTLINE

Week	Seminars	Assessments
1	Introduction to course & History of EFL	
2	Intro to Language System Theories of Lang. Learning & Learning Styles	
3	Lesson Planning & Evaluating Your Teaching Alternative Practices	
6	Intro to Phonology Intro to Skills - Receptive V Productive	
7	Grammar 2 - Tense, Time and Aspect Methodology & Learning Styles	Written Assignment 1 Experimental Practice
8	Course Planning	
9	Lexis 1 – Introduction & Syllabus Types	
10	Listening 1 Syllabus - Design Principles	
11	Presenting Language Speaking 1	Written Assignment 2 Course Planning
12	Phonology 2 & Classroom Management	
13	Reading 1 & Writing 1	
14	Grammar 3 - Form, Meaning & Function Lesson Planning 2 & Classroom Activities	
15	Discourse Analysis 1 - Intro Grammar 4 - Narrative Tenses	Language Systems or Skills Assignment 1
16	Materials 1 - Authentic V Non-authentic Grammar 5 - Futures	
17	Skills Review & Lexis 2	
18	Phonology 3 Discourse Analysis 2	Language Systems or Skills Assignment 2
19	Grammar 6 - Conditional Meaning Materials - Accuracy V Fluency	
20	Writing 2 Speaking 2	
21	Phonology 4 & Intro to Case Study Materials 3 - Evaluation of Materials	Language Systems or Skills Assignment 3
22	Error Analysis 1 & Lexis 3	
23	Formal & Informal Evaluation Error Correction	External Assignment Language Systems / Skills
24	Testing - Public Exams and Design Exam Practice 1 - Practice Questions	
25	Phonology 5 - Contrasting L1 & L2 Independent Learning	

Week	Seminars	Assessments
26	Grammar 7 - Relative Clauses CALL	Resources and Materials Assignment
27	Language Systems Review General Review	
28	Exam Practice 2 - Text Analysis Exam Practice 3 - Evaluating Materials	
29	Mock Exam + Q & A Session	Extended Assignment - Case Study
30	Exam Practice 4 Theory and Practice	WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Chapter 3

THE LANGUAGE TEACHER AS LANGUAGE LEARNER

Shelley A. Spencer

Pre-reading question: *How has your language learning experience influenced your language teaching? Consider how you might write reflectively about some of your critical experiences as a language learner.*

As an English language teacher working in foreign countries, I also have the opportunity to assume the role of language learner. However, what I experience as a language learner sometimes proves disturbing, and causes me to change my teaching practices and relations with my students (Spencer, 2003). As an expatriate, though, in sometimes isolated circumstances, with limited access to colleagues, compatriots, literature or other resources, I have no ready means of exploring my concerns or validating my practices. I need a way to make sense, on my own, of my teaching and learning experiences, as well as of daily life.

To this end, I have borrowed some techniques from phenomenology to develop an approach to processing my experiences and deriving and validating my new teacher knowledge. I keep brief diary entries of my ongoing German self-study experience, as well as records of classroom-learning experiences. From these notes, I have ready access to my learner-self thoughts and problems, which provide a source of reflection for my teacher-self. When moments as a teacher intersect with my learner experience, I take particular notice and process the event with a specific set of steps, beginning with a descriptive narrative based on the techniques of phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990). I then process the narratives according to hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 2002a) so that I can identify pertinent themes, process them in turn and arrive at my new teaching knowledge. The same approach applies in my learning role or my expatriate role, leading to new working knowledge to cope with learning and life.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is still an evolving research method developed by philosophers such as Husserl (1931), Heidegger (1982), Merleau-Ponty (1964), Gadamer (1976), and Ricoeur (1981). Its development can be traced through several movements, namely, transcendental, existential, hermeneutic, linguistic, ethical, and experiential phenomenology. The basic idea is that one examines a particular event, experience, or phenomenon to determine what its characteristic features are and thus arrive at some new knowledge about this moment that has appeared. According to Moustakas (1994), "in a broad sense that which appears provides the impetus for experience and for generating new knowledge" (p. 26). That is, by taking the opportunity to examine an experience and derive new working knowledge, we become "experienced."

In addition to philosophers, practitioners in other fields have found a use for phenomenology. The nursing field has adapted it in order to understand patients' experiences of illnesses. More recently, Van Manen (1990, 1991) has adapted experiential phenomenology to the field of education, coining the term "Phenomenology of Practice" (Van Manen, 2002b). He has reworked the form applied by professional philosophers to a form more workable by professional practitioners. Van Manen (1999) believes phenomenology can take the reflective practitioner to otherwise inaccessible depths:

> [T]he theory of reflective practice seems to underestimate the complexity of the organization of ordinary teaching practices, and the incredible intricacies of practical

actions in teaching-learning situations. I would argue that the practice of teaching is so challenging not only because it is cognitively complex but also because the knowledge that inheres in our practices is in part noncognitive–and it may be this noncognitive dimension of practice that continually challenges us in our efforts to provide for quality teacher education or teacher professional development. (n.p.)

Phenomenology, therefore, creates a further form of reflection, adding to the repertoire of possibilities available to reflective practitioners (Tripp, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996; amongst others). The appeal of phenomenology to me, then, is that it is a creative writing activity that one can carry out primarily alone, but with some unusual and unique disciplines:

- The writer must empty their mind, "suspending" all beliefs, and so enter a mental state called "epoche" (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990), in order that
- An experience or moment be described as if for the first time, without judging, analyzing, theorizing, or allowing any other interference from the intellect (reductio), but vividly capturing its "essential constituents, variations of perception, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colours and shapes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34), and then
- The writer, upon examining their work, must "intuit" the themes, that is, allow the themes to "suggest," "present," or "reveal" themselves.

Phenomenological writing, then, means first recollecting certain phenomena, or experiences or moments, and writing vivid descriptions of them in the form of narratives, which may or may not be anecdotal in nature: To follow Van Manen´s intention, (1990, p.19), "The aim is to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld." The purpose of creating such narratives, in phenomenology, is to get to the essential meaning of an experience, which Husserl (1930) and Heidegger (1982) describe as Zu den Sachen selbst ('to the things themselves'). That is, through narrative, the phenomenologist identifies the key themes and arrives at the essence, or core, that gives the experience its particular quality. The information provided may produce a resonance with others undergoing a similar experience. Basic phenomenology ends with this list of themes and reference to the essence of an experience. A complete working of a narrative will be given in the next section, but as an example, themes emerging from a narrative of a classroom moment could be: the power of the teacher, the silence of the learners, learner confusion about an activity, and the influence of prevailing teaching methods.

As a practicing teacher and learner, I want to extract more than these themes and essence—I want to determine their significance for future teaching and learning. I need to process the themes further in order to convert them into new teacher knowledge. What exactly is my position on "the power of the teacher" or "learner confusion about an activity" or "the influence of prevailing teaching methods"? How will I process these themes in order to arrive at my new working knowledge and inform my practice? I have thus continued the phenomenological process by drawing from the "interpretive" concept of hermeneutic phenomenology to propose six additional steps:

- Engage in additional reflection on each theme, which should be done first, and alone, to avoid the influence of other sources
- Extract related notes from personal diaries or journals, (e.g., my German self-study diaries, my German classroom journals, and my teaching journals)
- Seek other narratives on these themes in the literature, which highlights the importance of making narratives available to others

- Seek other references to, or discussion of, these themes in the literature
- Attend to any relevant passing comments or other auspicious sources—the "intuiting" process at work again
- Collate all these sources to arrive at my current working knowledge of that theme, in the form of a guideline, theory, philosophy, belief, or approach

The process is, however, cyclical. In an ideal world, I would diligently record, collate and track my musings. In reality, with a hectic teaching schedule, I often rely on memory of my learner-self preferences and "mental narratives," that is, those narratives we create in our minds after a significant moment as we repeatedly relive it—an activity the expatriate may often engage in due to the inability to share experiences directly with significant others. Regardless, the critical step is to extract and name the emerging themes, because then we bring them into conscious awareness. Future contact with these themes—and I encounter many moments where my teacher-self and my learner-self intersect—trigger further input for working knowledge. This process encourages an open mind, with ongoing reflection and intuiting, and discourages one from forming dogmatic or unexamined beliefs. The whole process from identifying a "trigger moment" to arriving at new working knowledge is summarized in Figure 1.
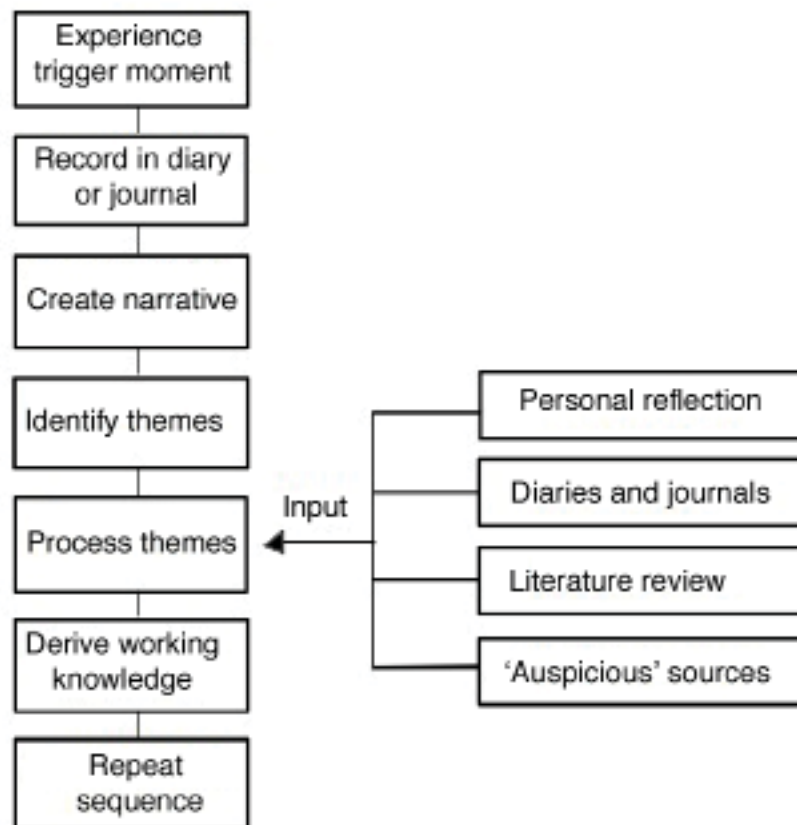

Figure 1. Reflective processes resulting in new working knowledge

Narratives from Expatriate Experience

In this section, some narratives are presented and the themes extracted. One theme is then chosen for more detailed development according to the model shown in Figure 1. As I generally teach outside of my culture, I have first selected some narratives that will help convey my circumstances and need to derive teaching knowledge from my own reflections. These particular narratives helped me understand and prepare for the experience of entering a new culture. In one particular post in rural China, I was the only foreign English teacher on campus, and one of few foreigners in the region. Many locals had never seen a foreigner before and would stop and stare; the students expressed a desire to physically touch me. Through narrative, I try to recapture the "lived experience" of my first few moments upon arrival at the airport:

> Narrative: First moments in a new country
> As I walked across the tarmac to the terminal, shifting the weight of my backpack and trumpet case, my focus locked on the surreal mountain formations embracing the runway, but I couldn't assess their height because of a grey-white haze. Mist or pollution? A feeling of "strangeness" began to settle upon me, accompanied by heightened sensory awareness; my brain began frantically processing the new signals; my head seemed to have become the focal point of my body. As my gaze swung around to the terminal, my attention was caught by the strange characters of a foreign language painted on the buildings. I then scanned the buildings themselves to assess their condition, looking for hints of the standard of living I could expect here. From behind, I heard some people calling out "Hallo!" and giggling. I turned to check if they were addressing me and noticed all the foreigners watching me, except that I realized I was now the foreigner. I smiled and nodded self-consciously, hoping they weren't being derogatory, and walked quickly on, trying to appear confident. As I heard outbursts of laughter, I wondered again with misgiving if it was directed at me, and glanced sideways to check, but no, the people just seemed to be loud and noisy and sharing jokes amongst strangers, just as the flight attendants had noisily shared jokes with passengers. Maybe it's just their way. I felt some relief. I'm still safe. Everything is still alright. I'm still in control. I prayed that I hadn't made the wrong decision in coming here, and my mind played through the scenario of attempting to catch the next flight back home, except that home didn't feel like home anymore. I pressed determinedly on.

In writing the narrative, I try to relive the moment and describe everything I sensed at the time, without engaging in any superimposed judgments or critical reflection. The use of metaphor is another literary device to describe what an experience is "like." By capturing the lived experience of a significant moment through vivid description, the writer creates a resonance with potential readers (Geelan & Taylor, 2001) with sufficient detail to enable the reader to draw from it according to their particular focus, perspective or life experience. Phenomenologists therefore consider that there is never a "single interpretation of human experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 31). A piece of text can therefore be revisited over time, and further insights drawn from it, or additions made in the light of later knowledge. This is one validating possibility for the reflective teacher in reviewing teacher knowledge they have developed from their own experiences.

Having created a descriptive narrative, the writer must then extract the themes. The phenomenological approach is to adopt an intuitive state of mind, in order to allow the themes to present themselves (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (2002c) suggests either contemplating the text as a whole, or perusing each sentence and naming the themes that "suggest" themselves. The reflecting teacher is not trying to engage in comprehensive, detailed analysis, which is a useful tip for the busy teacher. For example, by quickly regarding each sentence of the previous narrative, the themes that suggest themselves

could be: feeling of "strangeness", scanning surroundings, sights and sounds, foreignness, filtering information, puzzlement, assessing, forming opinions, self-consciousness, trepidation, misgiving, prayer, relief, safety, control, humour, and decision-making.

As phenomenologists do not ordinarily attempt to theorize or present conclusive arguments, this list, with some elaboration to create the essence of the experience, could represent the answer to a phenomenological question such as, "What is the experience of entering a new country?" The findings can be compared with those of other people, and a comparison of themes may result in the formulation of theories about such experience. However, with even this skeleton list, I have a greater awareness of my world and can monitor and exert some control over it.

Particularly with narratives drawn from teaching and learning, I have a need to process these themes to a greater degree, so that I can arrive at my new working knowledge, which might take the form of a new belief or theory, a set of guidelines, or a change in practice. To aid in this task, I have created the six steps presented earlier. For example, to process the first theme "feeling of strangeness," I engage in further reflection and write down my thoughts (step 1):

Reflections on "feeling of strangeness"
I've come to expect, and even look forward to, the feeling of "strangeness" that enshrouds me in the first few weeks, as I become the "foreigner", trying to make sense of an unknown world, and wondering how long it will take this time to acquire that familiar sensation of feeling "at home". I notice again, that I've left my "personal baggage" behind and begun life with a clean slate. No one knows me. I don't have a past history, which can be problematic because no one appreciates my prior achievements, and I don't have the language to enlighten them. I have to construct a new identity. I want to feel respected. However, there is nothing I know how to do in this new world. Nothing is familiar.

I become keenly aware of decisions and their subsequent outcomes—of cause and effect, of fate and destiny—since every day brings new challenges to be addressed. Without the support of significant others, I am forced to rely on myself for strength—to confront my real, naked self, with all the layers peeled back. Without the familiar foundations that supported my character and built confidence, I have nothing to hold my sense of self together. In a world that has different values, I even have to consciously review my prior values and ethics and consciously decide how to proceed. Confronted with an unpleasant problem, and no support to talk it over, one may reach the limits of coping. Collapse may follow, marking the turning point: return home, relocate, or persist.

Over the weeks, I consciously notice the "strangeness" subsiding, replaced with a feeling familiar from my previous life: "at-homeness". However, my difficulty is no longer dealing with "culture shock", for I've learnt to take life moment by moment, one step at a time, arresting judgmental thoughts. It's about dealing with all the "unnecessary" issues arising during the settling-in phase, the bureaucratic processing, the establishing of accommodation, and so on; because during this phase, I must commence my teaching. I must be fully functional to design curricula, build a rapport with students, ascertain their goals, establish how they have learnt English, how they view education, how their primary language(s) interfere with their English, and how I can best help them. There is actually now more distress in going home ("reverse culture shock"), because my new identities must learn to adapt to my old world. Friends struggle to reconcile the new arrival with the person that left. The feeling of "at homeness" is not immediate, and perhaps not reclaimable, replaced again with that "feeling of strangeness".

Such reflections also produce text that could be intuited to provide further themes; so the cycle could be repeated. Nevertheless, following this reflective step, the phenomenologist explores further afield for additional insights, which I have broken down, for my purposes, into steps 2–6 (refer to the earlier list). Van Manen (2002d) terms this process "exegetical reflection." He encourages the researcher to work not only systematically through obvious sources (my steps 2–4) but to be led by chance meetings or fortuitous "stumbling" across things (step 5).

For step 2, I would extract pertinent references from any personal journals or letters about life abroad. This step is very important when dealing with teaching or learning narratives, as the comments in one's language-learning diaries or teaching journals give direct access to the learner or teacher mind—a privilege not all language researchers have.

Steps 3–5, in this case, evolved through stumbling across some relevant material. As I was searching online for unrelated information, I came across an article that triggered a connection with my narrative and themes above. There is a certain fascination in reading other narratives and finding points of resonance, so I allowed this fortuitous distraction and extracted some information that resonated with my experience (steps 3 & 4). Even the title begged a perusal: "The Lived Experience of Being a Foreigner" (Wu, 2002):

What really makes me feel being foreign is the constant awareness of self.

I need to know who I am by figuring out what image I have left in other's eyes. I cannot even make good judgements about myself. I need to get this sense from others.

The stepping back from 'me' and recognition of 'me' does not only create self reflection, but also self-conflict….The process of inner conflict may lead to great distress….To regain peace and confidence, a re-organization or reshaping of self is needed. This process is threatening, as one has to alter one's own identity, in order to accept this reincarnation. (Wu, 2002, n.p.)

The themes that strike a resonance with mine include issues of self, identity loss and reformation, inner conflict, threat, and peace. The reading and identification of themes gave me further insight into my own experience, making it relevant to review my own narrative for validation and for deepening of thought and understanding.

Another chance encounter after the discovery of Zhou's article provided more input and further opportunity to collect my thoughts (step 5 again). I was able to connect with such auspicious moments because my reflective musings had raised my awareness and sensitivity to the themes:

<u>Anecdote: Expatriate panic attack</u>
In the dead of night, there was an urgent knocking on the door. With beating heart, I rushed to open the door. A figure was standing there in pyjamas and dressing gown. I peered at the face in the darkness, which looked gaunt and strained. I recognized the only other expatriate in the area and invited him in to sit down. He said he was suffering a panic attack, and cried that he couldn't go on. He explained that nothing in life had prepared him to live in this culture and under these conditions. He said he couldn't find suitable food and had lost an excessive amount of weight. He added that his students weren't behaving according to his expectations. Above all, he just needed to hear a western voice. I quickly consolidated some of my recent musings and tried to offer and share constructive advice. He expressed surprise and relief at the intimate knowledge of his plight. Finally, as we began to shiver in the cold night air, he apologized profusely and departed. I sat back in quiet contemplation for a while, reviewing the incident, and nodding to myself as I noted the

value of my reflective writings in helping me process and cope with my world, as well as support others.

While working through the six interpretive steps, an intricate interplay of texts and themes begins to occur, with input coming from a variety of sources. As a result, I constantly feel in the midst of ongoing and interesting dialogues, thus removing some of the isolation from my expatriate environment with its lack of available cohorts and professional advice. So far, my original narrative has taken me to some intimate, revealing depths. In the expatriate's isolation of always being an outsider, one engages in a lot of introspection, but phenomenology has provided a clear direction for that inward turn. However, the reflective process is both humbling and threatening, yet ultimately strengthening. As Van Manen (1990, p.12) has pointed out, "So phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfilment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are."

In order to address step 6 (arrive at new working knowledge), I review my material on my chosen theme, and may include related themes that became entwined. For example, I now know what feelings or moments to expect when I enter a new culture and I might even group these features into labeled stages, which become part of my new working knowledge in the form of a theory. Although articles are available on culture shock and reverse culture shock, my intimate personal experience and reflection provide an intricate input that helps me move beyond common labels and prevailing thought to produce a set of guidelines applicable to me. Rather than referring to culture shock, which describes an emotional reaction to an intense and perhaps negative first experience, I need to talk about "entering a new culture," which is an ongoing lifestyle matter. As I have dealt with the issues of identity crisis and have a stronger sense of who I am, no matter where on this planet I find myself, it is no longer a question of shock, but of expecting and identifying other ways and devising coping mechanisms. For example, to counter the issues raised in the narratives and to preserve health and sanity when entering and adapting to a new culture, I have been building some guidelines for myself:

- Avoid judging and comparing guest society with one's own.
- Monitor one's internal "chatter" and rework negative thoughts.
- Purposely create happy moments to maintain balance of negative and positive.
- Keep some common threads running in life to retain a sense of normality.
- Judge neither disappointments nor successes—keep a neutral mind.
- Cherish acts of kindness and simple pleasures.
- Keep a pleasant, contented mien.
- Empty the mind of worries about the past and future. Stay in the present; engage all senses; allow space for ideas to enter that improve the present.
- Be receptive to life lessons.
- Make the most of opportunities life presents.
- View food and exercise as medicine and work at each daily.
- Learn a new skill or try a new activity.
- Remain professional and handle difficult situations with grace.

The generating and processing of narratives may therefore lead to different forms of working knowledge and numerous applications. It is a humanizing force, which sensitizes me to the plight of others. The distilling of my experience in this exercise resulted in several applications: it prepared me for entry into other cultures; it helped me to empathize with and assist other expatriates; it enabled me to give advice to students leaving for study abroad; it helped me to engage with students newly-arrived in my own country, and it enabled me to advise local staff about issues faced by new arrivals, developing a greater compassion.

This highlights again Van Manen's claim that the aim of phenomenology is "the fulfilment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 12).

Language Teacher and Language Learner

Having embarked on a TESOL career while living abroad in unfamiliar cultures has sometimes made the task of making sense of the TESOL profession rather arduous. Whilst coming to terms with other cultures and languages, I am also coming to terms with other educational institutions, from language schools that dogmatically insist on teachers obeying their teaching methods to the minute, to institutions granting total freedom with little feedback whatsoever ("As long as the students aren't complaining."). The greatest influence on my teaching has been my own language and classroom learning, precisely because my learner beliefs at times conflict with my teacher beliefs (Spencer, 2003). Significant moments, or even thoughts, both positive and negative, for my learner-self subsequently connect with my teacher-self, and so trigger episodes worth capturing and processing by narrative.

Besides the two key personae, teacher-self and learner-self, other personae also appear: "learner from teacher," when I am a learner drawing on my teacher knowledge; "teacher from learner," when I am a teacher drawing on my learner knowledge; and "teacher and learner," when presenting both perspectives with colleagues. The various personae are usually summoned by "trigger moments": flashbacks to a moment in the other persona's world, or an inkling that something significant is occurring relating to another persona. Each persona has a different perspective on the teaching-learning issue, and I employ my phenomenologically-based methods to try to reconcile them.

> [T]he experience of being both language learner and language teacher has greatly changed my relationship with my students, which I describe as a more humanized, sensitized approach.

Other teachers who are language learners have intimated similar experiences. McDonough (2002), referring to her teacher and learner persona, summarizes the phenomenon: "[T]hese are very different worlds that do not necessarily meet" (p. 404).

Gower (1999, p. 7) also recorded "disturbing personal experiences" in the classroom as he switched from language teacher to language learner. In addition, he looked at studies of other teachers, mostly undertaking short-term experimental language courses, and found that their writings "contain more than the odd hint that one of the surprises was that what they wanted as learners was not what they gave as teachers" (p. 8).

When I enter the classroom as a student, it is not my intention to judge the presiding teacher. I do not even enter the classroom as a teacher. My learner-self is totally engrossed in the role of learner; my mind is preoccupied with learning—indeed, I have been surprised at the busy activity going on in my learner's mind, although as a teacher, I had imagined there was little going on in the students' minds! This learner focus corresponds with the experience of McDonough (2002).

Before presenting the following narratives, it must be stressed again that "A phenomenological description is always one interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer or deeper description" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 31). That description may actually take forms other than narrative, for example, poetry, music, dance, or film. As an example, the classic Japanese film *Rashômon* (Kurosawa, 1950) is regarded as an interesting phenomenological study. The film presents visual and verbal narratives that relive a murder scene from the perspectives of all witnesses and participants, including the dead man's spirit (through a medium). It shows how reality can be perceived differently by each person. The viewer attempts to determine the truth of each flashback and narrative, but cannot, as each portrayal seems both plausible and unreliable. Film director Kurosawa highlights "the inability of any one man to know the

truth, no matter how clearly he thinks he sees things. Perspective distorts reality and makes the absolute truth unknowable" (Berardinelli, 1998, n.p.). It would therefore be interesting to create narratives from the perspectives of others involved in my experiences; however, time and practicality mean limiting my interest to examining only my own perspective. Nevertheless, the intricate interplay of narratives and themes causes me to continually examine my beliefs.

Narratives from Learner and Teacher Personae

After a few years of TESOL teaching in my first overseas posting in Japan, I was still struggling with basic Japanese for numerous reasons including the habit of the Japanese to use foreigners for English practice. Finding this beginner struggle embarrassing as a language teacher, I decided to take up German, a language I had studied in school but forgotten, and attempt to "master" it. Following several months of daily self-study, in Japan, with the aid of a radio course, I enrolled in an intensive German course in Germany. It was here that the phenomenon of my dual, or multiple, worlds and personae finally dawned on me, and on my return to Japan, I recorded my classroom learner experiences in a journal (trigger moments, thoughts, lesson content, issues arising). I also began a daily diary recording my German self-study (what I was studying, when, how, accompanying thoughts, problems, and solutions). More German courses followed in Germany, Japan and Australia, providing more material for my classroom journals.

The following narrative was created by my learner-self after attending my first month-long, intensive course in Germany, at high-intermediate level (an ambitious decision by the placement tester, considering I had just started teaching myself German several months previously!). The narrative was prompted by a trigger moment alerting me that something significant was taking place regarding the use of dictionaries. The episode left vivid images in my mind, with a mental narrative forming, but as a busy student and then teacher back in Japan, I had no immediate time to process it thoroughly as reflection on action (Schön, 1983).

Back in my role as teacher, situations concerning dictionaries arose in different places and times that caused flashbacks to my learner experience, resulting in some spontaneous reflection in action (Schön, 1983). Mental narratives formed around some of these episodes, but I felt somewhat distressed that I had no time or means for really processing them until discovering phenomenology. I then converted the mental narratives into more detailed vivid accounts. The initial trigger moment about dictionaries is here converted into an anecdotal narrative. At the time, I was employed as a visiting professor at an exclusive Japanese university, but now on holiday in Germany with little language skill, my teacher only knew me as another struggling learner, which truly opened my eyes to the potential of the "language teacher as language learner" experience:

> Anecdote: The pocket dictionary
> I had strategically placed my beloved, dog-eared and ink-stained German–English pocket dictionary prominently on the right hand corner of my desk. As the teacher began to talk, I reached for the dictionary and rapidly flicked through, chasing unfamiliar words. When the teacher eyed my dictionary, he launched into a fury about pocket dictionaries (trigger moment) and stormed over toward me. As I sat with hand on opened page, eyes bulging, but then narrowing below a deep scowl, my mind recoiled at the affront to my person and preferences; my mouth flapped but no words formed. He grabbed the book and waved it in the air as he continued his tirade, then strode to the window, flung his arm outward and angrily pretended to launch the little book out. All students quickly slid their dictionaries onto their laps. I saw a flashback to my own students in Japan with their sophisticated L1–L2 electronic dictionaries, which I hadn't objected to. The teacher now strode to his desk, slammed the dictionary down and sat down.

As the lesson continued, I discreetly scribbled down every new word in tiny print on the bottom of my page, glancing at my dictionary on his desk, wishing I could consult it, and playing an image in my mind of marching up to him, snatching my dictionary back and angrily cursing him in like fashion. At the end of the lesson, the dictionary was tossed onto my desk, and I spent the break looking up my list of new words.

After the break, I defiantly placed the dictionary on the right hand corner of my desk, adamant in my desire to learn as I wished, by checking all unfamiliar words as they occurred. Again, my dictionary was confiscated and I was made an example of in an angry tirade to the class. After that, my classmates tried to censure me and keep me under control if the dictionary appeared, although I also noticed that they secretly referred to their dictionaries under their desks.

Weeks later, the teacher gave us massive German–German tomes to consult, which looked threatening enough by their sheer bulk. The contents overwhelmed us, as each entry contained new words that meant embarking on a continual trail of cross-referencing. Eventually the teacher noticed that the great tomes lay idle, the class silently preoccupied and everyone sitting well back in their chairs with downcast eyes. In a sudden outburst of raucous laughter, the teacher realized that we were all covertly consulting our L1–L2 pocket dictionaries under our desks.

To process this narrative, I peruse each sentence for emerging themes, listing the following:

dictionary use, vocabulary development, power wielded by teacher, student compliance or defiance, learner preferences at odds with teacher's beliefs or current teaching theory, emotionally charged atmosphere, (male) teacher allowing his personality to unfold vs. learners restraining theirs, learners' limited vocabulary and slowness to formulate verbal response

Once again, by naming these themes, I have brought them into conscious awareness, allowing future moments to connect with them and so form part of my growing teacher knowledge on these topics. As a busy teacher, I may exit the process at this stage, storing the themes in the recesses of my mind, or I may work on them further by applying my six interpretive steps.

As an example, the first theme of "dictionary use" will be processed in more detail using the six steps. For step 1, I engage in further reflection on the theme of dictionary use and write down my thoughts about the subject. In this case, I revisited my writing at a later date and added ongoing thoughts.

Step 1: Further reflections on theme

Reflections on "dictionary use"
The incident essentially portrays the teacher's disapproval of dictionaries, especially of the pocket L1–L2 variety. At the time of the incident, there was certainly a school of thought that did NOT encourage the use of dictionaries, demanding learners get the gist of a text, or occasionally permitted L2-only dictionaries. In the students' defence, we were mostly visitors and travellers from abroad, and the little pocket dictionary was the most practical to carry in our luggage.

These bilingual aids were a well-established part of my formative school language experiences. I hadn't seen or used an L2-only dictionary in this language context before, but subsequently took the opportunity to look at one, only to reject it because the explanations didn't give me as clear an

understanding of a word as the English definition. I could more easily digest the English definition and store it in memory; whereas the L2 definition remained inaccessible for recall. Furthermore, the L2 definition introduced more unfamiliar words, requiring further cross-referencing. It was much quicker and more reassuring to look up the L1 definition in my pocket dictionary.

Addendum: since graduating to the "advanced" class, I still prefer to consult my L1–L2 electronic dictionary. When that doesn't suffice, I cross-reference with my L2-only dictionary, but am not ready for it to be my main learning aid yet; I find condensed L2 "dictionary speak" tiring to process, and each entry has a long list to wade through, giving overwhelming shades of meaning.

Step 2: Refer to personal diaries and journals
In this step, I refer to my self-study diaries, which record my thoughts in each German study session. I search for references to dictionaries. In the narrative below, I have summarized my findings, but an alternative is to record exact quotations and dates. I also combine this step with step 4 at times (i.e., refer to the literature):

Referencing personal diaries and journals
I discovered that, as a learner, I wasn't satisfied trying to guess the gist of unfamiliar words or sentences as teachers in my world often recommend students do. This just didn't work for me. If I guessed wrong, then I just didn't make sense of further utterances, and my focus was distracted in trying to access the word and establish the correct meaning. My motivation and self-confidence plummeted and I sat and frowned. Also, I hadn't "learnt" the word, and felt uncomfortable with it. If I looked it up in my dictionary, I felt I had "learnt" it, or at least, was beginning to "own" it—it was like making a new acquaintance who would soon become a good friend, rather than an anonymous passerby.

McDonough (2002) concurs: "I'm not satisfied with getting the gist. I want to understand every word" (p. 405). Gower (1999), another teacher-learner, also experienced strong emotions: "faced with a teacher's or course book's refusal to help me understand everything, I was outraged and frustrated" (p. 12). I had an overwhelming desire to look up every unfamiliar word, just as McDonough (2002) reports from her own experience. I also enjoyed perusing the various accompanying meanings, phrases and examples. I repeated them in my mind trying to lodge them firmly in place. If reading from a textbook, I would underline the unfamiliar word, look it up and write the English above it. If listening to the radio or TV, I would write the word in my vocabulary book and either look it up immediately or wait until the end of the program to check new words. Looking up immediately gave me immediate reference to the context, which was forgotten by the end, but unfortunately prevented me from following the ensuing utterances.

I didn't try to review my word lists. I find this unproductive and boring as there could be 60 words for every 30 minute news broadcast, and there's simply not the time to keep up with it. However, the act of writing down and then consulting a dictionary gave me more meetings with the unfamiliar word, and over time, it was no longer unfamiliar. Although I didn't like studying my word lists, I did enjoy reading sentence dictionaries, particularly those with translations into L1, and at one stage would go to sleep at night reading pages from the dictionary.

I tried storing new words into the memory function of my later-acquired electronic dictionary, intending to review them every day, but that also proved a tedious exercise for me. Yet my various

students in Japan had been educated to use vocab cards (small cards on a metal ring) with L1 on one side and the L2 on the other. They sat on the train reading through and trying to learn them. They said it worked for them. When I revealed it didn't work for me because I found it tedious and boring, they grinned and agreed.

Nevertheless, their teachers persisted in giving them lists of words to memorize, and after the college's poor performance on a vocabulary test, it was decreed that the students study the 2000 most common words, write out the Japanese meaning with a sample sentence, and learn them. This horrified me, as from my learning experience, I found that each word had many contradictory meanings depending on context. For some words, not even a dictionary with one example in each context was enough to give me confidence that I understood and could use that word.

During my 5th German course, I queried the teacher about a word persistently confusing me even after consulting several dictionaries and meeting it many times, but she could only shrug and respond that it depended on the context. This highlighted the difficulty of acquiring the meaning of words, and I therefore consult the dictionary sometimes even for familiar words, finding that they are being used in a sense I hadn't been aware of— I've learnt not to take even the familiar words for granted. Gower (1999), stated: "I couldn't memorise words when I didn't have a full sense of their meaning" (p. 11).

The key to my own vocabulary development came after reading my first graded reader in the L2. Although it was, at first, an absolutely terrifying prospect to read a book in the L2, I discovered that this was a better way for me to meet words in their various contexts; by checking them in my dictionary as they occurred, my repertoire increased. At the same time, I met patterns of words, was exposed to the German way of conversing and communicating, and obtained insights into the national consciousness of the German people. If I ignore an unfamiliar word, I feel that I am missing an opportunity to learn.

Step 3: Locate narratives by others

Here, I search books and databases for narratives about dictionary use:

External source narrative on dictionary use
Clandinin and Connelly (1995) present a teacher's narrative:

> An instructor had complained more than once that much to her despair, her students wouldn't stop using their bilingual dictionary in class. I listened to her and expressed appreciation of her attempt to wean the students from relying almost totally on their first language. We both accepted the conceptual notion that ESL learners should be encouraged to use their first language to facilitate their understanding of difficult English concepts. Meanwhile, I pointed out that there was nothing wrong with using a dictionary. What was important was to offer them a good alternative and to guide them to the right track to promote growth and independence. So I recommended a couple of good English dictionaries suitable for ESL learners. (p. 147)

The author then visits the instructor again and reports with a proud smile, "They use their little (bilingual) dictionary much less often now. Of course, her openness to change made me feel good

too!" (ibid.)

Realizing I can also extract themes from such narratives, I now scan each sentence for themes that suggest themselves, arriving at a quick list:

> one teacher's "despair" at bilingual dictionary use; another's disapproval of bilingual dictionaries, disapproval of L1; "conceptual notion" of using L1 for difficult concepts; bilingual dictionaries not the "good alternative", not on "right track", not seen as promoting "growth and independence"; teacher "proud" that students use bilingual dictionary less often; teacher regarded as "open to change" for forcing students to deny their preferences

This list provides a wealth of input for further reflection, and highlights the intricacies of acquiring teacher knowledge. Here, I have an opportunity to examine the working knowledge of others and compare it with my own. There are some points of contention, and I find myself leaning towards the beliefs gained from my learner experience. I feel the teachers are repeating dictionary dogma passed around in the profession, but my learner-self doesn't want my teacher-self to accept it. I exit at this point to work on the next step.

Step 4: Locate other references to dictionary use in the literature

> Referencing the literature on dictionaries
> McDonough (2002, p. 405), a teacher-learner, also found that, as a learner, "small bilingual dictionaries are not encouraged" and "one evening in class, in a reflective moment, I scribbled a short note in my copybook to the effect that I was depending heavily on my pocket Greek-English dictionary. I assume this was an intuitive expression of a teacher's surprise that a small bilingual dictionary could be such a dominant learning aid." After distributing a questionnaire to 44 teachers and 19 students, McDonough found that 63% of teachers believed pocket bilingual dictionaries should be discouraged, yet 71% of students depended on them.

While reflecting on these references, some themes automatically suggest themselves: bilingual dictionary as "dominant learning aid" for teacher-learner, teacher's surprise at learner-self preference, majority teachers discourage dictionaries, majority students depend on them.

These extracts indicate a certain position in the field, as well as the dilemma faced by other teachers in reconciling ESL theories with their realities. My literature search continues as time and resources permit, but having named a theme, I am more receptive to further input and insights.

Step 5: Attend to passing comments and auspicious sources

In this case, I also include trigger moments for my other personae, creating narratives from their perspectives. The first narrative is after my return to Japan from Germany as I teach an English class. The second narrative occurred some months later.

> Anecdote 1: The electronic dictionary—Teacher-self connecting with learner-self
> I stood erect before my class in professional attire, speaking carefully in English. I looked down upon the students, sitting erect in their fashionable clothes as they looked up at me, eyes reflecting minds busy trying to make sense of my words. Some students suddenly started, grabbed their electronic dictionaries and keyed in a word. I had a "trigger moment" and flashbacks to the

dictionary incident in Germany. I stopped speaking and offered everyone in gentle tones some time to consult their dictionaries, make notes and ask questions.

All students opened their dictionaries and began typing and I looked around the room surveying the sudden activity and preoccupation. They conferred with one another, tipped dictionaries toward one another, and leaned over one another's shoulders to read the little screens. Hands went up and voices beckoned me to come to them ("Sensei! Sensei!"). I moved amongst them. They showed me their screens and with long manicured fingernails studded with imitation diamonds (elite women's college), they pointed to entries and asked questions, looking up at me with quizzical faces. I bent nearer to look, then straightened up to explain to the group who were listening in. A voice in their L1 rose above the murmur throwing a question to someone. Several voices answered excitedly from several directions and with rising volume, as they seemed to try to explain and give examples. After all the commotion and activity, a sudden silence fell. Surprised faces looked up and around to me. I raised eyebrows at them. They smiled back at me. I walked back to the front, turned and continued my speaking.

Anecdote 2: Discussing dictionaries and L1 with colleague—Summoning both teacher-self and learner-self
From the other side of the partition in our shared office, my colleague began ranting about her students and their persistent use of their L1 in the classroom (trigger moment). I walked around the partition to engage in further dialogue. She was slouched over the desk, hands holding her head. Near her was a plastic white cup with silver coins in it. She pointed to it and sobbed that she had resorted to fining the students whenever they used their L1. I had an image of her enacting this procedure in the classroom. She said she found it very annoying when they consulted their dictionaries; more so when they stopped speaking mid-sentence to do it. She appeared very angry and distressed. I spoke of my desire as a learner to use my L1 at times and consult my dictionary when I felt a need. She paused for a moment to digest that. We exchanged a few more thoughts on the issues but soon ran out of words. We parted with unresolved questions floating in the air, our focus redirected to preparation for the next lesson.

Step 6: Derive current working knowledge

I now need to formalize my current position on dictionary use by reflecting on the information I have gathered. For example:

> All of the above anecdotes and thoughts emphasized to me the complexity of language learning, and in particular, vocabulary and meaning acquisition. My learner experience revealed the value of the dictionary as a learning tool, with the bilingual dictionary being a primary aid at all levels of proficiency, and the L2-only dictionary gradually being utilized at the advanced level. My electronic dictionary, in particular, with its grammar explanations, verb conjugations, sample phrases, and word games, has been a major learning tool. My teacher-self had little appreciation of the intimate relation a learner might have with words and their dictionary/ies or the complexity of establishing the meaning of words. Because of my learner experience and reflections, my stance is to encourage students to regard dictionaries as a valuable tool, both in and out of class. I will encourage them to check all new and unfamiliar words and to note down their L1, but adding more L2 synonyms at the higher levels. I will encourage them to think about shades of meaning and check ongoing meetings with words to determine which shade of meaning is inferred. My

learner-self is definitely a strong force with a great vested interested in mastering a language. I feel inclined to work with its requirements and adopt them in my teaching practice.

