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Tailoring Reflection to Individual Needs: a TESOL case study

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ABSTRACT *Reflection in teaching refers generally to teachers learning to subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to a critical analysis, and taking more responsibility for their actions. In order for reflective teaching to happen, opportunities must be created for teachers to use conscious reflection. This paper reports on the reflections of one non-native speaker, a teacher of English as a foreign language in Korea, during a 16-week period. Specifically, this paper tells (1) what the teacher talked about in the three modes of reflection: group meetings, individual meetings and what she wrote about in her journal; and (2) what was the level of her reflection in each activity: descriptive or critical. Results indicate that the teacher shows a clear preference for group discussions as her method of reflection over the other two activities: journal writing and classroom observations.*

INTRODUCTION

Reflective teaching is becoming an important component of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teacher education and development programmes around the world (Richards, 1990). Reflection in teaching generally refers to teachers learning to subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to a critical analysis, and thus, take more responsibility for their actions in the classroom (Korthagen, 1993). However, in order for reflective teaching to happen, opportunities must be created for teachers to use conscious reflection as a means of understanding the relationship between their own thoughts and actions. A plethora of methods have been suggested as to how English language teachers should reflect. These include journal writing (Ho & Richards, 1993; Brock *et al.*, 1992; McDonough, 1994; Hyatt & Beigy, 1999), observation (Fanselow, 1987; Richards & Lockhard, 1994) and teacher–group discussions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; James, 1996). However, we in TESOL still do not know whether these modes are suitable for individual teachers to follow in order to become more reflective practitioners.

This paper reports on the reflections of one non-native English speaker (Heesoon, a pseudonym), a teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Korea, and her preferred mode of reflection among three different types: group talking, individual discussions with the researcher and regular journal writing. The paper starts with a discussion of reflective

practice both inside and outside TESOL. Next, a brief description of the study is outlined. The paper then outlines the teacher's reflections as answers to two research questions: (1) what did Heesoon talk about in the group meetings, and individual meetings/ observations with the researcher, and what did she write about in her journal? (2) What was the level of Heesoon's reflection in each activity: descriptive or critical? Implications for EFL teacher development are also discussed.

REFLECTION

Reflection is a popular term used in teacher education and development programmes in the 1990s. Miles *et al.* (1993) surveyed initial teacher education courses in the UK and found that over 70% of them had some form of 'the reflective practitioner model' represented in the coursework. Moreover, many teacher educators agree that some form of reflection is a desirable practice among teachers. However, the agreement stops there because there is almost no consensus as to the exact definition of reflection and which reflective practices promote teacher development (Hatton & Smith, 1995). As Louden (1991, p. 148) says: 'The educational uses of the term [reflection] ... in a wide variety of ways, perhaps so wide as to make the term unusable without careful redefinition.' Redefinition of this term means making it suit a teacher's particular context and needs.

In TESOL, Pennington (1992) proposes a reflective orientation as a means of '(1) improving classroom processes and outcomes, and (2) developing confident, self-motivated teachers and learners' (p. 51). In a more recent article, Pennington (1995) says that teacher change and development requires an awareness of a need to change. Richards (1990) sees reflection as a key component of teacher development. He says that self-inquiry and critical thinking can 'help teachers move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking' (p. 5). Richards continued:

Critical reflection refers to an activity or process in which experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to a past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making, and as a source for planning and action. (p. 5)

Outside TESOL, Hatton and Smith (1995) point out that the term critical reflection 'like reflection itself appears to be used loosely, some taking it to mean more than constructive self-criticism of one's actions with a view to improvement' (p. 35). Hatton and Smith (1995) have remarked that the concept of critical reflection 'implies the acceptance of a particular ideology' (p. 35). This view of critical reflection in teaching also calls for consideration of moral and ethical problems (VanManen, 1977; Adler, 1991), and it further involves 'making judgments about whether professional activity is equitable, just, and respectful of persons or not' (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 35). Therefore, the wider socio-historical and politico-cultural contexts can also be included in critical reflection (Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Schön, 1983, 1987).

