

Reflective Teaching in Second Language Teacher Education: An Overview

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Reflective teaching has become a dominant paradigm in second language teacher education in recent years. This paper reviews the conceptions and practice of reflective teaching in second language teacher education. The first part of the paper identifies five orientations to reflective teaching in the training and development of second language teachers: reflective teaching as thoughtful practice, as a model of teacher preparation, as organized professional development, as classroom inquiry, and as a means to social justice. The second part of the paper outlines the methods and strategies that have been proposed for implementing reflective teaching in preservice teacher education programmes and in professional development activities for serving language teachers. The paper finishes with a critique of reflective teaching as it is conceived and practised in second language teacher education. This review will show that in the field of second language teacher education, more effort is needed in defining reflective teaching and reflection, and in researching the process of language teachers' reflection and its effect on classroom teaching.

Key words: reflective teaching; second language teacher education; second language teaching

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Reflective teaching has been a major movement since the eighties in teacher education (Calderhead, 1989; Cruickshank & Applegate, 1981; Gore, 1987; Zeichner, 1987). The field of second language teacher education did not wait long to start advocating the notion of reflective teaching (e.g., Bartlett, 1990; Wallace, 1991). This paper reviews the development of reflective teaching in second language teacher education (SLTE). Special attention will be paid to how the notion of reflective teaching is conceived by writers in SLTE and how the idea of reflective teaching has been put into practice.

Although similar reviews have been conducted for mainstream teacher education (e.g., Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990), this review is warranted since, as pointed out by Fradd & Lee (1998), SLTE is complex and unique in many ways. Lange (1990) underscores the fact that many ESL teacher education programmes in USA are in the form of Master's courses, and these are often oriented more towards linguistics and language acquisition than they are towards teaching and learning. In the UK, Williams (1994) identifies two features which render the English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher-training discipline unique. The first is that ELT teacher-training is conducted in almost all parts of the world, and "this immediately raises vital questions such as cultural appropriateness, political influences, teacher background and competence, pupil expectations, cost, and accountability" (p. 214). (This point has similarly be emphasized by Holliday (1994).) The second feature is the vast diversity of ELT training programmes, which range from university-based preservice teacher education programmes to short ELT teacher certification courses run by private institutions.

In light of the uniqueness of SLTE, and the current fervour for reflective teaching among second language teacher educators, it is therefore worth examining in greater depth how reflective teaching is conceived and practised in the preparation and development of second language teachers.

This paper is in three parts. The first part reviews conceptions of reflective teaching in SLTE. The second part summarizes the suggestions made by writers in SLTE for implementing reflective practice. The third part is a critique of reflective teaching in SLTE, based on the overview presented in the first two sections.

Conceptions of Reflective Teaching in SLTE

The section represents an attempt to capture the various conceptions of reflective teaching in SLTE. Following the example by Zeichner and Liston (1996), and Carter and Anders (1996), this review is organized according to the emphases that different writers attach to as they attempt to portray reflective teaching. As in mainstream teacher education, there is not a single conception that all writers in SLTE adhere to. To most writers, reflective teaching is made up of a number of attributes, and as a result there is overlap between different conceptions. The conceptions summarized below, therefore, are not mutually exclusive. This paper identifies five orientations to reflective teaching in SLTE.

Reflective teaching as thoughtful practice

This might be regarded as a weak version of reflective teaching. Under this conception, reflective teaching is a disposition to think about one's teaching practice, instead of passively following routinized procedures that one has established over the years. Reflective teaching then constitutes nothing more than mindful teaching.

Wallace (1996) asserts that "it is normal for teachers, from time to time, to informally evaluate various aspects of their professional expertise" (p. 292). Wallace (1998) refers to this kind of contemplating about one's teaching as "informal reflection" (p. 13). Writers who subscribe to the conception of reflective teaching as thoughtful practice do not usually define "reflection" in great detail. For example, Tanner and Green (1998) purport to follow a reflective approach in their design of tasks for language teachers,

but explain their “reflective model of teacher education” as a practice whereby “you reflect both on your (teaching) experiences ... and on your past experiences as a language learner” (p. iv).

Wallace (1998) has cautioned that thinking more about teaching does not always result in improved practice: “Contemplating problems does not necessarily lead to solving them. Indeed sometimes such a process is not even therapeutic: mentally rehearsing certain experiences can lead to an intensification of unpleasant emotions without suggesting any way forward” (p. 13).