Because my phenomenological approach is cyclical and I want to remain receptive to further moments related to my named themes, I soon encounter more input. In the ensuing move to China, my dictionary recommendations are met with shock by my university students, because they have been indoctrinated to believe dictionaries "waste time" and that learners must "guess the meaning" of words. Instead, their teachers give them specific word lists to memorize, but because of my learner dissatisfaction with memorizing vocabulary lists, I am therefore wary of asking learners to do likewise. I suggest they purchase dictionaries, read extensively (I introduce them to Graded Readers) and consult their dictionaries frequently. One by one, the students purchase dictionaries and after some initial fear, announce that dictionaries are "fun." I encourage them to branch out and explore their own best ways for acquiring vocabulary and meaning.

Importantly, the class and I have created open dialogue to discuss and share learning issues and ideas, because we share the same journey of language acquisition. However, as a Western individual learning to live in a group society, I also worry that I am undermining local authorities, and therefore need to be continually alert for trigger moments and monitor my beliefs in my current context. Gaining teacher knowledge from my reflections is an intricate process that generates confidence but also unearths niggling uncertainties.

My Changing Attitude toward Learners

My learner experience in and out of the classroom has given me more intimate knowledge of the learner's private and public world. I have a better appreciation of the effort required by each individual to acquire another language. As a classroom learner, I am privy to the relationship between students, to the fluctuating mood, to the feelings induced as a result of the teacher's words or actions, and to personal views about the teacher. My learner-self has revealed quite an emotional battleground being enacted in the classroom, which I consider disturbing; yet as a teacher, I am oblivious to this internal world. The following narrative captures my learner experience of this inner turmoil in 1999 in a Japanese class for foreigners in Japan. Such experiences make me more sensitive as a teacher in considering the effect of my words, attitude, behaviour, actions, requests and demands.

Narrative: The Japanese lesson

The matronly teacher stood commanding from the front, in a smart black outfit with big shining brooch, and a beaming face that seemed to radiate confidence and power. Nearby were a number of assistants, similarly beaming. The class of adult foreigners sat in regimental rows. As the class progressed, the beaming continued, despite the anxieties I was experiencing. I was riding an emotional rollercoaster: I recited a list of verbs, overjoyed at the new vocabulary; then I began to panic as the teacher expected us to apply them in sentences in various forms before I had memorized their meanings. My shoulders drooped and the energy dissipated from my body. Half listening to the teacher, I furiously studied my list of verbs, trying to commit them to memory. I lost my grasp of the lesson.

I stopped to stare at the teacher as she raced on, with her smiling face that I now found annoying. I stared around at the assistants, who busied themselves peering at other students' books. The thought occurred to me that they weren't sincere; they were performing a role called 'community service to the foreigners'; I screwed up my nose, stared dejectedly back at my page and wondered what to do. I looked around at the rows of students across the aisle: some also seemed to be

playing their roles as dutiful students. The classroom began to feel artificial. I was thinking how much I had looked forward to these lessons, and now I was losing heart. As the teacher quickly launched in a new direction, the student behind me (a professional musician) muttered: "What the hell is that woman going on about now?" Expletives issued from his neighbours. I realized that other students were similarly suffering in silence. I gave up all attempts to follow the teacher, and started my own self-study.

Processing this narrative, one can distill potential themes: for example, the power of the teacher, emotional rollercoaster, artificial behaviour, different perceptions of reality,, teacher's quick transitions, teacher's distance from students, student reluctance to seek help, lack of opportunity to seek help, giving up, and self-study. Having named these themes, and even without processing them further, I am already more conscious of my actions when in my teacher role, and so become more "sensitive" and "humanized" as a teacher.

The following narrative, created from a later experience in China, shows how the above experience and narrative, as well as the earlier ones, connect with my teacher-self and influence my philosophies of teaching:

Anecdote: Student request

As the new foreign teacher, I stood on the dais introducing myself to the assembled student body. Dressed in a new suit, I smiled broadly at the sea of faces in tiered seating and hoped to create an image of confidence and control. When I finished speaking, a student near the front stood up and asked: "Will you get to know me?" My eyes widened and I stared at her. There was a murmur and shuffling amongst the students and faculty. She looked around, then repeated her question. I smiled as my mind captured images of my learner-self also struggling with issues of teacher power, distance, and identity. I felt my stiffness melt away and I blurted out in simple English: "Of course. My classroom is my family. I am like Mama." The students and faculty looked at each other, laughed, and clapped.

Without my learner experience and the subsequent naming of themes, I wouldn't have understood nor appreciated the poignancy of her plea. Thus, my dual roles inform my practice, and also seem to have a humanizing effect on my teacher-self. I later received a delightful card from a student who remembered the "Mama" speech and liked the class atmosphere: "You are a very kind 'mom'…. Love you, my mom!"

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasized four main themes: the benefit of reflective writing for teachers; the value of the language learner experience for a language teacher; the application of phenomenology to education and teacher knowledge; and the plight of the expatriate TESOL teacher making sense of teaching, learning and life. The thread linking these themes is an adaptation of phenomenology to produce vivid narratives and elicit themes, bringing them into conscious awareness for further reflection.

The keeping of personal language learning diaries and journals provide material that feeds into the reflective process, either in the creation of narratives or in supporting the emerging themes. The insights revealed are invaluable material for questioning and informing beliefs about teaching and learning, thus providing a means for teacher development, particularly for isolated teachers. The expatriate teacher also has cultural issues to deal with, not only in life but regarding local teaching and learning philosophies, where the application of this phenomenological approach can assist in the clear identification and monitoring of issues.

Most significantly, the experience of being both language learner and language teacher has greatly changed my relationship with my students, which I describe as a more humanized, sensitized approach. For example, I have reduced the distance between me and each student; I regard and treat students as humans first, and students second; the classroom has more of an atmosphere of working together around the kitchen table (even when in rows), with all members expressing and sharing their worries, ideas and, in particular, personalities. I try to connect with my students' experience of my lessons; I imagine myself as a learner in my own classroom, and imagine what effect my words and actions have on them.

I recall even the slightest issues that gave me grief as a classroom learner, and try to avoid creating them in my teaching role. For example, I "sign-post" the lesson by informing the students what I'm doing and why; I use more repetition, particularly with lesson or segment introductions; I offer more summaries of teaching points, and I give students thinking time to digest work. I also write all page numbers on the board, as well as tasks, explanations and homework requirements. In addition, I consider if homework tasks truly provide value for the time required. I make myself available during breaks and after class. I do these things not because of professional training, but because my learner-self has given me the teacher knowledge. I do these things because I enjoy being with other language learners.

Even if a busy teaching post doesn't allow me to engage in much physical writing, I have my mental narratives and the training to identify trigger moments, elicit themes and bring them into conscious awareness. I may be isolated from teaching colleagues, but these trigger moments and narratives intertwine in an intricate interplay of themes and thoughts to create a sense of ongoing professional dialogue, which greatly influence my teaching, learning, and expatriate life.

How valid is my teacher knowledge formed from my own learner experience and narratives? I would argue that, unlike some teachers, writers and researchers, I have direct access to a long-term learner's mind, and although there may be learner differences according to learning styles, age, gender and so on, my greater sensitivity to learner issues combined with my reflective program will, in the absence of professional dialogue and feedback, effectively guide my teaching practice.

Finally, phenomenologists may use means other than pure narrative to capture and convey a phenomenon, for example, poetry, painting and music. The following poem expresses the various personae resulting from my dual teacher and learner experiences:

Language Teacher as Language Learner

I, who am teacher, am master,
Aloof in my wisdom and years,
Solemnly posing and drawing,
Tho' hiding my lack in my fears.

I, who am student, am shadow,
In darkness, half-formed yet aflame,
Peer out, reach out for the candle,
Then cower and blush at my shame.

I, who am teacher and student,
Look down from both sides of the wall,
Speak of my view overwhelming,
Defending and judging them all.

I, who am teacher as student,
Look, question, demand and endure,
Fear not the thoughts of my fellows,
In knowing the truth am secure.

I, who am student as teacher,
Watch over my neighbours unsure,
Filling the gaps of omission,
And guiding them safely to shore.

I, who am teacher from student,
Search deep in each eye to the soul,
In knowing, nodding and sharing,
More human to nurture our goal.

About the Author

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Chapter 4

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THROUGH MEMOIRS AND JOURNALS

Carla L. Reichmann

Pre-reading question: Considering texts in broad terms, that is, including written texts such as articles, books and reflective journals, as well as audio/visual texts such as photographs, paintings and movies, which texts have had a vital impact on your teaching practice and on yourself? Why?

Introduction

This chapter is based on these underlying assumptions:

1. Language shapes and is shaped by social processes, construing social identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough, 1992)
2. Learning to construct texts and familiarity with genres requires social experience (Hasan, 1989)
3. Reflective writing is a professional action (Burton, 2004)
4. Teacher development and school reform are conceptualized as processes of restorying practice (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005)

Echoing these ideas, I will discuss the empowering effect that a specific reflective writing genre—dialogue journaling—has had on my professional practice in different contexts. Roughly following a chronological sequence, I will analyze various journaling situations I have experienced, focusing on professional challenges and teacher learning. I will contrast two dialogue journal projects with EFL teachers—a successful one versus a fiasco (or at least as I saw it then). Most importantly, this chapter highlights the relevance of narrative research, reflective teacher collaboration, and a professional network on my own learning process as a language teacher and teacher researcher over time.

Narrative research and reflective writing can take place through different formats, such as autobiographies, life histories, reflective feedback, dialogue journals, audio and video recording, portfolios, webfolios, and weblogs. Personally speaking, I started writing more reflectively and systematically about my language learning and teaching experiences while attending the MAT program at the School for International Training: The collaborative context for reflection and meaning-making definitely shaped my professional identity and social practice as a teacher. On reconstructing my life history and educational experiences through my memories, on making sense of the present, and on signaling professional possibilities, reflective writing, and group discussions were a breakthrough. I became more aware of my position as an educator and was exposed to critical tools for lifelong learning. My experience is confirmed by Freire and Freeman: Freire (1996, p. 80) pointed out that "in truth, professional development takes place in existential experience, conceived in and influenced by it"; and Freeman (2002) has written about the importance of teacher education aiming to make sense of experience, collaboratively, and in a context-sensitive manner.

Likewise, the notions of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982), teacher research and evolving discourse (Elbaz, 1991; Freeman, 1996), critical reflection (Bartlett, 1990; Freire, 1970,1997; Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Smyth, 1992), reflection-in/on-action (Schön, 1987), text-making (McDonald,1992) and narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) have also shaped my practice deeply.

Another important construct underlying my current work is Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. Through interaction with more capable peers, the individual progresses from what Vygotsky called an actual development level to a potential development level. Between these two levels is the ZPD, "the interpersonal space where minds meet and new understandings can arise through collaborative interaction and inquiry" (Cummins, 1994, p. 45). In other words, the ZPD is a dialogic, discursive space, *a construction zone* (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989), constituted by the "specific ways that adults (or peers) socially mediate or interactionally create circumstances for learning" (Moll, 1989, p. 59, in Cummins, 1994, p. 45). Vygotsky was convinced that learning itself is a dynamic social process, and that high-order cognitive functions originate in the social environment. Following this framework, dialogue journaling is in line with ZPD theory, forging construction zones.

In sum, this chapter will cover my use of journal writing for myself and with teacher-learners over my professional career. The next section addresses the moment I joined my professional journal network—a group of teachers scattered around the world, connected by their mutual interest in journal writing, language learning, and teacher development (see Chapters 1 and 12). I then go back to my first dialogue journals, produced in the U.S.A. before I joined my journal network. Then, I will address an insightful experience—a dialogue journal case study I conducted in Brazil—whereas the section after that addresses a complicated experience—a dialogue journal project I tried to implement in Bolivia. The final section addresses my ongoing practice, and my journal network.

Constructing (Con)texts—The Online Journal Group

Learning is not so much acquiring particular skills as it is increasing participation in a community of practitioners. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 90)

In this section, I relate how I joined my professional network in the middle of the professional experience I focus on in this chapter.

The setting: New Year's Eve, Florianópolis, Brazil. I log on for the last time that day. An e-mail message informs me that my chapter proposal for the TESOL *Journal Writing* book (Burton & Carroll, 2001a) has been accepted. The chapter would address the Brazilian dialogue journal that turned out to be the core data for my doctoral dissertation; I was then wrestling with academic discourse having just finished a couple of pilot studies and a research paper—or "interim texts," in line with Clandinin and Connelly (2000). These explorations dealt with teacher discourse analysis from a systemic-functional linguistic perspective (Halliday, 1994). I would soon take the plunge and start writing my dissertation. But not right away. Now I had another text to write, another reader, another social interaction, pushing me to review the dialogue journaling experience.

In line with the unpredictable projects my professional journal writing seems to trigger, the impact of this particular discursive practice was then still unclear. The focus of my dissertation served as an entry to an ongoing network of teacher-writers-under-construction, namely, an open-ended collaborative project construing a learning community of practitioners focused on reflective journal writing and professional renewal. The developing e-mail network, and the underpinning concept for this book, has led me to go

back and forwards through my professional journey, acting as the central catalyst for my thinking and my practice over the past few years.

First Experiences—The U.S. Dialogue Journals

When pursued in a disciplined manner, teaching itself becomes a form of research. It is a matter of balancing and assembling different points of view, each of which knows—or can know—aspects of the story of teaching and learning. This insight will entail recognizing diverse ways of telling the stories so that more voices can be heard. (Freeman, 1996, p. 112)

Back to the beginning. The setting: MAT program, School for International Training (SIT), Brattleboro, U.S.A., course on language, culture and semiology. It is the first day of class, and one of our course assignments was to pair up with a peer in order to discuss in writing our reactions to the readings and related issues that would come up along the term. We are told that at the end of the semester we would be writing a final reflection on this dialogue journal experience, investigating threads and questions that surfaced in our written dialogue over time.

It's the second day of class, and my co-writer decides to quit. The professor volunteers to keep the journal with me—and thus my first dialogue journal jump-starts. Essentially, in this journal I discuss my initial ideas regarding my MAT thesis project, focusing on videotaping learners for language learning and self-awareness purposes. Having a BA in Journalism and with a strong background in photography and video, I was fascinated when, during a French course I had taken in my first semester at SIT, the professor videotaped us for another project he was conducting. Although our class never saw the tape, I was intrigued by the potential benefits of video analysis in the language class. By the time the second semester was over, I had conducted several exploratory video sessions, in three different contexts: I had videotaped myself, as well as a learner of Portuguese whom I was teaching privately, and two bilingual classmates. The footage yielded my first reflections on video analysis and self-observation, namely, error correction, progress, bilingualism, identity in a foreign language, and intercultural issues.

> If teachers' mental lives are storied or narrative webs of past and present experience, if their knowledge is reflective of their position in the activity of teaching, then it makes sense that reflective practice must become a central pillar in teacher education. (Freeman, 2002, p. 11)

My final reflection for the semiology class, triggered by dialogue journaling, revolved around my video experiences and course readings. I also focused on a painting by Velázquez, Las Meninas, which was extensively analyzed by Foucault (1978), and whose work I had come across during my undergraduate program in Brazil. The painter himself is rendered in this mirror-like painting, creating the dual role of observer and observed. This metaphor seemed to fit with video, self-observation, and reflection on the language learning process. Importantly, through this first dialogue journaling experience, I was encouraged to extend my thinking, and to develop a better sense of my own research interests—such as language learning awareness, documentation of progress, student responsibility and teacher accountability. On clarifying my thoughts, dialogue journal writing enhanced my self-confidence, sense of ownership, and metacognitive skills. The professor rightly pointed out that the longitudinal factor, a central feature in documenting progress over time, was not captured in the Velázquez painting (as can be seen in Figure 1).

Figure 4.1. Las Meninas, Diego Velázquez, 1656. Used with permission from the Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

Thus, with a video analysis project in my mind's eye, the following Summer I set out to Cushing Academy Summer School, where I worked in a six-week ESL program. I taught two intermediate classes, both of which dealt with the four skills. Altogether I had nineteen international teenage students, ages ranging from twelve to seventeen, with different cultural backgrounds—France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Spain and Venezuela. This was the context for my action research using video. My initial assumption was that video analysis was a powerful way to assess and address student needs regarding oral communication in either an ESL or EFL class.

Each group of students was videotaped once a week, and after each session learners had a journal writing task, basically addressing questions such as "What did you talk about today?", "What was positive about your presentation?", "What can be improved?", "What about your communication skills?", "Is there anything you would like to change? What? Why?", "What have you learned about language through self-

observation?", and "What have you learned about yourself?" Many learners also used their journals to jot down their insights during self-observation. I kept track of my own insights in a personal journal.

Over the six-week period, each group had six video sessions. Students had a two-minute limit, but most spoke less than this. The first topic involved sharing with the class unusual information about themselves—this was a follow-up of "sharing personal info" activities conducted in class during the first week. The second video session involved sharing with the class interesting information about their countries—also a follow-up on cross-cultural activities conducted in class. The third task involved talking about their field-trip to Boston (impromptu speech this time). Their fourth task involved talking about U.S. culture (impromptu speech in dyads and triads). The fifth task involved topics brainstormed by students, such as leaving Cushing, sports, music, different cultures, studying abroad, war, love, and fighting with someone you like. The last task involved taping the first task again, so as to allow students to see their progress. Some excerpts of a student's journal entries can be seen below:

> I was very nervous and trembling my voice. I was exciting that I can know which is right and wrong. After watching videotape, I could know about that. Today I also learned new grammar... I think this journal helps me a lot. I can think about my speaking English through this journal. I also can know what I did wrong then I try to fix that... Today this morning I spoke about my country's folding fan. It was more comfortable than first time. I was loud when I spoke that. I think this video is better than the others. More long story, more secure when I spoke about story... My classmate and I, we kept talking, and our voices were loud... I think I grew up.

Other learners focused on pronunciation, vocabulary, eye contact, and reviewing mistakes. As I wrote in my thesis, videotaping, class discussions and dialogue journals worked well together, and gave me a good picture of progress—theirs and mine. As I engaged in written dialogue with my students, I could see the positive effects of video analysis in class. While learners explored language learning and intercultural issues, I became more confident with my teaching and teacher identity—namely, what I was doing in class and why, and who I was as a language professional. I felt comfortable with the journaling experience, and with the electronic paraphernalia. In hindsight, an interesting point is that during this experience my main focus was integrating video analysis in the classroom. I barely addressed the dialogue journaling experience—I had not even considered including students' entries in my thesis (Reichmann, 1992). My adviser raised the importance of weaving in learners' insights. It was through reflective writing in my thesis that I grasped the extent of my learning experience as a teacher doing action research; that I managed to make sense of my personal, professional, and academic experiences; and that I became more aware of the different voices in my texts. In essence, at SIT I came across reflective, experiential learning and action research, and learned that "positioning teachers as creators rather than consumers of knowledge about language teaching is one way to remedy the mismatch between theories and situated practices" (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004, p. 397).

On textualizing my teaching practice, I had a better sense of where I was coming from. I broadened my professional horizons, and realized I had something creative to say. I gathered some energy and presented a poster session on video analysis at an international TESOL conference. The poster consisted of a large photograph of a video camera, facing the onlooker, surrounded by texts following the four main sections in my thesis, namely, *analysis, experience, reflection,* and *synthesis.* Sharing this experience was a professional breakthrough yet again providing me with material for more writing. As a teacher-writer, I was experiencing that a text leads to more texts. Furthermore, that the classroom is a text (Freire, 1994) within an intertextual chain. Along Kristeva's (1986, p. 39) and in Fairclough's (1992) lines, intertextuality implies "the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history" (p. 102).

Thus, these experiences illustrate how I first came across dialogue journals as a graduate student and teacher-researcher. Furthermore, I realized the vital relevance of enhancing teacher literacy, and of creating narrative space for teacher thinking, or a "reflective oasis" (Zabalza, 2004, p. 136).

My story on journaling continues. Sometimes with video analysis, sometimes without it, I conducted other reflective writing projects—dialogue journals with international undergraduate art students in Savannah, Georgia, U.S.A., focusing on intercultural experiences; a reflective writing study group with Brazilian EFL teachers at a binational center in Santos, Brazil, focusing on life stories and teacher beliefs; and written reflections produced by EFL teachers taking a postgraduate course on Oral Communication which I taught at a university in Blumenau, Brazil, this time focusing on their speaking skills.

The Doctoral Experience—The Brazilian Dialogue Journal Case Study

Being "professional" in this way entails, among other things, being able to articulate and justify one's practice. We believe dialogue journals can help language learners and teacher learners develop this kind of language, a professional language that assists all kinds of learners in managing generative personal reflection (inner dialogue) and collaborative reflection (social dialogue). (Burton & Carroll, 2001, p. 6)

The setting: Ph.D. Program in Applied Linguistics, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil, course on written discourse analysis. It is the first day of class, and as we clarify our final paper, I decide I need samples of written teacher discourse from a practicing teacher, so as to write the final term paper on collaborative, reflective practice, and evolving teacher discourse. A colleague agreed to keep a dialogue journal with me; this short-term project gained momentum, and lasted fifteen months. After its conclusion, as mentioned earlier, it led to my Ph.D. dissertation investigating linguistic evidence of discursive change in both participants' discourse, over time (Reichmann, 2001a).

Yet again the Velázquez painting appeared: I came across *Las Meninas* as a metaphor for the teacher-as-researcher, whereby "the teller is fully and centrally reflected in the story" (Freeman, 1996, p. 110). I definitely incorporated the painting in my academic and professional work, in order to illustrate the teacher–researcher concept: I included this image in my dissertation, in my defense, as well as in various presentations addressing reflective writing, teacher learning, and teacher-research.

Halfway through my Ph.D. program, I saw a call for papers for a book on journal writing. As I have mentioned earlier, in response to this call I submitted a research paper on the Brazilian dialogue journaling, and my proposal was accepted. Writing about this topic from another perspective really appealed to me, I needed to write reflectively about the dialogue journaling. Having a text edited online was a new experience, extremely exciting. Co-constructing my narrative—and voice—was fascinating. I could see my reflections on reflective writing taking on a new life, very different from the academic genre I was trying to produce. This text was less dense, in the sense that it was less wordy and theoretical, closer to oral discourse. This piece of reflective writing provided me with another perspective on my own doctoral experience. Isolated with my own academic writing, this novel dialogue about dialogue journals was like a breath of fresh air. I constantly felt that my editor's support validated my work, my case study made sense, and was relevant.

As a result of writing a chapter (Reichmann, 2001b) in a book (which included some of the authors in this book), I had more confidence and energy to finally engage in writing the final dissertation. The book chapter itself and my editor inspired me immensely—on starting to write my dissertation, the first words I wrote practically came straight out of the book chapter: "Language teaching is known to be a complex, dynamic, socio-historical practice, multifaceted like a prism, unpredictable like chaos. To unravel it, clarify it, experiment, and promote change, teachers need systematic support…."

I can still remember my adviser's crucial words of encouragement, on reading my first chapter. He excitedly told me that I had started very well—my ideas flowed, clearly signaling what was coming ahead, and that the issues I raised were extremely relevant. And thus I started discussing my Brazilian dialogue journal experience, in light of a critical discourse perspective (Fairclough, 1992) and a systemic-functional framework (Halliday, 1994). The linguistic analysis aiming at investigating teachers' discursive change over time was a challenge. That we had both been transformed by our social interaction was crystal clear: so what had happened to our language?

Assuming that language shapes and is shaped by social processes (Fairclough, 1992), I sought to explore traces of change in our texts. Within a critical discourse perspective, language is seen as a form of social practice, deeply immersed in social context, representing and signifying the world (Fairclough, 1992). Within a systemic functional framework, language is viewed as communicative and socio-constitutive (Lemke, 1992), as an open, dynamic system of meanings (Lemke, 1984) for speakers to create texts which unfold in some context of use (Halliday, 1994). Triggered by the journal, my research questions focused on what the lexicogrammatical evidence would reveal regarding the social relations and representations encoded in our discourse.

On analyzing the dialogue journaling from a Hallidayan perspective, and aided by the concordancing software WordSmith (Scott, 1995), I was able to pinpoint three similar features in our discourse over time, namely:

(i)   In terms of social relations, more obligations and inclinations are reported in the journal;
(ii)   Also in terms of social relations, the grammatical Subjects *we/let's* increased over time, enhancing the teachers' subject position, and constituting more symmetrical power relations;
(iii) In terms of representations, more *creative doings* are reported, and these increased teacher doings are anchored in the many mental verbs produced initially in the journal.

In other words, gradually the power relations between participants became more symmetrical, our teacher identities evolved collaboratively, and our dialogue enhanced informed action. Our questions constantly pushed our dialogue onwards.

As I see it, an important aspect is that I never actually saw my colleague teaching, or a video fragment of her class, as I had envisioned in the beginning so as to have common ground for our interaction. Our work centered exclusively on our perceptions and discursive constructions. The impact was powerful, as can be seen in the text below, an e-mail produced by my colleague eighteen months after our dialogue journaling had ended (my translation):

An interesting point is that the 'reflective written interaction' seems to enhance a deeper conception of the teacher's role in the teaching-learning process, and of the factors that contribute to this process. It is as if we were co-constructing, through writing, our own object of study: our own pedagogical practice and our students' learning practice are foregrounded. Classroom reality becomes the focus of reflection, as opposed to isolated happenings. I remember that in the beginning of the DJ [dialogue journaling] I did not exactly know what I should be writing about. I portrayed isolated incidents, and seemed to be more worried about what I did (as if I could do anything by myself). Now I am more capable of enhancing student voice, although I still talk a lot... Yesterday I was thinking how I really was trained as a teacher-researcher during the journal process. After all, my research projects are nothing more, nothing less than a sequel of our work; we really haven't stopped...And I really appreciated your article [Reichmann, 2001b], it is great to feel all this progress as a teacher, and that we accomplished this together. I really did not know

what it meant to feel 'awareness' regarding pedagogical practice. And I don't have all those fears anymore...

With these words, I ended my dissertation, and my defense. Besides the above mentioned points raised by my co-writer, focusing on teacher research, metacognition, and social interaction, another issue that specially caught my attention was the time factor: the above insights were written after our collaborative writing project was over—a year and a half later, more precisely. As for the book on journal writing (Burton & Carroll, 2001a), it was published right before my defense. I had a public voice. The effects were visible, in the sense that this implied my positioning within an international discourse community, and my local academic community acknowledged this. My dissertation was well received, impacting positively on my current work with narrative inquiry and language teacher research in Brazil (Reichmann 2006). As for my colleague, she has clearly repositioned herself as a language teacher researcher and educator, and is currently developing a Ph.D. project in Brazil and Canada, involving teacher literacy and teacher socialization, focusing on dialogue, reflection, and collaborative practices.

In hindsight, I can see how reflective writing and dialogue journals have been a link throughout my professional learning, in terms of my practice and identity as a teacher-researcher. The issues foregrounded in my Brazilian dialogue journal study became clearer with the book chapter, which in turn facilitated my academic writing—different, interconnected genres shaping my professional voice and discursive practice, in line with Pavlenko (2007). Teacher development is a lifelong learning process, grounded on social context; and in this egg-carton profession (Lortie, 1975), along Vygotsky's (1978) lines, construction zones are crucial. Ever present are Shulman's (1988a, p. 16) words, "[W]hen we conduct educational research, we make the claim that there *is* method to our madness."

I will now address my "fiasco."

The Professional (In)experience—The Bolivian Dialogue Journal Project

The dilemma, then, is how to engage teachers in articulating and publicly representing the complexity of teacher learning. (Freeman, 1998, 2002)

After the successful Brazilian dialogue journal study, for a while I was mostly involved with EFL teaching in an undergraduate program in Brazil. Meanwhile, I kept on writing to teachers, and reading about journals and narrative inquiry (e.g., Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, amongst others). Along Freire's lines (1996, p. 85), these readings "illuminated my practice and the practice of others and explained the level of success or confirmed the level of error that took place."

Then an opportunity to develop an in-service EFL teacher project arose. My two-year contract at the Brazilian university was ending, jobs in the area were scarce, and traveling abroad with my family sounded like an interesting intercultural experience. Having previously worked as an English Language Fellow at binational centers in Brazil, out of the blue I received an e-mail announcing there were job openings in the program. Off I went. The setting: An English Language Fellow Program at a binational center in Bolivia. An unbelievably complex setting, as I would realize much later on.

As I currently see it, my work there was a failure in terms of promoting institutional change. And an immense learning experience, too. In hindsight, some aspects have become clearer. For one thing, I had been immersed in a university setting for eight years, and had distanced myself from the reality of a language school. Also, had I been more informed back then regarding the conservative features of the local society and culture, I would have immediately paid more attention to some perplexing facts, which were clearly signaling danger. To begin with, I remember how puzzled I was when the supervisors showed

me the teachers' schedule. No slot for workshops during weekdays, just Saturday mornings. No bonus, no extras for the overworked, underpaid teachers. Compulsory workshops on Saturdays, and that was that. No way out. Understandably, teachers hated this. Another complicated issue was the supervisors' obsession with controlling lesson plans; the "surprise classroom observation" approach was also popular, and I firmly had to decline this approach. To top it all, the library resembled a museum: resource books could not circulate. (On commiserating online with a colleague who had worked at a similar setting in Central America, she told me about her "Free the Dictionaries" project...).

And there I was, trying to talk to forty-five teachers about reflective writing, collaborating, exploring, doubting. Some even tried, heroically. A few journals did take off—three teachers who were involved with graduate work, and a few other teachers, also interested and extremely motivated, I have to say. Their texts revolved around their life histories, teacher and student motivation, and teaching teens. Institutional problems were never discussed in writing; conversations were a safer ground. As time progressed, I realized how suffocating the top-down approach was. The teacher-as-technician attitude adopted by the administrators was painful. Here was a group of teachers trying to survive in an environment built on surveillance, control, and oppression. Everything seemed mysterious. Teachers were never sure about their exact salary; it varied month by month; payment was always late; they were scolded for trying to be creative—such as trying to organize field trips with students. Medical leave was unheard of; any health problem was a major issue. And so on and so forth. No space whatsoever for growth. Nothing made sense to me. Yet again Freire's lines resonate: *"It is not possible to create without serious intellectual discipline; likewise, it is not possible to create within a system of fixed, rigid or imposed rules"* (1996, p. 167).

Culture shock, you might ask? Somewhat, but I have lived most of my life in Brazil, and had worked in similar language institutes; I was familiar with the tightrope scenario: that is, living in an unstable South American economy, and not being able to make ends meet. However, Brazil is not Bolivia: a different language, different culture, whole different ballgame. Institutional shock? Yes, definitely. I remember thinking how the school needed an organization consultant trained in conflict resolution—as opposed to an ELT specialist. The school administration was not open to change, did not expect change, and I was unable to create a construction zone so as to promote change. Yet in terms of reflective teacher development, institutional support is crucial (Burton, 1997).

One interesting thing that did happen was that close to the end of my post, my own journal network had to organize an imminent TESOL colloquium (Quirke et al., 2004) on diverse journaling experiences. In order to plan for the session, involving participants around the world, an intense e-mail interaction ensued. I contributed with a letter, in an attempt to illustrate in the colloquium what a dialogue journal entry might look like, and thus encourage a response from the audience. The entry can be seen below.

Dear Friend,

Here I am again. Hope all is well. I haven't written for a while, but there is a lot I need to share with you—so here I go.

As you well know, I've been involved with this 10-month fellowship since last September when I arrived in this country. A few weeks after I got here, the country seemed to fall apart—there was that mini-revolution, for a couple of days I thought I'd have to leave—but then things went back to 'normal'. So this kind of slowed my work in the beginning, for obvious reasons. The whole country went through post-traumatic stress.

Anyway, what can I say—I've never faced such a challenging/confusing experience as a teacher educator. The institution is incredibly top-down, I don't understand their priorities, and

their whole attitude towards the teachers—they look for the negative, not the positive; I had to negotiate the observation process—no way I'd pop in announced, the way they do it, and as for forcing the teachers to attend Saturday workshops—oh dear. The teachers and the Academic Director don't get along—they're barely on speaking terms. Teacher motivation is low, I face huge institutional odds, and teachers are so overworked I had a hard time figuring out how to meet them, as a whole group.

So I have organized two meetings a month—one Saturday morning, and one Friday "lunch session". As an option, I've tried to get a DJ project going, but except for a few, the teachers don't write. Since our meetings started last January, I've reorganized the whole plan I had initially organized. The teachers don't really read in advance, so I had to plan different stuff. And focus on the five or so teachers that do want to get involved.

The "successful activities project"—their suggestion—also did not take off. Work has to happen during the session itself, it seems—which aren't so frequent. So I guess I will now focus on student feedback (they're not familiar with structured feedback/reflective practice), encourage a poster feedback activity (on our sessions) with them the next time we meet, and continue working with the cuisenaire rods—which they seemed to like. I don't know how to optimize the brief time I have with them, and cannot assume they'll do extra tasks. I have the feeling I'm not going anywhere. And they're a nice group of teachers, around fifty, but I can't seem to reach them. Usually only half of them attend our meetings. Teacher voice, teacher autonomy—what has happened to all my goals? What do these teachers need? And how could I support this group more efficiently?

So I am quite intrigued with this whole process, and wondering what kind of impact—if any—my work will have here. How do you see all this? I really need to talk this out. Would love to hear from you.

Take care,
Carla

Writing the above lines was enlightening. I could see my confusing situation more clearly, the professional contradiction I was facing: The school administration had hired me to enhance language learning and teaching processes, yet they were not really aware of (nor open to) the profound changes that were necessary in order to reach their goals. On another note, due to my dialogue journal entry above, and the exchanges with the Journal Group in order to plan for the TESOL session, it occurred to me that I could try a different format at the next couple of workshops I would be facilitating, at binational centers in Santa Cruz and Tarija. Inspired by our planning for the colloquium, I decided to use the first entry of the Brazilian dialogue journal as a writing prompt for the Bolivian teachers—sixty altogether. The entry, produced by my dialogue journal colleague Olga (a pseudonym), can be seen below:

Eleven students. There are twenty students in my classroom and there were only eleven today. One of them left a message with a colleague saying that he couldn't come because he had to study. I know that it is probable that the others also had this kind of reason not to come to class. However, it always worries me when students miss classes, when they give up my courses, or when they look upset in class. It is as if it was my fault. Maybe I am exaggerating. Maybe it was only the terrible and hot weather. I felt tired today.

There is one thing that is always embarrassing when it happens in classrooms (or at least in mine, cause I feel this). It is when students ask a word you don't know: *fisioterapeuta? faxineira?*

Assistente de cozinha? The worst thing is that sometimes you know, but you don't remember, or you're not sure of it. I think (I feel) students value vocabulary knowledge a lot in foreign language classrooms. I don't feel they are testing me. I feel this is not the primary purpose, but sometimes things end in a kind of embarrassing situation.

A good thing I noticed today is that the students in my class work well in groups. This is really great, because they help each other, kind of ZPD, cause some students know more than others, so they also help me. I mean, I am not the only teacher in class. Back to the first thing I talked about here, I have the impression that some people think they will learn English just by subscribing to the English course. Some of them don't come to class, don't have time to study, and do say they want to learn. Today we talked about the photographer Sebastião Salgado in class, it was nice.

I don't know if the text I am supposed to write here may be like this, a kind of freewriting. It was good for me to write cause it helps me to reflect on what I am experiencing in class. There are some issues I've been thinking about concerning my classes and classes in general. I'd like to mention/discuss them later.

Till next, Carla! (I just would like to say that I am conscious of some choices I've been making concerning my discourse practice in this text. I tried to freewrite, not to think a lot, and to write quickly).

P.S. It is almost seven. As always I am worried with the planning of my class. I want to begin doing different things, such as games. I'll try to explore more this kind of activity, although it wastes time. I mean, we spend lots of time when we go into such activities. On the other hand, it is worthy doing games because students feel motivated.

Participants responded individually to Olga, their imaginary colleague-writer, discussed their responses in pairs and groups—it worked. A whole group discussion followed, with much teacher input. Teachers empathized with the teacher, gave advice, shared experiences. Common issues were identified. We talked about the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), a point that came up in the first journal entry. (I myself had actually learned about ZPD theory through my Brazilian dialogue journaling colleague.) Later I discussed with the teachers my own written response in this first dialogue journal exchange, as can be seen below:

Hi Olga,

I'm really glad we got this dialogue journal going, let's see what will come out of it, and where our thoughts will take us! I'll try to respond to the various issues you've brought up. For one thing, it really is very disturbing to have many students absent, when they give up and disappear... If they look upset in class, a kind word can be helpful and supportive, I guess. Some things are just beyond us, as teachers.

As for vocabulary we forget or don't know—well, sometimes it is embarrassing, but there's no problem in telling students you'll check and tell them next class, etc. You can tell them to check too, and compare notes later on.

As for group/pair work, it's really a very productive and enriching way to learn. As a graduate student, I sometimes wish our teachers had a different approach.

Anyway, especially since your students seem to like group work, it's something to explore, right? (By the way, what's ZPD?) :)

What level are you teaching right now? I forgot to ask you this. And what kind of games

did you have in mind? They can be great, as long as they are relevant, they can be really helpful to reinforce things taught in class. When did you start teaching English? Please feel free to ask me anything you want. I'm looking forward to discussing the issues that you've come across, regarding your classes and the course.

See you!
Carla

The Bolivian teachers discussed reflective writing, and I could see that the painting metaphor for teacher-research seemed clearer using this first dialogue journal entry as a writing prompt. Teachers could identify textual traces of themselves in their written responses, for instance, through personal and possessive pronouns, and verbs. Thus, the journal network contributed to my ongoing work. In line with Wertsch (1994), "the voices to which a speaker is exposed in social life determines certain fundamental aspects of how reality can be represented in inner speech (p. 230).

I will now try to respond to the following questions: Overall, what went wrong with my work at the Bolivian language institute? What could I have done differently? What did I learn? First and foremost, I did not know the context in depth, and it took me some time to grasp the scope of the problem—I did not perceive outright the veiled authoritarian aspects of the school. In a nutshell, I was very naive. Had I been more aware of the institutional obstacles that the teachers—and I—were facing, my strategy would have been different. I could have analyzed relevant case studies; I could have networked with other teacher educators who had successfully promoted institutional change.

I had so wanted to empower teachers, but the Kafka-esque environment seemed beyond me. I therefore tried to strengthen personal relationships and worked one-on-one with the teachers—hurriedly talking to them in the halls, in the teachers' lounge, and in private post-observation conferences. Job security was an issue—teachers could be fired anytime, for personal reasons; they could not even talk freely in the school premises. I tried to support classroom projects that teachers were independently trying to conduct (with puppets, audio and videotaping, for instance). My energy focused on surviving an authoritarian system. The setbacks were many, and I was constantly frustrated with the unprofessionalism I witnessed at work every day, day in, day out—such as no academic direction, no respect for teachers, and no awareness whatsoever regarding healthy classroom life. There were major institutional obstacles hindering my work, and I could not position myself in this context.

What did I learn? Basically, I learned that I misread teachers' needs. When I arrived, I had my own agenda, supposedly open-ended, focusing on understanding classroom life. I assumed this agenda would fit. It did not. Jointly constructing narratives did not work. Reflective writing projects did not take off. These social interactions and discursive practices were simply not appropriate. I learned that collaborative, narrative inquiry is not always feasible. Timing and conditions have to be right: that is, teacher readiness and context have to be taken into account. In my particular case, these issues were initially blurred and ambiguous, and it was during my time there that I became more aware of the sociocultural and interpersonal complexities.

The next section, a letter to you, the reader, addresses a few current projects and closes this chapter.

Teachers-Under-Construction—The Journal Group, Some Years Later

Representing our experience, and that of teachers, in text, is seen to be a challenging, complex, and creative endeavor, open to revision and questioning at all times; and in the process, we not only revise the text but the revised text may create new experience. (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, p. 38)

Dear Reader,

So far this text somewhat resembles a personal learning journal, a form of reflective writing. Through some key moments and texts I selected, I have tentatively mapped out my professional path. Now I have switched to a more explicit interactive format, as in a dialogue journal entry.

My story is moving on, and I would like to share some final thoughts with you. The setting: Universidade Federal da Paraíba, NE Brazil. New job, new life, new projects. Narrative research has been the common thread in my work, aiming at (i) reorganizing language learning and teaching experiences; (ii) enhancing a reflective stance through writing; (iii) constructing teacher learning communities; (iv) reconstructing professional identities through teacher research. Besides teaching and advising, current challenges include a continued education extension project, comprised of yearly courses for EFL public school teachers, in João Pessoa. This project has promoted teacher learning through reflective writing processes, and has shaped a teacher learning community—at the moment, exploring teacher portfolios, which is what worked with this group. Surrounding this extension group, a broader teacher research group is in the making, involving these public school teachers, and undergraduate and graduate students engaged with this extension project. Quite a few dialogue journals have been produced—with research assistants involved in this project, and with graduate students in my Applied Linguistics courses. We have focused on EFL/ESL learning and teaching experiences, through time lines, memoirs, blogs, personal and dialogue journals. So far, on discussing these texts, major insights triggered by journaling include the relevance of sharing experiences, of reflecting collaboratively, and of mapping life stories. Another painting has woven into my work—a rerendering of Las Meninas, by Picasso.