CRITICISMS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

A number of scholars (mainly outside TESOL) have urged caution as to the applicability of reflective practice in education. For example, Hoover (1994) has cautioned that: 'The promising acclamation about reflection has yielded little research qualitatively or quantitatively' (p. 83). He does not however, rule out reflection in teaching but says reflection is a learned activity; he describes it as 'a carefully planned set of experiences that foster a sensitivity to ways of looking at and talking about previously unarticulated beliefs concerning teaching' (p. 84). He also says that this self-analysis requires time and opportunity. In addition, Goodson (1994) points out that the concept of teacher as researcher has some problems:

If frees the researchers in the university from clear responsibility from complementing and sustaining the teacher as researcher. 2. The teacher as researcher focuses mainly on practice; the New Right is seeking to turn the teacher's practice into that of a technician which turns teaching into a routinized and trivialized delivery of predesigned packages. (p. 30)

Hatton and Smith (1995, pp. 34–36) have highlighted four key unresolved issues concerning reflective teaching.

- Is reflection limited to thought process about action, or more bound up in the action itself?
- Is reflection immediate and short term, or more extended and systematic? That is, what time frame is most suitable for reflective practice?
- Is reflection problem-centered, finding solutions to real classroom problems, or not? That is, should solving problems be an inherent characteristic of reflection (group discussion and journal writing are widely used as a tool for reflection but they are not problem solving)?
- How 'critical' does one get when reflecting? This refers to whether or not the teacher reflecting takes into account the wider political, cultural, and historic beliefs and values in finding solutions to problems.

Hatton and Smith (1995) also see a number of 'barriers which hinder the achievement of reflective approaches' (p. 36). They have observed the following.

- Reflection is not generally associated with working as a teacher; but is seen as a more academic exercise.
- Teachers need time and opportunity for development.
- Exposing oneself in a group of strangers can lead to vulnerability.
- The ideology of reflection is quite different than that of traditional approaches to teacher education.

All of these are valid criticisms, which must be answered by each teacher interested in undertaking a reflective stance to their teaching.

By far the most comprehensive discussion of reflection is found in the work of Schön (1983, 1987). Drawing on the writings of Dewey, Schön writes about reflective practice in terms of the immediacy of the action in the setting. For Schön, when a practitioner is

confronted with a problem, he or she identifies the problem as being of a particular type and then applies an appropriate technique to solve the problem. This is assuming that the problems of practice are routine, knowable in advance, and subject to a set of rule-like generalisations that are applicable in multiple settings. However, Newman (1996) challenged the idea that Schön's work can be easily applied to teaching and teacher education. Newman (1996, p. 297) remarked that Schön's work does not use the classroom or teaching as a background to his discussions, and that Schön 'fails to appreciate the time factor in understanding professional behaviour'. Newman (1996, p. 302) suggests that a reinterpretation of Schön's work would allow 'for the development of the Wittgensteinian notion of language games, in the context of which particular words and actions may have particular meanings'. Newman (1996) suggests that reflection describes a behaviour within a language-game and that the teaching and learning of a language-game may sometimes best be achieved in the particular context.

In TESOL, not only have the terms reflection and critical reflection been used rather loosely, the whole concept of reflection has not been appraised critically. Richards (1990) (among others) does not really distinguish between reflection and critical reflection. Neither does he take the broader aspect of society into consideration when defining reflective practice. Pennington (1995) defines critical reflection as 'the process of information gained through innovation in relation to the teacher's existing schema for teaching' (p. 706). Again, the broader aspect of society does not play a significant role in her definition of critical reflection.

