REFLECTIVE PRACTICE THROUGH JOURNAL WRITING AND PEER OBSERVATION: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Journal writing and Peer Observation in an educational context have become popular techniques, with several different types of applications. They have now been used quite widely in both language teaching and in teacher training. However, despite its reported advantages in both teaching and research, there are not many Peer Observation and Diary studies available based on the writing of experienced language teachers. The Teacher participants maintain Journal writing and Peer Observation as a means of reflective practice. They consider these practices as a mirror, which reflects the teacher's own image as a practioner. The post-reflection discussion reveals that the teacher participants believe in reflective practice as an effective means of self-evaluation and of developing sensitivity to students' learning. This paper examines Peer Observation and journal writing of two teachers working on the same language programme in terms of a variety of topic headings, and suggests that reflective practice can be a useful tool for both classroom research and teachers' professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Dewey (1933) made a distinction between 'routine action' and 'reflective action'. Reflective action, on the other hand, involves 'willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development.

It implies, among other things, flexibility, rigorous analysis, and social awareness' (Pollard *et al* 2006: 13). 'Considering that the reflective approach is a self-directed approach which can involve teachers in an ongoing process of examining their teaching and developing strategies for improvement, it appears to be a reliable model of professional development' (Ramanujam 2009: 101).

RATIONALE FOR THE CHOICE OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

This study, which attempted an investigation of the role of reflective practice in enhancing ESL teachers' awareness of their own classroom teaching contributing thereby to their professional development, adopted the case study approach for the purpose, as it was found best suited to the complexity and specificity of the real life phenomenon proposed to be investigated in the study.

DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

After attending a programme on reflective practice, two teachers teaching undergraduate ESL classes at colleges in and around Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, decided to carry out reflective practice through one or more means for their own on-going professional development. The participants were heterogeneous in different aspects, such as age, qualifications, training, experience, and place of work.

Teacher T1 heads the department of English in a degree college in Vuyyuru, about 25 kms from Vijayawada, Krishna (Dt.) India. He has taught English for 31 years. He has a Masters degree in English literature. He has not had any training in teaching English as a second language.

Teacher T2 is a teacher of English working in a degree college in the suburbs of Vijayawada. She has a Masters degree in English literature and 9 years of experience in teaching English and communication skills. She has had no training in teaching English.

This researcher has maintained separate files for each of the two participantteachers with his/her pseudonym.

Before the subjects set about their exploratory practices, this researcher administered them with semi-structured questionnaire. The questions focused on the teachers' beliefs about ESL teaching-learning process, teaching strategies, opinion on reflective practice, and the use of bilingualism while teaching. The participants were led into free discussions with this researcher about her research and about the possible means for improving their professional competence. Each teacher decided to spend a minimum of five minutes to write about his/her experience and reflect on the problems encountered either by introspection or through discussion with a colleague. Also participants were guided to make journal entries after each class, reflecting on their experiences and with suggestions for improvements for the next class. The entries, the teachers made in their journals were unguided, but the list of questions was only to motivate them for the purpose.

The journal entries made by the teacher participants were collected into their files separately, their way of progression qualitatively in day-to-day teaching practice was registered, and the new methods and materials devised because of regular reflection were determined.

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A small discussion on these entries was conducted separately with individual teacher, to arrive at a better conclusion, which proves the effect of reflective practice in language teaching-learning process.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN THE SUBJECTS' REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The researcher's role was that of an observer-cum-participant. She conducted a questionnaire survey of the subjects' beliefs, studied the records of the subjects' reflective practice (such as journal entries), played the role of a peer observer in the case of one of the teachers (Teacher T2), and took part in review discussions with each one of them about reflections. Whenever the participants gave their experiences and opinions, the researcher carefully documented them. When this researcher approached the teacher T1for taking his consent to participate in her research, he readily gave his acceptance. He opted for journal writing.

FINDINGS THROUGH AN INFORMAL INTERVIEW

In an informal interview conducted by the researcher, the teacher expressed his personal opinions about various aspects of ESL teaching.