My current M.A. advisees are all exploring their own teacher journals—and their journals have triggered yet more journals: very recently, on conferencing with an advisee, I asked her at the end of our meeting, "Well, and so what? Has this journaling had an impact on your teaching somehow, has there been some effect in your classroom?" To this, she simply replied that everything had changed. On asking her to be more specific, she tells me, for one thing, that her lesson plans have totally changed, there are new spaces in her class for reflection and dialogue (new construction zones...). In one of her classes, she informs me, fifty ('Fifty!') student-teachers are writing journals—and very involved. To say the least, the ripple effect triggered by journaling is fascinating.

The Journal Group's e-mail messages become more intense, cyclic brainstorms characterize this group. We had another TESOL colloquium. And a book proposal. Lots of electricity among us all, literally. We co-construct teacher learning (con)texts. I decide to draw a timeline addressing my journaling, and my reflective writing experiences. My letters, my travel journals, the dialogue journals in the U.S., Brazil, and Bolivia, the Journal group... Maybe this could be a starting-point for my chapter? I concentrate on my network, and its recent impacts. This online group (professionals whom I have not personally met yet) grounds my work, and makes me write and read—stuff we ourselves produce. We make texts together, read together, and learn about teaching together.

Constructing personal narratives is a day-by-day endeavor, to a great extent determined by the texts one produces or has access to (Meurer, 2000). Along these lines, participation in the MAT learning community at SIT was a powerful experience: on sharing personal and professional experiences in a tight teacher-learning community, through reflective writing

and narrative inquiry, I was able to co-construct my discursive history, my life story. Although we were constantly asked to reflect ('What have you learned? How do you know you have learned?'), it took me a while to actually integrate this broader perspective into my practice. Much more teaching, much more reading, much more talking, and much more writing. Time... Only ten years later, with my journal network, would I feel part of a teacher learning community again—sincerely, reciprocally negotiating our identities, and coconstructing knowledge. On moving to NE Brazil, I reorganized my books and papers, trying to make sense of countless texts. Voices from the past surround me, I am transported to another dimension, surrounded by my grandparents' books, my parents', my kid's, my own stuff. Even my very first journal has surfaced: 'The Adventures of Lisa, Leda and Carla at São João Farm.' My first journal! I read this diary written by a six-year-old, the first of many travel journals I would keep throughout my life. I reread it, searching for an idea, a metaphor, something. What I do notice is that it starts off as a monologue, but it gradually becomes a conversation between the three girls, resembling a play. I visualize these dreamlike dialogues unfolding: we chat about a picnic hike through a narrow path near a precipice, a horse ride to a neighboring farm, and a drive downtown in order to buy stationery. Our last, short exchange simply announces that we will read. Thus this journal ends. And my journaling practice starts.

And here, dear Reader, my reflections will cease momentarily. I hope I have inspired you to further explore your teaching practice, to create meaningful dialogues, and to develop long-term reflective writing projects—namely, to forge new construction zones.

Bon voyage,
Carla

Acknowledgment

About the Author

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Chapter 5

COLLABORATIVE REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

Michael Carroll and Seiko Tatsuta

Pre-reading question: To what extent do you think that writing reflective journals on their own language learning experiences can help teachers organise their thoughts on their own teaching?

It is possible to categorize journals in TESOL into three groups: language learning journals kept by students reflecting on their language learning; teaching journals kept by teachers reflecting on their teaching; and language learning journals kept by researchers reflecting on the learning process itself. There is a sizeable literature surrounding each of these, for instance, Mlynarczyk (1998) and Peyton and Staton (1993, 1996) on learner journals; studies of language acquisition and classroom learning such as those of Schumann and Schumann (1987), and Bailey (1983); and Holly (1997), and Brock, Wu and Young (1992), on teacher journals as a means of teacher development. This paper draws on research from each of these three groups.

The authors, an English speaker of Japanese as a second language (Michael), and a Japanese speaker of English as a second language (Seiko), are beginning-level learners of Chinese. We will examine how our regular discussions on learning Chinese, and on what we were learning about teaching, both face-to-face and by e-mail, from our different but intersecting perspectives, have enabled us to deepen our understanding of classroom language learning processes, and how Michael's teaching has been influenced by these collaborative reflections.

Learning Chinese at a private conversation school in Japan means that Michael is learning Chinese as a third language, through the medium of a second (Japanese), while Seiko is also learning Chinese as a third language, but through the medium of her first. Our discussions, taking place in both English and Japanese, with a small amount of communication in rudimentary Chinese, allow us to consider the usefulness of reflection in both first, second and foreign languages. It also allows us to experience in a vivid way the experiences of typical beginning university students studying English in Japanese universities, and to think about how these experiences might be better managed for more effective learning.

The Nature of Collaborative Reflection Writing and Discussion

If we had begun our learning of Chinese primarily as a means of researching classrooms, we might have decided on a data collection strategy involving, amongst other things, regular journal writing. However this was not our prime motivation. We began to learn Chinese for just that reason: to learn Chinese. Our reflections on our experiences were not in response to any set research agenda, but simply arose naturally out of the situation. Moreover, they didn't begin as journal entries, but as casual discussions after each class, which flowed over into email discussions during the rest of the week. As our discussions progressed, and as we began to think about what we were discovering about teaching and learning as well as about Chinese, our reflections in fact became more disciplined, and more driven by their written form: more conventionally "reflective journal-writing." This is a different situation from most studies of reflective (journal) writing. We feel, though, that it provides an interesting "real life" model of critical reflection that allows us to see that the reflective thinking that we, as teachers, are aiming for when we give our students

structured journal writing tasks, in fact develops naturally out of ordinary conversations. It is a simply a normal way of understanding experience.

Reflection is the essence of most journal writing requirements in language or teacher development courses. Sometimes we need to stimulate this process, and we may need to alert our students to the benefits of reflection. We may also provide them with guidance about useful ways in which to structure their reflections by giving them a framework to support their reflective space. These supportive strategies are extremely useful, not only for novice reflective writers but also for more experienced researchers and teachers engaged in professional development. They do create some tension, though. Sometimes writers (learners) feel there is nothing to say, or feel constrained by the frameworks we construct. In Michael's own classes, in which students keep journals, there is a consistent tendency for around a third of the students to be unenthusiastic, and around 10% simply to opt out. There is relatively little research on this tendency, although Mlynarczyk (2001) touches on it, describing how she addressed problems she had encountered with earlier ways of using journals. We feel that one part of the reason for some students' reluctance to engage in these reflective exercises may be the tension they feel through trying to structure a process that works best as a natural,intuitive response to a learning situation.

This is not to suggest that requiring or encouraging journal writing is a bad thing: far from it. Our intention is to offer a picture of a spontaneous reflective process in which we found ourselves engaged, as students trying to make sense of our learning, hoping that that it may contribute to our understanding of more formal classroom situations.

What Aspects of the Situation Do We Reflect On?

Jill Burton has suggested a model of reflective writing that comprises several levels (see Burton, p. 7, this volume). Starting with drafting and expressing answers to the question "what happened?" at the initial levels, they proceed through commenting, theorizing, reviewing, and re-reflecting at the later levels, answering the questions "how?", "why?", and "what does it mean?" This typology is useful in thinking about how our own reflections progressed.

Our early discussions and e-mails tended to be centered around two main areas, at the "what happened?" level:

> The mechanics of Chinese itself, "So *jiao* is a bit like '*I'm called*', and is often used for introductions—*I'm Michael*, but *xing* is just for family names—*My name is Carroll*, right?" Concrete issues, such as the basic organization of the class, "Will we have the same teacher every week?", "I liked the way we finished this class with free conversation"; and the our requirements as students, "When Lao-shi (Chinese for 'Teacher') asked us to learn these words, do you think she meant that we'd have a test?"

As time went on we began to discuss our experiences at a deeper level, asking ourselves, "how did this happen?", "why did it happen?", and "what does it mean?", and our reflections began to gather around two areas:

- Reflections on language, how we switched between languages, and how we came to understand the connections between the Chinese we were learning and our knowledge of English and Japanese.
- Reflections on teaching styles, events, and processes in the classroom.

Reflections on Language

Scaffolding of the Target Language by the Second Language
Thinking about our somewhat unusual language matrix has been an integral part of our experience of learning Chinese. For both of us, our second language seems to mediate our third in some way. Seiko uses the metaphor *senpai-kouhai* to describe this. In many social situations in Japan, businesses, clubs, educational institutions, and so on, a *senpai* is a person who has been a member of an organization for longer than the speaker. It can loosely be rendered as 'senior,' but it often includes the notion of 'mentor' as well. *Kouhai* is the inverse—a person who has joined an organization more recently. Our Chinese teachers often explain grammatical matters to us in Japanese. (The school is in Japan, and the students are speakers of Japanese.) For Seiko, though, references to similarities with and differences from Japanese grammar are less helpful than the references she herself makes to English grammar.

> Seiko: In Chinese class the teacher often uses grammatical words to explain adverb, adjective etc. But sometimes I suddenly realize, "Oh, it's just like when I was learning English." Also, I never think about grammar when I speak Japanese so I can't make much sense of these explanations, in relation to Japanese. For instance when I use conditional in Japanese I never think, "Oh, I'm using conditional." But I can relate these to English. In other words, when I think about Japanese grammar it's hard to find a point of contact with Chinese grammar, but when I think about English grammar it makes Chinese grammar clear. Both are foreign languages to me, so the older one helps the younger one, like senpai helps kouhai.
>
> Of course my goal is to be able to think in Chinese. At one time I needed Japanese explanations about English, then when I reached a certain point I could start to process things in English and learn in English. I needed that experience learning English in Japan, but now, learning Chinese I have that experience already there, and I can use it to scaffold and to hasten the way I go through similar experiences in Chinese.

For Michael too, this metaphor is powerful. While it might seem strange to process grammatical understanding through an unrelated language, in fact Japanese acts as a scaffold for Chinese.

> Michael: Sometimes, when elements of Chinese turn out to be similar to Japanese, as you say, my knowledge of Japanese *(senpai)* scaffolds my learning of Chinese *(kouhai)*. Of course a big part of this is kanji [Japanese characters derived from Chinese], but there is an effect from the fact that I have gone through the process before. For instance, even though Chinese word order is often closer to English than Chinese, in some circumstances it is different to both. But since I have gone through the process of re-thinking word order in learning Japanese, it's not a big cognitive jump to do it again with Chinese.

Of course, this scaffolding (English for Seiko and Japanese for Michael) is not an unreserved boon. It also leads us to interference errors. Michael sometimes makes word-order errors by following Japanese patterns in cases where in fact Chinese is closer to English.

> Michael: I said, *"ni shenme he xihuan"* using Japanese word order, and then, when I thought a little more I realized that it was similar to the English, *"ni xihuan he shenme* ([Would] you like to drink something?)" and I didn't really need to think about it at all.

Seiko makes these kinds of errors less frequently, but, at one stage, noticed interference from the apparent similarity between the English verb *to be* and the Chinese verb *shi*.

Seiko: English sentences should almost always have a verb, and in Chinese these sentences are common too, but in Chinese adjectives often DON'T require verbs. In particular, the word "*shi*" is almost always followed by a noun, but adjectives don't require it. For example, in English I should say "I AM tired" or "She IS very beautiful", but in Chinese "*wo lei*" (I [am] tired) or "*Ta hen piaoliang*" ("She[is] very beautiful) are correct". So English used to interfere, causing me to make the error, "*Wo shi lei*" (using "*shi*" like the English word "is").

Sometimes English is useful for both of us:

Seiko: Today [Michael was absent] Lao-shi tried to explain "*xingli*". It means "nimotsu" in Japanese, but she said Japanese "*nimotsu*" has broader meanings. For example, you can say "*yuubinnkyoku kara nimotsu wo todoita*" ([I]got a parcel from the post office). In this case it means "parcel" But it can also mean, "suitcase," of course. Japanese "nimotsu" is more like "goods". Lao-shi said "*xingli*" was slightly different, but she couldn't find the right word to explain it. Then I said "*sore ha 'luggage' mitaina imi desu ne*", (It means something like "luggage" doesn't it?), and Lao-shi said "*sou, sou, desu!*"(Yes, Yes!).

Following this incident, in addition to using Japanese, the teacher also increasingly used scaffolding in English as a reference point, perhaps on the assumption that since English is widely taught in Japanese schools, most students (not only the two of us) would have some grounding in it. Japanese also has a large number of loan words taken from English and other European languages; this also contributes to a possible role for English as a familiar point of reference.

Seiko: At the Chinese class yesterday, Lao-shi used quite lots of English for supplementary explanation even though Ryuichi (another student in the class) was there. As you pointed out the other day, she might have thought he must've spoken some English since he is interested in learning foreign languages. Lao-shi explained the new vocabulary again that I already learned the week before. She explained "*xingli* (luggage)" again. First she tried to explain it in Chinese, then in Japanese, and eventually she remembered "luggage" was closer than Japanese '*nimotsu*', so she said so. Ryuichi said " Ah... I see."

This strategy is used by some teachers more than others, perhaps depending on their own ease with English, as well as their intuitions about its appropriateness for particular students. Of course, with such a small group of students, it is not possible to say very much about how useful its use is. Nevertheless, the fact that teachers continue to use this strategy occasionally, suggests that they consider it a justifiable strategy.

Writing Journals in the Target Language
Many teachers of English as a second or foreign language value journal writing highly, not just as a means of giving students practice in producing English, but as a way of encouraging them to reflect on their learning, even at low proficiency levels (Lipp, 2001; Carroll, 1994). While there are certainly good reasons for using Chinese, our target language, in our dialogue journals, and commenting on or describing our learning experiences is a realistic communicative topic for us, our current abilities are insufficient to analyse those experiences or to reflect on them at anything but a superficial level. At our

level of proficiency in Chinese, there is very little we can say about our learning. While both of us can and sometimes do use Chinese to communicate, we are limited to concrete ideas: "*Jintian ke hen nan*" [Today the class was difficult], or "*Shang xingqi women lianxi le Lao-shi hen gaoxing*" [Last week Lao-shi (teacher) was happy (because) we had practised well]. But since in this context our capability (or patience) is restricted to a couple of simple phrases, we expand on this idea in Japanese or English: "It gets more difficult week by week, because we aren't keeping up with the introduction of new vocabulary" or, "I think Lao-shi finds it hard to handle when we haven't prepared enough to make the lesson go smoothly and we can't do the activities very well because we have to be prompted for the pronunciation of so many words."

This understanding leads us to realize that instructors' emphasis on first language use in journals, at least at low levels, can in fact inhibit reflection, however useful it may be as a means of practicing structures. In our case, we used the natural strategy of simply changing to whatever language allowed us to express the ideas we wanted to express; a pragmatic (and natural) approach to code-choosing. This is the approach bilingual children almost always take—the path of least resistance (Bialystok, 2000). However, in ESL situations where students of necessity have an English-only rule, there is a danger of students feeling inhibited from using their own (most effective) language, and perhaps, as a consequence, ultimately failing to reflect more deeply than their target language proficiency allows. Even in EFL situations this may be a problem. For one thing, students and teachers alike are keenly aware that the chances for use of the target language are limited, and journals offer one very attractive opportunity; for another, many teachers may not be proficient enough in the students' language to be able to understand the language of critical reflection.

Use of "First" Language in Class

A further aspect of the language matrix that features in our discussions concerns the extent to which we use Japanese and Chinese in class. We, students and teacher, often use Japanese during the class, for grammar explanations, for clarifying the task at hand, for discussing aspects of Chinese culture, and for informal chats outside lessons. On one occasion, when we had a replacement teacher who spoke no Japanese, the lesson was the most exhausting and (in some ways) exhilarating that we'd had; we were thoroughly immersed in the target language, grasping desperately at first for understanding and gradually finding a somewhat tense equilibrium. We would not want this kind of class every week, though.

In the field of ESL, the predominant model of instruction is of a native-speaker teacher and a class with varied nationalities. In this situation, inevitably, the teacher does not speak the language of all, or even most, of the students. Hence, there is little alternative to an English-only policy in the classroom; in fact, it makes sense. This ESL model is often seen as the best model for EFL in Japan, too, where large numbers of English native-speaker teachers speak relatively little Japanese, and by necessity maintain an English-only rule. It is interesting, though, that almost all the teachers at the school where we are learning Chinese speak Japanese at a very advanced level. At the beginning level, most use Japanese in class. This initially surprised Michael, though not so much Seiko. Japanese is often used by Japanese teachers in English classes, and though there is a continuing debate among English native-speaker teachers about the value of first language use in the English classroom (Da Silva, 2002; Ryan, 2002), the prevailing model is "target-language-only." Our journals and discussions focused on this early on in our course, and we concluded that we did not have time for a quantity

> On one occasion, when we had a replacement teacher who spoke no Japanese, the lesson was the most exhausting and (in some ways) exhilarating that we'd had....

of input that might have allowed us to deduce how the language worked. While we would not deny that direct methods may be successful even in part-time situations such as ours, we believe that Japanese (the lingua franca of the class), and occasionally English were very important to the effectiveness of the class. Judicious use of Japanese by the teacher allowed her to explain nuances of words and fine distinctions of

grammar that help us to move beyond the meanings we can grasp through Chinese alone.

This view is supported by research. Ellis's (1994, pp. 618–619) review of empirical studies comparing formal instruction with natural exposure found that although communicative approaches were effective in ESL situations, there was little evidence that they were more effective than traditional grammar-based approaches in EFL situations. In addition, the assumption that a target-language-only policy is essential, even in EFL situations, has recently begun to be re-evaluated by several researchers in Japan. Some have commented on the usefulness of the first language in the classroom, and difficulty of teaching people to become bilingual through a rigid monolingual policy (see, for instance, McAuley, 2001). Some studies have shown support among students for first language use. Burden (2000) and Cullen (2001), in separate but similar studies, found that a large proportion of students (ranging from 35% to 90% depending on proficiency level) favored some use of Japanese in class by both teachers and students. These findings and suggestions resonate with us, especially following our journal reflections on our language-learning experiences.

Understanding Teaching

Teaching and Learning Methods and Styles
Our first experience as learners echoed that of "Laura," a student in Thonus's (2001) teacher education course. Laura notes, "It was odd to be in the class and not be able to understand a word the teacher said on the first day... I felt lost in someone else's world" (p. 104). We had to resume a role we had not experienced for many years, surrounded by unfamiliar speech, and barely able to respond beyond the level of looking confused.

Michael: It hit me suddenly that the look on my face is exactly the one I see on my first year students quite often. So that's what they're feeling!

It is a truism to say that the experience of being a student is invaluable for teachers, helping them to re-evaluate their professional practices. But in what ways does it stimulate this re-evaluation, and what is the special role of reflective writing? As we have shown, there are a number of ways in which we came to understand better the dynamics and processes at work in the classroom at a linguistic level. We also reflected on the teaching-learning process itself, and inevitably came to consider how our Chinese class compared with the English and Japanese classes we have both taught and experienced as learners.

As relatively experienced language learners, and as teachers, we were highly aware of the teachers' styles, as well as of the range of alternatives open to them. It is interesting, though, that although there were significant differences between the style of our Chinese classes, and, for instance, the style of English classes we are most familiar with, for the most part we accepted each teacher's methods with few questions. We deferred to the teachers' authority and, again perhaps subconsciously, felt a responsibility to find the learning opportunities in whatever material and activities were presented. This sometimes resulted in our discovering benefits in activities we would not have ordinarily have spent much time on, such as going over phrases repeatedly in tightly constrained ways.

Michael: Again and again I'm struck by how traditional the classroom is, with lots of reading aloud, correction of pronunciation, and drilling of structures— and how much I like it! It's the opposite of my own inclinations as a teacher, and it's a far cry from my own classes. I've always pushed my own students to speak as spontaneously as possible, or at least to choose from a variety of possible structures in carrying out activities. But as a learner of Chinese, I realize that, 1) at first we couldn't cope with such freedom in Chinese, because of our limited vocabulary and grasp of basic grammar,

and 2) even now that we can cope with some flexibility, still our practice seems much smoother and more useful when the "free speech" part comes only after some intensive drilling.

The efficacy of this kind of drilling is also supported by research. Lynch and McLean have shown significant gains for learners who engage in "structured repetition with attention to improvements" (2001, p. 159), as has Bygate (2001). Drilling has its downside, though, as we were reminded by the following incident:

One day at the start of the class the teacher asked us to recall, from Japanese prompts, the ten or so key phrases we had learned the previous week. In a unit about visiting the hospital we had learned, for example, *kan yangzi, ni hao duo le* ('You're looking a lot better') We had "learned" this phrase as part of a text in Chinese. When we heard it or produced it in Chinese, we could allocate a meaning to it, in Japanese or English. In addition, some two or three weeks previously we had devised a new method of practicing. Since the textbook used both Chinese characters and pinyin (the standardized script used to show the pronunciation of Chinese characters) side by side, we had realized that we often read only from the pinyin, and were making slow progress in becoming able to read "real" Chinese. Therefore, Michael started writing out the dialogues from the textbook using only Chinese characters to try to solve this problem.

Michael: But because I was reading only from the dialogues I'd written out, I had also deprived myself of the Japanese translations of the texts, printed in the margin of the textbook. My pronunciation and phrasing have improved. And in a guided role-play I can produce the phrases. But today, faced with the teacher's request to translate from Japanese, I found I was unable to respond. What's going on? Is it a problem with my Japanese? I don't think so. I couldn't come up with a response to the task with an English prompt either. I was shocked. I even spent extra time this week learning the dialogues, listening to the CD, shadowing, writing them down.

We had discussed the incident in class. Lao-shi's opinion was that she had discovered a problem: "You're learning the words, but not the meaning." Writing out the dialogues had addressed one problem—pronunciation—but created a new one in the process. Identifying the new problem helped to devise a way to solve it, but also prompted us to consider whether similar situations occurred in Michael's own classes. In a class of 30–40 students, it is harder for a teacher to identify specific problems of this sort. Nevertheless, trying a method, finding a problem with it, and then looking for its solution was one of the most useful experiences we have had. It led us to brainstorm the kinds of activities that might provide these sorts of experiences to students in larger classes. As a result, Michael redesigned one class for the following year, incorporating much more specific weekly tasks and self-assessment goals, as well as structured practice, using a model described by Kohyama and Stevenson (2004).

This experience was a typical example of how our journaling moved fluidly and effectively through all of the higher levels of reflection. Having commented on the situation, and problematising it in the way suggested by Smyth (1989), we tried to understand the reasons and find solutions (theorizing). Then, we reviewed the situation by examining Michael's changed learner strategy in the Chinese class as well as his new approach as teacher in his English class.

Seeing Things from the Teacher's Point of View
In addition to reflecting on ourselves as learners, we were able to reflect critically on the teaching situation itself, and as teachers, we were easily able to put ourselves into our teacher's position. On the occasions when we had failed to prepare for class adequately, or when it was obvious that our progress was not as

fast as it might have been, our reasons were because of working full time and learning Chinese only once a week, not in any way through some fault of the teacher.

> Michael: I realized as soon as we started today's class, and I could remember only a few of this week's words, that I should have spent more than a couple of hours just before the class to prepare. Of course it's obvious, especially to me as a teacher. I tell my students all the time, "little and often is the key to studying." But when I'm juggling my own classes, meetings and deadlines, it's easy to put off Chinese until "later."

As teachers, when we emphasise regular practice to students, or when we give what we consider modest homework assignments, it is easy to feel impatient with students who fail to do these things, and to feel that there is no excuse. Even the phrase "no excuse" reveals a sense in which we, perhaps students as well as teachers, feel that students are obliged to explain to teachers the way they allocate time, for instance to part-time jobs, or to assignments for other subjects. We would not want to say that this obligation does not exist, either for our students, or for us as students ourselves. Nevertheless, we did come to understand some of the pressures that students are under in fitting these obligations into the complexity of their weekly schedules.

On the other hand, as we have noted above, we were more constrained when reflecting on our teachers themselves. There were occasions when we found a particular teaching style oppressive, although we would neither say this to the teacher or write about it. For instance, one teacher insisted on correcting the pronunciation of every word we uttered, often continuing several times with one word even when it was obvious that we could not "hear" the difference between her and our renditions. Chinese is a tonal language, having four or more distinct tones for most syllables. These tones are especially difficult for learners whose own languages are not tonal. They are a crucial part of learning Chinese, but we felt that this teacher overemphasized them at the expense of fluency: phrasing, vocabulary, and grammar. In these cases too, though, we were reluctant to confront the teacher. The teacher only taught us for a short time, and so the problem resolved itself, but we were left not knowing how we might have dealt with it if the situation had continued. Although we both recall conversations about this issue, it is conspicuously absent from our written journals. Whether out of politeness, an insufficiently close relationship with such teachers, or perhaps a sense that the issue didn't warrant challenging the conventional teacher-student roles, we clearly imposed on ourselves restrictions on what we considered suitable topics for the written reflection. We think it is likely that our own students also have such self-imposed limits on what they write, and as teachers it is worth considering. The point also applies to other kinds of written reflection such as evaluation questionnaires.

Teachers as Individuals and as Members of Communities
Direct criticism aside, we did often notice, and comment on, the teacher's mood. "Lao-shi seemed preoccupied today. She didn't give us so much time to speak;" or "Lao-shi was happy today"; or "Lao-shi was especially *yasashii* today" ('kind, gentle, or easy-on-the-criticism'). But we also considered teachers' cultural backgrounds and how circumspect we should be in broaching potentially controversial topics. We occasionally discussed current events in class in a rudimentary way. Occasionally, topics sensitive to China, such as relations with Taiwan, news of Falun Gong, or the anniversary of the Tiananmen incident would be in the news in Japan. We discussed whether we wanted to broach these topics with teachers who might have strong views on them.

> Michael: I remember an incident in Adelaide, after a widely reported scandal in which improperly packaged cold meat caused the death of a child through food-poisoning. I was shocked when an

Iranian student told me she was worried about eating at the local food court, because Australian hygiene standards were not up to those of Iran. My initial reaction had been close to disbelief—wasn't it the prerogative of citizens of wealthy countries to worry about hygiene overseas? And then I felt uncomfortable. The student was right to be cautious, of course, having arrived in a country of which she knew little, at a time when the food poisoning scandal was in the newspapers every day. I wonder whether Lao shi would feel similarly uncomfortable discussing issues relating to China?

Most teachers, perhaps, are conscious of the need to be respectful and considerate of students' cultural sensibilities. We may not so easily remember, though, that students too may feel the need to think about what topics they can and cannot easily raise with their teachers. For every student who was outspoken to Michael about the food scandal, how many deliberately did not mention it for fear of offending him? And how many students in classes in Japan are inhibited from talking about some topics because they are unsure of what reaction they might expect?

Conclusion

As teachers, we often keep professional logs and/or reflective journals both to document and to make sense of our teaching experience. At the same time, we often ask students to keep their own learning journals. Both types of journals can be more or less reflective, depending on how they are set up, and they may or may not relate to each other. Teacher journals may be simple logs of activities, lesson notes, (minimally reflective, level 1 in the scale Burton proposes in Chapter 1), they may incorporate evaluations of those activities and lessons (increasingly reflective, levels 2, 3 and 4, see Chapter 1), or they may be highly introspective and analytical (most reflective, level 5, see Chapter 1). Similarly, student journals may be barely reflective at all (diaries of daily activities unrelated to language learning), they may be language-learning logs (more reflective), or they may be highly introspective and analytical (most reflective). Our experience has been that our spontaneous journaling, unrelated to course requirements, has taken us through all of these, and that the more reflective kinds feed off the more mundane kind. We used our discussions to clarify the nuts and bolts issues of our classes, but we also worked through classroom incidents, asking how and why they occurred. And in writing this chapter, we are reviewing what happened, putting it into a wider perspective, making sense of our Chinese class in terms of ourselves as users of other languages and as enquirers into the process of teaching and learning. While many teachers have access to learner journals, they do not as frequently write as learners themselves. In our case, the insights that have come from our dual roles as learners and enquirers into teaching indicate that there are considerable advantages as both teachers and learners from reflecting on multiple sides of the teaching-learning matrix.

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Chapter 6

SMALL-GROUP JOURNALS AS A TOOL OF CRITICAL REFLECTION: A MEASURE OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Latricia Trites

Pre-reading question: What benefits do you see to the use of group journals as opposed to individual journals? What drawbacks? Is there any particular type of journal that you feel is better suited for a group format? For an individual format?

For decades, journals have been used in educational settings to foster student writing abilities, to enhance student reading comprehension, and to help students retain content knowledge. In addition, journals are also used to build classroom communities, teacher-student rapport, and student self-awareness and confidence.

Peyton (2001) and Burton and Carroll (2001) chronicle the history of journal writing in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) field, focusing on the differing formats and purposes of journals. Some journals are solitary, public learning journals kept by students. Teachers often review and assess these journals, creating a level of anxiety in the student, and sometimes lowering the authenticity of the content. Another journal format is the dialogue journal between teachers and students. Again, the teacher serves as master and the student as apprentice. These journals are typically characterized by the student responding to a prompt and the teacher reacting to the student by asking additional questions to continue the conversation. Finally, a third type of journal is the peer-to-peer journal. While not a traditional format, the advent of electronic discussion boards, or forums, has allowed this format to incorporate a constructivist approach to learning, in which peers build on their knowledge through the interaction with other learners.

It is important to understand the rationale behind the use of peer-to-peer journals, the focus of this chapter. These journals are introduced into the learning environment following a constructivist approach to learning. Through these journals, teachers believe that students can develop their own understanding about subjects, thereby constructing their own knowledge base. This theory, which has been thoroughly explored by scholars such as Bruner, Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, often serves as the rationale for implementing the use of dialogue journals. Strommen (as cited in Bennett & Green, 2001) defines constructivism as students' ability to "actively construct their knowledge, thus modifying their understanding by assimilating new information offered by the instructor with prior knowledge" (p. 3). Instructional practices in this paradigm include the negotiation of goals between instructors and students, learner-centered activities, and assessment measures that are "designed around real-life problems and promote self-evaluation and reflection and to maximize learner responsibility" (Mishra, 2002, p. 495).

Dong (1997) and Nassaji and Cumming (2000) indicate that the development of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) allows students to learn as a community, relying on the strengths of each of its members. Nyikos and Hashimoto (1997) explain that Vygotsky's theory of collaborative learning hinges on students' ability to participate effectively in joint problem-solving activities. Bober and Paz Dennen (2001) theorize that through this interaction, "intersubjectivity" develops, creating deeper learning. They, along with other researchers (Cole et al., 1998; Dong, 1997; Schoorman & Camarillo, 2000) state that a learner-centered environment helps foster peer interaction and promote community-building. Through this community-building, students are able to share and validate their own viewpoints

by understanding the positions of others. Learners, thus, are not passive recipients (see also Jeannot & Hunter, this volume); instead, they take initiative and are active, invested, and engaged in the learning process, assuming responsibility for their own learning. Other positive characteristics fostered through peer journaling include a stronger sense of self-awareness, critical and collective reflection, enhanced problem-solving, increased motivation, and social bonding.

Dong (1997) also argues that peer-to-peer journals are better than student-teacher journals in that they offer more than positive feedback and facilitate "self-critical evaluation and self-improvement through expertise sharing" (p. 28). This view is also supported by Cole et al. (1998) who state that peer dialogue journals are more effective because participants are on an equal footing with each other and feel that they have built up a level of trust, allowing them to feel safe enough to be candid in their discussion.

In these journaling environments, success seems to hinge on how much learners are willing to invest in the concept of journaling. Bailey et al. (2001) state that for professional development or growth to be successful, five critical components must be present:

1. Choice
2. Trust and honesty
3. Reciprocity or mutuality
4. Better teaching
5. Judgmental or developmental distinction

They mention that this must come from peers, not from administrators or others in authority. This development is similar to the characteristics needed for peer journals to be successful (as noted by Torres, 1996); these include a sense of trust, ownership, individual benefits, and reciprocity.

While these researchers examine broad qualities of successful peer journaling, other research on journal writing examines the different types of interaction that occurs in peer journal environments. John-Steiner, Meehan and Kennedy classify four patterns of collaboration: distributed, complementary, family, and integrative: "They state that differences are based on collaborative values, working methods, and role dynamics" (cited in Torres, 1996, p. 2). They explain that the two more distinctive patterns—distributed and integrative—have vastly different characteristics. The distributed mode is seen as the division of labor and very goal-oriented while the integrative mode is communicative and "characterized by intellectual interdependence, defined as an 'awareness of the other's resources and knowledge'" (Torres, 1996, p. 2). Torres also discusses the difference between goal-oriented action and communicative action and argues that when "means-ends logic is the driving force—everything, including relationships with other humans is instrumental" (p. 3). However, the communicative action is just the opposite in that "people will get past their subjective views in order to come to an understanding" (1996, p. 3). He argues that the integrative mode leads to the greatest level of collaboration provided that the learners also take a distributed approach. This interdependence helps learners gain what they need while also offering their own expertise to the rest of the group.

Benefits of Technology

Technological advances have allowed teachers to use electronic journals more effectively. Wang (1996) notes several positive aspects in the use of e-mail for dialogue. He states that the teacher interacts more with the students in email than in face-to-face situations or on paper. He also observes that email language is closer to spoken language than written. It seems more conversational—dialogic. Also, benefits of

electronic medium allows for the expansion of communication and learning beyond the bounds of the classroom.

Besides the use of email, dialogue journals have also been facilitated through the use of discussion board forums such as those present in course management systems (CMS). Charr-Chellman and Duchastel (2000) argue that asynchronous communications are beneficial in that they allow students to work on their own time schedule and to share their thoughts without waiting their turn. Other benefits include the ability for teachers and students to collect and read all postings at once, as well as to be able to stop and respond to individual entries. In addition, the ability to archive forums allows for research on them to be conducted.

Since this chapter recounts my own differing levels of success with the use of small group peer-to-peer journals, I have begun to explore elements that may contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of dialogue journals. These elements include the amount of time students are willing to commit, the value that students place on journaling, the students' feeling of choice, the actual quality of journal entries, and students' readiness to be collaborative.

Time Commitment

One criticism that repeatedly appears in all aspects of online learning is the investment of time, both that of the students and of the teacher. The time it takes teachers to develop forums, read other student postings, and reply to responses can be enormous (Smith et al., 2001) initially, as with any new teaching method or approach. As far as students are concerned, when they recognize a sound teaching approach, they are likely to be willing to invest time in collaboration and learning, and success may follow. Student investment of time in learning depends, in part, on the quality of the materials and method, and, in part, on teachers' own investment, that is, how they first arouse students' interest and then work at online teaching to make it time-efficient for their students and for themselves as teachers.

How Students Value Journals

When students invest time in a new activity such as online journaling, this investment may indicate that they value the activity, or, at the least, acknowledge reasons to devote time to it. Whatever the reasons that lead students to engage in dialogue journaling, their active investment in the activity is critical for it to stimulate learning (Cole, et al., 1998; Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Problems arise when students in the same journaling groups value, or invest in, the activity differently (McFarland, 1992). Rovegno (1992) found that the student in her case study saw knowledge as something to be received from "authority" and commented that journals were "busy work." Students such as this believe that "learning means coming to know what an authority/professor says is so" (p. 493). Thus, these students would view the dialogue that journals seek to encourage as irrelevant to their education. Moreover, such students tend to devalue class discussions as a whole, denying their role as a valuable opportunity to learn; they see them as "just talking" (Rovegno, 1992, p.502). So both in discussions and journaling, the teacher needs to guide them towards an appreciation of the power of learning in groups.

Teachers seeking to introduce dialogue journaling in their student groups, therefore, need to take such different responses into account and plan for a period during which students adapt to the new class activity. As this chapter shows, each class raises different teaching considerations for dialogue journaling; these have to be accommodated in ongoing course planning as in any learner-centered teaching.

Having a Choice

As will be evident from the preceding comments, students must feel that they have a choice of whether or not to contribute to dialogue journaling and some leeway over what their involvement might be.

Students may simply choose not to participate for a variety of reasons. Hughes and Daykin (2002) note that students are often reluctant to post responses to discussion forums, often because they worry about mistakes and negative responses to their postings. Since with online discussion forums, students have the ability to listen selectively to different threads, they may ignore certain posts (Bober & Paz Dennen, 2001). This means that, from the teacher's perspective, student interactions run the risk of being sporadic and uneven unless teachers come up with a sufficient range of topics to include all students' interests.

Quality of Journal Entries

Hughes and Daykin (2002) also comment that discussion forum postings are often found to be perfunctory and lacking in substance. In fact, academically strong students tend to post a response first and then other students just agree. Perham (1992) found that in her "classbook" she was unable to address "BIG IDEAS." She states that the students wouldn't pick up on the more demanding discussion topics. She also found that students had a tendency to deal with their own intellectual needs while trying to keep their audience's needs in mind (p. 5). Torres (1996) also found this to be true: No matter what opportunities were provided, the teachers in his study would not engage in intellectual discussion. He hypothesizes that the groups were composed of self-sufficient individuals who emphasized individual success rather than collective learning.

Student Readiness

Rovegno (1992) theorizes that many students are not ready for the more constructivist approach to learning. She quotes Schommer's research that found that undergraduate students tended to have dichotomous beliefs about knowledge; they either saw learning as simple or complex, and as certain or tentative (as cited in Rovegno, 1992). She postulates that these beliefs about knowledge predict the way that students interpreted information and their assessment of comprehension (p. 492). Results of her study show that "students who believed that knowledge was certain tended to write inappropriate, absolute conclusions to passages describing multiple theories about a phenomenon" (p. 492). Rovegno also states that these students would have difficulty reflecting since they "rely on others to direct their learning and to tell them what they need to know. They do not value their own 'voice,' nor do they value constructing knowledge based on their observations" (1992, p. 495). These students are confused and incapable of production when teachers require original work. They are intolerant of ambiguity and like predictability.

Case Study

Several influences encouraged me to introduce small group journals into many of my classes. My own teaching experience involving the use of dialogue journals fostered my interest in the use of peer-to-peer journals (Trites, 2001). In addition, my successful use of small group activities when teaching online classes helped me to bring small group journals to my more traditional, on-campus classrooms. However, the overarching reason for the inclusion of small group journals is that the constructivist theory of learning is a central, embedded part of my teaching philosophy. I believe that students learn best when they are active participants in the learning process. When I developed small group dialogue journals for my classes, however, I was surprised to find such varying degrees of success and failure.

Three Different Settings

In the past few years, I have had the opportunity to develop small group journals for several of my online and on campus classes. All of the journals make use of electronic discussion forums set up on the Blackboard CMS. Through group assignments, students were given access to a discussion forum, e-mail,

and an area for document exchange. I developed small group journals for three different classes over the period of a year and a half in the institution where I teach. While I thought that I had learned a great deal about how to promote reflective, collaborative learning through dialogue journals, the levels of success and failure that resulted have shown me that no matter how carefully I design a journal assignment, it is critical to prepare the students for journaling and develop very specific goals.

Developing Intercultural Competence

The first class for which I developed small group dialogues was a graduate-level course entitled Developing Intercultural Competence, which was taught in the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language (MA TESOL) program in my university. The class consisted of eighteen future ESL teachers from a variety of backgrounds. The language backgrounds represented included Arabic, Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, and Thai. In addition, students had experienced a variety of life experiences. Some students had already taught in EFL settings (both native and nonnative speakers of English); some were nontraditional, older students who were returning to the classroom to pursue a second career; and others were young students who had had limited contact with other cultures.

Students in this class were assigned to groups of three: one first-year student, one second-year student, and at least one international student. They were instructed to write about cultural incidents that they encountered throughout the semester, had encountered in the past, or which had happened to a friend or acquaintance either in the U.S.A. or in another country and that affected their or someone else's acculturation. They were to discuss why they thought the incident had occurred, what they learned from it, and how it might influence their teaching in the future. They were also expected to use their peers as resources to find out about other cultures and experiences.

> Students learned to discuss their cultural views without hurting the feelings of students from other cultures. Overall, students felt this experience was very informative and worthwhile.

The goal of this journal assignment was for students to build community, to participate in a cultural exchange, and to see situations from a different perspective. For example, one student talked about the idea of the American garage sale. He commented on how odd it was to think about buying second-hand items. He recounted a story of buying two used plates and bringing them home. His wife made dinner and served it on the plates; He ate the dinner off the plates but then threw the plates away because he was uncomfortable with eating from dishes that had belonged to someone else. This story contrasted starkly with that of one of his group members who commented in her entry that she was a serious bargain hunter. One day she noted that everything she wore to class had cost less than five dollars in total.