In this study the term reflection incorporates the importance of Pennington's (1992, 1995) and Richards' (1990) ideas of reflection and critical reflection. Furthermore, this study consulted Ho and Richards' (1993) ideas on defining critical reflection (see answer to research question 2). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper I have defined reflection to be in progress when a teacher seeks answers to the following questions: (1) What is he/she doing in the classroom (method)? (2) Why is he/she doing this (reason)? (3) Will he/she change anything based on the information gathered from answering the first two questions (justification)? I realize that this definition of reflection views teaching at a technical level (Zeichner, 1987). Zeichner (1987) has proposed three levels of reflection: first, a technical level followed by a second level where teachers consider the influence of the context where they are working. Zeichner's (1987) third level of reflection looks moral and ethical concerns. The Korean teacher, Heesoon, agreed with my definition of reflection and concurred that she had wanted to keep it at a technical level (to reflect on the effectiveness of her teaching), at least in the beginning. We also agreed that we would use three modes for reflecting: journal writing, classroom observations and group discussions. However, we did not negotiate how we could use mode.

A number of TESOL teacher educators have suggested various methods that can be an effective method of reflection for pre-service and in-service teachers. These include journal writing, classroom observations and group discussions. Bailey (1990, p. 218), for example, says that a teaching journal can be a place for teachers to experiment, criticise, doubt, express frustration, and raise questions. Ho and Richards (1993, p. 20) suggest that journal writing 'can provide an opportunity for teachers to write reflectively about their teaching'. McDonough (1994, pp. 64–65) also found that practicing teachers indicated that keeping a diary was of interest and of value, and for researchers, teachers' diaries were a

'real insider instrument ... we can become aware of day-to-day behaviors and underlying attitudes, alongside outcomes and the decisions that all teachers need to take.' Additionally, Brock, Yu, and Wong (1992, p. 295) suggest that journals are an excellent tool for reflection, are simple to conduct, and 'promote development of reflective teaching'. Hyatt and Beigy (1999) also found that journal writing (among other methods) had a positive outcome in the developmental process for beginning language teachers.

Another method of reflection is by classroom observations (Gebhard, 1999). Gebhard (1999, p. 35) defines classroom observation as: 'Nonjudgmental description of classroom events that can be analyzed and given interpretation.' These descriptions can be verbal or written, depending on the purpose of the observation. Gebhard (1999) outlines five purposes of observation.

- To evaluate teaching. This is usually in a clinical supervision mode. Clinical supervision, when used to refer to reflective teaching practice, is the process whereby a supervisor observes a teacher and provides a feedback and discussion session with the person observed so as to review (and maybe evaluate) and enhance the existing practice.
- To learn to teach.
- To learn to observe.
- To collect data for research purposes.
- To explore teaching to become more self-aware. This last purpose can be carried out by peer observation. Peer observation occurs when colleagues undertake to observe each other teach in non-judgmental type situations (Fanselow, 1987; Gebhard, 1999). What was observed can then be described and analysed through checklists, transcripts, and coding instruments.

Yet another method of reflection is by talking to other teachers. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) suggest that oral inquiry, such as group discussions, is one method for teachers to reflect on their work. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, p. 30) argue that:

Oral inquiry processes are procedures in which two or more teachers jointly research their experiences by examining particular issues, educational concepts, texts (including students' work), and other data about students ... they are by definition collaborative and oral. During oral inquiry, teachers build on one another's insights to analyze and interpret classroom data and their experiences in the school as a workplace.

Discussion within a group of peers can be a powerful way of exposing teachers to different viewpoints. These different viewpoints can be seen as positive when the group members are supportive. As James (1996, p. 94) points out: 'The person, using the group as solidarity to support others and to be supported, then becomes empowered to act productively elsewhere.' These discussions can centre on teaching practices and the theories and beliefs that are behind those practices.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how reflection (as defined within the field of TESOL) could promote the professional development of one experienced EFL teacher in Korea. For the purposes of the study, then, methods of reflection and analysing reflection (for distinguishing reflection from critical reflection, e.g., Bartlett, 1990) were chosen from within the field of TESOL. The study was, therefore, an attempt to investigate

the usefulness of the methods of reflection as suggested by TESOL scholars. Special emphasis was also placed on discovering the content of Heesoon's reflections within each mode.