- ➢ **Reflective practice**

   I have no idea about 'Reflective practice', both in theory and in concept. However, my teaching depends purely on thoroughly thinking about the previous class I have taught. I find it new to document my reflections.
- ➢ **Teaching aids used**

   Besides the black board and the prescribed textbook, I prefer using CDs. I prefer collecting short stories from various books, in order to enable my students to learn English while enjoying it.
- ➢ **Teaching strategies used**

   I take 1-1.30 hrs to prepare for each class. I collect stories and sayings expressing the similar idea as in the lesson. I teach by giving examples from the day-to-day life and popular incidents from the society. I introduce each topic through story telling thus motivating the students and I prefer relating the situation from the text to life incidents, thus sustaining the students' interest through out the class time. I follow the classic method of repeated practice to help the slow learners.
- ➢ **Use of bilingualism**

   I use simple words in English mostly. As my students are from rural background, I am some times forced to use certain words in Telugu, which is their mother tongue, to make them learn the second language with ease.

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- ➢ **Type of questions used**

    I prefer using divergent questions whilst teaching and while summing up the lesson, I prefer referential questions in a way to make the students think about the lesson.

- ➢ **Teacher's attitude towards students' learning English**

    I have got tired teaching English to the rural students. I feel that the learners learn English as one of the subjects and they learn English to get pass marks. However, they need English for getting through job interviews only. 10 students out of 60 try to learn English as language.

- ➢ **English as a spoken language**

    My students do not have a chance to speak in English outside the campus or within the campus. They only try to answer the questions asked within the classroom in English, very often through one-word answers. In spite of all my efforts, it is highly impossible to create an English atmosphere on the campus.

- ➢ **Teacher's beliefs about ESL instruction**

A belief inventory of the teacher was made by administering a questionnaire (Appendix A). The teacher identified the following as her beliefs:

- ➢ As long as students understand what they are saying in an English class, they are actually learning the language.
- ➢ When students make oral errors, it helps to correct them and later teach a short lesson explaining why they made that mistake.
- ➢ Students generally need to understand the grammatical rules of English in order to become fluent in the language.
- ➢ If students understand some of the basic grammatical rules of the language they can usually create lots of new sentences on their own.
- ➢ Students usually need to master some of the basic listening and speaking skills before they can begin to read and write.

REFLECTIONS THROUGH JOURNAL WRITING

The teacher said that he had no idea of 'Reflective Practice' as a theory or as a concept but that his teaching depended purely on thoroughly thinking about the previous class he had taught. Documenting his reflections was a new experience for him.

The teacher prefers story telling as his teaching strategy.

He relates classroom situation to day-to-day experience.

He prefers divergent questions while teaching and referential questions while summing up.

The teacher uses CDs and also collects stories from different books to make his class effective. Sometimes, he uses the students' mother tongue, as most of his students are from rural background and are not used to speaking in English. In the classroom, when they are required to answer questions in English, they respond in monosyllables.

From the statements gathered from the inventory, point to the teacher adopting rule-based, skill-based and function-based approaches to teaching English.

Teacher T1 does not appear to be a reflective practitioner, though he maintains a journal in which he writes about his classroom experiences. But the entries are critical of his learners for their lack of interest and motivation or express his own helplessness in the context of what he perceives to be unfavourable circumstances caused by unsuitable materials and disobedient students, among others. The entries do not indicate any significant reflection on attempts on his part to bring about a change in the situation. Even in the post-reflection conference this researcher had with the teacher, he avoided questions on this aspect and spoke about the value of journal writing in improving the writer's writing ability!

Five entries from the teacher's journal are given below without any analysis or further comments.

Extract I

We took a few extracts from Gandhi's autobiography, made copies of them and asked the students to read them at home. They did not show much interest.

Extract II

In my classes a great number of students have shown revulsion at the questions and question tags in the conversation. After the completion of the lesson the students were asked to write down short conversations on the pattern shown in the lesson. Many of them expressed their disgust at it, though they did the work.

Extract III

The students were divided into batches. Each batch was asked to read a few chapters from any autobiography, it gets from the library and compare its contents and style with those of Nehru.

Entry IV

The whole story is like a modern Telugu film-without much sense.

Entry V

However, I selected a few students who would listen to our words and gave them the work of studying the lesson deeply and sorting out some very important strong points from it. Even those students were reluctant to obey us, but they did some work and showed it to us.

POST-REFLECTION DISCUSSION

The researcher had a 15-minute discussion with the participant teacher. When he was asked to respond to his own "reflective practice" through journal writing, he sounded sceptical but spoke with considerable enthusiasm about the value of journal writing in developing one's writing ability:

> *Journal writing is a useful practice. A teacher who writes always economizes on both his thoughts and words. Every one gets a few excellent thoughts, some useful thoughts and a large number of unuseful thoughts. Journal writing teaches him to make succinct expressions of paramount value. Thus he is forced to use a 'filtered' language which causes more delight to him and less trouble to the students. Journal writing widens the scope of his thinking. But consciously recording the thoughts may not be realistic.*

At the informal meeting with the teacher T2, this researcher, sought her consent to participate in this study, explained the significance of reflective practice in effective teaching, as well as the procedures for reflective practice. The teacher chose peer observation. As her colleagues were reluctant to observe the teacher's classroom teaching due to rigid time schedules, this researcher herself decided to act as her observer.