Another cultural exchange was reported of an international student who had lived in the U.S.A. for more than ten years. She attended a concert just after September 11, 2001. She was surprised that it the concert began with the singing of the national anthem. She noted in her journal entry that she had never experienced this before and asked her fellow group members what the proper protocol for the situation would be. Should she stand? Should she sing? Should she place her hand over her heart like others did? This cultural experience evoked a larger discussion that flowed into a class discussion concerning cultural views of patriotism, especially the stronger feelings that were seen after the events of September 11, 2001.

As seen in these two examples, this small group journal assignment could be judged a success. Every student participated regularly and eagerly. The journal entries were lengthy and insightful. Students shared their lives, their experiences, and opinions with each other. Occasionally, students were frustrated with the comments of their classmates; however, these frustrations served only to heighten the cultural differences present in the class. Students learned to discuss their cultural views without hurting the feelings of students from other cultures. Overall, students felt this experience was very informative and worthwhile.

Applied Linguistics and Professional Practices

The second class for which I developed small-group dialogues journals was a graduate-level course entitled Applied Linguistics and Professional Practices, also in the MA TESOL program. This class is a capstone class for the program, exploring both current research in applied linguistics and learning how to conduct research. There were sixteen students in the class, all prospective ESL teachers from a variety of backgrounds. In fact, many of these students were also enrolled in the first class. Students chose their own research and journal partner, and were then set up in pairs on the Blackboard CMS.

In the discussion forum, students were asked to write about the readings for the week (concerning research methods and/or second language acquisition theory), and to discuss the strengths and weaknesses so that they were able to come to class with questions, concerns, and comments. Also, as their own research projects unfolded, they were asked to discuss their projects with their partner. The assignment read: "Float your research questions by your partner for critique; discuss pitfalls, concerns, highlights, etc. as your research progresses. As you design your project, let your partner review each phase. Let him/her look over the instrument(s), let him/her help you with ideas for recruitment, etc."

The goal of this journal was to develop a sense of community for nascent teacher-researchers. The design was for students to realize that they were not alone in the research process and that collaboration was an important aspect of that process. Students were to discuss their thoughts concerning the course readings as well as the decisions that they were making in their own research projects. The partners were to support each other in that decision-making process and to allow them the opportunity to express their frustrations over pitfalls they encountered.

This second journal assignment failed in my estimation. Only two students participated fully in the project; interestingly, they were roommates and could have discussed all of these issues in person. However, they told me that their sense of obligation to the course forced them to put these discussions on the discussion board for me to see. Two other students participated; however, their discussions seemed stilted and clinical. For the most part, these two students completed the assignment, but only because it was an assignment. Most students participated to some degree, yet very sporadically. Finally, one pair of students never logged on to the discussion board to attempt the assignment. Even though this assignment was a grade for a graduate course that was worth 10% of the grade, these students did not complete any aspect of the assignment. Even when they were told directly that their grades would be affected, these two students still never logged on.

Standard English Usage

The third class for which I developed a small-group dialogue journal assignment was an undergraduate course, Standard English Usage. Students in this class consisted primarily of undergraduate students from a variety of majors. While most were English majors or English Education majors, some students were from other disciplines, and took the course to improve their grammatical knowledge. In this class, there were also two graduate students: one was pursuing a master's degree in English and wanted to take the course for graduate credit, the other was an MA TESOL students who felt she needed to improve her grammatical fluency. For the first graduate student, I required additional assignments and more in-depth discussion of the language issues to meet the Masters' credit requirements. However, for the second, a nonnative speaker who was only taking the class for undergraduate credit, no additional requirements were assigned. There was also one other nonnative speaker of English enrolled. This student was an undergraduate who needed to improve his English language skills.

Based on the previous success of the first small-group journals, I placed students into groups of three. Students were asked to examine the environment around them for grammatical issues. They were

then asked to present these issues to members of their groups. They were told that issues to notice could include frequent errors people make, funny bumper stickers that use language in an unusual way, or peculiarities of English. The students were required to read and react to their group members' entries as well.

The goal of this journal assignment was to encourage students to talk about grammatical issues with fellow classmates. From previous experience, I thought that students would appreciate the insights that their fellow students had. In addition, I thought that by discussing these grammatical issues with someone other than the teacher and somewhere other than in class, the students would develop a heightened awareness to the language around them.

I would judge the third journal assignment a moderate success. Based on my experiences with the past two journal assignments, I placed students in groups of three, rather than pairs, so that more of a community could evolve. Some problems that I didn't foresee included the number of students that dropped the course after group assignments were made, and the negative attitude that some students brought with them concerning the topic—grammar. There was some success, however. Several groups formed small communities and had interesting discussions concerning the topic. These students commented that they formed alliances that they would have never made in the class alone. Interestingly, two of the most active and insightful participants were international students who recognized that they had "expert" resources available. The other graduate student based on journal entries and feedback during the course did not substantially invest in the journals, choosing to act as if the activity were simply busy work.

Discussion

After experiencing these varied levels of success, I began to explore what worked and what did not. I believe that the first set of small group journals worked well because students felt connected to each other. Their journal entries, feedback and course evaluation indicated that they trusted each other and found that each individual member of the group benefited from the experiences of the other—reciprocity.

There are two major reasons I felt the second journal activity was unsuccessful. First, several of the students were enrolled in both classes, so time constraints may have forced them to choose between the two journals. Since these students stated that the first journal was more exciting to them and other class members participated more fully, the culture journals "won." In addition, the time constraints of proposing, developing, conducting, and reporting on a research project within a single semester limited the time that they had to reflect on the research process. Second, students demonstrated in their entries and feedback that that they felt often they were unqualified to comment on the readings for the course since mostly they did not believe that they understood these theoretical articles that well. I also feel that pairs were not as successful as groups of three. If one person in a pair did not participate, the dialogue failed.

The third journal activity was moderately successful for several reasons. Those who appeared to participate more fully were those who were willing to engage in community building and learning. Based upon my journal research in these and other courses, I believe those students who were unwilling to participate in the journal activity had more individualistic attitudes. They, like the students in the research presented by Rovegno (1996), seemed to feel that the activity was "busy work." The topic of grammar might have intimidated some and bored others. The use of small groups was useful. Several times, one student would not participate for a week or two; however, the group did not disintegrate. The only problem with group membership came from the unusual amount of attrition in the course.

Revisiting the research on effective dialogues, I examined the elements of my journals, looking for broad patterns from which to learn. I found that content, group membership, and a feeling of community were three important elements that distinguished the more successful journals from the unsuccessful ones.

Content

Based upon the student journal entries, their direct feedback to me and their evaluations of the courses discussed in this chapter, content, that is, topics or focus, seemed to be an issue for many of the students in some of the journal assignments. In the successful class, the content was something with which the students were comfortable: it featured their own cultures and learning about the cultures of their group members. They were the experts, and the group membership allowed each member to contribute as an expert to the group, thus, creating a balanced environment in which everyone was an expert. In the second graduate journal assignment discussed above, the topics and the materials used appeared to be above their level of readiness. Since the readings for the course were complex theoretical readings, in addition to the new challenge of conducting research, the students did not consider themselves competent enough to discuss these issues effectively; thus, they could not assist other group members to learn. Finally, in the undergraduate journal assignment, I believe that some of the students felt that they were not competent to talk about grammatical issues, much less identify grammatical anomalies present in their every day lives. Others simply felt the content was not stimulating enough, although others found the content quite enjoyable.

Group Membership

Group membership was stable in the Intercultural Competence class. All students in the successful class were enrolled from the very beginning of the semester, and there was no attrition. The same was true for the unsuccessful graduate student class; however, other factors such as pairs instead of groups of three may have played a role. Finally, in the undergraduate class, there was considerable attrition after groups were assigned, so some students suddenly lost all but one of their group members, leaving them as solitary journal writers with the teacher as audience. Other groups remained intact. Not wanting to disrupt the small community that had been formed, I chose not to redistribute group members.

Also, while diversity of language background and study programs seemed to help create the success of the journals in the culture class, the diverse population that made up the undergraduate class could have contributed to the varied success. Since this class is designed for English majors and non-majors alike, students enrolled in the class for a variety of purposes. For some students, the class was seen as vital in helping them improve grammatical competence in their writing. For others, the class was an elective adding to their knowledge of English as a whole. Still others were pre-service teachers wanting to enhance their grammatical knowledge in order to better teach future students. Because the students came from a variety of fields and for a variety of purposes, their own needs seemed to prevent their bonding with other students in the class. Instead of becoming a community of learners, the room was filled with a group of individuals.

Class as Community

In both of the graduate classes, community was easy to create. The seats were arranged in a circle so that every class would foster community-building. In addition, these students attended most of their classes together, forming a natural cohort of learners. Although room arrangement had not been a problem in community-building in the undergraduate class the semester before, I did not arrange the undergraduate class in a circle, but kept it in rows. When each student made a brief presentation to the rest of the class--an

opportunity to interact with their classmates, this did not lead to social interaction among the students. I observed that students seldom talked with each other before or after class.

What Else Could Have Been Done?

I believe that there are several things that I could have done to help the second and third journal assignments to be more successful. For Applied Linguistics and Professional Practices, it seems sensible to have only one focus: either a reading-reflection journal or a research journal. For a reading-reflection journal, providing guided reading questions might help students focus on the journal or at least to get students started on the journal. For the research journal, student investment might be improved by making it a private, reflective journal. Since learning to conduct research requires instruction and practice, students might benefit from a master-apprentice model (Freeman 1998; Silverman 2000); therefore, a student-teacher journal might be more appropriate choice.

When considering the Standard English Usage journal assignment, I believe that I should incorporate more in-class community-building activities. Despite my trying small group activities, undergraduates did not participate fully and preferred more of a didactic approach to learning. In fact, many preferred to be passive learners in the class and commented that any discussion seemed to be a waste of time. Many of the undergraduates in the grammar class wanted to know the rules and did not want to discuss the reasoning behind the rules or the application of those rules. They did not like activities that had multiple answers. In fact, when students asked for clarification or for further explanation, other students saw this as a waste of their time. Possibly bringing in a "hot entry" on the key grammar point of the week might stimulate discussions in class and entries in the journals.

Conclusion

The greatest success that I take from these experiences, especially those involving future ESL teachers, is that the students formed friendships through these assignments that they have continued past the course. Many of these students have continued a global friendship and collegiality that has helped them in many ways, both personally and professionally. While I cannot take credit for developing these friendships, I feel that I have imparted the knowledge of the usefulness of dialoguing, especially in an electronic environment. These students have learned that they have resources well beyond their physical reach that they can access at a moment's notice.

Lessons Learned

Through the use of journals, I have learned several important lessons concerning the development of effective dialogue journals. These lessons should help me to develop more successful journaling opportunities in the future.

1. Groups of three appear to work better than pairs. It leads to community building; students receive feedback from more than one person and do not feel pressure as the only respondent to a question to perform.
2. Topics have to be of interest to the students and on the appropriate cognitive level.
3. Participants must be knowledgeable about the topic, or at least feel that they have some level of expertise in the area. When students feel that they are inexperienced or ignorant of the area, they tend not to comment on the topic except to say that they feel lost or ill prepared.

4. Even if the teacher does not actively contribute to the journals, the teacher's presence must be felt. A brief comment just to let students know their insights are read and appreciated or to redirect a statement will help to keep students involved.

5. Using the journal topics in a class discussion helps students see the value of the activity. If it is never mentioned in class, students will see the activity as a completely ancillary, unrelated activity, and therefore a waste of their time.

In addition, the self-evaluation of my teaching practices has been most beneficial. This exploration has provided me with more insights concerning students' approaches to learning. I have recognized that some students must be explicitly taught, or culturally reeducated to value group work and to use *all* resources for learning, including classmates.

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Chapter 7

REFLECTING THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Tania R. S. Romero

Pre-reading question: *You may find some hidden treasures in writing your professional autobiography that will help you understand the teacher you've become. What are the underpinnings of your teaching concepts? What does the language you use in writing your professional autobiography reveal about your teaching concepts and practice?*

Introduction

This chapter discusses the use of linguistic tools in critical reflection through autobiographies in teacher continuing education programs.

Based on my experience as educator, I believe that teachers' tacit knowledge must be shared, scientifically investigated and used in their own education to increase interaction and make it more meaningful. The theoretical perspective underlying this discussion draws upon:

1. The historical-cultural approach, through which the relevance of understanding tacit theories supporting teachers' classroom practices will be emphasized
2. Critical reflection theory, focusing on the role of narratives as privileged forms of learning aspects of teachers' social identity and constitution which, by being shared, will lead to meaningful and collaborative knowledge construction
3. Systemic functional grammar, which sees language *as a strategic, meaning-making resource* (Eggins, 1994, p. 1), because in considering how to narrate their memories, authors have to select meaningful life episodes. This selection can be realized only through language decisions in which lexical choices are particularly relevant.

Therefore, while reiterating the use of autobiographies as part of a language education process as proposed by recent educational trends, this chapter offers linguistic guidelines on developing a discourse analysis instrument for teacher educators. To illustrate the analysis, I will use systemic functional grammar to analyze three autobiographies used as self-evaluation tools in a critical reflective education program for in-service state school teachers of English (Halliday, 1994; Martin & Rose, 2003).

The Context of the Study

The data analyzed were produced by state school teachers of English who participate in a continuing education program developed by the joint effort of two institutions: Associação Brasileira de Cultura Inglesa São Paulo (an Institute for EFL teaching), and the Catholic University in São Paulo. The

former finances the program and is in charge of language improvement. The latter, through its applied linguistics graduation department, is in charge of professional education based on critical reflection.

The three English teachers whose texts were analyzed already have undergraduate degrees and have been teaching at state schools in the São Paulo metropolitan area for a number of years. It should be mentioned that English classes are taught twice a week, each class lasting fifty minutes, and that state schools in Brazil are usually attended by children from a less privileged social class. In addition, most of the teachers working in the public system are former public school students.

As one of the educators involved in this continuing education program at the Catholic University, I asked the teachers for homework towrite an autobiography in which they reflected on what had led them to the teaching of English, and in which they would recall their own experience as language learners (Romero, 2002). In order to help them with their task, I suggested some guiding questions, such as: *What contributed to your learning English? Which teachers influenced you most? Why? What remarkable events in your life are related to your interest in becoming an English teacher?* The autobiographies were later discussed during class, and conclusions on the principles underlying these teachers' actions were drawn. My purpose was to offer teachers an opportunity to analyze their own past experiences so as to enable them to understand their practice and develop teaching philosophies.

On Educating Teachers

One factor that has traditionally been overlooked in teacher education programs—whether pre- or in-service programs— is that teachers' education actually starts long before they engage in formal, systematic courses. Even well-meaning

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educators (as if there were any other kind) tend to forget in their formal, systematic courses the overwhelming power exerted by years of experiences that the (future) professionals went through as learners while they were acquiring the "apprenticeship of observation," as Bailey et al. (1996) put it. Therefore, considering this lengthy history, which usually starts at the age of six, or even before, there is little that teacher education programs can do to help professionals perform according to the new trends in language teaching. The frustrating result is that, in spite of all efforts, teacher educators are bound to perpetuate internalized models—that is, "we teach as we have been taught, rather than as we have been trained to teach"(Bailey et al., 1996, p. 11).

There are three typical problems associated with teacher education programs, according to Woods (1987):

a. The content is based on epistemologies (sociological, psychological, philosophical, etc.) that teachers see as divorced from the practical problems they deal with in their daily routine.
b. The knowledge produced seems too distant, theoretical, and abstract for teachers to engage in, especially considering that their own views appear to be ignored: "others" speak about "others' theories" which seldom refer to a theory of teaching *per se* (Larsen-Freeman, 1990)
c. Knowledge is constructed through discrete, uncontextualized aspects. In other words, knowledge is "alien," constructed by others and, oddly enough, not involving those more concerned about and central to the process.

In order to break this cycle, self-study research emerged. According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), this new approach, which attempts to address teachers' practical dilemmas and aims at teachers' and teacher educators' improvement as professionals, was heavily influenced by remarkable transformations brought about over the past quarter century. One substantial switch came from naturalistic and qualitative research methods, which emphasized the relevance of understanding facts and problems by taking into account their context (time, place, complexity) and the perspective of the interacting individuals involved. Rooted in ethnography and the critical theory of knowledge, such methods have significantly contributed to promoting reflection in teacher education and development research (Magalhães, 1994). Also, intellectual traditions from the humanities— anthropology, sociology, psychology and cultural studies—have highlighted the importance of recovering meanings constructed during one's life based on experiences. Recovering meanings by reorganizing facts about experiences enhances one's understanding of what they meant and how they have impacted and shaped one's views, values, ideologies and representations of the world (Machado, 2000). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) further clarify this point as follows:

> Self-study points to a simple truth, that to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other. ... [S]elf-study's appeal is grounded in the postmodern university's preoccupation with identity formation and a Foucault-inspired recognition of the linkage of person and the play of power in self formation. Foucault offers a rationale for self-study work: "If one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question." Self-study is explicitly interested research. (p. 14)

This new perspective considers that meanings are developed socially and historically through interactions individuals have in their cultural contexts with others (Vygotsky, 1994). And, as the anthopologist Gusmão (2003) adds:

> This means that, no matter how socialized we are, there always remains an "open" or "empty" space to be fulfilled by the experience lived, imagined, reflected on, which generates perception, logic and construction of the real. (p. 18)

In self-study research, data are most frequently generated from written or spoken journals, correspondence (e-mail or letter), recorded conversations, and autobiographies. The popularity of this type of analysis material is explained by Nóvoa (1995), "The contemporary use of (auto) biographical approaches is due to social sciences' dissatisfaction with the type of knowledge produced and the need to renew ways in scientific knowledge" (p. 18).

Autobiography, in comparison with the other data analysis materials, is considered to be a most appropriate source of investigation (Woods, 1987; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), because, according to Woods (1987), it is anchored within the teacher's self and, as it should be stressed, autobiography "both gives historical depth to ethnography and permits a view of wider socioeconomic and political circumstances and their effect on personal lives.... It is concerned with the whole person, within whole contexts" (p. 124).

For Casey (1995), instruments such as autobiographies (also called narrative research, personal reports, personal narratives, personal documents, life documents, life histories, ethno-

history, ethnobiography, self-ethnography, etc.) have drawn special attention because of the interest in *the ways human beings make sense through language* (p. 212). It is through narratives, Casey maintains, that one is able to organize his or her experience and the principles of human action, as well as reconstruct his or her identity, or, as Thompson (1978; similarly Casey 1995–1996) points out, this instrument "gives history back to people in their own words. And, by giving them a past, it also helps them walk towards a future created by themselves" (p. 220).

Thus, teacher educators (Bruner, 2001; Celani & Magalhães, 2002; Telles, 2004) have emphasized the importance of understanding tacit theories that underlie teachers' classroom actions. Such understanding would serve teacher awareness because:

> By thinking carefully about our own experiences, we begin to articulate our own theories of teaching. This is indeed a personal as well as professional responsibility, because it is this theory that guides each of us in the classrooom.... It is only when we are aware of our theories of teaching that we can examine them and alter them as needed. (Bailey et al., 1996, p. 22)

Focusing on teacher learners' tacit theories may also enable teacher educators to have a sound and real basis on which to discuss and help transform their pedagogical practice as appropriate. Prior to introducing any new educational concept or approach, then, researchers stress that attention should be directed towards knowing who teachers are—that is, what their social identities are. As discussed earlier, from a social-cultural perspective (Moita Lopes, 2003; Smolka, 2004), identity is constructed, negotiated, rebuilt, modeled, and organized by human beings through interaction as a product of social practice and activity. The starting point for teacher educators, therefore, would be to grasp the meanings the teacher makes of the world and society, for, as argued by Bruner (2001): "In an attempt to elaborate theories about classroom practices, ... it should be better to take into account the popular theories those who participate in this teaching-learning process already have" (p. 54). And these meanings, private and personal theories constructed throughout one's history, are conveyed, made known and transformed through language, as Vygotsky (1996) points out.

Analyzing and interpreting teachers' discourses reveals their everyday practices, motivations, interpretations, points of view, and beliefs as they narrate relevant episodes experienced during their professional and personal history (Bailey et al., 1996; Liberali et al., 2003; Telles, 2004). As a result, teachers or teachers-to-be can have an active voice in their education and teacher educators can be better equipped to foster teacher development. Based on my experience as a teacher educator, engaging teachers in interaction based on their own lives makes the formal education process more meaningful and relevant for them, and makes teacher educators feel closer to their teachers.

Having made a plea for autobiographies as powerful instruments in teacher development, I would like to stress that this, most obviously, must not be an end in itself, but part of a process leading to critical reflection. Therefore, I next clarify what my understanding of critical reflection is and, by making a link with this perspective, go on to describe the process that encompasses the interpretation of data based on discourse.

Critical Reflection

Effective professionals tend to be reflective. And, as Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) point out, not a single educator would say that he or she does not value reflection. But, considering the many co-existing reflection typologies leading to completely different practices, the theoretical perspective taken here should be made clear.

In the 1930s, the concept of reflection—previously discussed by Plato, Aristotle, and Confucius, and others (Hatton & Smith, 1995)—started to be associated with teacher preparation programs (Goodman, 1984). John Dewey, concerned with the problems in relating teacher education to technocratic approaches, distinguished routine actions from reflective ones, which relate theory and practice in order to better prepare the future educator. Dewey also added that reflection could only occur if the teacher

a.   were directly involved and interested in a real problem experienced in his or her practice
b.   would search for solutions by carefully examining in the process "all beliefs and supposed forms of knowledge in the light of their underlying foundations and conclusions they lead to." (1997, p. 25)
c.   would test these solutions in the same social context in which they originated through teaching practice. This way, he maintained, the reflective process would result in redefinitions and new understandings about practice, leading to transformations in teaching actions. More recently, Grimmet and Erickson (1988) echoed Dewey by stating that reflection is the reorganization or reconstruction of experiences which enable new understandings of a given action situation.

Based on the work of Freire (1970), Smyth (1989, 1992) proposes four forms of action that would help teachers plunge into a reflective process (Romero, 1998):

a.   Describing—by describing concrete experiences teachers can review their actions in an organized fashion, enabling them to take the necessary distant standpoint from the context to see events more clearly. According to Liberali (2004, p. 26) this is when "we depart from our here and now that constitute the situation we are immersed or inserted in, and it is from this situation, which we can perceive, that we can move on". The leading question here is "What actually happened?"
b.   Informing—after reviewing the events as they took place, the reality described by the actor involved in the process starts being interpreted. This is when teachers start to perceive the teaching principles (theories) they developed and that underlie their actions. The examination of these revealed principles of teaching and language theories empowers them to make qualified interpretations. Also, this process may unravel contradictions, as it allows the unmasking of assumptions underlying the act of teaching, paving the way for the decisive step of questioning routine actions acquired through common sense. The leading questions here are: "What is the meaning of the actions? How can they be interpreted in reference to teaching and learning theories? And in reference to language theories?"
c.   Confronting—with a broader understanding of the actions and events duly contextualized, attention is now directed towards their critical evaluation, considering their social, political and cultural consequences in face of the desired ultimate purposes. Through

the questioning this process arouses, the ideologies surrounding teaching practices may become more visible. The leading questions here are: "How did I become like that? What do my practices reveal about my beliefs about teaching? What are the consequences of my teaching practice?"

d.   Reconstructing—by gaining a clearer, better informed perspective of the problems which triggered reflection, teachers are able to find action alternatives which are more effective and consistent with their new understandings and professional goals. At this stage, teachers may have an enhanced control over their actions and decisions because thought and action, practice and theory, and physical and intellectual work are now combined. The reference question here is "How can I do it differently?"

Autobiographies may serve critical reflection purposes if facts and events brought to the surface—specifically those related to pedagogical and language issues experienced—are described. Teachers writing their autobiographies can recollect and record facts and experiences which may have led to a specific representation of teaching or teacher role, as the following examples from my data illustrate:

> My 5th grade teacher Silvia would speak to all of us, play guessing games with words and their meanings, use the verb to be, personal pronouns, everything through dialogues. Unfortunately she was with us for only two months because she got sick and after that did not return anymore. I missed her because she would teach looking everybody straight in the eye. (S.M.O.)

> When I was a teenager, I took a private English course every Saturday for three straight hours, but which teenager likes to wake up early on Saturdays? There my mistakes were exposed and ridiculed by certain teachers and for this reason there were moments when I was not interested in learning English. Learning English for me then meant discouragement and frustration. (L.P.C.)

> When I was 14 my parents enrolled me and my sister at a private EFL Institute. I remember to this day that it was a very good experience being able to speak those words accurately and understand certain grammatical structures right on the first class. (E.C.G.P.)

These significant moments are most probably recalled together with the emotional impact and meaning they caused at the time they took place. They are then reinterpreted (*informing*) in the light of teaching and learning theories and language approaches. In my institution, for instance, the learning and teaching theories we use as references are behaviorism, cognitivism, and socio-constructivism, and the language approaches are structuralism, notional-functional, and socio-interactionism. The pedagogical and language concepts deriving from lived experiences are then critically evaluated (*confronting*) by comparing the concepts constructed at that time to authors' present concepts from a more distant and theoretically informed stance, and by considering the social, political and cultural outcomes these experiences generated. As psychologist Abreu (2004, p. 9) points out, "*Past facts cannot be changed, but the interpretation we give them can.*" Through reviewing past events, the critical reflective process can lead to the planning of different actions consistent with

the new theoretical perspective gained (*reconstructing*) which can be reevaluated back in the same original context.

Viewing reality and the world from a different point of view means learning has actually taken place. And learning, in accordance with the Vygotskian historical-cultural approach, is a social, mediated process. For this reason, the critical reflective process that can operate in autobiographical writing is best not undertaken alone. A well-prepared teacher educator will help overcome fears, ask adequate questions, notice when there are escapes or inconsistencies, and assist teacher-authors to reinterpret relevant recollected episodes (Abreu, 2004). As Woods (1987) also emphasizes:

> But one needs help in the use of it [autobiography]. This leads to another advantage. In addition to the prompts to memory and the discipline encouraged in recollection, the aided life history facilitates teacher articulation. This is important for two major reasons. First, talking about something aids our understanding of it. Expression is like the final stage of the learning process—not until then can we be sure of the degree to which we "have it". We may only have ill-formulated ideas or hazy memories—talking about them in discussion with a trained sympathetic listener can add considerably to their substance. Secondly, articulation promotes teacher control of the knowledge produced. As one teacher told me, "Now the more we talk about it, the more the uncertain things become, you know, fixed... it is mine, the minute I put it into words, my words, I've got it." Here, then, is the essential moment of appropriation and reinterpretation which helps to establish ownership. (pp. 124–125)

Weighty guidelines for quality autobiographies are offered by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001). In the next section, they are reviewed, expanded and grounded in applied linguistic tools for text elaboration.

Suggested Approaches

Concurring with the position taken here that autobiography can be a form of narrative research concerned with the construction of "self," Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), drawing most of their guidelines from literary traditions, assert that quality autobiographical self-studies should rely on nine, often overlapping, guidelines. I summarize and comment on them below based on the discussion developed so far in this chapter.

1. Be attractive to readers because of the connection this enables. Autobiographies are especially relevant to teacher education not only because they enhance authors' professional knowledge and growth by focusing on their "nodal moments" of learning and teaching, but also because readers can recognize themselves, their own practices, difficulties, dilemmas, unanswered daily questions through the narrated experience. After all, sharing is part of self-improvement. Here lies the power of vicarious learning.
2. Work towards insight and interpretation. Reflecting on those nodal, crucial and problematic moments at different times in one's teaching life reveals the previously-unnoticed connecting lines.

3. Be absolutely honest in portraying the complex setting of events and facts and courageous in revealing one's own prejudices and judgments.

4. Focus on a problem related to learning and teaching issues so as to justify its inclusion in a teacher education program.

5. Be directed towards the resolution of the dilemmas posed. This is, after all, the ultimate goal of learning.

6. Aim not only at self, but also at others' learning. The inclusion of autobiography in a teacher development or education program can only be validated if it is focused on learning and knowledge production for teaching practice. Throughout the eight years I have been working with autobiographies, there were uncountable times when experiences shared by one of the teacher learners helped others understand why they teach the way they do. For this reason I make a point of involving the whole class in discussing everyone's individually written autobiographies.

7. Write in a simple, linear chronological order, since this facilitates analysis in teacher education. This does not mean, however, that the writing should lack emotional or intellectual impact, or a pleasing style.

8. Give the necessary attention to context, since dramatic incidents take place in a specified scene and situation. As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), the proponents of these guidelines, put it, "If we use a literary framework to judge autobiography, we should expect the author to appropriately explore the dimensions of literature that are most likely to provide insight into the wholeness of the autobiography of teacher education being told as well as insight into the context within which the teacher educator lives and works." (p. 18).

9. Offer fresh perspectives on actual, long-known flaws, difficulties and troubles learners and teachers go through. Heroic accounts of victories or tragedies are not necessarily intellectually interesting for teacher education.

Although Bullough and Pinnegar's guidelines offer a significant contribution to elaborating the power of autobiography for teacher education purposes, the literary tradition they draw on gives rise to subjective interpretations that may lead writers to produce texts that do not support critical reflection. Also, aspects of context are important to remember. For that reason, I prefer to ground context in autobiographies in the historical-social approach rather than in literature. While literature allows and implicitly calls for fantasy, an autobiography aimed at critical reflection in teacher education is a "narrative as a cultural tool in forms of mediated action whose purpose is to represent the past"(Wertsch, 1998, p. 80). Its ultimate goal is to construct how the author understands what he or she narrates: that is,

> [T]he chain of meanings, constructed through the constant negotiations
> among participants in interaction and the resulting meanings,
> expectations, intentions, values and beliefs referring to (a) theories of the
> physical world; (b) norms, values and symbols of the social world; (c)
> expectations of the agent about him/herself as an actor in a given context.
> (Celani & Magalhães, 2002, p. 321)

Students and teachers engaged in the writing of autobiographies in education programs should be fully aware of the objectives underlying the process and make use of properly designed

instruments so that they are able to produce texts which prompt critical reflection. Based on Bailey et al. (1996), I prepared (Romero, 2002) the following set of questions to assist autobiographical writers in their task:

1. Recall your English learning process and narrate it in the first person singular (I), taking especially into account: (a) What aspects contributed to your learning of English? What role did your teachers have in this process? (b) What made it difficult for you to learn English? What role did your teachers have in this process?
2. Based on your experience as a student of English, make a list of actions that, in your opinion, may (a) help someone to learn English; (b) make it difficult for someone to learn English.
3. Which teachers do you have up until now as reference? What specific aspects do you note in their actions? Why did they become unforgettable for you?
4. What remarkable facts happened in your life that may be related to your interest in the English language and to your choice of becoming a teacher of English?
5. In your opinion, does your present classroom practice resemble or differ from that of your former teachers? Why?

A more complementary, effective instrument may be offered by guidelines based on discourse analysis principles (the intent of this chapter) which frame autobiography in teacher education programs as a genre, that is, "a staged, goal-oriented social process" (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 7). As a social process, autobiography concerns specific content (what), is written by a specific person (who), to a specific audience (to whom), with a pre-determined purpose (why or what for), in a specific place (where), in a due time (when), in a specific way (how). Thus, the wh- questions proposed can be answered as follows:

- <u>What</u>: the content focuses on learning and teaching, as well as language issues because in each case it aims at recovering through memory how writers learned and/or were taught English and how they conceptualized this language.
- <u>Who</u>: the writers are language students or teachers involved in a critical reflection program;
- <u>To whom</u>: to colleagues and educators who will read the autobiographies and analyze them in order to collaborate with authors to help them reflect on their writing;
- <u>Why</u>: to encourage critical reflection leading to improvement of teacher knowledge and practice;
- <u>Where</u>: in a pre-service or in-service teacher education program aiming at critical reflection;
- <u>When</u>: in preparation for knowledge construction through collaborative discussion with educators and colleagues in the classroom;
- <u>How</u>: in written form, through narratives of contextualized facts, events and turning points from recollection. Contrary to Woods (1987), I hold that this type of autobiography should be written, not spoken, because writing demands more time, meditation, search for information and organization of thought and so tends to lead to more insights and connections. Besides, it is more manageable in a course taught to large groups, when there is no time available for the educator to talk individually with every participant. Furthermore, as Abreu (2004) holds:

The use of words allows for a maximum degree of symbolism and abstraction. When we only think about something, we are less clear and defined than when we talk about it, but when we write, we are forced to have our ideas defined, linked, with no digression. Hence the importance of the final form being written. (p. 9)

With the aid of the Wh-questions presented above and the set of questions suggested before, writers are ready to proceed individually towards the actual elaboration of their autobiographies. In the courses I have taught, after discussing the purposes of the experience and clarifying the guiding and Wh-questions, I usually supply the participants with some examples of written autobiographies and then ask them to develop their own as a home assignment so that they have the necessary time to reminisce meaningful moments, facts, contexts and situations and refer to any material resource or document which may aid their memory. An often-suggested strategy is to start with timelines in which remarkable moments of writers' lives are identified and then organize the autobiographies chronologically using the time-lines.

The following class can start with the participants divided into small groups reading each others' texts with the task of comparing them, looking for similarities and differences in the group not only in terms of facts and causes, but also in terms of concept construction. In the three autobiography excerpts mentioned above, for example, the three teacher learners show how they conceptualize teachers' roles based on their learning experience: For S.M.O., it seems that teachers should have a close relationship with students and foster interaction by speaking to all students and looking at them straight in the eye. L.P.C., on the other hand, indicates that teachers should not expose students' mistakes and scorn them. E.C.G.P. emphasizes speaking words accurately and understanding grammatical structures in order to learn English, which could imply a preference for a structural language approach. These examples suggest how important the guiding questions can be in focusing the discussion and limiting digressions. An oral discussion involving the whole group follows, while the teacher educator helps the participants make the connections with teaching and learning theories and language approaches. Thus, learners mediated by the educator generate knowledge and are able to make direct links from their lived experiences to contextualized constructed meanings and concepts.

The results achieved in the teacher education course I teach have reinforced the role of autobiography in critical reflection and its utmost importance for teachers' growth. A former student commented:

Only when I wrote my autobiography did I understand who I really was as a professional and as a person. But, God, how difficult it was preparing it! But I loved it! I could finally see myself! And I was also surprised to be able to mentally see my former teachers again! (S.D.R.)

However, the analysis of autobiographies in the light of pedagogical and language theories alone may be subject to diverse interpretations. For this reason, the analysis carried out should also rely on sound scientific grounds, such as those supplied by discourse analysis that focuses on the materiality of language. The analytical instrument I suggest is based on the principles of systemic functional grammar (SFG), which I briefly introduce in the next section.

Peering into Teachers' Minds through SFG

Since the role of language is central to constructing knowledge in the Vygotskian perspective, an appropriate instrument of analysis for disclosing the meanings teachers hold is likely to be a form of discourse analysis. SFG, as described by Halliday (1994) and his followers, seems therefore to be such a linguistic instrument, because it conceives language as closely involved in the construction and organization of human experience (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). As SFG is an analytical instrument that sees language as a social construct and whose main interest is its function and meanings, its use is conceptually coherent with the purpose of the teacher education analysis proposed in this chapter; and SFG has successfully been used as an instrument to bring out meanings in teacher education courses in different parts of the world (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. vii; Eggins, 1994, p. 1; Hasan, 1992; Romero, 1998).

Language is a system that offers its users a number of alternatives to express meanings (Halliday, 1994). Users, often unconsciously (Thompson, 1996), reveal different meanings, depending on the written or spoken linguistic forms they choose to employ. Therefore, if teacher educators seek to gain a deeper understanding of what (future) teachers mean when they write in their autobiographies about professional identity, they need to attend to the language choices teachers make in their writing.

The sample investigation described below focuses on how teachers perceive, feel, experience and represent their world, their experience in it, the professionals or persons who influenced them, and how they were influenced. The data analysis carried out drew on SFG principles.

Stressing their understanding of texts as *a sequence of meanings*, Martin and Rose (2003) elaborate discourse systems related to the three Hallidayan general functions of language in social contexts: to enact relationships, to represent experience and to organize discourse as meaningful text. Of the five discourse systems (appraisal, ideation, conjunction, identification and periodicity) they propose, I used only ideation in my analysis because it "is concerned with how our experience of reality, material and symbolic, is construed in discourse" (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 66). Hence, I looked specifically at agent Participants[1] in order to locate the persons who influenced the three teachers whose autobiographies are studied and the Processes they chose when describing events. Participants are the people who take part in a given activity; and a Process, realized in the verbal group of a clause, is the enacted activity. Four general kinds of Processes are considered: (a) *doing*, which refers to the actions people are involved in; (b) *saying*, which refers to speaking acts; (c) *sensing*, which refers to feelings expressed, and (d) *being*, which refers to descriptions or classifications of entities.

In the following section, the sample autobiographies are analyzed.

Interpreting the Data with SFG

Although the teacher educator had provided guiding questions for the preparation of the autobiographies, none of the teacher writers followed a question-answer format, preferring narratives, which seemed to allow them more freedom to reflect on their own experiences. By stressing autobiographies, the educator had, in fact, guided the teachers to a narrative format. The

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1 Initial capitals in words such as Participant/s and Process/es reflect Halliday's (1994) convention of highlighting that such words, used in everyday speech, have a specialized meaning in SFG.

three texts produced cover basically the same topics, but vary in the sequences and length dedicated to each topic, as the following outlines suggest.

Teacher A starts by recounting her relation with foreign languages from the age of ten to the end of her high school years. In the middle of this retelling, she states how she felt about English. Then she moves on to comment on how she acts as a teacher, making some links to her past learning experience. At the end of her account, she briefly mentions the teacher who influenced her most, who, oddly enough, was her science teacher, who used to say some words in French while teaching.

Teacher B reviews her learning process, separating it into two distinct moments: up to high school when she considered herself a good student, and then college when she faced serious learning difficulties. While describing these two phases, she recollects her views about English. Next, she compares the roles of two of her former college teachers. The end is dedicated to considering her current professional performance.

Teacher C starts by pointing out the role of her father, a man who, despite his few years of schooling and his humble origins, always valued education. Then she recalls that her first contact with English was through music, bringing up the memory of Elvis Presley. Her learning process appears to start from her first years at college, although she emphasizes the role of two former English teachers and the help received from colleagues and books.

Thus, four categories were identified in the three texts, namely, (a) *view of language*, which reveals how each teacher felt about the foreign language, (b) *learning process*, when they tell what they remember about how things happened, (c*) influences*, when they identify who most contributed to their identity-building; and (d) *teacher today*, which is an evaluation of how they feel about and perform their job now. However, very often two of the categories specified above—for example, *view of language* and *learning process* or *learning process* and *influences*—were closely combined: that is, they are linguistically realized together.

Starting the language analysis by using the ideation discourse system to classify the Processes used and identify the agent participants mentioned, the following picture emerged, summarized in Table 1.

This table illustrates how each teacher conceives the key aspects of their professional identity. The *view of language* is linguistically realized in different ways by each. While Teacher A restricts herself to qualifying the foreign language by choosing *being* Processes (*It was fascinating to speak other languages.*), Teacher B sees it more often as a mind, internal elaboration (*I realized I didn't know anything*) through the selection of a sensing Process. Teacher C virtually combines the previous views by having both *being (It was very difficult to learn English*) and sensing Processes (*I liked songs in English, although I didn't understand anything*).

The identification of Participants and their occurrences in each text shows who played the major roles in both categories: *learning process* and *influences.* It seems, for example, that Teacher A learned English mostly because of her own effort, considering that she used "I" sixteen times, with minor participation from others (*teacher, mother, State school, students, people*). Looking at the doing Processes used, the effort was mainly through actions (*I used to play by writing Portuguese words backwards and then I said I was writing English; we used to act in plays, sing...*). Likewise, Teacher B's own involvement (eight occurrences of "I") in her learning process was more relevant in her view than that of her former teachers, who were mentioned only once. And, based on the sensing Processes she preferred, this involvement was mainly intellectual (*I realized I did not know anything when I started College*). This teacher described how she viewed and related to the foreign language throughout her learning process. However, the teachers (Veronica and Francisco) did play a major role in C's learning process, especially because of who they were and the things they did (*She was a master and she was also an author, so she made us research and used special approaches*).