CONTEXT

A group of four EFL teacher (including this researcher) in Korea came together voluntarily to reflect on their work. The period of reflection was 16 weeks (one semester). Methods of reflection included weekly journal writing, group discussions, and classroom observation/individual discussions with the researcher. This paper reports on the levels of reflection of one of the participants (Heesoon) in all three activities: the group meetings, individual meetings and journal writing.

Heesoon's Background

Heesoon is a Korean female teacher of English in a university in Seoul, South Korea. She speaks English fluently and has a Master of Science degree in Education (M. S. Ed) with a specialisation in English teaching. She said that she joined the group because she was seeking to become a better teacher. In an unpublished paper (co-authored with another group member after the period of reflection), Heesoon told me about her reasons for wanting to reflect on her work:

It is not enough for me to know only which material should be taught, in what order it should be presented and how the teaching process should be guided. I must also be able to find myself as a teacher by systematically looking at what I already know and do, examining all the ideas presented and then answering my own problems on the basis of [my] own experience.

METHOD

Qualitative research procedures were used in the collection and analysis of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). With this approach the emphasis in collection and analysis of data was on understanding and interpretation. For interpretation of the results, I consulted Heesoon and she authenticated my interpretations. The collection of data was accomplished by:

- the researcher's field notes and written log;
- audio recording of group meetings;
- audio recording of classroom observations and individual discussions;
- Heesoon's written reactions in a journal; and
- post-study interview six months after the project.

The data were analysed using a procedure of data reduction, and confirming findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the data reduction phase, Jorgensen's (1989) ideas were followed. Jorgensen (1989) pointed out that qualitative researchers could consult previous

similar studies for help with data analysis. Jorgensen (1989, p. 110) continued: 'As different ways of arranging materials are explored, you may find it useful to consult or revisit existing literature and theories related to your problem.' This study consulted and used a modified version of Ho and Richards' (1993) categories for data analysis. Consequently, the data were coded according to six general categories or themes. Category one includes theories of teaching; category two includes approaches and methods used in the teachers' classes; category three includes evaluating teaching; category four concerns teachers' self awareness of their teaching; category five includes questions about teaching and asking for advice; and category six includes direct references to the group itself.

This researcher's role in the beginning was that of audio-recorder, classroom observer, and conversation partner in the discussion after class and in the group discussions. The teacher also wrote 4 a journal in order to help her further reflect on her class and our discussions. The idea was that this process would promote reflection.

HEESOOON'S REFLECTIONS

Heesoon's reflections are presented as answers to the two research questions. The first question was: what did Heesoon talk about in the group meetings, individual meetings/observations and what did she write in her journal? Table I outlines her reflections.

Globally, it is obvious that Heesoon used the group meetings (49 entries) more than the other two activities to reflect on her teaching. First, in order to orient the reader to the process, I present some representative quotes on teaching issues that Heesoon made in all three activities.

Group Meetings

In the group meetings, Heesoon was interested in talking about her personal theories of teaching and her students' level of motivation. For example, in the second group meeting she said: 'Good teaching is a feeling; class is not a system. It is the chemistry between the students and the teacher. There is good and bad teaching.' In the third group meeting she said: 'Nobody can teach language. It's a habit, by themselves; they have to feel motivated. Model for them, if they feel bored, the teacher must motivate them.'

Also, Heesoon talked a lot about her students' level of motivation. In the third group meeting she said: 'We must motivate the students because Korea is different from other countries; we have passive learning and the students can't think independently. That's what I found.' In the fourth group meeting we discussed teacher initiated questions in class and Heesoon said: 'Korean college students know everything but if we do not ask easy questions [in English] they get bored. It is beyond their thinking; they stop thinking. The challenge is a language and culture problem, both.' Throughout all the group meetings she attended, Heesoon was a very active participant. She tried to get involved in many of the discussions that the other members had initiated and was always nonjudgmental in her comments. However, Heesoon did not show the same level of participation in the other two modes of reflection: observations and journal writing.