FINDINGS THROUGH AN INFORMAL INTERVIEW

In an informal interview conducted by the researcher, the teacher expressed her personal opinions about various aspects of ESL teaching.

Reflective practice

> *Though every day classroom teaching has given me lot of experience and trained me for an effective ESL class, an informal meeting with the researcher has provided me with an acquaintance with this concept of reflective practice. Of all the methods of reflective practice said by the researcher, I prefer peer observation because it is the liveliest method, which an give an immediate feed back of the class through discussion session after each class and it is less expensive as it involves no technology.*

Teaching aids used

> *I prefer books, newspapers and pictures as teaching aids to explain the English lesson effectively. Very often, I prefer referring to my personal experiences as examples to compare and contrast the situations given in the lessons.*

Teaching strategies used

> *Often I divide my class into groups of 5 or 6 depending on the strength of the class and give them tasks. I keep guiding them when they are doing their tasks. Later, I combine the class and ask students to share their experience to others. I make it a point to ask them to speak in English even when their English is not so good.* 194

- Opinion about bilingualism
- *Very rarely, I shift to mother tongue. Mostly I use very simple words and encourage students to use only English. But when the students fail to understand the lesson I need to give illustrations in Telugu so as to make the point clear to the students.*
- Type of questions used
- *Initially the questions are related to the topic. Later the questions are to draw the comprehension details of the lessons. Finally, the questions help them to summarize the sub-topics in order to recall what they have studied.*
- Teacher's attitude towards her student's learning English
- *As my students are from Telugu medium of instruction, they are poor at understanding English. They are sometimes disappointed when I ask them to read their lessons independently. Until they come to degree classes, they were used to lecture method and notes given by the teacher. To motivate them to learn the language is great burden for me.*
- Opinion of the teacher on English as spoken language
- *They (My students) don't speak English at all outside the classroom and even within the classroom as they know little English which may not help them to perform tasks. It is difficult for them to answer the questions related to their lessons.*
- Teacher's beliefs about ESL instruction

A belief inventory of the teacher was made by administering a questionnaire (Appendix A). The teacher identified the following as her beliefs:

- Language can be thought of as a set of grammatical structures, which are learned consciously and controlled by the language learner.
- When students make oral errors, it usually helps them to provide them with lots of oral practice with the language patterns, which seem to cause them difficulty.
- It is important to provide clear, frequent, precise presentations of grammatical structures during English language instruction.
- When students make oral errors, it is best to ignore them, as long as you can understand what they are trying to say.
- Students usually need to master some of the basic listening and speaking skills before they can begin to read and write.

PEER OBSERVATION

Based on the feedback obtained from the interview with the teacher T2, the researcher decided to use five observation instruments, to be used by both the teacher participant and the observer. In addition to these, the observer had decided to write a detailed narrative of the classes being observed. With schedule in hand, the researcher went to the teacher in private and explained the study.

In doing so, she stressed the following three points:

> ➤ **Results would be kept confidential; the observations would be used anonymously in the researcher's thesis;**
> ➤ **The observer's role was only to observe, not to criticize; and**
> ➤ **The teacher would decide what the observer would do.**

To make sure that the teacher understood the above said points, the researcher who played the role of the observer, and gave guidelines in a 'Do's and Don'ts' format for both the teacher and the observer.

AN ANALYSIS OF CASE II

Teacher T2 feels that reflection through peer observation is the liveliest method of professional development for a teacher because the teacher could get feedback directly from the observer through post-observation discussion. She seldom uses the mother tongue of the students but made very good use of newspapers, pictures, and sometimes her own life experiences as teaching aids. She feels unhappy about the linguistic standards of her students and says that they are not able to answer the questions asked in the class in English.

The teacher's choice of statements from the inventory shows that she prefers rule-based, skill-based, and function-based approaches.