Table 7.1. Categories of Analysis

Texts	View of language	Language learning process	Influences	Teacher today
A	<u>Processes</u> Being (quality) (3)*	<u>Participants</u> I (16); teacher (2), we [the students] (2), State school (2), people (1), <u>Processes:</u> Doing (12), Saying (6), Being (3), Sensing (3)	<u>Participants</u> [Science] teacher (3), English teacher (2) <u>Processes</u> Sensing (2), Saying (1) Being (1)	<u>Processes</u> Being (4) Sensing (3)
B	<u>Processes</u> Sensing (5) Being (2) Doing (1) Saying (1)	<u>Participants</u> I (8), the teachers (1) <u>Processes</u> Sensing (5), Being (2), Doing (1), Saying (1)	<u>Participant:</u> Teacher Hilde (7), first teacher (4), Two teachers (1) <u>Processes</u> Being (8), Doing (2) Saying (1), Sensing (1)	<u>Processes</u> Sensing (2) Doing (1) Being (1)
C	<u>Processes</u> Being (3) Sensing (3)	<u>Participants</u> Teacher Verônica (6), I (4), Teacher Francisco (3), Colleagues (3), the course (1), real contact (1), books (1) <u>Processes</u> Doing (9), Being (7), Sensing (2), Saying (2)	<u>Participants</u> My father (10), teacher Verônica (7), teacher Francisco (3), music (1), Elvis Presley (1) <u>Processes</u> Being (9), Doing (5), Sensing (3), Saying (1)	<u>Processes</u> Sensing (5) Doing (5) Being (1) Saying (1)

*The numbers between parentheses represent the number of times different functional labels were used in each particular category.

The ranking of the influence of former teachers and others (*father, music, and Elvis Presley*) is also made clear by how the teachers identify and value the Participants. Teacher A sees the learning process as an internal experience (*She influenced me,* a sensing Process), because her teacher spoke in a foreign language (*She used to say words in French while teaching,* a saying Process); Teacher A also identified her (*She was the Science teacher*), perhaps in an attempt to show the reader that her main influence had an unexpected origin. In Teacher B's case, the role of her former teacher Hilde is clear because her special characteristics are stressed (*She was wonderful / She had an excellent approach*). Teacher C indicates that her most relevant influences were her father and her former teacher Veronica, who were both memorable because of who they were (*My father was directly responsible for my own and my sisters' career line. / She was master in this subject and author of many textbooks,* identifying Processes) or because of what they did (*My father repaired shoes like no-one else. / She would show the way,* doing Processes). Overall, the three teachers see their current performances as due to inner constructions (*A: I understand my students' troubles with the language; B: When I plan my classes, I think of how she acted*—all sensing Processes), with Teacher A qualifying her perceptions (*I try to be different,* a being Process).

The simple SFG analysis in this chapter indicates that important aspects of the three teachers' professional constitution and identity were revealed in their autobiographies, which shed light on how these teachers operated in and interpreted their learning and teaching contexts. But the three teachers understand their experiences and worlds—no matter how similar these might be—from unique perspectives.

The findings from this study reinforce why teacher education should not attempt to be neutral or consider all learners alike. The study further suggests that when language teachers are encouraged to use linguistic tools (e.g., SFG) not only will they better understand their roles as language teachers but teacher educators and researchers will also be better prepared and empowered to support them.

Final Considerations

This chapter argues that teacher education should be based on what teachers themselves understand about being teaching professionals; teacher autobiographies provide a means of starting this self-understanding, because as texts they can be subjected to critical reflection. Understanding how teachers construct their own professional identities enables teacher educators to be more aware of what teacher learners bring to teaching and what they need to learn. In this study, autobiographies were used for this purpose. By stimulating teachers' memories of their learning experiences, individual testimonies straight from the source could be investigated. Since such journeys back into the past depend on language and its use, special attention in this study was paid to the lexical choices that the teachers made in their autobiographies, for language is "a strategic, meaning-making resource" (Eggins, 1994, p. 1).

The teacher education process proposed here, then, articulates lived experience, practice, teaching and learning theory; and critical reflection and language use awareness in the belief that by looking into our past through well equipped lenses we can envision a more enlightened future. This experience is rewarding not only for the teachers who engage in the challenge of self-examination. By sharing recollections and interpretations among colleagues the experience is strikingly expanded, for it bridges tacit to scientific construction, self to others. The teacher educator, on the other hand, allowing her/himself to open to the experiences shared, is also enveloped in this process and definitely has her/his pedagogical action transformed and enhanced.

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Chapter 8

ONLINE DIALOGUE JOURNALS—A VIRTUAL VOICE

Silvia Correa and Deborah Skibelski

Pre-reading question: In what situations would an online dialogue journal be preferable to a paper one? For example, how can online journals provide an alternative channel of communication within a language institute?

Introduction

Adapting to an organization's culture is one of the biggest challenges that novice teachers face when they start working at an institution. As trainers, we have searched for ways to bridge the gap between pre-service teacher training and the reality that new teachers encounter once they begin the job at our institution. This chapter will describe the objectives, procedures, and results of a project that we, the trainers, carried out for two semesters at Associação Alumni, the institution we work for.

The Context
Associação Alumni is an American-Brazilian binational center in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, a metropolis of over ten million people. At our five branches, we have approximately 4,500 enrolled students. We teach all levels, from beginners to advanced students, whose ages range from five years old to adults. New teachers at the institution may teach a variety of ages and levels at one or more branches.

Rationale

We have been using dialogue journals with students and teachers alike for a number of years, and the overall results have been positive. As part of the regular EFL syllabus, intermediate and advanced level students are asked to keep a dialogue journal as a way to communicate with their teachers throughout the term. When the course begins, students are given a booklet in which to write their entries at home. These entries are then submitted to the teacher once every two weeks. Teachers read and respond to the entries. One of the most valuable benefits of this approach is that students develop a special interest in writing to and communicating with their teachers on a regular basis.

Journal writing is also a common practice in our teacher education programs, when teachers are asked to keep journals with reflections on their learning in their own courses. During our pre-service training program, keeping a journal is one of the requirements for the successful completion of the course. Teachers-in-training are given a booklet to keep their journal entries in on the first day of the course and are expected to record daily entries until the program ends. Teachers may be asked to respond to specific prompts or select their own topics. The writing is mostly done at home, and entries are collected about once a week, so that the trainers have the opportunity to read and respond to them. This process serves two purposes: it allows teachers-in-training to process their

experience in the course by agreeing, disagreeing, and reflecting on what they have been learning; and the trainers are able to assess the content of the course continuously based on the comments that the teachers make; trainers see these entries as a valuable assessment and feedback tool. Besides exchanging notes with trainers, teachers are also asked to share notes with one another. This generates more reflection on their part, since they compare and discuss their responses.

Implementing Journal Writing in In-Service Teacher Training Programs

The Pre-Service Teacher Training Program

Attending the pre-service training program is a requirement for all teacher candidates selected to work at our institution. This eighty-hour program in EFL teaching is designed to introduce language teachers to the Alumni class by promoting an exploration of theories of learning and teaching. The program comprises In-class Sessions (theory and practice classes), Class Observation (observation of experienced teachers' classes), and Follow-up Sessions (weekly meetings during the first semester at the institution).

The in-class sessions are framed as follows: First we demonstrate lessons in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar to participants who take on the role of EFL students. Next, the participants analyze the lessons demonstrated in view of the principles behind planning and teaching, and as homework they write a journal entry. Finally, participants peer teach sample lessons using the textbooks adopted by the institution.

The practice teaching component consists of peer teaching sessions. At the end of each one, teacher, peers, and the trainer meet for feedback on the lesson that has been taught. For homework, the participant who has just taught the sample lesson is asked to write a journal entry reflecting on the lesson: feelings and reactions and the lesson's strengths and weaknesses.

Once they are hired, new teachers are required to attend one semester of in-service training, the Teacher Training Follow-up Sessions. These consist of weekly meetings whose purpose is to evaluate the relevance of the program and discuss their experience with the materials, lesson planning, testing, and evaluation. In addition, these meetings give new teachers the opportunity to stay in touch with each other and to have closer contact with most of the supervisors at the institution, who may not work at the branch where they are teaching.

Over the years, the post-training follow-up sessions have served as key support in helping new teachers adjust to the institution. However, before we developed this project, new teachers met to discuss issues but were not given a chance to reflect on the aspects that they found challenging to adjust to or needed further support with. Since teachers-in-training generally found writing journal entries to be a positive experience, we decided to expand the journal writing to include the first two months on the job. This allowed the newly hired teachers to write to each other about their concerns, in addition to talking about them at follow-up meetings.

This follow-up on the new teachers' work at the institution provided another motivating factor for us to begin the project. As head trainers, we felt somewhat disconnected from the teachers once the pre-service program was over and they started teaching, mainly because neither of us was with them at all the follow-up sessions. Therefore, asking new teachers to write a dialogue journal with us helped us better assess their performance in the first term and gave them the opportunity to have one or two trainers as a resource to guide them at the beginning.

As new teachers were already accustomed to writing journal entries in the pre-service program, they were familiar with this activity as a requirement in teacher training programs at

Associação Alumni. Based on that assumption, in order to implement the project, we informed the group of new teachers that they would continue journaling during the follow-up sessions, and we would tell them what to write about and whom to respond to as we went along.

One important difference we implemented in the in-service journals was the online format. We decided to carry out this project online for several reasons. First of all, it was the most practical way for us to communicate, since the advisors were at two different branches and the new teachers worked at four different locations. Sending printed copies of the prompt and having the teachers respond to each other's booklets as they did in teacher training would have been quite complicated. In addition, we wanted to encourage teachers to become "e-mail literate." Asking them to access readings on the Web and respond to each other by e-mail was effective but at times led to problems for teachers who had limited computer access.

The Project

This project was carried out over a period of two semesters at Associação Alumni, a binational center in São Paulo, Brazil, where we work as academic advisors. We worked with two groups of new teachers. During the first semester, six teachers took part in the dialogue journaling project, whereas in the second semester, seven teachers were involved. The teachers in the two groups had attended pre-service training at the institution in January and July, respectively. The teachers' previous EFL teaching experience ranged from no experience teaching groups to over ten years of previous teaching experience.

Based on Staton's (1988) idea that "a dialogue journal usually focuses on topics of interest or concern to the student, but either writer may initiate a conversation on a topic of interest with the expectation that the other participant will acknowledge the topic and perhaps comment on it also" (p. 198; see also Garmon, 2001, p. 38), we decided to begin the process ourselves by providing new teachers with prompts or readings to stimulate their reflections.

The first time the project was carried out, new teachers wrote eleven entries, two of which were feedback questionnaires. Teachers were asked to write in response to a variety of prompts, five of which were reflective accounts of their teaching or responses to their peers' reflections, while four others focused on their reactions to a reading text. Examples of both types of prompts and feedback questionnaires follow below:

Prompt 1, *Journal Entry One*

Describe your first week as an Alumni teacher. As you write, try to answer the questions below:

1. How did my first week as a teacher at Alumni meet my expectations?
2. What was the biggest challenge I faced in the first week of class? In what way(s) was that a challenge?
3. What changes am I going to make in my lesson plans next week that will allow me to meet the challenge(s) I have identified?

Prompt 2, *Journal Entry Two*
Statement of Relevance

Write about one class, or one student, or the week in general…

Prompt 3, *Journal Entry Three*

Dear All,

As of this week, we'll be changing the format of the journals slightly. You will be working in two groups of three:

Group 1:   Silvia will be responding to Karen, Rogério, and Mara[1]
Group 2:   Debbie will be responding to Renato, Jonathan, and Marcos

By the way, both Debbie and Silvia will be reading all the entries so you should continue sending your entries to both of us.

 For **Friday March 19th**, your task is the following:

1. Please read the attached text "Praise and Criticism."
2. (Respond to the text. You may want to consider the following: Do you agree or disagree with the author's ideas? Do you think this approach could/should be adopted in your classes? How relevant are the ideas presented here to your teaching situation at Alumni? Be sure to copy your response to the others in your group.
3. Respond to at least one of the entries you receive from your colleagues and copy Silvia and Debbie by **March 24th**.

You should be getting a response to your first two journal entries by Monday.

Have a good weekend,

Debbie and Silvia

P.S. Please confirm receipt of this message.

Prompt 5, *Journal Entry Five*

Dear All,

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1 The names of all the participants have been changed.

This is the prompt for your next journal entry (# 5). We'd like you to read at least one of the texts attached[2], and make comments about it/them, as follows:

Before reading the article(s), briefly answer these two questions:

1. What makes a successful teacher in your opinion?
2. What makes you a successful teacher?

After you have briefly answered the questions above, read one or both of the articles attached and find connections between your answers and what the author/s say/s.
Please send your answer by Friday, April 2, to Silvia and Debbie, and copy the other two members in your group.

Midterm Survey, *Feedback Questionnaire*

April 23

Dear Teachers,

As we are now halfway through the semester, we'd like your feedback on the journal writing you've been doing. Please answer the questions below and send your comments to Silvia and Debbie.

1. Which kind of journal entry did you prefer—reflection or reading a text? Why?
2. How interesting/useful were the texts chosen?
3. Do you prefer working in groups or with the advisor individually?
4. Which kind of comments did you find most relevant/useful—specific suggestions and comments at the end of the text, or side notes on the text?
5. What other topics would you like to discuss or read about?

Prompt 11, *Final Feedback Questionnaire*

June 1

Journal Entry—Final Entry

For your final entry we'd like you to reflect on the journal writing process/activity you have been involved in. Please answer the following questions:

1. What did you like and what did you dislike about the journals?
2. Did you find the journals valuable? Why or why not?
3. Have your perceptions of the journals changed since the beginning?
4. What did you think of the format of the journals (on-line) as opposed to the journal booklets you kept during pre-service teacher training? Why?

2 "Good Teaching: The Top Ten Requirements" and "Best Teacher Description," teaching resources not included in this chapter.

5.   What suggestions do you have to help us improve this task for the next group of teachers?

The journal prompts were assigned weekly, and teachers had a week to submit their entries. In the first two weeks, teachers sent their entries only to the two advisors supervising the project; as of the third week, however, teachers worked in teams and sent their entries to their team members as well as the advisors.

As one of our objectives was to provide new teachers with the opportunity to participate in dialogues with more than one reader, when divided into groups, teachers started reading and responding to each other's entries in addition to writing their own. In order to allow for more exchange and interaction of ideas among new teachers, we organized the groups so that the teachers working at different branches, and not seeing each other often, would dialogue through the journals.

Teachers were asked to send their writing to both of the advisors and the other two members of their groups as well. Writers would then receive comments from their teammates and from one of the advisors, who took turns responding to each team's entries. After two months, we decided to stop dialogue journaling with the first group of new teachers, because they had just started the second part of their first semester in-service program (attending the Grammar in a Nutshell course)[3], and we realized that the workload was going to be too heavy if they continued writing.

The second time the project was conducted, seven new teachers participated. As a result of some of the feedback from the first cohort of teachers, we made a few changes to the original plan. The first change referred to how the new cohort was organized and who read and responded to the entries. Some participants in the first cohort did not find sharing their entries in groups useful for two reasons: They met their colleagues during the week and discussed the issues they were to write about later on, and it would sometimes take too long for their colleagues to respond. Another change we made, based on how the first cohort felt about the project, was the number of entries. Although all participants found both types of entries useful, they thought that the amount of work was overwhelming.

The articles the new teachers read were about topics on which they were asking for further input, such as discipline in the teenage classroom, error correction, and good teaching. In addition, they completed midterm and final questionnaires. Another entry given to both the first and second cohorts was designed to promote computer literacy. They were asked to work with a graphic organizer, examples of which were available on a site recommended to them.

Prompt 6

As you come to the end of your first bimester—or the middle of the first semester for some of you—here at Alumni, we'd like you to take few minutes to reflect on it.

As you reflect, try to think of at least 3 significant events or moments of <u>awareness</u> that occurred. Then, using a graphic organizer such as a timeline, flow chart, word web, etc. represent those three. Please include a short explanation about them at the end.

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3 This is an obligatory two-month course for new teachers on grammar and how to teach it.

For some examples of graphic organizers, see http://www.graphic.org/goindex.html.

This prompt led to some of the most creative entries in the first cohort. Some of the participants were quite creative, using clip art, Microsoft PowerPoint®, and different colors and shapes in addition to the ideas suggested on the link. (See Appendix 1: Rogério's entry.) Two or three of them, however, could not deal with the timeline format and came up with very drytexts to discuss their learning. (See Appendix 2: Mara's entry.) The responses from the second cohort were less creative and demonstrated less familiarity with a computer. Two teachers did not attempt to use the graphic organizers on the computer and instead turned in handwritten entries.

Discussion

Drawbacks
Despite the overall success of the project, there were several negative aspects. Perhaps the major one was the time constraints everyone faced. The journal writing and responding meant several extra hours a week for teachers who were already struggling to fit into the institution. As one teacher wrote:

> Once we started working, though, I confess I barely had time to check my e-mails because I was engaged in other activities such as lesson planning, correction of written assignments, quizzes and written tests… (Antônio[4])

Another teacher disliked the journals, stating

> I had so much to worry about that I was overwhelmed and I ended up giving priority to my classes. (Renato)

Due to the many tasks the new teachers faced, several of them had continual problems meeting deadlines. Failure to meet deadlines was a more serious problem in the first cohort, because we required teachers to respond to each other's feedback before receiving trainer feedback. As some of the participants were consistently late with their entries, those who turned them in on time occasionally had to wait almost two weeks for a response from one of the trainers. Therefore, although we felt that it was important for the new teachers to form a sense of community and learn to depend on each other, we decided not to group the teachers in the second cohort. This meant that teachers received responses from one of the trainers within a week. This also cut down on work for the trainers, who would send an e-mail reminder whenever they did not receive entries on the due date.

Computer access was a factor that hindered the journal writing for some. While the majority of the participants felt that the e-mail format was preferable, a few had trouble either finding or using a computer:

> As I have mentioned in a previous entry, the fact that I don't have a computer at home made it really difficult for me to update my entries in a satisfactory manner.

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4 All journal entries were transcribed verbatim.

> Besides I don't know why, my messages kept bouncing back which made things even
> more complicated. (Antônio)

Another teacher wrote:

> I preferred to keep my entries in a booklet. I don't like to work on the computer.
> (Mara)

Another aspect that some teachers in the first cohort commented on was that they found it repetitive
to respond to each other. Although the teachers worked at different branches, they met each other
every Friday at the face-to-face follow-up sessions, and some of them met at different branches during
the week. Some thought this gave them enough time to discuss their teaching, making the journal
entries superfluous.

Finally, some teachers preferred writing reflective entries, while others preferred responding
to articles. Mara said, "I preferred the reflection journal entry as I could rethink about my week and
my teaching," whereas Renato preferred the reading entries: "By reading an article, not only do you
have some new points of view on a given subject, but also you have something more concrete to focus
your comments on." For this reason, the trainers decided to maintain the division between reflective
and reading response entries in the second phase course of the project period. As trainers, however,
we found it important to continue to include readings as they served as further input to some of the
areas teachers pointed out as challenges.

Benefits

On the whole, the feedback was positive despite the problems mentioned above. The project was
successful in its aims, as can be seen by participants' feedback. The teachers benefited from reflecting
on teaching in general and on their own performance.

> I liked reflecting on my week. (Mara)

> They [the journal entries] were valuable in the sense that they made us reflect
> upon issues we sometimes hadn't had the chance to think about. (Verônica)

Recalling their classroom experiences allowed teachers to generalize and learn from them, even when
the experience was not positive. This was especially true for some of the less experienced teachers
such as Rogério:

> This week, my most relevant experience was the class I taught on Monday (March 1).
> All my three classes for this day had been planned long in advance. I felt more secure
> than ever. I was convinced that this would be by far my best week, and that I had
> finally dominated the whole class planning procedure. So, there I was, sitting in the
> teacher's room; I separated my materials, left them on the table, and turned to some
> of my colleagues for a chat. I was totally relaxed. Then it was time to go to our classes.
> I looked at my material and thought that I was carrying too much, so, I decided to
> leave my plastic folder behind. I didn't think I'd need it. All I carry in this folder are
> some notes, extra paper and pens, maybe some of my student's written work, etc.

I walked into my class, greeted my students, and started organizing my things on the table so that I could get things going. That's when I realized something: There was one more thing that I put in my folder that was kind of important…the CD! Yes, the CD with all the listening exercises! When I realized this, a panic suddenly took over. I knew that I couldn't show to my students that something was wrong, so I continued the class just as I had planned to. I explained the warm-up and asked my students to start working. While they were busy, I quickly looked through my plan to see how I could adapt. In the end, I did a lot of improvising, and I managed to get through the class without using the CD, or making it look like something was wrong.

This little slip up was actually a good thing. To hide the fact that something was wrong, I tried to be more playful, and I put on an "act" of confidence. The class dynamics, therefore, seemed to improve. The class flowed well, and I think I managed to find the balance between being entertaining, yet keeping control. The students seemed to respond well. I tested this new "persona" I created, if I may call it that, in my other two classes that day. Both of them seemed to flow much better than in my first week.

So, this experience was very interesting. It showed me a new possibility of presenting myself to the class, and also it showed me that I have been preoccupied too much with following the exact procedures—being too correct. A certain margin of improvisation is always good. Obviously "planned" improv is best; I did not enjoy the panic I felt once I realized that my class could soon become a disaster! But maybe not everything should be planned in detail; maybe I can afford to observe the students' response, and adapt accordingly.

The journals gave teachers a record of their teaching, and they were able to perceive their growth as they became more experienced. One of the teachers made the following comment in his last journal entry:

I actually think it was useful to reflect on our experiences as we were going through them. It gave us a chance to step back and look at what we were doing. In fact, it's interesting to read the first few journal entries. I can see how far I've come. (Jonathan)

Another teacher mentioned his growth in response to a colleague's entry:

Well like me, this difficulty was actually an important moment of awareness. It was good that they came up now in the beginning rather than later. I actually like challenges, and, also, as you wrote in your entry, when you see how your change in strategy worked, the feeling of accomplishment is bliss! I had a similar moment, and I included it in my journal entry....So, I guess I can relate deeply with your significant moments, Karen! Very similar to me! An early moment of panic and worrying that some things were not working, but, following a period of adaptation and improvisation, I think we both learned that we must be prepared for class in two senses: the class must be well planned, but we must be flexible so as to adapt the plan, and deal with problems that may occur. Now that we know that we are able to

do that, I personally feel much more at ease. (Rogério)

In addition to their learning through reflection on their classes or readings, the newly hired teachers gained confidence from the feedback received from more experienced teachers and the trainers.[T]he journals were quite valuable for me. The articles we had to read and the topics we had to think about made me think about my teaching. Plus the responses, in my opinion, were the most valuable things of the process. Having a more experienced teacher responding to your thoughts—telling you which ideas should be further explored or pointing out positive points in my entries—gave me more confidence and tranquility in the classroom. (Renato)

To me the most important thing was to get the feedback, so I could check I was/was not on the right track. I particularly think both trainers have a similar line of thought, so it did not cause any kind of controversy, there was no hindrance in this aspect. (Vanessa)

One of the positive aspects that teachers commented on was the relevance of the prompts. The trainers chose readings based on the problems the teachers mentioned in their journal entries. For example, many teachers were having difficulty maintaining discipline in teen classes, so we had them read a chapter in Ur's (1996) *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory* and relate it to their reality. The same approach was taken with error correction.

> Reading about the challenges faced by their colleagues made teachers feel that they were not alone.

As one of our goals was to help the new teachers get to know one another better, we were pleased that the journal project offered this opportunity. Reading about the challenges faced by their colleagues made teachers feel that they were not alone.

What I liked best about the journals was the possibility of reflecting on our experience. Bearing this in mind, my suggestion is that the journals always be reflective and practical at the same time. I mean, I find it really helpful for us to discuss and analyze what we've been doing and also to collect suggestions from our peers. ... I think the idea of exchanging entries and replying to our colleagues was a very nice one. However, I think we could have a more specific task when replying to them. Something like, you will try and find a solution for a problem your colleague is going through. (Renato)

There are days when I'm content with having taught them the topics, but on other days, I feel a bit frustrated that they could be learning more. (Marcos)

I'm with you on that buddy. Sometimes, I leave the classroom feeling great about the class I've just taught. My students behaved, I got through all the material, and they produced it and showed me that they understood. Awesome. But sometimes, dealing with their rowdiness and/or Portuguese speaking, combined with the fact that we have to teach a heckuva lot in a relatively short period of time (50 minutes), can sometimes be quite frustrating. I understand. (Jonathan, in response to Marcos)

As trainers we reaped several benefits from this project. First, the journals provided us with a window into the teachers' minds—we could see how they felt and what kind of help they needed with their teaching.

> Here's my entry for this week [first week]. I don't know if there's any system for feedback in place, but I'd very much like it. As you'll read, I'm having some difficulties (reported to me by some students) that I'm working on fixing as of today. It would be great to hear some advice or have someone to talk to about this. (Erico)

This allowed us to provide support more quickly through our responses to their entries:

> Thank you for your first entry, Erico. Yes, you will get feedback both from Debbie and me in response to your journal entries, and from your "guardian angel"[5], who should be in contact with you very soon. Your guardian angel <u>will</u> set up weekly meetings with you to discuss any lesson planning and teaching issues you may need support with. In addition, she will schedule class observations with you so she can give you feedback on your classes as well.

Sometimes we were able to identify challenges the teachers faced that may not have been explicit in their entries. For example, when Jonathan mentioned an episode when a student had cried because he had threatened to call her parents to tell them of her poor performance on a quiz, we were able to send his guardian angel to aid him in dealing with the student. This case involved not only resolving the problem of the phone call but also identifying her learning difficulties so that she would perform better on the next quiz.

The situations the teachers described also provided us with indirect feedback on their teaching and our training program. The descriptions of their classes let us know how closely they were following the school's methods. The insights their descriptions provided us with about our pre-service and in-service training programs were also valuable. Based on the problems and the solutions teachers described in their journals, we have made changes in our training, such as providing new teachers with further input on maintaining discipline in teen classes. In this sense, the journals are a form of ongoing needs assessment enabling us to provide support to the new teachers.

Finally, one of the most rewarding aspects of this program was getting to know our new employees better. This became especially important in the second course during the project, when one of the trainers had not had any personal contact with these new employees. Seeing the interest the new teachers demonstrated and the progress they've made as employees at the institution made the whole project worthwhile.

Areas for Further Study

Looking back at our main objectives when we first designed this project, and analyzing the results we achieved the first two times we carried it out, we know that we reached our main goal—new teachers felt supported during their first semester at the institution and were more confident of their ability to perform well in class. Keeping a dialogue journal with two of their trainers and being able to pose

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5 This is a supervisor assigned to give new teachers support in their first term.

questions and examine and question their beliefs about teaching and learning gave the teachers a solid start. As described above, some changes were implemented the second time we carried out the project, and the results achieved were already more positive. However, based on the second group's feedback and on our determination to give new teachers even stronger support when they first start at the institution, we are faced with the continuing challenge of constantly adapting the dialogue journal project with new groups of teachers so as to make it as useful a support tool as we can; our idea is to offer them more freedom of choice.

In the future, we may give the new teachers a list of possible topics to choose from, such as class observation of their classes; a student; their relationships with their colleagues, institution, or guardian angel; or what's been easy and difficult to adjust to. We have also considered offering new teachers the option to choose between writing a reflective entry or reading and responding to a text. By giving the teachers a choice and making the experience more personal, we hope to make the process more beneficial.

Another choice we will give new teachers is whether to start on a new thread or continue a discussion on a thread they have already started. As the teachers receive feedback from trainers either through questions or comments, giving them the opportunity to explore a topic more thoroughly may be a more useful teacher development tool than simply asking them to start thinking about a new topic or idea.

We also plan to set up a system to allow new teachers to use the Blackboard[6] course management system as a tool to record their thoughts and reflections and to communicate with both trainers and peers. The use of Blackboard will be a practical way to make articles available to everyone and to post tasks as well, instead of always having only e-mail to resort to. It will also keep the discussion more organized through the use of threaded discussion boards.

Finally, we have now worked with both trainer and peer feedback. Results thus far with the first two groups showed us that both types of response are fruitful, for the trainer provides the voice of experience, while a peer contributes solidarity so that teachers feel others share the same concerns. Our plan was to respond to all entries as trainers and offer a few opportunities for peer responses in order to collect more data and reach a conclusion as to the best balance of responses. When we allowed for peer response rather than trainer response to one entry about midway through the project with a later group, we realized that an additional benefit was the fact that our previous responses had provided a model for appropriate journal responses for the new teachers.

Conclusion

At an institution such as ours, where teachers work at five branches spread across a city of ten million people, we believe that finding a "non-present" method of giving new teachers support in their first semester at work was necessary. The online dialogue journals we adopted have been motivating for both the teachers and trainers. The teachers have been exposed to new ideas in the readings and have developed through reflection on their teaching. As trainers, we believe this has led to benefits for the institution as well. This project has allowed us to turn the virtual voice of our new teachers into real improvement in our teacher development program.

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6 Blackboard (http://www.blackboard.com) is a fee-based program available over the Internet for online teaching and learning. For journal projects, it provides an environment where the teacher can post the prompt online, and students can post their responses.

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Appendix 1. Rogério's Entry

<u>**My Experience at Alumni so far...**</u>

First day...
...I was worried about teaching Pre-Teens, but confident that I would do well!

After the first week...

Confusion

Panic

Stress

Can I do this?

<u>**Moment of awareness nº 1:**</u>

My theater rehearsals!

Coordinating a group

Micromanaging individuals

<u>**Moment of awareness nº 2:**</u>

Student's progress

Improvement in grades from quiz 1 to 2

"Eu fui bem porque eu comecei a prestar mais atenção na aula" (my student!)

<u>**Moment of awareness nº 3:**</u>

My second observed class

Dominated class dynamics and discipline control

As time passed, I started to realize how to deal with the actual students (the element missing from peer teaching classes!); I discovered how to impose myself in a class and how this posture would affect the class. Therefore, the changes I made in style led to moments 2 and 3, which proved to me that I am progressing as a teacher… now I'm back to how I felt on the first day: confident.

Appendix 2. Mara's Entry

TIME LINE

TIME CONSTRAINT MANAGEMENT	STUDENTS' NEEDS	CLASS

When I started teaching at Alumni, I had problems keeping up with the schedule. I found it hard to teach everything I had planned in 50 minutes. I then started to pay attention to the students' needs. I noticed what they had more trouble with and focused my classes in activities which provided practice, communication, and interaction among the students. I would take a look at the lesson and focus on what was more important to them. Class management was also important as I had to plan ahead of time in order to teach effectively during the class period.

Chapter 9

THE DISCUSSION DOESN'T END HERE—THE ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD AS A REFLECTIVE WRITING FORUM

Mary Jeannot and James Hunter

Pre-reading question: How do you envisage the use of online discussion boards in your own classes if you haven't used them before? If you have, to what extent have they supported students' construction of private and public identities, and power relations among them and with the teacher?

Introduction

Language teacher education programs often bring together radically diverse groups of students with varying needs, skills, passions, life experiences, political views, socioeconomic status, and language backgrounds. In any interaction that takes place in teacher-training courses, there are a number of significant cultural forces just below the surface. These can be hard to understand for students who lack the vocabulary and analytical training to distinguish among the various discourses and practices of the academic and social cultures they encounter (Hyland, 2000; Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keenan, 2000). The lines are not neatly drawn, however, between the L1 and L2 speaker groups of English in teacher preparation classes. It is generally hoped that L2 students will contribute to the classroom culture by bringing linguistic and cultural diversity. They can serve as linguistic and cultural resources, but L2 students have frequently reported that

a. they do not have as much to contribute as their L1 peers, and
b. they believe they lack skills that L1 peers possess, as well as the ability to be critical, a skill that seems to come more readily to their L1 counterparts.

Much of the reason for this evaluation, we assume, comes from the quality and quantity of their in-class participation, a term that in recent years has taken on a variety of meanings. Some L2 students also report being unable to keep up with the discussion or to jump in with their opinions, while others are simply not accustomed to being invited to participate at all.

While there has been research on negotiating one's identity as L2 students in graduate mainstream classrooms, which are lecture-based and in which discussions are open-ended, there has been much less research describing negotiation of identities and competencies in TESOL graduate language teacher training environments. Those of us who design curricula with L1 English teachers and L2 English teachers in mind routinely follow those recommendations that, for example, Morita (2004) makes. We use strategies to assist or scaffold L2 students' comprehension of class discussions, attempt to intervene in turn-taking practices and allow students to take turns in an egalitarian manner, and try to employ different kinds of activities and encourage classroom participation (p. 599).

In a well-designed TESOL graduate class, outcomes are multiple and varied enough for teacher learners to "display" their linguistic competence; courses for them are structured creatively;

they are learning how to be teachers and culture researchers in the classroom setting; group roles and positions are structured and carefully considered, not haphazard or random; L2 English teacher learners, either experienced or novice, are considered to be a linguistic and cultural resource; and L1English teacher learners are expected to genuinely understand and engage with the resources immediately available to them. These are just a few pedagogical practices that mirror our expectations for our ESL and EFL teachers. Ultimately, these practices point to the continued need to question the concept of participation (for example, talk is not the only indicator for participation or success), especially since after complying with these practices, we still wonder about our success as second language teacher educators. In the wake of this ideal, there is still research to be conducted on student negotiation in the classroom, as well as more sophisticated notions of participation.

In the last decade there has been a burgeoning literature calling attention to the strengths that L2 English speaking teachers bring to the *teaching* experience (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 2001), but there has been much less on their resourcefulness (or expertise) as *learners* in language teacher education courses, and even less describing their contributions in courses in which the content deals directly with the theory and practice of language and culture. Students typically come to the course prepared to discuss surface manifestations of culture with a capital C (cynically referred to as the 3 Fs: *Food, Fashion, and Festivals)* but are often unprepared to experiment with and experience the underlying culture *of* and *in* the classroom.

One of our goals is to have our students understand culture that extends beyond those visible forms of culture in the classroom setting. In the meantime, there are ample other concepts for L2 English-speaker teachers to consider regarding their cultural "competence," things that L1 English-speaking teachers take for granted. The challenge for them is knowing what kinds of things can be asked about (for example, whether a person's meaning is literal or ironic) and when it is appropriate to ask such things.

> By refining and expanding our conception of classroom participation and analyzing its link to culture, we hope to gain some insight to better serve all of our students.

Another goal has been to provide significant experiences so that all class members, including the instructors, are striving to improve their cultural and communicative competence. Non-native English speaking teachers have to cope with language issues as well as classroom expectations that may be quite different from what they are used to. Native English speaking English teachers, on the other hand, may lack the linguistic and cultural competence that their counterparts take for granted, such as knowing the difference between a preposition and a pronoun or knowing about the anxiety that comes with trying to survive in a new (classroom) culture. Since they will eventually be ESL teachers, the native English speakers are on their best behavior when working with non-native English speakers in group-work and on projects and, in general, are genuinely willing to learn from them.

If our goal is to better understand the complexities of classroom participation, it is not sufficient simply to conceive of the classroom as a space for open-ended discussion, where talk (or worse still, "speaking up") is the major criterion for successful participation. Without well-planned structured opportunities for students to interact with one another, along with creative ways to assess those interactions, we will forever suffer the frustration of of what we call academic monopoly and dominance: "He who gets the floor, keeps the floor." By refining and expanding our conception of classroom participation and analyzing its link to culture, we hope to gain some insight to better serve all of our students.

Online Reflective Journals

One obvious, although underreported (Goettsch, 2001), medium for reflection and expression is online journals. These journals can be created in a number of ways, through direct e-mailing from one individual or group to another, the use of e-mail distribution lists, and the kind of electronic forum available for newsgroups. The discussion board feature of Blackboard, the online course software available at our university, has been a useful tool for addressing the various challenges outlined above. In addition to enabling participants to extend discussion beyond the class and explore their responses to the topics raised, it has been an especially helpful medium for students who are less inclined to speak in class. Non-native English speakers often find the discussion board appealing for many of the reasons that Canagarajah (2002) and others have outlined. Speech accent is not an issue. Students who are not usually spontaneous are able to reflect on and craft careful responses to theories and concepts that come up in class, as this quotation shows[1]: "When I was repeating to think the content of our class, I was silent, but I was brainstorming what I want to say. To be honest, there are a lot of terminologies I did not know.*"* This struggle with academic reading in graduate programs should not be a surprise for those of us in this field. More broadly, the shared authority that we try to establish in the classroom, a teaching and learning community of participants who are simultaneously teachers, researchers, and students, spills over into the Blackboard arena. This is evidenced by a Japanese student who has connected one of the course readings to her own speaking style, as a "lesson" for the rest of the students: "In Japan, our conversation style is like bowling game that means individual conversation. I often wait to speak if someone talk because it is impolite to interrupt speaking."

There are, of course, corresponding disadvantages to this form of reflection as well, the most pronounced being that it is a public forum. While on the one hand non-native English speakers have less cause to worry about their pronunciation, they are now nervous about their grammar and writing skills*:* "This is I am worry about. I hope my spelling is good because I can not image the picture when I am teaching English and I can not spell right. How do my students think about me?" Furthermore, once a written text is produced and sent, it is subject to intense scrutiny, which compels us to ask: How much room is allowed for error, either factual or linguistic, and to what extent do teacher educators have a responsibility to be language and culture teachers and authorities to participants for whom English is a second language? Finally, there is the danger that students will not be as open in their reflections in such a forum as they would be in a traditional journal format, when the audience is generally restricted to the course instructor.

On the other hand, students in our courses have grown up in a world of instant messaging and chat rooms, and thus have a more laissez-faire attitude about "correctness" in this context. Amber, a native English speaker, spelled this out for the group, defining the rules of engagement fairly early in the semester and incidentally taking a philosophical stance about the development of written fluency that we fully endorse:

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1   All excerpts from Blackboard are cited verbatim (including format). Any abbreviations or contextualizations are shown in square brackets. Further, all names are real.

> Blackboard discussions are about your thoughts, ideas and opinions. Not how well you can spell or punctuate sentences! The red ink will come on our [papers] so use this forum to relax and communicate freely!

Towards the end of the semester Kim, another native English speaker, joined this position.

> I empathize with [non-native English speakers] who want correctness and acceptance. When we consider these two issues, we might think that correctness in language leads to cultural acceptance by others. I don't believe this anymore. Now, a second milestone in intercultural communication, I believe that my cultural acceptance in Columbia, for instance, would come from my personality and self expression, not from using past perfect progressive correctly.

With these concerns in mind, this chapter explores the extent to which the online forum was successful in encouraging students, especially the non-native English speakers in the class, to reflect without letting some representations, primarily those of the native English speakers, dominate (Harklau, 2003). We also hope to show how the reflections in the forum have the capacity to instruct, thereby blurring the boundaries between teacher and student.

To address these issues, we trace themes that emerged from the course topics and were also carried over into the Blackboard reflections. Some of the course topics yielded heartier responses than others. Examples of the topics that produced rich and informative discussions are listed below. The first half of each title in the four vignettes (labeled "lessons I-IV") below reflects the topic of discussion; the second half reflects the "lesson learned"—mostly by the authors.

The data for this chapter come from a course taught two years in succession, a TESOL sociolinguistics course at a small northwest U.S. university. In the first year, five of the participants were Asian (one from Taiwan, another from mainland China, and three from Japan),and five were American. In the second year there were nine students, five Americans and four non-native English speakers (two from Taiwan, one from Korea, and one from Japan). The authors, who team-taught the class, are American and British.

Lesson I: Names and Cultural Identity—Mismatched Expectations

Using Holmes' *Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2001) as our main text, we initiated the Blackboard discussion by introducing the idea of linguistic variation in forms of address, or what we referred to on our Blackboard post as "names." Following Holmes (p. 3), we asked the students to consider names in various contexts. We highlight the following example to demonstrate three ideas. First, we learned early on that we needed to better scaffold our in-class presentations and find ways to help us check for understanding with, especially, the non-native English speakers. Second, the example highlights the sharp contrast between the class discussion and the follow-up blackboard discussion, which, thirdly, reinforces and advances the claim that Asian students are not a monolithic block, a homogenous group whose silence (in the classroom) can only mean one thing (Morita, 2004). Indeed this illustration should reveal textured and differentiated responses that required very little intervention or instigation from the instructors.

As a way to prepare students for their Blackboard discussion, in our first class we presented a short conversation from Scollon and Scollon's (1995) book on intercultural communication in which Mr. Chu, a businessperson from China, and Mr. Richardson, an American businessman, meet

each other on a plane and have a rather awkward conversation, at least from Mr. Chu's perspective (p. 122). We use this conversation to introduce one of the basic frameworks for the course: description, interpretation, and critique. It is not enough, we tell students, to describe something. They need to be able to "cook" their data, and hopefully examine underlying causes for why things happen the way they do. We expected that the Chinese students in the course, for example, would offer one interpretation (taking the side of Mr. Chu—or not), and that the Americans would offer a different perspective.

A number of interesting interpretations emerge from the exchange below. The five Americans in the class weighed in on this discussion with predictable urgency, argument, and zeal—eager, perhaps, to show their understanding of the situation and distance themselves from what they perceive to be Americans' insensitivity to cultural differences. Equally predictably, the Asian students were less polemic and said little during the discussion. Ayako, having been trained in her previous ESL classes (at the same institution) to seek help when she needs it, writes the following:

> I couldn't understand the class that was about name last week. Two businessmen who are Chinese and American talked about their name right? What is the main point of this conversation? Please tell me!!!!!!!!! I need your help.