TABLE I. Topics Heesoon talked about in group meetings, individual meetings/ observations and journal writing

Category	Sub-category	Mode of reflection		
		Journal	Group	Individual
Theories of teaching	Theory	2	8	2
	Application	0	0	4
Approaches and methods	Approaches & methods	2	8	1
	Content	0	3	0
	Teacher's knowledge	2	6	1
	Learners	2	6	2
	School context	3	5	1
Evaluating teaching	Evaluating Problems	2	3	0
	Solutions	1	3	4
		0	1	0
Self-awareness	Perception of self as teacher	1	6	1
	Personal growth	1	0	0
	Personal goals	0	0	0
Questions about teaching	Asking for reasons	1	0	1
	Asking for advice	1	0	1
Total		18	49	17

Observations

Heesoon had only two classroom observations and after each class she did not talk about her teaching methods or procedures. Instead she talked mostly about someone observing her class. For example, in her first journal entry she wrote about her anxiety, and ambivalence regarding being observed in class:

I haven't had any experience of being watched. Tom (the researcher) keeps telling me that he is not going to judge me when he is in my class. But I feel fear. I had dreamed a bad dream about my class before I had the class that was to be observed. I don't want to think that this fear is from my inability.

Nevertheless, she still wanted to reflect on her teaching in general. She continued:

‘Anyway, this whole thing [reflection] gives me a big chance to look back on my teaching career and my future one.’

I then observed her teach twice and videotaped (at Heesoon’s request) each lesson. I asked her what she wanted to do (concerning the observation) after each lesson and she said that she had just wanted to look (alone) at the video of the lessons. Additionally, after her second observation she said that she was not keen to have another look at her class. Heesoon said: ‘How can we judge ourselves with only five seconds of looking at our teaching? This is only one way.’ In a later group meeting she said that she did not like people coming into her classroom because ‘I can’t do my best in front of people.’ At the fourth group meeting she said that her schedule was very tight, and: ‘I don’t teach that much. Oh! I am terrible for these class visits to be watched as an ESL teacher. I do not have confidence to share [insights about her class].’ She reconfirmed her uneasiness about having another person observe her class in a later meeting when she said that she did not like people coming into her classroom. Therefore, at Heesoon’s request, and after observing two of her classes, we ended the observation process.

Journal Writing

Heesoon used the journal infrequently for reflection. Out of a total of six entries, she wrote mostly about her class procedures. Just as in the observations, she was somewhat ambivalent about exploring her teaching in general and writing about it in particular. For example, in her first journal entry she wrote: ‘What do I think about my teaching method? Do they learn something from my lecturing? I don’t want to answer these questions. Actually I don’t know.’ She also wrote about her students’ reluctance to speak English in class and related this to her own student experiences. She wrote:

Whenever I use English in class a lot, my students complain because they are very shy and so they are afraid of talking in English and listening to the lesson in English. But they really want to speak English. I can understand them well because I get through [*sic*] that kind of experience when I was a student.

When she wrote about her teaching it was in general terms. In her first journal entry she wrote:

What do I think about my teaching method? Do I make them bored? Do they learn something from my lecturing? I don’t want to answer these questions. Actually, I don’t know.

She wrote a journal entry towards the end of the project reflecting on what she was trying to achieve with her classes during the semester. This reflection was mostly in the form of questions she posed to herself without any answers. She wrote:

I just admit myself as a ‘beginning’ teacher and try to think more about my classes: ‘how can I give my students more clear directions? Do I have to correct their oral errors when they speak? How can I make them motivated toward English? How can I make them smile?’

Even though Heesoon used the journal infrequently (quantitatively) as her mode of

reflection, I nevertheless wanted to check the level (qualitatively) of her reflections in all three modes to see how critically reflective she was.