This researcher observed six classes of Teacher T2. The duration of each class was 50 minutes. The first class the researcher observed was a I B.Com. class where she was asked to observe the overall teacher behaviour, while the teacher was teaching 'parts of speech'. For about 30 minutes, the lesson was teacher-fronted. Then the teacher observed that the students were passive and were getting disturbed. Therefore, she cracked a joke, which attracted the attention of the students, and she started teaching again. But the way she wrote on the blackboard was of concern. While teaching, she scribbled here and there in a haphazard way, causing some difficulty for the students. There were no activities and it was hardly interactive. Soon after the class, the teacher and the observer met, the observations were discussed, and the teacher was not defensive when the not-so-effective classroom techniques of her were brought to her notice. However, the observer's feedback helped her become more careful about her blackboard work.

The same procedure was a followed for the second class also, but the class was interactive and the teacher introduced some activities as it was a listening class. The observer was asked to observe the teacher-student interaction. While taking part in the activities set by the teacher, many students tried to get their doubts clarified. However, the teacher could not satisfy all the students owing to time constraint. In the post-observation discussion, the teacher decided to set group activities, so as to involve all the students within the class duration.

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Thus, the teacher not only introduced interaction responding to feedback but was thinking of ways of making it more effective. But this time she could not evaluate the knowledge gained by the students through the activity. In the post-observation discussion, the observer suggested time management.

In the third class, the teacher was found to be conducting activities on 'voices' in a planned way, by dividing the class into teams of two and setting a transformation exercise in voices. She went round clarifying their doubts, but she failed to reinforce the right response from the students and was also found ineffective in evaluating all the student performances. The teacher was informed even of these two problems by the observer. The observer's feedback made her more cautious of her classroom teaching.

While observing the fourth class, the observer noticed that the time given to the students to answer the questions asked by the teacher was limited, and that they found it very discouraging. The teacher was informed of this difficulty by the observer and was taken care of by the teacher in the later session. While observing the fifth class of Teacher T2, the observer noticed that the teacher was eliciting the difference between the sentences denoting instruction and the sentences reporting the work done. She also found the teacher correcting and guiding the students' responses. The teacher through recalling her students' previous knowledge of some chemical process, made her class more effective.

After the sixth observation session, the teacher was also informed of the other suitable authentic sources of teaching aids, which the teacher found to be interesting. On the first day of observation, the teacher felt a little nervous. However, later, as she found the feedback valuable in effecting improvement in her teaching, she became relaxed.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Decisions About Timing Through Reflective Practice
The reflective practice of the teachers in this study helped them to be sensitive to the time needed by the students to carry out an activity, and make adjustments in time allocation. It also helped them estimate the number of activities that could be set in a period. Furthermore, it helped the teacher identify and assess the attention span of the students.

Decisions about Solving The Students' Problems Through Reflective Practice
Though the classes differed slightly in 'personality' and 'perception', surprisingly, the kinds of problems that the students faced were rather similar.The teachers could identify the students' problems, tried out different methods of explanation within the lesson series, and thus arrived at workable method of solving the students' problems.

Before the process of reflection, the teacher taught a 'poem' by merely explaining the meanings of the words literally. Constant reflection made him realize the difficulty of his students' in understanding. He decided on the contextual narration of poems.

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The teacher realized the need for practice exercises and individual attention for teaching pronunciation. He found a way of helping the students who were finding it difficult to attempt writing exercises, by making them learn expressions suitable for formal and informal occasions.

Finding the prescribed textbook beyond the level of her students' comprehension, she used alternative materials to develop the habit of reading and to give the students a taste of success. While teaching grammar, the teacher resorted to the elicitation technique: she asked the students to describe their routine.

Teacher T1 realized the need for 'cooperative learning'. Teacher T2 sets team activities to enable the students summarize lessons.

Better Decisions about The Use Of Visual Aids And
Inventing New Strategies Through Reflective Practice
Reflective practice has led Teacher T1to use CD and short stories and sayings of famous people besides the prescribed textbooks. Teacher T2 uses books, newspapers and wall posters as teaching aids.

Teacher T2 prefers teamwork. She considers herself as a trainer facilitating her students' language learning in a better and easier manner through interaction. She prefers using *why*-type questions to test students' comprehension skills. She has identified motivating students as the most important task for the teacher.