On one level, embedded in her desperation is Ayako's lack of inhibition in either her English writing or in her ability to admit her lack of knowledge. Since this is the first entry, she has helped set the tone for the rest of the group, and a number of people come to her rescue. On another level the message she sends ("What is the main point of this conversation?"), whether intentional or not, shows her uneasiness with the ambiguity of interpretation, which was one of the points we drew out in the class activity. First to respond is Kim, a seasoned writing teacher and native English speaker, who understands well the frustration ESL writers have. Like most of our students, she takes the program mandate seriously: You are learning to be ESL teachers, so don't overlook non-native English speakers *in your courses*. Thus Kim interprets her classroom position as that of translator and even helper for the course instructors. In fact, Kim was responsible for 20% of all Blackboard postings during the course—almost as much as the authors combined. Her instincts as caregiver and nurturing teacher on Blackboard discussions proved to be beneficial especially for the NNS English teachers.

She opens her entry with a consoling note displaying her empathy (if a bit stilted) for Ayako. Her same educational instincts allow her to offer personal stories and blend those with her academic voice, and that this too can be authoritative.

> Also, I was a little lost because in the evening my brain feels saturated (filled up) with "input," new ideas from helping others with their thinking and from working with students and teachers all day.

Following Kim's entry is James's entry, an even more direct, a concrete minilesson to help the students understand.

> Imagine this situation: Tanoue Yoshifumi speaks very good English, and got his MBA in the US. While a student, he called himself "John" because his friends always mangled his name:

> YOshiFUmi
> YoSHIfumi
> YoshifuMI
> You're shy for me
> etc
> Now, Mr. Tanoue is a businessman. He meets Peter Smith on a plane and gives him his card, saying "Call me John". Mr. Smith reads his card and says: "Great to meet you YoSHIfumi!"
> Questions: How does Mr. Tanoue feel at this point?
> Why did Mr. Smith ignore his invitation to call him John?"

The first response from Ayako shows that she is struggling with what appeared to us to be a straightforward recast of the Scollon and Scollon text.

> I think Yoshifumi felt uncomfortable when Mr. Smith called him john.
> I don't know how American (not only American) chose the name that come from different country. Yoshifumi has different name because he thinks is a good way to suit different culture. Japanese name is difficult pronunciation for American, so he worried about it. Mr. Smith thinks "John" is easier pronunciation than "Yoshifumi." That's why he called Yoshifumi John?

This was Ayako's first course in the program, and she seems to be thinking out loud here as she summarizes what she feels the "main idea" to be, a leftover metacognitive strategy perhaps from her experience in our ESL program. She does, in fact, seem to comprehend at least James' "main idea" in her third sentence, but this contradicts both her first and last claims. One reason for this confusion might be due to the fact that it is less common for Japanese students to change their names than it is for Chinese or Taiwanese students to change their names (not necessarily to accommodate Americans though). Less striking than Ayako's confusion is this identity shift, completely uncharacteristic of her positioning within the classroom the previous week. While explicating a position of confused student, she has simultaneously implicated a position of powerful student who is first to post, not only with a question, but a summary of what she feels the answer to be, which would show a sign of risk taking. By contrast, she could have repeated her plea, "help!!!!," but instead chose to provide a summary. This positioning is certainly at odds with the facile idea that Japanese students are "shy," what we feel to be a rather empty descriptor leftover from some of the literature on learning styles (see, for example, Rao, 2002), although sometimes our Japanese students will use this idea as a way to excuse their lack of participation.

Following Ayako's bid for help, her Japanese colleagues come to her rescue with their own interpretations, again, a very different dynamic from what had happened during the class discussion, in which none of the Japanese students had participated. Without prompting from us, Junko and then Yuko add several more layers to the discussion. First, Junko draws upon her own experience as a non-native English speaker to connect language to Yoshifumi-John's linguistic identity. This is her opening:

> I think Yoshifumi is accustomed to be called "Jhon" only when he speaks English. When he has communication with Americans, he can be near American because I think when people speak different languages, sometimes their behaviors or personalities are different when they

speak their L1. In my case, it is different when I speak English and Japanese. For me, English is better because I can say more my ideas. But Peter didn't call "Jhon" because Peter thought that if he called real name "Yoshifumi" he could be more familiar with Yoshifumi. And also, Peter expected Yoshifumi feels better. I think although Peter ignored Yoshifumi's invitation call "Jhon," Yoshifumi didn't feel bad because Japanese or foreigner's names are difficult to pronounce. Yoshifumi already knew it; therefore he changed his name in America.

Junko has offered her own interpretation, which varies slightly from the one James provided. She links it to Yoshifumi's English speaking identity, an idea which is compatible with thoughts she has around her English-speaking identity, as her third and fourth sentences indicate. She also adds a layer of empathy for the English speaker, in this case, Peter, who botches Yoshifumi's name because she knows, from significant personal experience, that "foreign" names will often be mispronounced. Building on previous classroom discussion, one in which she did not participate orally, she appreciates the intimacy that the American Peter would like. In our classroom discussion and one of Mary's entries about American friendliness, the American participants agreed that Mr. Richardson with his version of cultural sensitivity "didn't get it," mostly because he had not done the requisite work to learn about Chinese names and their significance. Junko, however, is offering an alternative explanation for Mr. Richardson's *qua* Peter's behavior. In other words, the stereotypical American expressions of intimacy with strangers are integral to American culture—we can't help it. Of course, another interpretation, one perhaps less favorable to Americans, might suggest that Yoshifumi, being Japanese, recognizes this American insensitivity, but chooses not to comment.

The irony is not lost on us regarding her rendition of the name "John," either: The spelling and pronunciation of Yoshifumi come quite easily to her of course but John, with its silent consonant, is difficult. (Had she verbalized this idea in class, we would not have seen this idiosyncratic rendition, of course.)

Although not stated explicitly, Yuko disagrees with Junko and sticks closer to the discussion we had in the class.

I think Mr. Tanoue was offended by being called Yoshifumi even though he asked Mr. Smith to call him John. I don't think it is because of his bad pronunciation. As Junko said, "sometimes their behavivores or personalities are different from when they speak L1," I think John is not equal to Yoshifumi when he speaks English. In Japan, business people never call each other in their first names. So, I think it was Yoshifumi's way to approach to another culture that he asked Peter to call him John. Also, it seems like Mr. Smith didn't listen to Yoshifumi. He could take that as he was ignored.

Yuko offers yet another interpretation that extends the conversation even further. First, her mixing of titles merits attention. Whether it is intentional or not, Mr. Tanoue is referred to in three different ways in the first sentence. She feels that Mr. Tanoue (Yoshifumi) was offended, which had nothing to do with Mr. Smith's "bad pronunciation." On the one hand, she appears to understand Mr. Smith and his desire to "express his way of friendliness through his own culture"; on the other hand, he "didn't listen to Yoshifumi. He could take that as he was ignored." Her cultural lesson, like Junko's, is also well noted: "In Japan, business people never call each other in their first names." From Yuko's perspective *both* men are making an attempt, through their cultural lenses, to be helpful.

Lessons Learned

We, the instructors, regularly met to discuss the postings on Blackboard, or would call each other's attention to particular postings or discussions of interest. Our reflections over the *Names* posting brought to light our need to scaffold class activities more carefully to make sure that the non-native English speakers were following, or at least to allow them to check their comprehension in ways that wouldn't embarrass them. This is a recurring concern for teacher educators in our position, as we seek to acclimatize students who are not native English speakers to academic discourse and help them to keep up with fast-moving class discussions, while not painting their language skills in a bad light. Ultimately, however, a course that deals with pragmatics is by definition ambiguous, and misunderstanding is to be expected. In any case, we were both grateful for the safety net that the online reflections provided as, clearly, was Ayako.

The exchange also gave us an insight into the dynamic between the three Japanese speakers in the exchange, none of whom, it should be stressed, offered any opinion in the class discussion. Here Ayako, Junko, and Yuko are perfectly willing to offer (dissenting) opinions, perhaps because this is their area of expertise, thereby dismantling common stereotypes about Japanese students, who are thought to be "harmonious" and "group oriented" (see Kubota, 1999). The issue of why this can happen on Blackboard but not in class is addressed in Lesson IV.

Lesson II: Bafa Bafa—An Intercultural *Mis*communication Simulation: Whose Experience? Whose Content?

One of the exercises in our course is the cross-cultural simulation Bafa Bafa, in which participants learn one of two hypothetical cultures and subsequently interact with each other and then reflect on their interactions and assumptions. We use the simulation to introduce students early on to the idea that there is an emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspective to cultures, discourse communities, and even classrooms. Much of this culture is invisible to the insider, and visible—but irrational—to strangers. After taking part, students used Blackboard to reflect on the experience, saying how they felt about it and what it meant for them as teachers. Bin, our mainland Chinese student, accidentally posted her reflection paper on the site, which evoked a number of responses. Most salient for our purposes here were her candid disclosures regarding her experience "visiting" the Alpha culture simulated in Bafa Bafa:

> My embarrassment and frustration came when I was chosen to go to their place to try to get involved in their culture…. After standing there for a long time, watching what they were doing, I decided to do something, to be nice, open-minded and tolerant. I asked them questions, trying to understand what was going on there and if I could participate. I even tried to touch them in the way they did to each other showing my goodwill. They didn't seem to be happy and no on seemed to have the patience to explain. They went on with their own business, enjoying their own life, totally ignoring me. I felt lonely and hopeless.

Bin has successfully highlighted a key idea from a previous reading. Are tolerance and goodwill enough for cross-cultural understanding (O'Sullivan, 1994)? And, by extension, despite one's intrinsic motivation to learn a language and a culture, are there not other external forces that can prevent one from being accepted in a community? Bin has described her exclusion in spite of her best efforts, and provides us with supporting examples. Bin, a non-native English speaker, who is

generally quiet in class discussions, provides the scaffolding for future reading on this topic. Later in the semester, we introduce students to the work of Norton (1995, 2000) to deconstruct some of their assumptions regarding language learner motivation and acculturation. A learner, in this case Bin, may be extremely motivated to learn the target language and culture, but due to external circumstances beyond her control, may not be allowed to invest in the target language, does not have the tools with which to invest, or may or may not have access to the "wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (Norton, 1995, p. 444). As Pavlenko (2002) points out, "no amount of motivation can counteract racism and discrimination, just as no amount of positive attitude can substitute for access to linguistic resources" (p. 282).

This topic in particular, which incidentally required no translation, intervention, or scaffolding from the instructors, generated a range of interesting responses. Two of the most intriguing aspects of the fifty responses following Bin's post were the genuine conversations and learning that were occurring. Like our classroom discussion, this particular topic elicited very few comments from the non-native English speakers other than Bin, who in fact takes the discussion to a level of critique that we were not anticipating, since there had been few like this from any student in previous years.

Another thread involves Amber and Bin, with Amber recounting one of her earliest experiences of feeling like an outsider in her own country. She writes:

> I was returning from an overseas trip on a packed airplane which was occupied primarily by Chinese people, as well as few Americans. When I landed in Los Angeles, everyone started filing out of the plane and I noticed several of the Chinese people were pushing their way to the front. WELL, the Americans were NOT happy with this (I could tell by their facial expressions and grunts of annoyance), but they were outnumbered. At first, I felt a little annoyed too, but I realized they weren't trying to be rude, it was just their way. So you can imagine when we got to the baggage claim, it was a mess! The Chinese passengers were scrambling to get their suitcases and elbowing, pushing and shoving each other in the process. I stood back and watched … I heard one woman say, "I have never experienced such rudeness in my life." Another guy was visibly pissed off and he let some of the Chinese people know it—but it didn't seem to phase them much. The Chinese passengers weren't trying to be rude; they were just doing what they had been socially conditioned to do AND the Americans were faulting them for exactly that. Both groups had completely different styles of airplane etiquette and neither of them were "wrong" just different. Yet, it was easy to see why the Americans were upset and why the Chinese people thought, "What's the big deal?...Happens all the time." That's what's frustrating—examples like these are just cultural misunderstandings, and if people investigated what's really going on, they wouldn't get so bent out of shape. WHAT'S A PERSON TO DO?

Amber's personal experience is precisely the kind of catalyst one would hope for in order to continue a discussion on intercultural communication. She has taken a rather ordinary event (an airport scene) and has tried to analyze it from the both an outsider's and an insider's perspective. What makes this particularly interesting is the hybrid and paradoxical nature of the exchange, an elaboration of an in-class discussion of emic and etic perspectives. One might ask in a situation like this: Who exactly are the insiders? The Chinese passengers are on 'U.S. turf, acting in Chinese ways,' with the Americans looking on. Amber also characterizes the situation well, and provides a good

model for the rest of the students, when she suggests that neither group was wrong. The discussion doesn't end here, however. Only in our dreams could we have hoped for the following response from Bin.

> Good description Ambre! It makes me homesick! It certainly brings to mind some familiar scenes in some places in my hometown. But is it the culture in China that people behave that way in public spaces? I doubt it. I would rather believe it is a way of survival under unfavorable conditions. If you go to my hometown Shenyang, you will see crowds of people at bus stops along the streets during rush hour. Do they stand in line? Are you kidding? The line would be long enough to cross the street to other blocks!!! Do they elbow and push? Yes! Sometimes they have to push the people in front hard into the bus in order to make enough room to get on. You have to get used to it, otherwise you will never get on the bus.

Bin has expanded Amber's reflection on culture from her own personal experiences better than either of us could have done, since for the most part, although we have extensive international experience, we come from countries that adhere to well-established norms for queuing. With guileless restraint, Bin neither blames nor excuses her fellow compatriots. Instead, she matter-of-factly attributes the behavior in public spaces to "survival under unfavorable conditions." Bin has, in effect, eliminated our need to ultimately ask of the perspective-taking Amber (and others who are reading), "That's great, but why do people do what they do?" That is to say, cultural behaviors come from somewhere—they do not emerge from nothing—and are inevitably linked to real world conditions. Further, given this situation is there such a thing as rude behavior? Better, what is "rude" behavior? Had we asked either of these questions in, say, an open-ended discussion, Bin would quite likely not have volunteered this information and if pressed for a response to the all too familiar query: *Bin, can you tell us about China?*, she would suddenly become elevated as the single representative for all of mainland China (and for some, all of Asia). As it turned out, her apt illustration was not utilized to the extent that it could have been, a point we address below. Next, she concludes her reflections by turning the question of rudeness on its head and, whether intentional or not, has managed to re-create our classroom simulation. When seen through a "foreigner's" eyes (for example, an American with little experience of international travel) LAX can seem fairly uncivilized, at which point one must respond to Bin's questions, which we have highlighted in bold below.

> The airport of Los Angeles is a very crowded place. I had a hard time there waiting there, waiting in line to get out of the airport, trying to find a cart for my bags and trying to find my bags at the right place, wondering all the time where I could re-check my luggage for shipment, where I could find my next plane to Spokane and whether I had enough time to do all this. For people who don't have a lot of international traveling, this is a scary moment. **When you see them pushing and elbowing around, do you feel the need to civilize them or are you able to think in their position?** They are people who are trying to survive in a very foreign country. I would be more grateful to those who answered my questions patiently, showing me the way than to those who tried to civilize me when they found I had done something improper.

Lessons Learned

Part of what makes the above reflections interesting is the fact that we still have access to them. Unstructured, open-ended discussions are often fleeting and can fall flat, leaving the instructor and the students with a sense of incompleteness and no textual reminder of the content. We have learned from our collective years of experience teaching non-native English speakers that most students need time and space to reflect on the material introduced during classroom discussions, and this, as we have pointed out, is one of the attractive features of Blackboard. Since, as the title of this chapter indicates, the discussion doesn't end here, it doesn't need to end with Blackboard either. The student-generated texts are like case studies that can be recycled and used for current and future audiences. Bin's postings for example, while read at least once by everyone, stopped there. Instead of using her rich text as a sort of Freirean problem-posing opportunity, we returned to the course textbooks, privileging the "experts" over what would appear to be the "novices," an idea that contradicts one of major pedagogical tenets: be resources to each other. In other words, the exchange between Amber and Bin should have been treated as course content. As it was, students read their exchange, but there was little or no response: The conversation indeed fell flat. One of the dilemmas, however, of using student texts that are semi private conversations between course members is that they now become public documents. For this reason, we would advise teachers to be intentional about how they use the material. Indeed, as the next section shows, not all (private) discussions should be aired for public viewing.

Lesson III: What's in a Word? A Voice for Moderation?

One of the frustrations of the course for both of us has been the tension between, on the one hand, our espousal of critical pedagogy and the desire to use classroom space as a forum for ideology critique, and on the other, the need to make the course material relevant to a mixed student group. As the courses coincided with the Iraq War, it seemed natural to use language taken from the headlines as material for our discussions of language and power. Early in the semester we set up a forum *What's in a word?*, which cited an editorial critique of the Bush Administration's position in Iraq, followed by a letter in the local paper reacting to the critique. Our intention was to focus on the use of the word *civilize* to describe the US goal in Iraq (as opposed to, say, *democratize*). The editorial, which was very long and filled with idioms and political language, got a response only from two of the three L1 English-speaking males in the course, who quickly ended up "shouting" at each other, their language bristling with self-confidence and peppered with essayist prose:

> I would hope that we try and justify our political actions with some semblance of reasoned logic. If we can't, what's the point? You may see this as a nuance of western politics, but I see it as a requirement for any political action. Sorry, Brandon, relativism rings has always rung hollow in my ears.
> But enough of this heavy-handed bullsh**t. Back to linguistics … …

The last line strikes us as particularly ironic and counter to the message that we have tried to convey in the classroom, that language, and therefore linguistics, is all around us; that it is not neutral, value-free, or abstract. Everything is, therefore, up for grabs. We were both surprised by his separation of very real language from "linguistics."

Less surprising, perhaps, was the lack of participation from the rest of the class, including us. In class, it would have been possible to moderate the discussion and bring in other voices, but in the public online format it became difficult to break into this "fight
 between the two participants. In addition, we had told students from the outset that Blackboard was *their* forum for discussion and reflection, and that we would read their postings and participate, but that we were not in charge. The motivation behind this, as we have said, was to allow voices other than ours to predominate and to allow participants to explore their thoughts "aloud" so that they would benefit from the review of their peers and not just from the "authority" of their course instructors. In this case, while everyone read the postings,[2] nobody else joined in. Murphy and Coleman (2004) warn that in the context of the online forum "the shift in control away from the instructor is not necessarily a beneficial one but simply a different and possibly more complex and frustrating form of control and domination of communication and interaction" (p. 9). Our action of posting a provocative idea and then withdrawing to the sidelines strikes us as a keen example of this sort of dangerous abdication of authority.

Beyond these considerations, however, was the feeling that the *topic* itself was not engaging the rest of the class. Evidence for this came from our class discussions, in which such topics would frequently engage the native English speakers and leave the non-native English speakers smiling politely or staring into space. It seemed unfair to replicate this dynamic on Blackboard, and so we were more circumspect about such postings after this. For one thing, the editorial on Blackboard had appeared out of the blue as far as the students were concerned. Yes, it was connected to the ideas (euphemism, language, and power) discussed in class, but we failed to highlight this relevance before seeking comment. On the other hand, later class discussions about political correctness, pejorative labels, and national language policies (all of which were also quite heated) were immediately relevant to the non-native English speakers, all of whom had something to say on the topics. The following posting from Sandy (from Taiwan) on language policy exemplifies this:

> Actually, I don't mind to make English the official language in the United States. Because after all, I am just an international student here. However, in my opinion, I think that American is a very lucky country in someway. There aren't a lot of countries that has so many different countries and cultures coming to one country. In America, we can see a lot of immigrations, and that help the Americans to know different countries and cultures. If the Americans see this as a positive point and learn the different cultures, it will be a very great experience for them.
> However, maybe "English only" is not as simple as I seen it.

Lessons Learned

From our own experience and from the literature, we know that the quality of participation changes when instructors take part. In both courses, our postings accounted for about one-fifth of the total postings. Colleagues who use Blackboard but do not post themselves report that not only the quantity but also the quality of postings begins to diminish, with postings becoming increasingly off topic and less well thought out. We believe that if the online forum is to be used to good effect as a reflective writing forum, it needs to be done with careful, but not overbearing, instructor

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2 Or at least accessed them: The Blackboard software tells us in detail who has accessed each posting.

participation and moderation, a point that mirrors our thoughts regarding in-classroom instruction as well.

The language of the initial and subsequent postings about Iraq was hardly inviting to the non-native English speakers in the class, and without the necessary scaffolding to show the relevance of the topic, there was little reason for them to take part. Later attempts, in which we connected the dots a little more carefully, were much more fruitful in generating real inquiry and reflection.

Lesson IV: Sociolinguistic Issues in the Classroom—The Discussion Doesn't End Here

Towards the end of the 2004 course, we began to include on Blackboard a few topics taken from the TESL-L e-mail discussion list. These were real questions about teaching practice from real teachers and were an experiment intended to generate reflection about the kinds of issues that teachers face in their classrooms. They also provided the students an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to authentic situations. The first such topic concerned participation, and came from a Korean teacher:

> When teaching the students English conversation or any other sujects, what should I do if the students do not speak and do not show any reaction ? When I ask them even simple questions, they look at me just like a monster. I have no idea if the students are just sitting back and glancing at me without showing any reactions [JJA from South Korea]

First to respond was Carissa, who took a classic educational psychology approach and provided solid classroom-management advice:

> There is a chance that the students are not understanding. In this case, I may take a visual poll by asking all students to raise their hand if they understood the question. If this is the case, the teacher may have to start with even more simple questions.
>
> But, more likely the students are not used to actually speaking English. There are a few things that could be done. The teacher could write a simple question on the board, say it verbally, then ask students to turn to a partner and talk to each other about the question. Talking to a partner is a lot less threatning than talking in front of the class. The teacher can then walk around and get an idea of how students are doing…

Carissa honed in on the cognitive and affective domains, demonstrating her understanding of language acquisition processes, and her answer clearly satisfied everyone else. Almost two weeks went by before the next posting on this topic, which came from Myeong-Seon. By this point we had assumed that the topic was dead, and indeed that our experiment (of introducing these real-life vignettes) had failed. Myeong-Seon's post, however, introduces the important distinction between child and adult English language learner and offers a tantalizing glimpse of unexamined "Korean-ness":

> I don't think that the students didn't understand at all. I'm sure because I am Korean and I'm a that kind of person.[...] If they are adults, the teacher needs to have time to motivate them. I think that it's really hard to make them react. However, if the teacher persuade them how much reaction and participation are important, I believe that their attitude will be changed.

The discussion is joined by JF, whose post indicates that he, like Carissa, is approaching the problem from a classroom management perspective. He has not really understood Myeong-Seon's point that Korean students might not see participation and reaction as important:

> I agree with Carissa that the teacher should clarify that he/she is being understood, but in light of Myeong-Seon's insight I would probably wait a few classes before I asked any one person to speak in complete sentences; rather, ask simple one word answers first to get them used to me before asking for their thoughts.

This prompts Myeong-Seon to be more explicit. She outlines the educational background that leads Korean students to have an expectation of "non-participation" (in the western sense) that is totally at odds with the expectations of many language teachers—and of Myeong-Seon herself, as her questions at the end of the posting indicate:

> It is very common that students don't say anything in a class. Many students would expect that they don't need to talk in a class as they have done in their typical classes.
>
> Therefore, many Korean teachers talk without asking anything. They just prepare what they want to teach and say it. Can we change their attitudes? Can we find good ways to communicate with them?

It should be pointed out that Myeong-Seon is one of the quietest students in the class; based on traditional assessments of participation, she would probably not do very well in this course. She is obviously aware of the tension between the expectations of the course and her own behavior as a Korean student, but she has hitherto taken it as a given that something in her needs to be "changed," rather than trying to explore the underlying cultural dynamics. As the course instructors, we spot a "teachable moment" and immediately jump in to answer her questions, summarize the discussion so far, and lead it in the direction we think it should go:

> You have all made excellent points:
> - There needs to be a level of trust between teacher and students
> - There needs to be an atmosphere in which students feel they can say something and not feel foolish.
> - The teacher needs to "scaffold", in other words, to build up to what s/he expects, not just walk in and expect everyone to respond.
> - The teacher needs to pay attention to Korean educational culture, in which students ARE EXPECTED TO sit quietly and passively.
> - The teacher needs to motivate students, not just to talk, but to VIOLATE THEIR OWN NORMS OF BEHAVIOR.
>
> … in THIS culture, students are expected to respond.

The irony of this is that we are talking about some idealized EFL or ESL class, while failing to take our own excellent advice with respect to this graduate class: Myeong-Seon is, in fact, participating very actively in the discussion, and responding appropriately. The fact that she does

not do so in the class discussion may have little to do with "Korean educational culture," about which we know little, and more to do with interpersonal relationships and collectivism, topics in which Myeong-Seon became very interested and decided to research for her final project. The following post shows the onset of this interest, as she compares the behavior of Korean students in the United States and in Korea:

> I think that I can teach Korean students here as I did in ESL class.
> Every circumstances is great to learn..
> They are fully motivated of learning English.
> They don't need to consider other Korean students as much as they did in Korea..
> They don't feel ashamed like in Korea.
> Actually, American teachers are totally different with Korean teachers.
>
> Everything makes them study positively here..
>
> Thesedays, I am wondering about teaching English in Korea...
>
> I also realized that our culture is a shameful culture(?) when we talked about last class..
> It was so much interesting to me....
> I don't have any good answer..but I will find..
> It makes me understand a lot about our culture..

Here Myeong-Seon synthesizes the discussion about participation with the ideas (about shame and guilt cultures) brought up in a class session, during which we remember her saying nothing at all. Her comment that Korean students "don't feel ashamed like in Korea" is interesting since something (beyond her rather low estimation of her own language skills) is preventing her from "saying anything in a class." But having identified what it might be (Korean teachers, Korean classroom behavior, not having to consider other Korean students), she is now faced with a dilemma: Korean students "here" behave differently (and more positively, in her view) from Korean students in Korea. She does not say this, but perhaps an implied question is: How can I apply the training I receive here to a possible future teaching career there?

Finally, her comment that "American teachers are totally different" prompts Lynn, a Taiwanese student, to begin a discussion of error-correction techniques and encouragement, a topic which is of considerable interest to all of the NNS English teachers, who are, in general, skeptical of the student-centered, communicative approach as applied to the EFL situation:

> However, sometimes it still hard for me if students tell the answer wrong again and again... I'll get angry in my heart thinking that how many times we had talked about it...In conclusion, it's a big changing for me to dig deeper in this area, learning the way of teaching and improve myself!

Unfortunately, this topic came up just before the end of the semester, so the discussion did not have a chance to develop fully. However, one month after the course, several students were still posting on this topic, so the discussion obviously didn't end there.

Lessons Learned

First, what Myeong-Seon writes about students not having "to consider other students" goes to the heart of the question of participation, or lack of participation, of non-native English speakers. The imperative not to show off by speaking out in class, thereby showing up one's classmates, is one which takes time and uncomfortable effort to overcome. In contrast, the online forum, removed in space and time from the face-to-face encounter of the classroom, presents an opportunity not just for reflection but for self-expression, engagement, and even disagreement. After this experience, we would never consider teaching a seminar class without it.

Second, as the purpose of the forum is for students to reflect—not for the instructor to feed students information—we should take more time to read and reflect ourselves on what students have written, rather than simply trying to answer their questions. While we wholeheartedly want our teaching to lead to student autonomy, our instinct is to jump in and teach whenever the opportunity presents itself, particularly when a question comes from a a non-native English speaker. Knowing when to do so, and when to hold back and let the discussion and reflection take its course, is largely a matter of knowing the group and the individuals within it, as Tina pointed out:

> Knowing my or anyone elses, metacognitive learning strategies is helpful in recognizing and adopting the strategies that will be most beneficial. I hope that I am able to do this with my students so that I can create a learning environment that benefits everyone.

In any case we can't assume the topic is dead, even if several weeks have gone by without new postings. In fact, many of these topics are ones which students may want to revisit long after the course has finished, so there is probably a case to be made for archiving the discussions and making them permanently available to students.

Conclusions

As a result of participating in and revisiting these reflections, we have come to a more refined understanding of what participation entails, in terms of making information accessible and selecting topics that are of immediate import to the participants, despite our desire to consider alternatives and offer perspectives. We are pleased with the level of participation of the non-native English speakers, who accounted for about 40% of the total postings, and with the opportunity that participation gave them to be experts with their native English speaking peers. We observe a willingness (in some cases a need) for some students to share their understanding of concepts, not simply to verify that they had "got it right" (as we might have predicted) but also to demonstrate their invention, or ownership, of theories they may initially have resisted. In fact, in some ways Blackboard provided a useful alternative for assessing learning outcomes, since we could really see where students were appropriating the ideas presented in the course.

Our study also revealed that on Blackboard students are negotiating and co-constructing meaning together as *both* experts and novices, within topics as well as across them, gaining their expertise not just by reading about cultural and linguistic differences, but by experiencing them. The online forum turns out to be an excellent tool for this, a hybrid participation and reflection forum: Unlike class discussions, the discussion is not in real time and these are not face-to-face conversations, so students can think about their responses in advance. On the other hand, unlike paper journals, they are not polished drafts, and so we often get significant glimpses into what

students are actually learning. Online, the students fall somewhere between speaking in an inner, or private, voice and a public one, and so the rules mediating this type of discussion are not clear cut and may differ significantly from rules mediating classroom discussions and activities (Lantolf, 2000). A final excerpt from Tina exemplifies these points well:

> I reviewed our groups' ongoing Blackboard discussion for the past 5 weeks. It's really interesting. It reveals a lot about how the project unfolded and what role each person played. I also think that I may have learned something about my own autonomy and motivation in reviewing what I've been saying on Blackboard. I think that I'm motivated but I don't know what my level of autonomy is.

Finally, as an unintended consequence of our Blackboard discussions, we as team-teachers have had ongoing opportunities not only to examine our teaching and collaboration, but also to clarify our own positions on some of these critical issues in English teaching, especially as concerns the extent to which our choices of pedagogical approach are applicable to the actual or future teaching situations of our students.

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Chapter 10

THE ROLE OF FREEWRITING IN TEACHERS' GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: INSIGHTS FROM AUSTRIA

Rebecca Mlynarczyk, Renate Potzmann, and Kunigunde Haigner

Pre-reading question: What does the term "freewriting" mean to you? Describe your own experiences with freewriting in your personal and/or professional life.

The phrase "lifelong learning" is often heard in discussions of professional development programs for teachers. And, indeed, teachers are more likely than most to be committed to ongoing intellectual growth and development. Yet, too often, professional development programs for teachers, whether pre-service or in-service, are seen by the teachers involved as inadequate—detached from actual classrooms and perhaps just designed to fulfill certification requirements. Lasting teacher change rarely results from such programs.

Sometimes, however, a teacher's participation in a graduate program or a series of workshops does result in changes that are incorporated into the teacher's evolving philosophy of learning and enacted in daily classroom practice. In rare cases, teachers are so committed to the new ideas that they work systematically to share them with other teachers. In this chapter, we will explain how this happened for two teachers of English in Vienna, Austria, who participated in a U.S.-based master's degree program. Throughout the two-year M.A. program, participating teachers were encouraged to write freely and to use writing as a way of reflecting on their own teaching. Now, years after having completed their master's degrees, Renate Potzmann and Kunigunde Haigner are working to promote the use of reflective writing in meaningful ways among other teachers in Austria.

First we will describe this collaborative enterprise, how it began, how it grew, where it is now, and where it may be going in the future. Specifically, we examine the teachers' initial engagement with freewriting and the role of reflection in this engagement. Next we look at the dissemination efforts that have grown out of the teachers' enthusiasm for this type of writing. Finally, we take a closer look at the successes, challenges, and limitations of these various activities to gain insight into some of the principles underlying meaningful and lasting professional development for teachers.

In order to help readers understand our differing roles, we will briefly introduce ourselves. The three of us met in January 2003 as a result of our involvement in an M.A. Program in English Language and Literacy sponsored by the City College of New York, a senior college in the City University of New York (CUNY). Rebecca Mlynarczyk, Professor of English at Kingsborough Community College and the CUNY Graduate Center, teaches the final course block. As part of this block, the teachers prepare a reflective teaching philosophy portfolio, in which they look back on all the reading and writing they have done in the program, describing how their thinking may have changed or deepened, and explaining the basic principles on which their teaching is based. Rebecca has a longstanding interest in the processes and products of reflective journal writing (1998; 2001; 2006) and is also involved in programs to encourage teachers' professional development (see Mlynarczyk, 2004; Mlynarczyk et al., 2002; Scurletis & Mlynarczyk, 2004).

Renate Potzmann and Kunigunde Haigner were both students in the program and received their M.A. degrees in 2004. Renate is an experienced teacher of English, history, and computer sciences at a secondary school in Vienna. For fifteen years she was a teacher trainer at the Pedagogic

Institute of Vienna (*Pädagogisches Institut der Stadt Wien*). In her work at the Institute, Renate organized seminars on topics that promoted the professional development of teachers. The Institute provided funding through the state school system and offered a wide choice of seminars and teacher training courses from which teachers selected those that seemed most interesting and potentially useful in their particular teaching situations. Because of a major restructuring of teacher education in Austria in 2007,[1] Renate currently coordinates and develops teacher training courses for lower secondary teachers at the *Pädagogische Hochschule Wien.*

Kunigunde Haigner teaches English and music in a *Kooperative Mittelschule*, a secondary school with special emphasis on music and computer science. In the first years of her teaching, the emphasis was on teaching music. Then she had a chance to work in a team of four teachers focused on the integration of handicapped students into mainstream classes. Because of her interest in methodology, she became the English coordinator at her school. From there, it was a natural next step to become involved in disseminating many of the new approaches to reading and writing she had experienced in the M.A. program.

In the sections that follow, we will explain and analyze the ongoing processes of teacher growth and development—in this case, how two teachers' interest in reflective freewriting led them to develop ways to promote this practice among other teachers in Austria. We will address the question of why freewriting is especially appealing to many Austrian teachers and their students, and we will explain the specific ways in which Renate and Kunigunde have worked to disseminate this practice. Much of this discussion is based on a conversation among the three authors that took place in Vienna in June 2005. Later in the chapter we will use excerpts from this conversation (which was audiotaped and transcribed) to illustrate how our thinking about reflective writing and the professional development of teachers has developed and evolved.

Austrian Teachers' Reactions to Freewriting

During the two years of the City College M.A. program, teachers are introduced to a variety of pedagogical practices that are not widely known or used in Austria.[2] These practices include reader response to literature, writing essays in multiple drafts, and new approaches to assessment using teacher-developed rubrics and portfolios. Among these practices, one that is introduced very early and that invariably has a major impact is freewriting. Before the course begins, the teachers are asked to read *Writing Without Teachers* (1973), in which Elbow explains what he means by freewriting:

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1 In 2007, the responsibility for providing initial and continuing education and training programs for all teachers was transferred from the fifty-one existing teacher training institutions to fourteen University Colleges of Teacher Education. Upon graduation, students will receive the internationally recognized degree of Bachelor of Education. In the interest of creating an educational continuum, all programs for in-service or continuing teacher training are now offered at a *Pädagogische Hochschule*. In response to this restructuring, by the end of September 2007 the Pedagogic Institute of Vienna was transformed into the *Pädagogische Hochschule Wien* (http://www.phwien.ac.at).

2 In this program, which was initiated in 1994 under the auspices of the Austrian-American Educational Cooperation Association (AAECA), City College of the City University of New York (CUNY) offers a Master's degree in English Language and Literacy. In this two-year program, which is taught entirely in English, professors from CUNY travel to Austria to teach courses in six intensive "blocks" lasting two to three weeks. Each M.A. group includes fifteen to twenty teachers from a wide variety of teaching contexts, ranging from pre-school through adult education.

The idea is simply to write for ten minutes…. Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write, "I can't think of it." Just put down something…. The only requirement is that you *never* stop." (p. 3, emphasis in original)

In the first class session, Professor Susan Weil asks the teachers to try this method themselves. The teachers and the professor sit around the seminar table writing steadily, just keeping the pen moving, not stopping to worry about sounding academic or being totally correct.

Without exception, the Austrian teachers find the idea of writing like this, especially in a graduate program, to be strange but also liberating. To understand why the teachers have this reaction, it is important to know how writing is taught and assessed in Austria. From the early years of schooling up through university, writing is evaluated for its correctness. *Fehler* is the German word meaning 'mistake, error, defect, or flaw.' An important part of assessing writing in Austria is error identifications. The goal, from the student's point of view, is to produce writing that is *Fehlerfrei*: faultless, perfect, or flawless. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why many Austrians, even the well educated, fear writing, and why the idea of freewriting, as Peter Elbow explains it—not worrying about mistakes, just getting words down on the page—is liberating.

Almost all of the teachers who have participated in the M.A. program have responded positively to freewriting. Norbert Zajiček, a teacher from the M.A. class of 2006, reflects the reactions of many of his colleagues when he writes: "Freewriting was a very new experience. It was like a jump into cold water, to get the topic and to write for a couple of minutes about it. Not thinking—just writing" (Zajiček, 2005, p. 44). But although freewriting may come as something of a shock to these Austrian teachers, it also often unleashes a newfound creativity: "Peter Elbow's regard of writing let me deal with and put down on paper my emotions and feelings in a way I never did it before. It was a very nice experience with the desire to continue" (Zajiček, 2005, p. 27). Like this teacher, most of the M.A. participants enjoy the chance to freewrite about personal and emotional topics, something that is not usually encouraged in the Austrian educational system.

The Role of Reflection in Freewriting

Freewriting, as Elbow defines it, is not the same as reflective writing. In fact, with its emphasis on keeping the pen moving, freewriting at first seems very different from reflective writing, in which one steps back and analyzes a problem or situation. But for many Austrian teachers, the practice of freewriting has the effect of encouraging them to become more reflective in their writing as well. Once they are "freed" from their excessive concern with form and correctness, they are also "free" to use writing as a way of thinking, to reflect on the various topics they are freewriting about.

Throughout the M.A. program there is a strong emphasis on reflection. Teachers are asked to write reflectively in reader response journals on the assigned readings. They write—in and out of the classroom—reflecting on their own learning and their reactions to new ideas and pedagogical practices. Reflection, and reflective writing, are extremely important both in the teaching philosophy portfolio prepared during the final course block, and in the thesis projects, most of which are teacher research studies of issues or problems in their own teaching (for more detail, see Mlynarczyk, 2004; Mlynarczyk et al., 2002).

The Nature of Reflection

Since the publication of Schön's influential book *The Reflective Practitioner* in 1983, the role of

reflection has been greatly emphasized in discussions of educational practice and teacher preparation. Unfortunately, however, the term is often used without a clear sense of what reflection means. In an attempt to bring more clarity to this discussion and to provide a working definition of reflection, Rodgers (2002) returns to the work of John Dewey (1933; 1938; 1944) and articulates four criteria that Dewey considered essential for true reflection to occur. For the purposes of our discussion, we would like to review these criteria:

> Reflection is a process of active meaning making, an interaction with others and the world.
> Reflection is a systematic and rigorous way of thinking that has its roots in scientific inquiry.
> Reflection happens in community as we interact with others.
> Reflection values the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others.

We will discuss these criteria in order, examining how they relate to the experiences of teachers in the M.A. program

The first criterion, reflection as a process of active meaning making, is strongly emphasized in the M.A. program. In working with a group of teachers in Vienna in 2005, Rebecca asked them to read the Rodgers article and comment on it in a reading response journal. Several of the teachers related the concepts in the article to their own experiences in the program. One of these teachers, Birgit Safranmüller, explained that, for her, reflection is intimately connected with making meaning. School knowledge is only converted into action knowledge "when it has been connected with 'real, personal life' through reflection" ("Reading Response Journal" 1). She echoes Dewey's belief that reflection is "a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with … other experiences and ideas" ("Reading Response Journal" 1). By constantly moving back and forth between trying out new pedagogical practices and then reflecting on their significance, the teachers come to experience the value of learning as a process of making meaning.

Dewey's second criterion, reflection as a rigorous way of thinking with its roots in scientific inquiry, is more problematic in understanding the reflective writing of the teachers in the program. Because Dewey was writing in the first half of the twentieth century, his ideas were greatly influenced by the scientific method of the time, which was based on testing a hypothesis through experimentation. Thus, Dewey sees reflection as beginning with a spontaneous interpretation of experience but then progressing through several stages, culminating in experimentation to confirm or refute one's hypothesis. Some of the Austrian teachers do achieve this rigorous type of reflection, especially in their thesis projects. We prefer, however, to use a broader definition that seems more appropriate in the twenty-first century. In our view, reflection occurs along a continuum, which ranges from observation and description to hypothesizing, experimenting, and refining ideas (see Jill Burton's chapter in this volume for a discussion of possible levels of reflection). Sometimes reflecting involves forming and testing a hypothesis, but these processes are not a requirement in order for true reflection to occur.