Therefore, the second research question sought to find out the extent to which Heesoon reflected critically. Richards and Ho's (1993) definition of the differences between descriptive and critical reflection acts as a guide for this study. Also, Bartlett's (1990) definitions of reflection are incorporated. The first phase of reflection for Bartlett is called mapping, and describes what you do as a teacher. This phase corresponds to Ho and Richards' level one of reflection and corresponds to descriptive reflection in this paper, and it does not involve the teacher in critical reflection. However, Bartlett's next four phases involve the teacher in critical reflection and correspond to Ho and Richards' level two type of reflection. In more detail, Bartlett's (1990) phase two, informing, is similar to evaluation in the scheme presented in this paper. Bartlett's (1990) phase three, contesting, is a kind of self-analysis in scheme presented in this paper; his phase four, appraisal, is developing a personal theory; and his phase five, acting, is making a plan for future teaching.

Table II outlines Heesoon's level of reflection in each of the three activities.

TABLE II. Traits of critical reflection in each category as shown in Heesoon's comments in group meetings, individual meetings and journal writing

Category	Mode of reflection		
	Journal	Group	Observation/individual
Theories of teaching	0	8	1
Approaches and methods	2	14	1
Evaluating teaching	1	7	2
Self-awareness	2	4	1
Questions on teaching	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	5	33	5

Globally, the results (as shown in Table II) indicate that Heesoon was more critically reflective (as defined by Ho & Richards, 1993) in the group meetings than in the other two activities. This seems to be logical in that she was more active in the group discussions than during the other two activities. In the group meetings, Heesoon reflected intensely on her approaches and methods of teaching, and especially on her knowledge and experience of the classroom and on the greater school context. She was deeply concerned with her students' learning style and how this and other concerns influenced her teaching style. The following examples show how the group meetings may have been beneficial for Heesoon to reflect critically on these issues.

Heesoon reflected on her students' learning styles. She said: 'Korean students are different from other countries' students, they are passive learners. The students can't think independently.' She continued reflecting on this theme at the following group meeting of 24 September when she commented that Korean College students know a lot but, when confronted with expressing themselves in English, they could not do it clearly. She blames

their passiveness on both a language problem and a cultural trait of passiveness. This has influenced her teaching style. She said:

I am teaching a sophomore class, so they are not good at English that much so, you know, you know, I don't expect too much. Sometimes they never talk. I ask them questions, you know, I'm—I just keep talking ... If they don't speak to me in English, I just drop the subject and do other things.

At the next meeting, on 1 October, Heesoon also commented on her students' passivity while teaching a reading class and how this influenced her teaching. She said: 'My students never talk because the article is not interesting and they want to go through the article. They don't talk. In my mind, I want them to use Korean but I can't ask them because I think the students think they should use English because of the new foreign teachers in the school.'

When asked about the influence of foreign teachers on her teaching, Heesoon said that a new school policy of bringing in new foreign teachers had changed her perception of what and how she should be teaching. In the meeting on 1 October she said: 'There is a teaching evaluation, so I give a lot of materials, and do a lot of activities. Before, I never did this—I do a lot of things. The students are not interested in that. I want my students to talk, not to read, but I have to follow the curriculum.'

Heesoon seems to have used the group meetings to reflect critically on some issues that were causing her concern. By a process of reflection on these issues and by discussing them with other participants at the group meetings, she was able to articulate her thoughts to herself and others. So, what seems to emerge from this analysis is that Heesoon reflects more deeply in a group discussion environment than in journal writing or having someone observe her class.

DISCUSSION

Heesoon's reluctance to be observed while teaching could be the result of any number of reasons. I asked her why she had stopped the observation process and she said that she was not ready for that level of scrutiny by an outsider. This is a valid comment as many other practicing teachers have similar feelings about letting outsiders into their classrooms. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this reluctance in more detail as the teacher just said she was not ready for such scrutiny. I was also interested why Heesoon was reluctant to write about her reflections as this is recommended in the literature as an effective means of reflection for teachers.

Heesoon did not feel comfortable writing about her teaching and preferred group talking as her main mode of reflection; she felt that she could not achieve reflection through the medium of writing. At the last group meeting she revealed the extent of her lack of enthusiasm for writing when she said that the idea of writing a journal entry every week caused her stress: 'I always felt that I had to write something down, but I didn't have anything to write.' I am not sure why she felt that she was under pressure to write, but it may be because the other two participants produced regular journals throughout the 16 weeks. Heesoon stopped writing altogether after the seventh week. It may also have been the case that she was too busy to write regular journal entries.