She says that as a teacher of English, he had a problem with vocabulary and grammar initially and with phonetics in later years of his service, but he could regain confidence through persistent reflecting. He believes that grammar should be taught in a scientific manner:

> *As a beginner, I could not present my ideas properly; there was the problem of vocabulary. I found it difficult to find suitable expressions for the ideas on the subject. Teaching grammar was another problematic area. ...Grammar should be taught in a scientific manner...Again after twenty years I had another problematic experience as an ESL teacher. This time it is the phonetics... After thorough study with practice I became well equipped with the subject and well versed in teaching this topic.*

The teacher expressed positive attitude towards the video recording of his classroom teaching. He feels that lessons on video provide holistic awareness about one's own teaching. He also says that, through recording, teachers can improve their teaching skills, which in turn helps in students' understanding:

> *Video recording of the classroom practice will help us a lot in improving our teaching skills. By seeing the recorded version we come to know how exactly we teach. ... video recording can also help us in presentation skills.*

The teacher feels that video recording is preferable to journal writing because the former will help teachers not only in improving their teaching skills but also in assessing the attention of the students: through their facial expressions, the teacher can assess the extent of learning taking place in his/ her classroom:

Of the two means used, i.e., journal writing and video recording I think that video recording is the more useful and feasible one for usage in our institutional setting because video recording will help us not only in improving our teaching skills but also in assessing the attention of the students. When the whole class room activity is recorded we can watch later how the students are receiving and understanding our lesson; through their reactions and responses, their body language and expressions we can understand to what extent they have received our teaching.

Building On The Familiar

A significant insight that all the teachers derived from their reflections was that, for better learning to emerge, they should attempt to build on what was already familiar to their learners.

Teacher T1 related the prescribed 'The thief's story' to the known story of a Telugu film to enrich the students' understanding.

While teaching 'parts of speech' in one of her classes, teacher T2 made her students define each one by referring to known words.

Thus, reflection enabled each teacher participant to successfully utilize the students' earlier knowledge either to motivate them or to teach them a new concept.

Opportunities For Active Involvement

Teachers T1 used referential questions that called for the learners' opinions or interpretations, thus inculcating reasoning skills. While teaching 'The picture of the Universe', he made his students refer to biographies of great people and learn characters, which would lead them to build up a good personality. Teacher T1 divided the class into small groups. He took them to the library and asked them to refer to biographies and then come for a discussion.

Taking Advantage Of Wide Variety Of Resources

While teaching a lesson entitled 'In London', Teacher T1 used a few extracts from Gandhi's autobiography and made the students discuss the details in groups.While teaching 'The Thief's Story', the teacher related the lesson to a contemporary Telugu film, thus making his students take interest in the story in English.

Teacher T2used grammar exercises extracted from reliable authentic sources other than the prescribed texts for conducting purposeful classroom activities.

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Developing A Sense Of Belonging With The Classroom

Teacher T1 tried to be one among the participants in group activities and thus made her students feel at ease in the classroom.

Teachers T2 learned the importance of interaction in the classroom through reflection, and used several activities.

They asked simple content based declarative questions and made the students practise drill type exercises, thus creating a scope for student-teacher and student-student interaction. Teachers T1 prefer interaction as an ideal activity where students get an opportunity to express their opinions and ideas on the content taught. He taught a lesson prescribed based on Gandhiji's biography, 'My Experiments with Truth' and suoght the students' opinions on the feasibility of the ethics in present-day society.

Sensitivity To Learners' Difficulties

While teaching grammar, Teacher T2 realized the difficulty of their students in learning through the inductive method and switched over to the well-accepted deductive method.

Teacher T2 realized the need for group activities and for co-operative learning to make the teaching-learning process interactive.

Seeking Advice And Outside Support

The data collected indicate that the teachers realized the need for collaborative work, and sought advice from their senior colleagues to solve their classroom problems and for their self-evaluation.

Utilizing Effective Classroom Management Strategies

The teacher participants were found to realize the significance of group activities for creating interaction among their students.

Teacher T2 through discussions with her peer observer realized the need for using the blackboard properly so that it could serve the purpose better.

Maintaining Flexibility And A Positive Attitude

Teacher T1 was found taking his students to the library and allowing them to read other biographies of great people and get involved in group discussions.Teacher T2was found to be moving from structured instruction to a student-centered one. She was found teaching grammar through the elicitation method, thus ensuring students' active interaction.

Promoting Learner Autonomy

The entries of Teachers T1 and T2 indicate that they made sincere attempts to create a learning environment where their students felt that they could experiment Teachers T2 adopted inductive teaching of grammar and learned to avoid explicit descriptions, explanations, and technical terms.