Dewey's third criterion, which emphasizes the necessity of reflecting in community, is a strength of the M.A. program, where teachers of different subjects working in different types of schools with students of many different ages and ability levels come together to reflect on their work (Mlynarczyk, 2004; Mlynarczyk et al., 2002). In *Democracy and Education* Dewey explains why the sharing of ideas with others is so important:

One has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience…. A man really living alone (alone mentally as well as physically) would have little or no occasion to reflect upon his past experience to extract its net meaning. (p. 6, quoted in Rodgers, 2002, p. 856)

Birgit Safranmüller, the teacher whose journal was quoted earlier, also commented on the benefits of reflecting within a community. She referred directly to her experiences in the M.A. program in which "we discussed our impressions and experiences in groups so we got the opportunity to broaden our understanding with the experiences of others" ("Reading Response Journal" 2). For Birgit, it was important to do this reflection within a supportive community of other teachers: "It helps me a lot to formulate out loud, to explain to other persons in order to move forward in thinking" ("Reading Response Journal" 2). This is in keeping with Dewey's notion that explaining one's ideas to others is an important way of clarifying one's own thinking (Rodgers, 2002, p. 856).

Dewey's fourth criterion, reflection as a set of attitudes (specifically whole-heartedness, directness, open-mindedness, responsibility, and readiness), acknowledges the important role of affective factors in one's ability to engage in meaningful reflection (Rodgers, 2002, pp. 858–863). In *How We Think,* Dewey (1933) articulates his notion that the intellect is not separate and distinct from the emotions and that, in true reflection, the whole person is involved: "There is no integration of character and mind unless there is fusion of the intellectual and the emotional, of meaning and value, of fact and imaginative running beyond fact into the realm of desired possibilities" (p. 278, quoted in Rodgers 2002, p. 858). The readings and classroom practices of the M.A. program emphasize the importance of affective factors in learning. Teachers who have participated in this program often use the words "personal" or "holistic" to describe how their experiences here have been different from their previous educational experiences (Mlynarczyk, 2004; Mlynarczyk et al., 2002). In his response to the Rodgers article, Ernst Forstner, a teacher in the 2006 Vienna group, describes the attitudes that he encountered in the M.A. program:

For [Dewey] the interaction between the person and the environment is of the utmost importance. This is an aspect which I have cherished so much in this M.A. program: The interchange of ideas between the professors and the students on the one hand, but also amongst the students has been open-minded and thus very fruitful. ("Reading Response Journal" 1)

Affective factors such as the ones Dewey mentions are extremely important in developing a climate in which teachers—and their students—feel free to reflect, to grow, and to change (for a more detailed discussion, see Mlynarczyk 1998; 2006).

Clearly, most of the teachers in the M.A. program experience reflection in the sense in which Dewey articulated the concept, and writing is a very important part of this reflective process.

Moving from Theory to Practice
How are these theories about reflection related to actual classroom practice? How do teachers use reflective writing, often reflective freewriting, to struggle with issues in their teaching? And how do they use freewriting with their students? To answer these questions, we will include some examples from Renate's writings taken from her teaching philosophy portfolio (Potzmann, 2003).

Even in the first course of the M.A. program, when freewriting was still very new for Renate,

she was using it to reflect on and raise serious questions about her own teaching. The following is an excerpt from an early in-class freewriting:

> My whole concept about teaching English or History is at stake. I am a bit sad. I have always thought I am a good teacher. But the activities I let my students take part in were dealing with the logical side of their brains all the time. I have always given them too many solutions. I corrected them too often…. So what now? … My first question to myself: Why do I do something in any class I teach? What are my reasons?

In this excerpt, Renate has identified a problem, a source of dissonance in her previous teaching, when she states that she has overemphasized "the logical side" of her students' brains. She then goes on to ask one of the most important questions a teacher can ask herself: "Why do I do something in any class I teach?"

Teachers in the City College M.A. program use reflective writing to describe and analyze changes they are making in their teaching. For instance, Renate wrote that because of her own experiences as a writer in the M.A. program, her approach to teaching writing was changing. She described a grade 6 English lesson from June 2001:

> We sat in a circle. I think the atmosphere in the circle was relaxed. I read my text first…. According to the kind of questions [the students] asked I realized that they had listened to the texts being read out to them. Ilija responded to that activity a lot. He asked thoughtful questions…. There was a lot of laughter during the question asking session…. But I remember from my response group [in the M.A. program] that we laughed a lot too.

In this lesson, Renate's students were asked to do a focused freewriting on a topic such as "my best friend," "myself as a learner," or "my hobbies." What was different for the students was that they could write whatever came to their minds, without worrying about making mistakes. Renate set the tone by reading first from her own freewriting—a practice that in itself was highly unusual in Austrian schools. Then students, if they chose, could read their freewriting to the group for comments. Previously, Renate's students, like most pupils studying English in Austrian schools, did not write freely, expressing their own thoughts, but instead completed the "Study and Change" texts in the required English textbook. In these exercises, the students were just asked to change some words in a short model text (about four to six sentences) to adjust it to their needs. Because of this requirement to "Study and Change," the texts were very similar from one lesson to the next, and many students were not motivated to do this "writing."

It is significant that professors in the M.A. program do not explicitly ask the teachers to change their teaching methods. Rather, the teachers try out the methods for themselves in the student role. They also have a chance to read and reflect on the theory behind new practices. And then—if they wish—they can integrate some of these ideas into their teaching in ways that are consistent with their own teaching situations and philosophies as Renate did in this first use of freewriting in her classroom (Mlynarczyk, 2004).

During the last course block, teachers are asked to write several "teaching or learning stories" and then reflect on whether these stories reveal any larger themes and patterns related to their teaching philosophy. In her portfolio, Renate included a story about a time when she had trouble learning something; she analyzed her experiences in some fairly recent horseback riding lessons.

After the story of her "learning failure," she reflected on how this experience related to the students in her own English and German classes:

> I realized that feelings, emotions, played an important part in the learning process. Anger, insecurity, and lack of confidence hinder the learning process. Nowadays I try to create an atmosphere of trust in the classroom, and I do not allow or tolerate my students to mock their fellow students' mistakes.

This excerpt from Renate's teaching philosophy portfolio demonstrates once again the importance of teachers using reflective writing to link their students' learning experiences with their own. When teachers begin to identify with their students through writing as students themselves, this can lead to significant adjustments not only to classroom practice but also to one's philosophy of teaching.

Long-Term Effects of the M.A. Program

As would be the case with any professional development program, some teachers are influenced more deeply than others. However, based on conversations with many program graduates years after completing the M.A., it seems clear that all of the teachers are changed to some extent by their participation. The program's emphasis on reflecting on one's own learning is clearly an important factor in bringing about lasting change in classroom practices. Teachers don't just walk away with a new package of worksheets to copy for their students. Instead they take away substantial ideas, concepts, and reflections that are deeply connected to their own personality and pedagogical values.

In analyzing the success of the M.A. program, it is important to realize that the participating teachers are probably not a typical cross-section of Austrian teachers. Since they receive no tangible rewards such as a promotion or a salary increase as a result of receiving a U.S. master's degree, the teachers who enroll in this program are motivated primarily by the desire for new ideas and teaching methods (Mlynarczyk, 2004). Essentially, teachers commit a great deal of time, energy, and money to this program because of their own deep desire for growth and development. Another positive factor is that most of the teachers enter the program with a strong proficiency in English. Still, bearing in mind that the participating teachers are a talented and highly motivated group, it seems significant that several years after graduation, most of the teachers are using practices in their classrooms that they first encountered in the M.A. program. These practices include using portfolios for student writing, devoting class time to silent sustained reading, increasing the emphasis on talking to learn in German and/or English, and using freewriting in a variety of ways. In addition to making lasting changes in their own classrooms, some of the teachers go on to work with other teachers to disseminate these practices. So in some ways, the activities described in the next section are not unusual among graduates of the program. What is unusual, however, is that because of Renate's professional involvement in teacher education in Austria, some of the programs inspired by the M.A. program are planned and funded by the official state agency for ongoing teacher training and thus are widely available to teachers in Vienna.

Ongoing Professional Development Activities

Once Renate and Kunigunde completed the M.A. program, they wanted to share what they had learned to help other teachers in Austria invigorate their teaching. They had often heard colleagues complain about their students' increasing unwillingness and lack of motivation to write and to read,

and they suspected that freewriting would offer a more motivating approach than the one currently used.

Both Renate and Kunigunde have shared their new insights and methods with teachers in their own schools. In addition, Renate, through her position first at the Pedagogic Institute and later at the University College of Teacher Education, was in an ideal situation to disseminate these new ideas more widely to other teachers. In the following sections we describe several different types of activities that have grown out of this desire to share innovative teaching methods. The changes fall into the following four categories:

1. Changes within their own schools
2. A self-initiated writing group composed of teachers from the M.A. program and known as the Vienna Freewriting Group
3. The *Wiener Schreibprojekt*, which developed out of the original Freewriting Group with the purpose of promoting freewriting among other teachers in Vienna
4. The *LiteratInnencafé*, an open writing group for teachers in Vienna

Changes Within Their Own Schools

In Renate's current teaching, after she introduces her students to the principles of freewriting, they write their own English texts. In a comparison of the texts of Renate's grade 8 students (who have not practiced freewriting) and grade 5 students (who have been using the new method), Renate and one of the other English teachers judged that nearly all of the grade 5 texts were superior in content, grammar, and syntax. They were also more personal and interesting, perhaps because the students were not inhibited by the fear of making mistakes. On the basis of this comparison, Renate was able to convince one of the other English teachers in her school to use freewriting in her teaching as well. In our conversation of June 2005, Renate explained that the teacher was gradually won over by seeing how well the new methods worked with Renate's students. At the end of the year, Renate and the other teacher asked their students to "just write one word or one sentence about this year." Both teachers were amazed to see the students writing much more than this. Some even needed another sheet of paper.

Renate explains why she feels freewriting works so well for students in Austria:

One of the main problems in teaching today is to motivate students to take part in the writing or reading. Reflective writing is so personal. The students write about themselves, about their problems, about their friends. I think that's one reason why people who introduce reflective writing are so happy with it. It brings the children back into the teaching process and into the learning process.

Starting in 2005, a team of four teachers in Renate's school implemented a long-term Writing Across the Curriculum project in two classes that promotes freewriting in English, History, German, and Geography. The prospects for this project, which was organized by another teacher from the City College M.A. Program, are promising, especially as freewriting offers a very individual approach to writing for the multilingual and multicultural pupils of the school. The school's headmistress strongly supports the project, and the local school authorities are showing interest in the project as well (for more details, go to http://www.kmsneubaugasse.at/projekte_schreiben_lesen.htm).

Like Renate, Kunigunde feels that her approach to teaching has been transformed as a result of seeking out new methods and introducing them in the classroom. She explains, "When I started

the M.A. course, I was at wit's end in a way. So I thought either I quit teaching or I learn something really new." For her thesis, which was entitled "On Our Way to Authentic Teaching and Learning," Kunigunde studied a whole new approach using methods she had practiced herself in the M.A. program. She did not order any textbooks or workbooks for her class. At the end of every English lesson, the students wrote a reflection about what they thought they learned. When they had to put their thoughts into words, they became aware that they *had* learned something. This practice of asking students to write reflections on their learning has now become an important part of Kunigunde's teaching.

Looking back on how her teaching has changed, Kunigunde commented on the role of reflective writing in helping her to envision and implement a new approach:

> Writing reflections about my teaching helped me a lot to become the teacher I always wanted to be. Of course I am still on my way, but now I know the direction. Twenty years ago I was dominated by the image of the "good teacher"—the authority—as one who is able to maintain discipline. A "good teacher" can leave the classroom door open because the pupils are working quietly. A "good teacher" is a pool of knowledge but untouchable as a person. A "good teacher" is a different person in class than in private. From the very beginning I knew that I was not of that sort…. Reflective writing helped me to create my own teaching philosophy. It also helped to highlight problematic situations in class—to find out what my part in the conflict was. When I feel desperate, I still use reflective writing to find a solution.

Because Kunigunde was the English coordinator in her school, she had an opportunity to pass on some of the new methods she had learned in workshops and later in her M.A. studies. She especially wanted her colleagues to learn about techniques such as freewriting and student response groups, and she also wanted them to understand how a change in classroom atmosphere could lead to other important changes. She invited the other English teachers to her home in order to provide a cozy atmosphere and then asked them to freewrite. One person refused, saying she would never show a piece of writing to other teachers unless she had carefully planned it first. The other teachers were more receptive to the new ideas. Since this initial experience with freewriting, these teachers have not changed their teaching in dramatic ways. However, they continue to seek Kunigunde's ideas when they are planning a new project. Kunigunde has also conducted workshops on writing across the curriculum for teachers of subjects other than English.

Vienna Freewriting Group

A second development that resulted from the teachers' positive experience with freewriting in the M.A. program was the development of the Vienna Freewriting Group.

Renate recalls that she first thought of starting a writing group in Vienna in 2002 after an M.A. program dinner with Professor Sondra Perl, the group's thesis advisor. Perl, who has been actively involved in the New York City Writing Project for many years, explained how the Project brings teachers together to involve them in their own writing and learning so that these same practices can be adapted and extended to their work with students (see "New York City Writing Project"). In the next few days, Renate and Kunigunde talked about how to get a similar project started in Vienna, and soon Kunigunde sent an e-mail to all of the teachers currently enrolled in the M.A. program suggesting that they start their own writing group.

Beginning in 2002 with six members, the group met about once a month to write together, share their writing, and provide supportive response. Now, six years later, three of the six original

founding members of the Vienna Freewriting Group—Kunigunde, Ingrid Danninger, and Verena Dobnig—as well as Christa Schmollgruber, a professional storyteller, who joined the group in 2004, still meet regularly to work on their own writing (sometimes in English, sometimes in German) and to offer workshops for other teachers.

For each meeting, one of the members opens her home and provides food and drink. In the process of sharing their writing, the group members have gotten to know one another—and themselves—from another point of view. As the years have gone by, the group members have experienced deepening insights about their writing. After the great enthusiasm of the first year, the second year offered a surprising insight: writing, especially editing, is hard work. Responses of group members have led to hot debates and disappointment at times. One of the questions at issue was "Do missing links in a piece of writing create a mysterious atmosphere or do they confuse the reader?"

In June 2005, the Vienna Freewriting Group achieved a long-time goal by inviting a group of friends and family members to hear them read their work in a Viennese café. In 2007 they held another public reading, this time in conjunction with an exhibition of works by Aleksandra Falkowska, a Polish painter. The group hopes to reach a larger audience in future readings and, of course, they want to publish.

As of 2008, each of the group members has found a home in a specific genre, and they feel they are ready to enter a new phase in which they hope to shape their voices in writing more clearly, to develop their own distinctive style.

"Wiener Schreibprojekt"

The members of the Vienna Freewriting Group, encouraged by their positive experiences in this small writing group, decided to share the idea with other teachers. As a result, in the winter of 2004, the group began to work with Renate through the Pedagogic Institute to develop what they called the *Wiener Schreibprojekt*, which translates literally as the Vienna Writing Project. Thus, the *Wiener Schreibprojeckt* became a kind of unofficial European subsidiary of the New York City Writing Project.

The founding group members hoped to expand their group and reach out to other teachers in three ways. First, there was a need to have a platform on the Internet where teachers could post their pupils' freewriting texts; plans were made to start a homepage for this purpose. Second, the teachers wanted to disseminate the new writing methods they had learned, and so they planned a series of writing workshops at the Institute that would be open to other teachers. Finally, the teachers knew, from their experiences in the M.A. program, that it was essential for their colleagues to experience freewriting for themselves so that they would understand firsthand the effect that this practice has on one as a writer. This knowledge provided the impetus for the *LiteratInnencafé*.

At the beginning of 2008, both Kunigunde and Renate were still actively involved with the *Wiener Schreibprojekt*. Kunigunde's role is to conduct the methodological seminar for teachers, and Renate designs, organizes, and implements the structures for the *Wiener Schreibprojekt*. In light of the recent changes in teacher education in Austria, Renate is working to convince the new head of the Department of Education at the University College of Teacher Education of the methodological strengths of reflecting in freewriting and how this relates to the new Austrian initiative to individualize the learning process for all students. Institutional support will be essential to get further funding for the *Wiener Schreibprojekt* and to ensure that Kunigunde's methodological seminar will become an official part of the University's seminar program.

Writing Workshop Series

It took about a year of meetings and discussions involving Renate, Kunigunde, Ingrid Danninger,

and Christa Schmollgruber to develop the initial workshop series. In the first workshop, a basic seminar entitled *Texte schreiben kann jede-r* (roughly translated as Freewriting and Co.), Kunigunde introduced the participating teachers to freewriting, reflective writing, and methods for responding to both student and teacher writing. In the second workshop, entitled *Märchen und Sagen* (Fairy Tales and Legends), Christa demonstrated how she uses focused freewriting in these genres. This workshop was especially appealing to primary school teachers because they are required by the curriculum to work with fairy tales. In addition to these three workshops, a special seminar entitled "My Stories" was offered to meet the needs of elementary school teachers.

Because of the 2007 restructuring of teacher education in Austria (see footnote 1), the writing workshop series has undergone changes as well. But, it is a testament to the teachers' commitment and to the soundness of the original concept that the teacher-led freewriting workshops survived the transitional period and are now being offered within the new structure.

In October 2007, Kunigunde offered her workshop "Freewriting" conducted in German and partly in English at the University College of Teacher Education (successor of the Pedagogical Institute). For the first time she felt that she finally has found her own way of presenting the method instead of merely imitating her New York professors. One participant even said that it was the best workshop she had ever attended. The group was made up of primary, secondary, and grammar school teachers as well as special needs teachers. They all loved writing themselves in the workshop and were eager to bring these new ideas back to their classrooms. After the 2007 workshops, a committed group of enthusiastic participants formed. They attend the *LiteratInnencafé* workshops and take part in public readings at the end of the semester. One of them, inspired by Kunigunde's workshop, has produced a booklet with her pupils. Another has begun to use freewriting in her senior high classes. Kunigunde decided to invite two of these enthusiastic participants to a later workshop to present their own experiences. Thus, the widening circle of teacher-led professional development continues.

LiteratInnencafé

In order for teachers to convince their students of the benefits of freewriting, they need to experience this type of writing themselves. The *LiteratInnencafé* was developed to meet this need. Teachers are invited to bring in texts they have written earlier, but most of the writing is done in the workshops. Then the teachers share their texts and receive the kind of supportive, non-judgmental feedback that M.A. program participants had so much appreciated. Because the participating teachers teach many different subjects, not just English, the workshops are conducted in German, and the writing is also done in German.

As of 2007, the Literatinnencafe has become an important component of the workshop series. Renate and Kunigunde are pleased to report that there are more hidden writers among the teachers than they had expected.

Possible Future Directions

There is considerable interest in having the year's activities end with a public presentation of some sort. For example, the teachers who participate in the *LiteratInnencafé* could do a public reading of their works. Alternatively, the public presentation could take the form of a web page or a book, a compilation of students' and teachers' texts from the school year. Another idea is to get a published author involved in the project.

Yet another option is to facilitate visits between two classes whose teachers have participated in the *Schreibprojekt*. First, the classes would exchange their texts, and then they would actually visit the other class in their school for a public reading and/or an exhibition of texts. Public celebrations

are common at the end of the school year in Austria, so many teachers are interested in the idea of having students from different schools meet to share and present their work. Kunigunde would like to offer seminars conducted completely in English, something that might be appealing to teachers who want to improve their English language skills. She would also like to publish a series of pupil and teacher texts and to write a book on the freewriting method.

In the past year, Renate has been trying to communicate the importance of freewriting to the new head of the Department of Education to make sure that the *Wiener Schreibprojekt* could be prolonged and taken into a new phase. With her background as a skilled organizer, Renate is working to connect the ideas of the M.A. program with the requirements of the Ministry of Education and the University College of Teacher Education and to foresee future developments clearly. Specifically, she sought funding to offer a basic training in "freewriting" followed by three short workshops on editing and presenting texts. Each workshop would begin with a kick-off presentation by a guest such as an actor, a painter, or a storyteller.

Analysis

As with any ambitious new program, some aspects of the new initiatives have been more successful than others. Focusing on these successes and challenges not only helps in planning future activities but also sheds light on the principles of effective professional development.

One important reason for the success of the new programs was the strong institutional support they received in the past from the Director of the Pedagogic Institute, Dr. Paul Kral. But institutional support is not enough to guarantee the success of programs for teachers. We would like to take a closer look at the different programs to analyze the reasons for some of the successes and problems we have experienced.

Successes

The changes that Renate and Kunigunde have implemented in their own teaching are clearly working well. They believe strongly in the value of freewriting since they have experienced it for themselves, and this strong commitment has helped them to transmit their own enthusiasm to their students. Similarly, they have been successful in convincing at least some other teachers in their schools to try the new methods. These changes have come gradually as the teachers have been impressed by the improved performance of students using freewriting either in English or German. This unofficial type of professional development in which a teacher shares a new approach with an interested colleague can be extremely valuable.

For Renate and Kunigunde, the personal and professional growth that was fostered in the M.A. program has also continued. For example, Renate reports that reflecting and freewriting liberated her from her fears about correctness and lack of ideas for writing. About two years after the M.A. program ended, a publisher came across some of her learning materials that encouraged students to reflect individually on their learning process and asked her to develop them into a book. Having gained the confidence that she could accomplish this writing task, she agreed to design and write learning materials for students. Her first book (Potzmann, 2007) was added to the official list of school material by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education. She has also published several contributions in school development publications, which emphasize the importance of time and space for reflective learning activities to individualize the learning process. And she has been asked to come to several schools to present these materials.

Of the *Schreibprojekt* activities held at the Pedagogic Institute, one of the most popular was the workshop entitled "My Stories," offered for primary teachers. One reason for the success of this workshop is that teachers in primary schools spend the whole day with their class whereas secondary school teachers only see each class of 25 to 30 pupils for one hour a day. Because primary teachers have more control over how to organize class time, they have more freedom to experiment with new methods such as freewriting.

Although the limited time with students in the secondary schools can be a problem for implementing new methods, another feature of the Austrian curriculum favors the use of freewriting. In Austria, teachers are supposed to encourage "competence." This means that students should learn things for their life and not only for the teacher or for the school. Freewriting helps to foster a sense of competence in students. When they write about their past or about their learning problems, they can use writing to reflect about themselves. Freewriting can also be used in many different subjects such as history or German—not just in English—which makes it suitable as a focus for Writing Across the Curriculum programs. In some cases, the students themselves initiate change. For example, some of Kunigunde's students were so fond of doing freewriting in their English class that they convinced the German teacher to use it also. Gradually, more and more teachers are becoming interested in the potential for using this approach in different subjects. Renate explains, "This method is growing as we interest people we know through the buddy system."

Challenges

Despite these successes, there have also been challenges in the attempts to reach out to other teachers. One of the most striking is the fear of writing, of being judged negatively because of one's writing, a fear that persists in Austria—perhaps a legacy of the way these teachers were taught. According to Kunigunde, there is a big difference between German and English teachers in this respect. Teachers of English realize that they can't be perfect in a second language because they are not native speakers and learned the language later in life. German teachers, on the other hand, have the idea that they could—and should—be perfect in their native language. This desire for perfection often keeps the German teachers from

> You really have to experience the writing process, reflective writing, yourself. And then you can experience what's going on inside you.

feeling comfortable with freewriting because they are afraid of making mistakes. Kunigunde gave an example of how intimidated some teachers are by the idea of sharing their writing. In the promotional materials for her workshop, she invited teachers "to experience the adventure of writing once more." But still one woman was shocked and upset when she was asked to write in the workshop. This teacher, like many others, had expected theory and material to carry into the classroom. She was not prepared to write herself and felt "exposed" when she was asked to do so in the workshop. Kunigunde feels that teachers in Austria feel a lot of pressure concerning writing from their time in grammar school, "where you either were a very talented writer or bad luck."

Another source of resistance is parents, who object to methods that are different from the way they themselves were taught. Renate remembers an incident in which one of the history teachers in her school asked her students to write a response journal. One boy asked his father to help him with his homework. With his father's help, the boy wrote a perfect summary of the text, but the teacher told him, "I'm so sorry, but I can't accept this because it is not your personal story." The father was very upset by this reaction, and the teacher had to work hard to convince him that she had good pedagogical reasons for requiring a response journal rather than a traditional summary. Old attitudes die hard, and it is difficult to change traditional ideas about education.

Perhaps the most significant problem that Renate and Kunigunde have encountered in their dissemination efforts relates to the participants' deep-seated teaching philosophies. In the M.A. program this was not such a problem. For one thing, these were teachers who were clearly seeking change and looking for new ideas. Also, they were exposed to these ideas gradually, with plenty of time for reading, reflection, and trying out the new methods. Then, they were free to decide which methods they might want to use in their teaching and how to adapt them for use in their own classrooms.

Some of the teachers who have participated in the freewriting workshops have been very enthusiastic about the new methods and have incorporated them in their teaching. But others have been less convinced. If the new methods conflict with one's existing teaching philosophy, they are likely to meet with conscious or unconscious resistance. And, thus, they will probably not become a permanent part of one's approach to teaching.

Conclusion

One point stands out for us as crucial in discussions of the success of professional development programs for teachers: Being open to new ideas and incorporating them into one's teaching often requires a change of teaching philosophy. Obviously, this kind of deep and lasting change cannot happen in a few brief workshop sessions. In our conversation of June 2005, Renate kept coming back to the importance of a shift in teaching philosophy: "You really have to experience the writing process, reflective writing, yourself. And then you can experience what's going on inside you." Only after this kind of deep experience will teachers be able to go back into their classrooms and convince their students of the value of writing freely and of using writing to express personally meaningful ideas.

Epistemological change can only happen as a result of serious reflection over a substantial period of time. In the M.A. program, this type of change does not always happen, but it is possible. Teachers work together in a supportive community of colleagues and professors from a variety of disciplines and teaching situations. They read and reflect on their reading in conversation and in writing. They try out new techniques in the student role. They have the necessary time and space to grow and change as teachers. Sometimes, as we have described in this chapter, they are so enthusiastic about these changes that they wish to share them with others. This desire to disseminate more effective teaching practices can lead to an ideal environment in which professional development is not imposed from the top down by school authorities but instead comes from the teachers themselves. In peer-led programs such as the ones described in this chapter, teachers work together to promote new practices among their colleagues and to continue their own growth and development as teachers.

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programmes reflective writing is included in learning and teaching arrangements for individual learning. The most recent initiative on individualising learning encourages journal writing as a potent tool.

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Chapter 11

TEACHING ON SOFT EARTH—
WRITING AND PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN PERU

Spencer Salas

Pre-reading question: Who we are as teachers is sometimes shaped by our first memories of and interactions with schools and teachers. What is your first memory of school? How does this memory inform you in today's classroom?

Writing and Professional Transformations

Early in December of 2002, heavy boxes of thick notebooks arrived from the four corners of Peru to crowd the narrow corridors of the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section in Lima. Some one hundred teachers countrywide were submitting portfolios at the close of a sixteen-month in-service professional development effort. This chapter describes the processes of generating those multicolored loose-leaf binders and developing a heuristic for thinking about those teachers' and my own professional development. These processes continue to mediate experiences in our classrooms and structure understandings of the spaces within which we are *becoming* as both individuals and communities.

Teaching is a composing process: recursive, intertextual, and dialogic. It is fundamentally a collaborative effort to make meaning. Teachers who are writing for themselves and with others enter a dialogue—an ongoing configuration of who they are, why they are that way, and who they have the potential to become. As such, they are open to multiple and divergent (re)readings and (re)visions. Embracing the intertextuality of what they do in their classrooms and writing to learn about teaching traces the intersection of the memories and the methodologies to which teachers adhere— their race, ethnicity, class, gender, belief systems, and communities. Richards (1998) characterizes classroom practices as an accumulation of information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning. Contextualized and highly interpretive, teaching is not only the development of skills or the mastery of principles and theories (Parrott, 1993). More exactly, as Marland (1995) argues, teachers are guided by internal frames of reference grounded in personal experiences, both academic and other, and their interpretation of them.

In this narrative memoir of the individual and collaborative development of around a hundred Peruvian teachers of English, I advocate expressive and transactional writing—*writing to learn*—as a sustainable means of engaging teachers of English as a foreign language in an ongoing professional dialogue about the construction of teacher identities and best practices. Writing to learn about teaching positions teachers in a critical-inquiry stance through which their collective and individual "thought turned back on action" (Schön, 1983) emerges in an ongoing Freirean "praxis" (2000).

From Fairfax to Lima

The story of how I arrived in Lima after seven years of teaching in the Washington, D.C. public school system began in St. Louis, Missouri, at a TESOL International Convention, and the happy coincidence of an interview with a School of International Training representative recruiting EFL teachers and teacher trainers to participate in the U.S. Department of State's English Teaching Fellows Program. A public diplomacy *cum* cultural and educational affairs effort, the program sends cohorts of teachers and teacher trainers yearly to collaborate with host institutions in various countries around the world. A few weeks after my meeting with Allyn on the banks of the Mississippi, and after a phone interview with the Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Lima, I was offered the position of Senior English Language Fellow to Peru 2001–2002.

My charge would be "raising the quality of English teaching and learning" countrywide. From my host institution, *La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru,* I would collaborate with my Peruvian colleagues in the *Facultad de Educación* on the design of a distance-presence postgraduate TESOL certificate program. Additionally, and more specific to this chapter, I would travel the final week of every month on assignment to one of the seven Peruvian-North American binational centers to provide "training" for cadres of eight to thirty binational center teacher-trainers. In turn, they would provide training for their peers at their respective centers in a multiplying effect.

Emerging in the 1940s in South America, and for a time subsidized by the U.S. government, today the binational centers, more than a half-dozen dynamic institutions, are autonomous Peruvian, not-for-profit cultural institutes broadly characterized by the high quality of their English language programming. *El Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano* (ICPNA)—sometimes, *El Centro Cultural Peruano Norteamericano* (CCPNA), or more simply, "El Cultural"—enrolls tens of thousands of students countrywide in monthly class-cycles. The plan was that I would visit each of the binational centers for a five-day, forty-hour program. The eighth cohort would comprise my colleagues at "*la Católica.*"

By early September, it seemed clear to me that although Peruvian English language teachers consistently seek and actively engage in professional development activities, for the most part, this comes in the form of a "native speaker expert" sharing a very specific activity-strategy outside the context of the realities of the Peruvian classroom. The anxiety-reducing games for English learners I saw experts advocating in a large English teaching conference for four hundred Peruvian teachers only days after my arrival—whatever their attraction as potential breaks from the routine of daily instruction—finally fell woefully short of enabling teachers to become active agents of systemic change. So much of the professional development that educators bring in their ELT bags is little more than a hodge-podge bundle of band-aids, wall decorations, and air-fresheners that do little to make a difference to the professional life worlds they encounter. I did not believe in and categorically rejected a transmission model of teacher training consisting of "how to's"—especially within the parameter of the five days that I would have with participants in Peru. What I did believe in was, "How could we together…?"

EFL program administrators should be concerned with nonnative English speaking teachers' mastery of content—which in the case of the English Teaching Fellows Program in Peru was a language, English. However, disproportionate preoccupation with teachers' proficiency levels in English can sideline critical issues of teaching and learning in the classroom. Rather, the emphasis should be on the critical decisions that teachers make from the moment they enter their classrooms that have an immediate and long-term impact on the population they are serving.

Teacher reflection involves teachers in taking a long, hard look at themselves in their totality. To achieve real cooperation among the communities of teachers with whom I would be working, I therefore imagined it would be easier if their professional development were generated from their own authentic concerns. Additionally, I felt the need to affirm the value and quality of teaching and learning at the binational centers with a glass-half-full approach. That is to say, initially, my Peruvian colleagues were eager for me to tell them what was "wrong" with their teachers and teaching. I felt it would be more productive to start with what was "right"—what seemed to be working well and how it might work even better. Similarly, I felt that as a future cadre of teaching consultants, those of us who were to be the educators in the U.S. Department of State's programs would need to respond to individual and collective concerns as teachers and learners. We would want to include a high element of autonomy, given the staff's multiple responsibilities inside and outside the centers that, in many cases such has Peru, were those of multiple employers.

Exploring how to collaborate with my Peruvian colleagues in advance of my arrival, I was immediately impressed by teachers I met who were part of the National Writing Project (http://www.nwp.org) and what I perceived as their undiminished excitement in what they and their students in their various settings could achieve as communities of writers. Their classrooms seemed more authentic, more meaningful than others—mine included. I was curious to know more deeply about what exactly I was seeing. I wanted to see beyond the *process-based writing* with which I was cosmetically familiar. I was convinced that the reciprocal, participatory nature of the Writing Project—with its notions of teachers teaching teachers, and learning to write, writing to learn—would be a powerful way of engaging diverse communities of teachers in in-service settings in Peru. I enrolled in the Northern Virginia Writing Project's Summer Institute for the month of July immediately before my departure for Lima.

Composing the Leadership Institute

By October—and in the spirit of the Writing Project I had just left—I had drafted a proposal for a year-long program of professional development. For more than thirty years, the National Writing Project has brought professional development to K–12 teachers at its two hundred affiliate sites in the United States. Although each institute reflects the unique strengths of its host university—whether critical inquiry, community-based learning, social justice, literacy, or teacher action research—what all of the institutes share is an intensive summer of writing. Personal and professional writing is accompanied by participant-led demonstrations of homegrown best practice, or, at times, more tentative explorations of teaching and learning contextualized in the individual classrooms of participants.

For the five days I would spend with each cohort in Peru, I planned a writing workshop as a way of jump-starting the portfolio process and collaborative reflection. I drew liberally from the writing-to-learn literature—from Elbow and Belanoff (1995), Goldberg (1986, 1990), Heard (1989, 1995) and Fulwiler (1986, 1987)—consciously borrowing from outside the libraries of professional development typically available to Peruvian teachers of English. My hope was to move beyond the "How to" and to explore a more fundamental "Why do I?" and "How might I do otherwise?"

Although the expectation in Peru was, I believe, that I would teach them, I wanted a space in which we all might teach and learn with and from one another. The five days in each of the centers would be a chance for us to begin to re-envision teaching as a composing process. We would write. Remembering our experiences as teachers and learners, creating metaphors for teaching, exploring

critical incidents in our classrooms, doing focused and unfocused freewriting, establishing ways of sharing and responding both to our words on paper and our teaching, revising—all these were what I envisioned us doing, and how I conceived of us becoming a community of writers. Embedded in the writing workshop was a series of participant-led demonstrations of lessons from the commercially based English language materials upon which the ICPNA cycles are structured.

I would not be meeting the majority of the cohorts until the new year. In the meantime, I proposed six loosely structured activities by which the teachers might gear themselves up for the institute and, I hoped, return to afterwards. They included the articulation of a philosophy of teaching and learning; a philosophy of classroom management; a journal based on a series of professional articles; a series of lesson plans for teaching a unit of textbook; and, finally, a video clip of themselves teaching a class with self-evaluation and feedback. Finally, I asked each participant to prepare a brief "teaching demonstration" from their classrooms—not as a model of best practice but as a strategy for exploring how, through thinking on paper and then aloud together, a good practice might become better. As such, the demonstrations would provide a text, a starting point for reading and thinking about our own and each others' practice.

Along with the writing and micro-teaching, I knew in advance what I wanted as an end product to the year: teaching portfolios. Portfolios seemed to me to be the best strategy for engaging teachers in the sort of self-directed, collaborative, professional model I was hoping to create with them, an alternative to the training model that I rejected. What was less clear to me was what those portfolios might ultimately look like, but I was comfortable with that, given the diversity of the professionals with whom I would be collaborating.

At the same time, I generated three thematic targets to be addressed in the portfolios in some way. They included the notions of teacher as reflective practitioner, teacher as consultant, and teacher as lifelong learner. The year would be an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to Schön's (1983) notion of reflective practice, cooperate within a community of supportive professionals, and privilege individual and collaborative lifelong learning. If we could make that happen, then the professional development that I envisioned might have a chance for long-term sustainability.

As I see it, a teacher's portfolio, as opposed to a visual artist's portfolio, is less concerned with the product itself than with documentation of a process of individual professional and personal growth over time. The final portfolio, I explained to my colleagues, should address the individual teacher's growth in the three proposed targets of the institute—a selection of the composite pieces with introduction that clearly documents growth in the three targets. "Finally," I clarified, "the portfolio is meant to be both exciting and frustrating, both invigorating and frightening, both satisfying and unsatisfying. It documents a work in process: the teacher."

> The portfolio is meant to be both exciting and frustrating, both invigorating and frightening, both satisfying and unsatisfying. It documents a work in process: the teacher.

I Want to Be a Coyote Teacher

It is October. In Arequipa, we sit in a room hewn from colonial sillar—the white volcanic rock a gift of El Misti, Chachani, and Pichu-Pichu. They surround us.

I've blocked out the week: two teacher-demonstrations scheduled for the mornings, two for the afternoons, Monday through Friday. Twenty teachers teach twenty teachers. Alfredo does a

lesson from the Advanced Cycle unit about New York City, where the Twin Towers fell only a month ago. Edwin teaches us a song to an Air Supply tune for his beginning students. Gretha talks with her hands. The feedback and discussion that their micro-teaching engender quickly overshadow the mini-lessons themselves.

As we begin sharing our teaching, we also begin sharing our writing. Angel declares, "I want to be a Coyote teacher"—quoting from a tourist's hand-me-down copy of Brown's (1999) *The Science and Art of Tracking*: "A Coyote teacher makes you work for the knowledge you obtain. Questions are not answered in a straightforward way, but rather a direction is pointed out, or another question is asked in order to make us search for answers" (p. 3). Brown's coyote teacher is his best friend's grandfather, Stalking Wolf. The Apache elder teaches the two boys all he knows about the ways of his ancestors and the science and art of tracking.

Grandfather is Brown's contemporary rendering of the animal trickster of Native American legend. Sometimes a coyote, sometimes a raven, sometimes a spider—he is a mythic character who appears in the oral tales of the peoples of North and South America. Coyote is "a cultural hero whose actions, in the earliest times—the time of myth when the earth was yet *soft* and incompletely formed—helped to give the world just that order which humans would historically come to know" (Baym, 1999, p. 55). As in the folk tales, writing to learn about teaching makes us work for the knowledge we obtain. Questions are not answered, but rather a direction is pointed out, or another question is asked. The Coyote Teacher pushes us to intervene to shape our classrooms and worlds for the better. Writing makes where we stand as teachers soft earth, incompletely formed.

Silently on paper we record our stories—interacting with our memories and then aloud with each other. I share my failures with them, describing students with whom I never could quite seem to communicate. For example, there was Walter, who had a notebook full of Selena—the Tejana star who died young and tragically. Selena this, Selena that. Selena my rival. His sisters had been my students the years before—Cecilia and Silvia. His English was the best of the three, as he had gone to middle school in Washington, D.C. But he didn't speak much. Almost never—and to very few. To me very little. Walter, like Herman Melville's reluctant bookkeeper, Bartelby the Scrivener, preferred not to do just about anything I asked him unless it had something to do with Selena. His resistance was passive and all the stronger for it. I was, to quote Melivlle, "disarmed"—I didn't know how to work with him.

As I share my stories, teachers begin to share theirs—timidly at first, but with an eventual snowballing effect. We begin by responding to each other's writing in pairs. Then, in a large circle, we begin the dialogue again. Our first response is silence. We simply listen. With a second reading we begin talking, asking questions, making connections. By writing, teachers enter a firsthand understanding of the teaching–writing process: its frustrations and the blank page. At first, teachers are reluctant to share their writing, and their teaching even less so. It is far from perfect—often fragmented—and, like teaching, difficult to talk with others about. Listening to a colleague read a short piece with all its imperfections helps us understand that writing, like teaching, is an engagement and commitment to a process. We just listen.

We use proverbs from around the world as prompts to get us started: *Looking for a pupil, he finds a teacher* (Burma)*; he is bald, but he has one hair* (Greece)*; a hand accustomed to taking is far from giving* (Egypt). We write and talk about students who fundamentally taught us something about ourselves, whom we might have initially underestimated, who taught us to be more generous. Sometimes writing takes us to a time and place we had thought behind us. *Your friend's heart is a wilderness* (Zambia)—leads one teacher from Huancayo from writing about the hearts of friends

to that of her father whose heart failed him when she was a little girl. She remembers his premature death—the shock of losing him suddenly without warning—how his was a heart she still wishes she had known longer and better. She writes of growing up without him and of his heart, which betrayed his body and family. She stops reading, and Carmen helps her out of the room. We bring these memories, these voices into our classrooms. We teach with them.