Heesoon stated that throughout the period of this project she was very busy with an increased teaching load and other pressures from the university she was teaching in. She later wrote that even though she was pressed for time, she nevertheless wanted to reflect on her work:

At first, I hesitated to join the group because of my tight schedule. But when T [the researcher] told me what we would be doing in it, I felt the need to take part, talk about our classes and find out what was happening in them. I couldn't resist pushing myself into it.

In the group discussions Heesoon also found support offered by the other members of the group that is missing in the 'lonely' work of writing about teaching. The group was a forum for her to share her ideas and problems about her teaching life. Talking was sociable and enjoyable for Heesoon but writing was very stressful for her. The group atmosphere was light and a lot of humour was in evidence. In one group meeting she said: 'We teachers should be in a group of ESL teachers. We have to talk about our classes and find out what's good or bad for our students. We should encourage one another to be more efficient teachers.'

It is also conceivable that Heesoon found that writing a journal was of no use to her for reflecting on her practice. Writing by itself does not constitute reflection. Writing was a serious task for Heesoon. It demanded that she deliberate not only on what had happened in her classroom but also on how to write this clearly in a second language that has a completely different rhetorical tradition from her own. There is also a time lag in writing that is not a factor in talking within a group. While talking, group members can test out ideas, ask questions and get immediate responses. Furthermore, ideas can be produced jointly in a group. Towards the end of the project Heesoon said that she had learned a lot from the group members as a result of engaging in dialogue with them. She said: 'I learn lots of things from you all: teaching skills, attitude toward students, enthusiasm for teaching, and most of all, realizing myself as an ESL teacher.'

TAILORING REFLECTION TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Although each mode of reflection was treated separately, it should be noted that any one activity could, and probably did, influence the extent of critical reflection in other activities. Consequently, I suggest a range of modes be provided for English language teachers to reflect on their work. Also, these modes can be tailored to individual teachers' preferences. Heesoon showed a clear preference for talking with other colleagues in a group situation but did not really want to write about her teaching or have anyone observe her classes. Therefore, individual teachers or groups of teachers who want to reflect on their work may want to try out the following activities to see what level of reflection they want to start at.

Any, or all, of the following activities can be used by teachers to reflect; however, each mode of reflection should be negotiated by individuals before they commence reflections: (a) group discussions; (b) classroom observations/discussions (self/pair/group); (c) journal writing (self/pair/group).

Group Discussions

One way to start the reflection process would be to get interested teachers to come together in small groups to talk about their teaching. If the group is meeting in a formal setting, the teacher educator, the group leader (or whoever) should provide encouragement and support for the group. The teacher educator or group leader could also provide feedback for the group on how its members are progressing. If the group is meeting outside any formal system, then all group members have to be equally responsible to keep the group on track. Also, the group should negotiate when, where and how often they want to meet. They should also negotiate an agenda for each meeting and distribute responsibilities evenly among the members.

Classroom Observations/Discussions

Classroom observations should start with the teachers themselves looking at their own teaching. For example, in the pilot study to this project, participants taped their own classes and used a category system to talk non-judgmentally about their teaching. In this way, the teachers could develop more confidence to describe their own teaching, and eventually enter into groups to discuss teaching. Observation can be carried out alone, as in self-observation, and/or pairs (as in critical friendships) can observe each other's class, and/or the group can try to observe each member's classes in turn. As observation can be a sensitive issue in all contexts, both Asian and non-Asian, a discussion of how this can be incorporated into a reflective experience should be negotiated by each individual. Heesoon did not like to have her class observed and this researcher respected her wishes. It may have been the case that she was not ready to have an outsider observe her class or that she was not ready to become so critical of her teaching. Heesoon never really made her reasons clear.