Integrating Language Skills and Resources

The teacher participants learned to integrate language skills while designing activities for their students. By means of group discussions and pair work among the students, the teacher participants learned to integrate listening, speaking and reading skills. Teacher T1 made his students utilize the library resources to collect information related to the lesson prescribed, and the task served to integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Teachers' Initial And Post-Reflection Perceptions About Reflective Practice

The responses to the questionnaire and the interview indicated that the participant teachers were enthusiastic and interested in trying this practice in their day-to day teaching. Teacher T2 stated that she was optimistic about the usefulness of reflective practice for their professional development. However, Teacher T1 was rather skeptical about its feasibility and viability. But he said that he was willing to experiment with it and takes part in this study. All the participants, were however, mildly uneasy about the "experiment" because it was something new to them and were even unsure of what they might discover during the process. After experimenting with reflective practice, the participants became confident about the usefulness of this process. This confidence was the direct outcome of the significant gains they had made in their personal and professional development. They perceived reflective practice as a process that would raise teachers' awareness of their practice as teachers, improve their teaching practice resulting in improved learner outcomes, and give them greater confidence in their own ability to organize their development.

However, they expressed some concerns also which need to be recorded here. One concern was the amount of time that the process of self-evaluation demanded, though they conceded that the gains far outweighed the demand. The second concern was with regard to the video-recording of teaching. Teacher T2, who opted for peer observation, reported that, finding a peer who had leisure during her class hours turned out to be very difficult. However, all the participants found journal writing much less demanding and much more rewarding as it calls for transparency and sincerity.

CONCLUSION

Two college-level teachers of English who were committed to improving their classroom practice set about the task of reflecting on themselves and their teaching.
The reflection led to a series of processes.

They found themselves gaining a deeper understanding of several classroom issues, and developed, because of the understanding, alternative conceptions of teaching and alternative instructional practices.

This led them to try out the alternative ideas in their classrooms and they found the experience empowering and transformative in their personal growth and professional development.

Observing this transformative process over a period of a year and a half from the records the teachers have maintained with remarkable perseverance and from the discussions she has had with them, this researcher has drawn some conclusions which have significant implications for ESL teacher learning.

The conclusions, and the recommendations which derive from the conclusions, are set forth in the following sections.

> - The reflections unmistakably point to changes taking place in the teachers' practices. They began to question their actions within the classes and became more critical and distanced towards their habitual practices. For instance, they found their usual way of lecturing in class ineffective and were moving towards the 'elicitation method'. They started using activities, different teaching materials, and the deductive method of teaching grammar. In general, all the subjects realized the need to be sympathetic towards their learners.
> - In all the cases under investigation in this study, the teachers' classroom decisions were informed ones because they were based on inquiry-derived understandings because of reflective practice.
> - The decisions the teachers made and the actions they took proved to be experiences of educational value for them. This happened because their reflection on, and inquiry into, their classroom practices took place not as a set of prescriptive skills but rather as a mindset which Dewey (1933) described as a set of attitudes consisting of open-mindedness (*seeking alternatives*), responsibility (*recognizing consequences*), and whole heartedness (*continual self-examination*).
> - Their reflective practices through journal writing or peer observation or video recording created what Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 42) call "a new sense of meaning and significance" which brought a new sense of meaning and significance to their classroom work.
> - The cases also show that the teachers constructed their own explanations of teaching derived from their own practices, and the explanations (or "knowledge") were socially negotiated and restructured within their classrooms. This is in keeping with both socio-cultural theories that emphasize the fundamentally social nature of learning (Neaman, Griffin, and Cole 1989; Vygotsky 1978) and theories of situated cognition that maintain that knowledge entails lived practices, not just accumulated information (Chaiklin and Lave 1996; Lave and Wenger 1991).
> - It will not be wide of the mark to conclude from (e) above that the teachers' reflective practice involving the processes identified in the introductory paragraph of this chapter indicate their progress towards being producers of legitimate knowledge out of their own lived realities as professionals who are capable of constructing and sustaining their own professional development over time.

- ➢ What stems from (f) above is significant. The reflective practice of the teachers' tend to add force to the emerging "new scholarship" (Anderson and Herr 1999) which promises to alter the traditional knowledge base of teacher education consisting of generalizable knowledge about good teaching and good teachers produced by educational researchers who are outsiders to classroom life, and infuse it with "insider" knowledge.
- ➢ It is evident from the foregoing that reflective practice has considerable potential for the ongoing professional development of teachers in general and ESL teachers in particular and that it is usable and effective factors which will be valued by academic staff education systems.

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