With a second reading, we point to what Elbow and Belanoff (1995) call the center of gravity (p. 8)—where the piece resonates most, where we are taken in. We describe what is almost said or what we want to hear more about. In some cases, we summarize what we hear. We reply. We doubt. We believe. We follow Elbow and Belanoff's advice to sit back and just listen to one another:

> If they want to give you feedback you didn't ask for—or not give you what you ask for—they may have good reasons. If you aren't getting honest, serious, or caring feedback, don't blame your readers. You may not have convinced them that you really want it. (Elbow & Belanoff, 1995, p. 7)

We are each other's authentic, thoughtful, interested audience. In a Quaker sharing circle, we sit; when the spirit moves us we read—sometimes a morsel, sometimes a page, sometimes the entire text; and, we listen harder, and better.

Digging for Meaning

It is Thanksgiving weekend. Between sessions, I walk through the city of Cusco, the city the Quecha call the bellybutton of the world. I walk through layers of time and civilizations, through architectonic memory: contemporary structures straddling the colonial, embedded in Inca and pre-Inca foundations. Like these constructions, our teaching is layered in time and memory and space.

We add freewriting to the sessions in small doses: two minutes, three minutes, four minutes, five minutes. In Huancayo, Lima, Trujillo, Piura—we meet for the first time, and we write without stopping, without taking our pencils off the page: unbroken language in constant motion. Freewriting is writing without stopping, without taking our pencils off the page with one rule: "Do not stop moving your pen or pencil across the page even if that means writing a word repeatedly, or making nothing but circular motions." Like exercise, if you overdo it the first time, you won't want to any more.

Little by little, we become stronger and less intimidated by the blank page. We write for longer periods. Belanoff et al. (1991) describe freewriting as "what you get when you remove almost all of the normal constraints involved in writing" (p. xii). For Angel, it's revealing "a part of your mind that remains hidden most of the time. We are conscious of a part of ourselves behind our mask. The masks are not to hide our identity from other people but to hide us from ourselves. We don't have time to put our masks on." In words floating across blank sheets of paper, we are unmasked. Freewriting is sometimes full of ideas and sometimes void of them. Macrorie calls it digging: "Often when we dig in it, we find surprise, and a voice. Then we can revise it: sort the dross from the gold, arrange those chunks of gold in different order" (cited in Belanoff et al., 1991, p. 188). We write, and we dig—a little every day. In Peru, digging often leads to amazing discoveries: the tomb of a king, pyramids of the moon and sun, a frozen princess. Meche, a teacher in Chiclayo, dug with her parents on the ranch where she was born, unearthing Moche treasures in the sand—now meticulously

catalogued in Lima's *Museo del Oro*. We write, and we dig. We find surprise and a voice.

"The relationship between teaching and learning is like. . ." is a prompt we begin with to formulate personal metaphors for the classroom. We write without thinking too much; we write without stopping. For Zaida, teaching and learning are inseparable—"They are joined . . . They cannot work separately." Sabina writes that learning never ends, "Especially for us teachers." For Sabina, learning is the product of a cultivated curiosity—"a permanent desire for knowing what lies beyond our present understanding." It is, she writes, a "magic journey." We create metaphors of rivers and oceans, vegetable growth, and childbearing in relation to teaching and learning. We explore our first memories of school through writing—tracing "blueprint of deeper feelings and intuitions . . . like myths, stories we tell ourselves for years, the details polished over time" (Heard, 1995, p. 72*)*. We uncover the formative myths of our childhood and their impact on our present understanding of ourselves as teachers and learners.

On a blank page, we list what makes us happy to be a teacher. On the other side, we list what is problematic about our profession. We ask each other where our *querencia* is as teachers—where we find our strength to teach and to continue teaching. We look for what Heard (1995) describes as "a place where one feels safe, a place from which one's strength of character is drawn, a place where one feels at home. It comes from the verb, *querer*, which means to desire, to want" (p. 3). For many of the Peruvian teachers I have come to know that *querencia* is their students, the classroom itself, or the teaching and learning that take place within that space. For others, *querencia* is an individual, or a family.

Remembering our first day of school reveals yet another layer of teaching and learning. Mine started with a large cookie waiting for me on my own desk with my name iced in blue. For others it was crying. Some met their new best friend that day standing beside them—years later still standing beside them. Others describe the hand of a big brother or sister that led them on their way. Giuliana learned her catechism and to love Jesus. Ivan writes of being locked for hours in a broom closet by a Canadian missionary. In the end, writing about first memories of school leads us to possible explanations of why we teach the way we do, and to possible alternatives. Years later, we have not forgotten. Neither do our students forget.

We write about teachers we remember. For me, this is Lydia Gasman and her "Theories of Modern Art" at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Lydia Gasman, a tiny woman with a thick Romanian accent, in spite of her twenty-some years in the States, spoke of Van Gogh and Gauguin like old friends, and Picasso as her lover. She would cry out in anger when one of the two hundred of us would leave the auditorium in the middle of the hour without saying "goodbye" or "excuse me" or "forgive me." Lydia Gasman shrouded in the tragedy of her Balkan memory and the Holocaust.

Teaching and the Blank Page

On Wednesday evenings I follow the boardwalk through Lima's thick fog to Corriente Alterna, the marble villa where I am taking a figure drawing class:

Carla:	The head is too small.
Spencer:	Oh.
Carla:	Enlarge the breadth of her thigh—to here.
Spencer:	Oh.

Carla:	The left arm is shorter than you've drawn it. If you look closely you'll see.
Spencer:	Oh.
Carla:	*With her pencil she indicates a point on my paper.* It should be here. Can you see it?
Spencer:	Yes.
Carla:	Try again . . . Slowly.

The institute is a space where we look at ourselves and each other harder and better. *Slowly, we try again.* Writing to learn about teaching is a mediating tool for negotiating our identities and agency as teachers. Writing can help us to identity our belief systems and values. Writing can challenge them, and lead us to change. Revision is possible in teaching, as it is in drawing, as it is in writing. Goldberg (1986) describes revision as pushing "beyond when you think you are done . . . sometimes when you think you are done it is just the edge of the beginning" (p. 103).

With yellow highlighters, we look for "golden lines" in our writing and teaching to begin the process of revision. We look for what works, what stands out, what jumps off the page. We take off from there, a starting point for new writing and new teaching. In my own experience in Washington, D.C., I had learned that if I was unhappy with something in my classroom, I had two choices. Learn to live with it; try to change whatever it was that was bothering me—myself included. More often than not, that change begins with a specific critical incident in the classroom, a "golden line" from which we can revise, re-vision something better.

The good, the bad, and the ugly all have their place in a teaching portfolio. Not every piece represented has to represent a success. Writing and talking about our failures—what we should and could have done for a student or class with whom we struggled—also belongs in our portfolios. What is important is for teachers to accompany the narration of critical incidents in the classroom with rationales for their choosing. Why is this piece significant? What did I learn from it? What alternatives has it created for me?—as Luis, a young teacher from Lima, does here:

> Well, I give up—it's impossible. If she passes, good! But if not, bad luck!
> It's not my fault. The other students are happy, they work.
> Let's ignore her.
> Talk to her. I'm afraid of her.
> Ignore her
> Ignore her
> Ignore her

Articulating that specific critical incident, Luis notices other choices for his teaching and himself. What did I do? What did I intend? What might I do next time? As he began writing and talking about the incident, Luis revealed his fear of how she might perceive his efforts as a single male to gain her attention. "Perhaps she'll say that I am after her attention . . . for what? Umm! . . . and if she fails, she will blame me. No!" Understanding what he chose to do and why he chose to do it, Luis, now informed, has alternatives. Thought turns back on action.

In a similar fashion, Karem informs her classroom management through writing—here exploring the role of emotional intelligence in her classroom:

I always hear from my psychology teachers that the aggression of the patient is not against you, but the role you play in the session. In this sense, I have come to understand that my performance as a teacher represents—at the same time—interchanging roles in the mind of students, and many times, they become the reality of the classroom . . . If a student is frustrated, I can predict aggression, lack of attention, sadness . . . He needs to be accepted in his frustration; held; and then asked again to keep trying. Otherwise, he will not be willing to learn.

Writing provides a plane on which Karem connects her experience as an emotive-rational behavior therapist to her current role as an English teacher. Through a process of reconstruction and reorganization of experience, Luis' and Karem's unfolding of their teaching, creates potential opportunities for their own professional growth. As a mediating tool for inquiry, writing potentially leads us to our why.

Writing to learn about teaching gives Luis and Karem—and potentially more of us—a level of ownership of and responsibility for what we do in our classrooms. Nothing just happens. We make things happen together—or not. For D'Arcy (see Fulwiller, 1987), "When writers think of writing, they think of a blank page—and everything that went before the blank page—all the experience on which the writer is drawing in order to shape fresh meaning" (p. 41). Teaching is like that, too, each day a blank page—and everything that went before it. How will it read?

People, People, Because He Longed For Them

As teachers, we long for the company of other adults. We need colleagues and collegiality. However, very often when another teacher enters *our* room, we lose our balance. We curse, tremble, sweat, shake, roll our eyes in disdain, and fake a smile. Evaluative observations are those rare moments when another teacher is with us in the classroom. That awkward presence is welcome to the degree that the evaluation that follows—usually in the form of a checklist— fulfills our expectations. They leave, and we breathe a collective sigh of relief with our students. We are finally alone. Even in the most progressive of schools, an open-door policy is rare. Most of what we know of our colleagues' practice is hearsay—informed by gossip, and the walls that surround us. Fanny trembles when it is her turn to present her lesson—her hand shaking uncontrollably as she passes out her lesson plan. Like eggs in a carton, we teachers traditionally work in isolation—insulated in and from our individual and collective fragility.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Institutions can transform these traditional hierarchical paradigms from the vertical to the horizontal—so that instead of reinforcing a patriarchal relationship of competition among teachers, collaboration in the form of reflective writing becomes a catalyst for mutual growth within a community of supportive professionals. Writing about teaching in community is a way of re-envisioning the communities in which we work.

The oral tradition of the Native Americans informs the longing that we sometimes feel as teachers in schools. Wakjankaga, the Winnebago trickster, in this contemporary retelling by Felix White Sr. (Baym, 1999, p. 60), after an initially problematic relationship with "people, those who walk on two legs", abandons the Winnebagoes to travel all over the earth, only to find himself wanting to return to them.

Yes,
finally, he would arrive someplace, and
then—

Yes and
then—

The Winnebagoes,
again it was to them
he would start to go back, then—

People,
people,
because he longed for them.

The animal trickster of the Americas longs for people. He returns to them. Writing to learn about teaching places us back in the world, with the world, and with each other—where we as teachers ultimately belong.

    Writing can be scary for teachers, and teachers writing even more unnerving for their colleagues and administrators. As Elbow (2000) explains,

> Our own habits and feelings often seem to hinder our writing. And we often feel external forces (e.g., teachers, schools, institutions, society) trying to impede us or even keep us from writing. And we often feel external forces (e.g., teachers, schools, institutions, society) trying to impede us or even shut us up. (p. xiv)

 Sometimes loud, teachers' voices are rightly demanding of themselves, their students, their colleagues, and the institutions they serve. Yet, the dialogue that multiple perspectives generate can transform our classrooms, schools, and communities for the better. We need each other.

    Roxanna, a teacher from Tacna, locates her learning within community:

> I love to think, I love to reflect—making ideas real, giving them form and meaning, making them come alive in actions. That is the hardest part for me. Learning English is just a part of the learning process. Learning about myself, about life and learning to be a better human being are my challenges—challenges that I want to share, and that I want others to take.

For Roxana, learning happens with other people. With and through dialogue, ideas can slowly take form. Shared thoughts turn back into collaborative action.

    In his retelling of a Chinese tale, one teacher from Arequipa underscores the relationship between multiple perspectives and enlightenment. Fabio's story narrates how a frustrated novice abandons his mountain retreat. His spiritual master walks by his side as he climbs down the mountain. The master punctuates their descent with questions to the young man. What does he see in his changing field of vision? First the horizon, a distant lake, a town; finally, the faces of old ones, and of children playing.

What one sees at the top of the mountain is not what one sees at the bottom. Without this wisdom, we close our minds to all that we cannot view from our position and so limit our capacity to grow and improve. But with this wisdom, there comes an awakening. We recognize that alone one sees only so much—which, in truth, is not much at all. Lao-li, what you cannot see from the top of the mountain, can be seen from a different part of the mountain.

Writing to learn about teaching is a walk down the mountain that transcends our individual perspectives and recognizes the validity of multiple viewpoints. The recognition that our writing can inform each other's creates an endless vista of possibility. As critical educator bell hooks (1994) describes, it "allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress" (p. 207).

(Re)Visioning the Leadership Institute

Teaching is ultimately a *dialogic* interaction grounded in relationships with others: "Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981, p. 426). Constructing the portfolios in small groups has been an activity for the testing and revising of our perspectives as we interacted with the perspectives of others. Thinking about teaching as a form of writing has been a way of asking ourselves questions within a community: an ongoing professional conversation about what we do, and what we could do better. Reading our classroom practices and ourselves as "writerly" texts engenders productive rather than re-productive imagination. Our portfolios asked a cycle of questions: *Who am I as a teacher? How did I become that way? What alternatives are available for me?* Their reply can come in the form of a variety of texts.

While portfolios affirm, they also challenge. Their insistence on making the implicit aspects of our teaching explicit leads to a healthy troubling of our classroom practices and belief systems. That reflective turn creates alternatives for our students, for our institutions, and for us. What is inside our portfolios documents our individual and collective struggle to articulate what the classroom means to us—our subjectivities as teachers. A combination of individual reflection and small-group collaboration, the activity of assembling the portfolios has been a mediating tool for the channeling of our identities, and their re-inscription.

Portfolios emphasize teaching and learning as a social phenomenon situated in communities of practice. We teach with and through others. Framed as a collaborative process of teachers talking with teachers about teaching, portfolios are one such dialogue. They are spaces for teachers to engage in an ongoing (re)vision of professional identity and individual and collective agency. As Santa declares in her portfolio's conclusion, "I am not a robot." Teachers are not robots, or at least don't have to be.

My original conception of the institute evolved from the original proposal I submitted in October 2001. As the months passed, I felt the need to include readings to punctuate the micro teaching that were more critical than the writing-to-learn literature with which we began. By March, some of those readings included the work of June Jordan (1998), bell hooks (1994), Ira Shor (1992), and Lisa Delpit (1995).

Additionally, the teachers themselves challenged the portfolio—calling for a clearer picture of what the portfolio should look like. However, I stubbornly resisted spelling it out or providing a

model. Just as I rejected a model of best practice, I avoided—beyond the fairly vague documentation of a commitment to growth in three targets of teacher as reflective practitioner, teacher as consultant, and teacher as life-long learner—the notion of the portfolio as having to include specific pieces, or as having to look a certain way. Perhaps I was mistaken. Perhaps the portfolios would have benefited from a variety of "models"—both "successful" and "unsuccessful." It was only in the last months of the institute that I too began writing my portfolio. Perhaps I should have begun with them, or even before them as a way of anticipating the questions that might arise as they began theirs. Maybe I underestimated the cultural specificity of portfolios to North American teacher education. Perhaps, I, like Angel—but frustratingly for others—wanted too much to be "a Coyote teacher."

Then there were surprises. Claudia submitted hers electronically as a narrated film. Cati sewed hers together with calico and yarn. Others, although they had been writing both individually and collaboratively, submitted nothing at all. Some needed another chance and a colleague to nudge them into finishing.

Perhaps, as teachers, we still too often passively wait for someone else to *do* us some in-service development. Maria Rosa, a teacher from Lima, writes, "Even though I have been teaching English for a long time—eighteen years—I have had few opportunities to present workshops and I can give you hundreds of excuses. But deep inside me I know it was because I didn't want to get involved. It's more comfortable to sit and listen. You don't have to prepare anything." Soon after completing her portfolio, Maria began a Masters in Education—something she had put off between working, marrying, and having a family. Back in the classroom again, she is a teacher and a learner. She is doing the *doing*. Writing to learn about teaching may not be a *magic potion* for professional development, but for Maria Rosa and others it has certainly been an elixir of youth—a way of rejuvenating our own identities as professionals, as teachers and learners.

What also seems clear to me is that the process of writing to learn about teaching—whether portfolios were submitted or not—has fronted reflective practice as a heuristic for sustainable professional development. It has underscored the notion that teaching English is an activity located in fluid and dynamic contexts. Such contexts are not merely physical or geographical spaces. With dialogue, people become environments for each other.

Portfolios—and by extension the teaching and curriculum—are subject to (re)vision. They, and their writers are dynamic, elusive, and limited only by their collective and individual imagination of who they are in the process of becoming. For that very reason, the initial October deadline for the portfolios was extended to November. Reluctantly, that December they began arriving in Lima. Teachers had not finished. The portfolios did not represent them and who they were *becoming*. If they are lucky, they never will. What lined the hall of Public Affairs Sections that December were a half-dozen boxes of alternatives for who the teachers could become, and what they could do and why they would even want to—and a commitment to a process of reading and writing themselves.

Teaching on Soft Earth

Thought turned back onto action has taken a variety of forms in Peru. Mentoring relationships have been solidified, colleagues have begun team teaching, and service learning has entered the curriculum. Teachers have relocated themselves, their classrooms, and their institutions at the intersections of civic education, language education, and regional development. The way we talk about our writing has become a way for us to talk about our teaching. Supervisors from many of the binational centers have applied sharing and responding techniques for writing to their

post-observation conferences with their colleagues: pointing to the center of gravity, summary and sayback, scaffolding, and only then with criterion-based feedback (Elbow & Belanoff, 1995, pp. 8–12). Authentic dialogue among peers has happily replaced the list of do's and don'ts that sometimes characterizes interaction between supervisors and teachers.

In January 2003, two teachers from Chiclayo volunteered to pilot a two-month summer enrichment program for sixty public high school teachers from their region (see, Salas, De La Torre Ugarte, & Safaradan, 2008). Since then, the sixty have asked the host institution to extend the project to include every Saturday for the rest of the year. The host institution has gladly picked up the charge. Another cohort from Cuzco has embraced team-teaching as a way of bringing veteran and new teachers together (see, Salas, 2005). With the idea that the best teacher of another teacher is a teacher, one academic director in Arequipa has launched an ambitious in-service program of sending "teacher-consultants" to affiliate branches, piloting workshops they themselves have developed for their colleagues. Writing to learn about teaching has fortified an already vibrant mentoring project in Trujillo. Teachers in Huancayo now work to enhance courses through collaborative materials development. In Piura, others have adopted an inquiry stance to address notions of multiple literacies in the EFL classroom. In the spirit of reflection and action, teachers and administrators around the nation have begun an ambitious curriculum project to integrate civic education across the binational center curriculum. Teachers are meeting around the country in monthly discussion circles. They are writing on paper. They are talking in hallways and via an electronic, Worldwide Web. Classroom doors, once shut, are open to colleagues and the dialogue they bring. Thought turns back on action. In Peru, the earth is soft.

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Chapter 12

BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS THROUGH E-MAIL JOURNALING

Joy Kreeft Peyton

Pre-reading question: *Consider the factors needed to set up a collaborative writing community and write up a plan for setting up a collaborative writing group of your own.*

What will be its key features, and what challenges will you need to address and overcome?

Introduction

Many education practitioners and researchers have opportunities to work together and to share ideas—through national and international conferences; local workshops, study groups, and other professional development opportunities; publishing in refereed journals, research reports, and newsletters; and through Internet postings and interactions. In most cases, those who want to be connected for specific projects and publications can be. However, sustained, focused interactions among colleagues around the world, on specific topics that have an impact on our work, are much more difficult and rare. We are focused on local issues and daily realities, we are scattered, we are bombarded by information, and we are incredibly busy. As a result, our sights can be narrow, and our connections can be tenuous. Lortie (1975) and others described the isolation that teachers can experience in their work (e.g., Pomson, 2005; Schlichte, Yessel, & Marbler, 2005), and Fullan (1991) documented this isolation in specific contexts and showed how isolation limits teachers' contact with new ideas and effective participation in change processes. Although these studies focused on teachers in K–12 settings, other studies have documented isolation of university faculty as well (e.g., Norrell & Ingoldsby, 1991; Schuett, 1998).

> A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature. (Einstein, 1931)

While discussing isolation, these researchers also emphasize the importance of developing professional learning communities. In community and interaction with others, we learn new ideas, new strategies, and new ways of working in our fields and areas of interest (e.g., Dewey, 1933; Vygotsky, 1978/1934; see also McIntosh & Peckskamp, 2005, for a review of the history and study of learning communities; Rodgers, 2002, for a discussion of John Dewey's ideas on reflection as a social process; Burton & Carroll, 2001b, and Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988, for discussion of the application of the notion of learning communities to reflective, interactive writing).

Electronic Learning Communities

Electronic connections via e-mail interaction and message boards have given educators and researchers opportunities to form such learning communities without concern for physical proximity, allowing them to connect and interact with peers locally and around the world (Belz, 1996; Selber, 1995; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Electronic discussion lists such as TESL-L (http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/), an electronic discussion list for teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and foreign languages; Nandu (http://www.cal.org/earlylang/listservs.html), a discussion list for foreign language teachers; and Humanist (http://www.princeton.edu/~mccarty/humanist/), an Internet discussion list for scholars working in the humanities, allow teachers to exchange teaching ideas and materials, ask questions, and provide advice to one another (Tillyer, 1995) and scholars to engage in informal discussion of work they are attempting to publish (Weedman, 1994). A member of the Nandu list, sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics (http://www.cal.org, see Hoyle & Pufahl, 2007, for discussion), observed of her experience as a member of the list, "Nandu is like the mentor I never had."

Studies of uses of such lists by educators (prospective teachers in preservice education and student teaching, teachers in K–12 education, and professors in higher education) have found that this opportunity is providing connections far beyond those that have formerly been possible. It provides new opportunities for professional growth (Tillyer, 1995); has changed the ways that educators work, allowing them to form communities that were not possible before (Lincoln, 1992); and expands social networks (Thurston, 2001). Studies have found that access to the Internet, and the interactions it provides, reduce feelings of faculty isolation (Cunningham, 1994; Minsky & Marin, 1999) and increase faculty scholarship and productivity (Barjak, 2004).

An International Reflective Writing Community

This chapter describes the way that a group of nine scholars and teachers from around the world—Abu Dhabi, Australia, Brazil, Japan, Turkey, and the United States—works together in a collaborative community to implement and study reflective writing, for example, journal writing with our students, as a component of language instruction; with prospective and practicing teachers, as a component of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development; and among ourselves and with other colleagues as a component of our own continual professional development and growth. As described in Chapter 1 of this book, this group first came together in 1999 to write a book on journal writing (Burton & Carroll, 2001a), and for several years has presented our work together at TESOL's annual international convention. (See chapter appendix for a list of the original group members; this group has grown during the writing of this book.) *Journal Writing* (the original book), this book on reflective writing, and the TESOL presentations have been conceived and developed through email interactions, with one face-to-face meeting of the group per year at TESOL. The face-to-face meetings have included a critical core group of members but never all of us because of financial and scheduling constraints.

As the group has worked together, we have struggled with basic, often seemingly simple questions about the value of reflective writing—Do reflective writing in general and journal writing in particular have a place in current educational settings, with their many and varied expectations and time demands? What are the benefits of reflective writing? What are the challenges? How do we address challenges related to student and teacher expectations for effective education; differences in

student learning styles, cultural and language backgrounds, language and literacy proficiencies, and personalities; and the time it takes to write reflectively with students, teachers, and colleagues? What qualities of and formats for the writing (e.g., topic focus, length of text, and frequency of writing; structures and formats, electronic or otherwise; in dialogue with others or in a personal form) make it effective in different settings and with different individuals? How do we facilitate reflection in ourselves and those we are writing with? As we have worked on these issues together, we have come to better understand our own purposes and practice. As we have published and made presentations, we have shared our struggles and insights with others in the field of English language education.

Our work together has been extremely valuable to us (and we hope to the field of language education), but it has not always been easy to stay connected. Why have we continued with this group for this long (over 6 years)? What are the challenges to our collaboration and the factors that have kept us together? How might our group, and groups like ours, be more effective? In this chapter I address these questions based on the group members' responses to a set of questions about our work together and my own experiences with the group. (See Appendix B for the questions sent to the group in the fall, 2005; all eight group members responded. I also answered the questions and include excerpts from my answers as well.) The responses yielded a rich and varied set of experiences and perspectives on our work together. In Fall 2007, I sent the responses from 2005 to the group members and asked them to add any new insights since 2007, and they have been updated accordingly. Unfortunately, I am able to include only brief excerpts here. (All respondents have given permission for their names to be included with their comments.)

Why Do We Participate In This Group?

Participating in a reflective writing community, with colleagues who are far away and fully engaged in their own work, is rewarding but not easy. Why has this group chosen to continue? One reason is that some of us feel isolated in our local contexts. As three group members expressed,

> I have a lot of connections in my professional life, and I work with other professors and administrators all the time. But these conversations are usually very rushed and fragmented—centered on solving immediate, practical problems. It's extremely hard to find time to talk, in a serious way, about teaching. (Rebecca Mlynarczyk)

> In my professional life I communicate regularly with only one colleague in my department who has professional interests that are similar to mine. Other than my communications with her, my professional connections are limited to carrying out the tasks my job requires. (Aysegul Daloglu)

> Connections occur in the hallways during busy semesters. We seldom have time to talk about anything of theoretical importance or interest, because we are spread so thin with the requirements of our jobs: teaching classes, writing papers, doing service, mentoring students, observing pre-service teachers, etc. I would love to have the time to sit down and converse with colleagues about a number of things, but I find it quite impossible at times. (Latricia Trites)

At the same time, group members feel connections with those who are outside our local contexts, even if we are working in different countries.

Connections with colleagues beyond my immediate work settings are very important if I am to try to make sense of and learn from teaching and other professional or academic activities. What is involved in this for me is a sense of collegial acceptance without managerial or administrative repercussions (e.g., being able to speak frankly about work experiences that may be viewed as insensitive by immediate work colleagues), and knowing that external colleagues can be genuinely critical in a supportive, disinterested way. (Jill Burton)

The group has been crucial for me—a very important professional community, a resource, an incentive, an inspiration. It has helped me forge my professional identity, and I feel I have support and grounding. (Carla Reichmann)

It is extremely important to get beyond the local and connect with other colleagues who do similar work, but who are not in exactly the same situation. It's a way of gaining perspective, taking in the broader picture, seeing that your institution is not alone or unique in what it's trying to do. … Before this group, I felt that I had a strong local and even national network of colleagues who shared my interest in teaching and learning and ESL writing. Now I feel that I have an international network. The fact that we have continued to work together each year on TESOL presentations and that we meet at the conferences has really helped to sustain and deepen this international community. Working on this book is adding to the depth of our commitment and gives a strong focus to our efforts. (Rebecca Mlynarczyk)

Participating with this group has been one of the most rewarding opportunities that I have had. Getting to meet people around the world interested in a similar topic, finding out what other people around the world are working on, and making contacts with people in my profession outside of my own university or past Ph.D program has allowed me to expand my network. (Latricia Trites)

I need to have connections in my work; I don't enjoy working alone. I started my linguistics career with two extremely strong and supportive colleagues, Roger Shuy and Jana Staton. We wrote together for years about our work, and I learned and grew so much. When our work together ended, I felt very alone until this group formed. We have a strong bond, and we continue to help, challenge, and support each other. (Joy Peyton)

While these connections have been satisfying, they have also had a positive impact on our work.

It is difficult to overstate the immense impact our journaling group has had on my development. Many factors have had an impact on my work, but above all our exchanges over the last 4–5 years have made me feel as though I was always connected to the field when I am in a position where I am increasingly pried away from the classroom and pulled into the administrative side of management. (Phil Quirke)

One of the most essential ingredients of this group is the distance, the opportunity to look into our own experiences and situations with a slightly more outside view, encouraged by the disinterested questions, comments, and experiences of likeminded colleagues. These

colleagues' experiences broaden my own mind and stop me from being overwhelmed by the immediacy of things locally. (Jill Burton)

One specific example of the impact of the group on my work is the opportunity I had to listen to Aysegul talk about the type of reflective journal practices that she used with her pre-service teachers during their student teaching experience. Now that I am supervising students doing their teaching internship, I am finding some of her practices very rewarding. Also, as we present on our reflective writing experiences, it has been interesting to see the different conclusions we have drawn. (Latricia Trites)

Our joint TESOL presentations have helped me to critically analyze the journal writing I do with my student teachers and to reflect on the work I do individually through the year. Participation in the first book encouraged me to continue my work with journal writing. Reading and sharing the journal writing experiences of the group members gave me the chance to appreciate the value of journaling. (Aysegul Daloglu)

I have felt very much enriched by our global communication. I remember discussing how we were using journals in teacher education classes and exchanging ideas by email about using journals in a TESL practicum; my goal was to use reflective journals to help students engage in problem posing about their teaching situations. I shared how I was doing this with Korean teachers who were my students and, in a response to my email, I learned about similar ideas that were being tried on a different continent. (Ellen Lipp)

We occasionally in our collaborative journaling hear an anecdote that strikes a bell with us. Even though the anecdote by itself may not have much importance as evidence for anything in particular, it is easy to go from there to some kind of investigation of the situation— through asking questions of the person who originated it, speculating about it, relating it to our own experiences, and so on. (Michael Carroll)

Reflective writing has become a common thread in my professional life—I'm not sure when this awareness dawned on me. Writing with others has grounded my work, in many ways; it has continually shaped my practice, my professional and academic projects in language teacher education. In the past few years, it seems I always have a few dialogue journals going with students or teachers. My development as a teacher, researcher, and educator has been greatly influenced by reflective writing—reflective writing is the foundation. (Carla Reichmann)

A critical piece of being part of this group is the critique I have gotten from the members. I was feeling pretty smug when I joined—thinking I knew what there was to know about journal writing, its key features, and ways it can be successful. Group members questioned, pointed out some flaws in my thinking, and pushed, and I had to stretch. (Joy Peyton)

Some members of the group have done research on learning communities in their own programs and have found that membership in such a community, for example with teachers from

a wide variety of teaching contexts, is an important factor in the success of the program (e.g., Mlynarczyk, 2004).

What Factors Keep Us Together as a Group?
A number of features and dynamics of our interactions have motivated us to keep writing with each other.

Focusing on the Writing
Although we are separated geographically and professionally (we are working in different institutions, on different topics and areas of study, and with different types of students), we are all interested in and working on the same thing—ways to interact with others in writing to promote reflection and learning. We are passionate about this topic and deeply immersed in it in different ways and for different reasons—to promote reflection, to develop language proficiency, or to create connections. Without this passion, we would probably have left the group long ago. One group member said about her immersion in journal writing, "Journaling has become a lifelong process for me. It influences the way I think, work with my students, and conduct my research even when I am not journaling per se." (Jill Burton)

Supporting Each Others' Work
We support each others' work and the contributions we each bring to the group. In the midst of our local struggles, "voices around the world are there and can empathize." (Phil Quirke) Because we are not influenced by each other's local issues and tensions, we are free to explore the issue we are here for—to discuss reflective writing and its impact on our students' learning and our work.

Responding
We do not always respond rapidly, but we do have a commitment to respond to each other, and every issue or problem posed receives a response from some member or members of the group.

Interacting Flexibly
We have long periods with no interaction at all. People come in and out of the group as they are able, but we know there is a stable core of members who keep us together and our interactions going. Whether we are paying attention all the time or not, we have a place to return.

> Basically you come in and out of the group as you are needed or want to. There can be several months when the group doesn't appear to exist at all, but if something comes up, there may be an extended flurry of intense activity for several weeks. (Jill Burton)

> I see the group as the core of my work on journals even though our communication is not as frequent or reflective as we may have thought it would be. Most of my reflection takes place away from the group but is often kicked into action and motivated by the work we have been doing. The group is still the only active group of TESOL professionals scattered worldwide that I have consistently worked and communicated with over such a long period and would still call a group. (Phil Quirke)

Finding Ways To Communicate Easily

So far the easiest way for us to communicate has been through email, where we send and receive messages in our Inbox. Blogs and discussion boards have not yet been as successful with our group, because they require the extra step of going to a site.

> I find that direct emails that simply land in my mail box are easy to read and respond to, but having to go navigate to a Web site in order to read or respond makes it less likely that I will respond. (Michael Carroll)

What Challenges Do We Face?

We don't have many challenges to our ongoing interaction, but time and money are central ones. The fast pace of professional life in the 21st century make it difficult to sustain meaningful, focused communication online, and lack of funding has made it impossible for some group members to get together and present together every year.

> The biggest constraint is time. At this point, I find it easier to find time to respond when it is part of a course I am teaching or is related to a professional outcome I am working on such as a conference presentation, research, or a publication. Or, it might be part of mentoring that I am doing with a new faculty member or a student teacher. When my reflective writing is linked to specific short-term goals, I am able to fit it into a very busy workday. However, I find I have to put aside some of the larger goals and projects from time to time when my schedule is especially tight. Partly because of the personal engagement that is present in reflective writing and journal writing, I always look forward to returning to my larger projects and networks involving reflective writing once my schedule lightens. (Ellen Lipp)

> Time is the real limiting factor. We all have deadlines and busy work schedules, and anything completely outside those schedules gets easily left out or at least postponed. (Michael Carroll)

> Space and the desire to meet face to face is always a challenge for me. We get together at TESOL, and I want everyone to be there. I hate it when one of us can't come because we don't have funding or have moved to a different project. For me, only online interaction is not enough. (Joy Peyton)

Our continuity comes from more than simply online interaction. It seems to require a combination of online interaction, which keeps us going; our face-to-face meetings, which keep us connected; and specific projects to work on, which keep us focused. (However, it is not critical to have all three elements. One member of our group has not been able to meet with us face to face so far, and she is an active and contributing member.)

> Our knowledge of each other, gained during our face-to-face interactions and through the editorial process with both books, helps to keep us going. It helps to have a sense of who you are writing to. (Rebecca Mlynarczyk)

How Might This Group Be Improved?

Ours is not an ideal group, and there are many ways in which we could improve the frequency, quality, and intensity of our interactions.

> We could set up regular times to interact about issues we are working on and collaborate on research projects focused on those issues, with each of us having a stake in the project and providing constructive and honest feedback to the group.

> Instead of *only* writing together, we could give more focus and depth to our discussions by reading texts in common to expand and challenge our thinking.

> We could write more regularly than we do, possibly with a commitment to a specific time period and a schedule. Like a formal class, in which journal writing stops when the class ends, it is sometimes difficult to keep our interactions going after a book or book chapter is finished or a conference session is over.

> We could plan regular ways to communicate orally or face to face with scheduled conference calls and face-to-face meetings at least once a year. Our face-to-face meetings have been very important as a way to know each other better and increase the value of the writing, they seem critical to our continuing as a group, and we could be more systematic and purposeful about setting them up and participating in them.

> We could widen our circle to include teachers we work with and other researchers around the world. This could add a new dimension to our writing and extend the benefits to others. (This is beginning to happen with the publication of this book, which includes others beyond the initial group members.)

Conclusion

Community is important and with the Internet, ever-widening communities are possible. While it is not easy to develop and maintain effective ongoing community, I recommend that you start one or join one. If you belong to an effective learning community, or if you know of articles about such communities, please google us (the author of this chapter and the editors of this book: Joy Peyton, Jill Burton, Phil Quirke and Carla Reichmann) on the Web and let us know about them. We would all benefit from knowing more about why such communities are formed and how they work.

<center>ॐ ॐ</center>

Joy Kreeft Peyton is Vice President of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC. Her work in ESL education includes research and writing on the role of interactive writing in students' language and literacy development and in the development of student and teacher communities.

Appendix A. Original members of the reflective writing group

Jill Burton, University of South Australia, Adelaide
Michael Carroll, St. Andrews University, Osaka, Japan
Aysegul Daloglu, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey
Ellen Lipp, California State University, Fresno, CA
Rebecca Mlynarczyk, Kingsborough Community College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York
Joy Kreeft Peyton, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC
Phil Quirke, Madinat Zayed Colleges, Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates
Carla Reichmann, Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brazil
Latricia Trites, Murray State University, Murray, KY

Appendix B

Questions sent to group members in the fall 2005 and again in the fall 2007

1. What is your experience in your professional life with connections and the lack of connections?

2. Do you ever feel as if you need connections with colleagues beyond your immediate situation?

3. How has reflective writing/journaling with others influenced your work and your development?

4. In what ways has participation in this reflective writing group [the Group; see Chapter 1]—through TESOL presentations, participation in the two books, email interactions—had an impact on your work? Has it provided opportunities you wouldn't otherwise have to work with colleagues, learn from others, and make contributions to the field and the work of your colleagues?

5. What factors make such participation difficult? What factors make it easy and helpful?

6. In an ideal world, what would this/our group of reflective writing practitioners and researchers look like? What would we be doing together?

7. What research supports collaborative work among professionals and collaboration through reflective journaling?

End Tasks

The following tasks are activities that readers may like to use for themselves, to try out ideas raised in this book. The activities can be used individually, or with other teachers informally and in professional development sessions.

- Pinpoint a particular moment or occasion in your teaching or learning life which made you stop and think.
- Write a letter to an imaginary colleague describing this moment or occasion, then try to explain what it meant to you and how it has affected other aspects of your teaching life.
- Consider the following: How did this moment or occasion subsequently change what you did in the classroom? Why did it have these effects? In what ways has your thinking about this moment or occasion changed over time?

Alternatively:

- Brainstorm a time line of critical moments in your teacher learning—including texts, people, events, trips and intercultural experiences that were particularly significant to you as an educator.
- Use these to write a memoir, first deciding who you want to read it. Will your readers be valued colleagues? Past students? Then, which moments will you write about? With your readers and critical moments in mind, either write chronologically, or according to the most salient topics in your time line (e.g., critical people and critical texts). As you write, try to explain what these critical moments meant to you and how they have affected other aspects of your teaching life.
- Having written your memoir on teacher learning, what insights have you gained about your teaching? About yourself? What have you learned through the writing and rewriting process?

Further Reading

Appel, J. (1995). *Diary of a language teacher.* **Oxford: Heinemann.**
A secondary schoolteacher explores success and failure in the language classroom over six years. The book is a rich analysis of reflection and decision-making in teaching supported by personal teacher journals.

Bailey, K.M., Curtis, A., & Nunan, D. (2001). *Pursuing professional development: The self as source.* **Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.**
Three well-known TESOL educators from different parts of the world examine their teacher learning through the process of writing a book on self-development in teaching. The book portrays the support and continuing learning provided by the process of reflection, conversation, and writing together.

Bailey, K. & Nunan, D. (eds). (1996). *Voices from the language classroom.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**
An exciting collection of qualitative research stories from the classroom demonstrating how reflective writing can both support and extend the depth of research into practice.

Burton, J., & Carroll, M. (2001). *Journal writing.* **Alexandria, VA: TESOL, Inc.**
A starting point for some of the reflective writers in this book, this book focuses on different forms of journal writing in language teacher education and language learning classrooms. The case-study format provides a simple model for anyone new to written case analysis to follow.

Connelly, F.M., & Clandinin, D.J. (Eds) (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice.* **NY: Teachers College Press.**
Focusing on teacher knowledge, context, and identity, this book is the result of a twenty-year collaboration by two educators who have consistently talked about, written and analyzed teachers´ lived stories, resulting in a collection of richly-textured studies of teacher research and narrative inquiry.

Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2005). *Teachers' voices: Storytelling and possibility.* **Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.**
An inspiring book written by a teacher educator whose student teachers write narratives of teacher learning. The author's own reflections on her students' narratives provide rich layers of insights on curriculum as narrative practice.

Freedom Writers & Gruwell, E. (1999). *The freedom writers diary: How a group of extraordinary teens used writing to change themselves and the world around them.* **NY: Doubleday, Random House.**
An inspirational story of how a teacher used reflective writing to transform her classroom into a hub of learning, innovation and creativity.

Freeman, D., & Richards, J.C. (eds.). (1996). *Teacher learning in language teaching.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**
This is one of the most insightful, insider accounts available of teacher learning written from the language classroom. It models many novel forms and uses of qualitative research, including reflective practice and writing.

Fulwiler, T. (1982). Writing: An act of cognition. In C. Williams Griffin (Ed.), *Teaching writing in all disciplines.* **San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.**
Although this book is primarily on the teaching of writing, it is full of excellent ideas for using reflective writing in dailyteaching practice.

Mlynarczyk, R. W. (1998). *Conversations of the mind: The use of journal writing for second-language learners.* **Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates, Publisher.**
A must-read for anyone looking for inspiration to write reflectively.

Peyton, J. K. (Ed.) (1990). *Students and teachers writing together: Perspectives on journal writing.* **Alexandria, VA: TESOL.**
One of the books which first captivated many of the contributors to this book on the power of journal writing for both students and teachers.

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