Journal Writing

Journal writing can also be carried out alone in the form of a diary, in pairs writing to and for each other, and/or in the group writing to and for each other. However, the idea that reflection will occur automatically by writing about teaching and result in more effective teaching has been criticized by some teacher educators. For example, Hatton and Smith (1995, p. 43) have remarked that journal entries can sometimes be 'altered to accommodate to the perceived expectations of the reader, rather than to suit the writer's own end'. Also, Naysmith and Palma (1998, p. 67) found that, after building a large element of written reflection into an action research cycle to encourage a more systematic method to record reflections, the 'teachers were, on the whole, not only reluctant, but felt unable to reflect in this way upon their action'.

Teachers may require special training in journal writing before teacher educators can assume that they just record their reflections. This training could take the form of a workshop prior to the start of the reflective period. Teachers could be given models of effective journal writing and asked to follow these models. In other words, journal writing

should have as its main focus teachers' learning about different issues in their work. For example, teachers could be asked to use journal writing to focus on such issues as:

- teachers' learning, development and growth;
- articulating and solving problems that occur inside and outside their classrooms;
- clarifying their beliefs on teaching and their students' learning.

Additionally, time for writing and reading the journals should be built into the process. Groups could read the journals at the start of every meeting, and journals could be e-mailed to participants so that they can be prepared for the meetings.

Trust

Furthermore, trust should be built into any reflective process. As already outlined in the first section to this paper, trust was an important issue for Heesoon. She wrote about it and talked about it in individual meetings with the researcher, but not in the group meetings with the other three participants. The group in this study encountered two distinct stages: the 'getting to know you' stage and the reflective stage. In the beginning the group members sounded each other out, and negotiated their personal and group agendas. On the other hand, this researcher had worked individually with each of the participants before on various different projects, and had brought them together for this period of reflection. However, it will take time for individuals and groups to build up enough trust in each other and in the activities outlined above in order for them to have a deep reflective experience. Heesoon had not reached a position of trust either with herself or with having an outsider observe her class. Future teachers and groups of teachers should take time to build up trust in themselves as teachers and then trust other teachers to help clarify their beliefs about teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

The idea of reflection encompassed in this paper goes beyond the fleeting thought after class. Rather, reflection is seen as Goodman (1991) suggests, 'much more than taking a few minutes to think about how to keep pupils quiet and on task ... Reflection implies a dynamic, "way of being" in the classroom' (p. 60). Heesoon has managed to make a good start in her reflections even though these reflections were mostly at a descriptive level. However, this may be a necessary prerequisite for a deeper reflective experience. She was comfortable in a group situation talking with other teachers but did not want to write about her teaching and did not want to have anyone observe her class; she may not be ready for these activities yet, and/or she may not have found these activities useful for reflection. Furthermore, Heesoon was very busy throughout the period of the project, and this could also have played a part in her reluctance to get into conversations about her individual classes and left her no time to write a journal. Hoover (1994) has observed that reflection is a learned activity; he says it is 'a carefully planned set of experiences that foster a sensitivity to ways of looking at and talking about previously unarticulated beliefs concerning teaching' (p. 84). He also says that this self-analysis requires time and opportunity. Therefore, the fact that journal writing and classroom observations were not

negotiated (beyond the open instructions of ‘Write about what your teaching’ and ‘What do you want me to observe?’) may have contributed to Heesoon’s resistance to reflect in these modes. Consequently, the cycle of reflective activities as presented in this paper may help other teachers to negotiate what should be required in the different modes of reflection.

EPILOGUE

Heesoon needed time to think about the whole experience of reflection that she had encountered for 16 weeks. She was not sure what was happening at the time of the reflection and needed time to reflect on her reflections. Six months after the project Heesoon told me:

During the period the group was meeting, I didn’t actually realise much of [what was happening], just as if I had been journeying through a wood, not being able to see it for the trees. It was a great opportunity for me to find myself as an EFL teacher, to open my mind, to build better relationships with teachers that could allow better ones with my students and to acquire a self-awareness that I could introduce to my students.

Heesoon has since entered a deeper reflective experience: two years after this study, she enrolled in a doctoral programme on English Language Teacher Education.

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