Reflective teaching as a model of teacher preparation

This represents a shift from the traditional approach to SLTE, which has been more prescriptive in nature, to a more constructivist, experiential approach to preparing language teachers (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). This change of orientation has been influential in second language teacher education in the last decade (Freeman, 1994; Pennington, 1996; Richards, 1990).

Wallace (1991) refers to the traditional approach as the “applied science” model, which treats theory and practice as if they were two separate entities. Wallace asserts that much of the “theory” in SLTE is not based on empirical evidence, and he prefers to call it “received knowledge”, which consists of methodological prescriptions meted out by influential writers in second language teaching. Wallace argues that received knowledge is not sufficient in nurturing competent language teachers, and calls for more emphasis on experiential learning in the preparation of language teachers.

Wallace contends that “ways should be found of making the relationship (between received knowledge and experiential learning) reciprocal, not one-way, so that the trainee can reflect on the received knowledge in the light of classroom experience, and so that classroom experience can feed back into the received knowledge sessions” (1991, p. 55). Wallace proposes a reflective model of teacher preparation, which emphasizes the link between theory and practice.

The need to bridge the gap between theory and practice in teacher preparation has been echoed by Williams (1994). Williams emphasizes the need for learning to be constructivist and personally significant for the student teacher:

If our aims are for the training to be relevant to the different participants and contexts, then what is important is that these new ideas, views, or theories are personally significant to the trainee teachers themselves, and are not pre-determined by the trainer Thus reflection must form a crucial part of a training methodology, which must incorporate the elements of choice, decision-making, and ownership of ideas. (p. 218)

Williams proposes the following eight principles which should guide a constructivist, reflective approach to teacher preparation:

- developmental
- culture-sensitive
- non-prescriptive
- emphasis on reflecting on experience and theorizing from it
- theoretical input should be processed in light of previous experience
- trainees' experience should be valued
- trainer and trainee learning from each other
- course content should be negotiated with trainees

The proposal to adopt a reflective approach in SLTE has gained much support in recent years. There have been several attempts to follow a reflective model in teacher education at a whole programme level (e.g., Kwo, 1996; Lange, 1990; Wallace, 1991).

Reflective teaching as organized professional development

The importance of continuing, lifelong, professional development of language teachers has been reiterated by many writers in SLTE. Some writers have proposed participation in organized activities as a means of promoting reflective practice. Parrott's (1993) approach is to use tasks which teachers work on collaboratively. Parrott purports to follow the reflective model of

Wallace (1991), but while Wallace is more concerned with the training of preservice teachers, Parrott is more interested in the professional development of serving teachers: "Developing professional competence involves teachers identifying their own assumptions about the nature of language and of learning and teaching" (p. 1).

In a similar vein, Wajnryb (1992) promotes the use of observation tasks as a means of bringing about professional development. Wajnryb applies the concept of "the reflective practitioner" by Schon (1983) to teaching, and characterizes the reflective teacher as someone "who is discovering more about their own teaching by seeking to understand the processes of teaching and learning in their own and others' classrooms" (p. 9).

Ur (1996) is also interested in teachers' professional development, but she is concerned that some approaches of reflective practice rely on teachers' existing knowledge as the only source of input. Responding to Wallace's (1991) reflective model, she writes:

My only reservation is that this model can tend to over-emphasize experience. Courses based on it have sometimes used the (student-) teachers themselves as almost the sole source of knowledge, with a relative neglect of external input - lectures, reading, and so on - which help to make sense of the experiences and can make a very real contribution to understanding. As I see it, the function of teacher reflection is to ensure the processing of any input, regardless of where it comes from, by the individual teacher... Thus a fully effective reflective model should make room for external as well as personal input. (p. 6)

Ur argues for "enriched reflection", which is the incorporation of (a) vicarious experience, (b) other people's observation, (c) other people's experiments, and (d) input from professional research, theorizing, into the various stages of the reflective cycle.

In sum, the nurturing of the reflective practitioner has become the goal of many professional development activities for second language teachers in recent years. Rather than re-training serving teachers in the implementation of new methods and techniques of language teaching, these reflective

activities value teachers' own curriculum practice and encourage reflection on such practice through various means (e.g., Tanner & Green, 1998; Kamhi-Stein & Galvan, 1997; Wallace, 1998; Ho, 1995; Richards & Ho, 1998).

Reflective teaching as classroom inquiry

A number of writers have proposed that teachers should systematically study their own teaching as a means of reflection. This involves collecting first-hand data from one's own classroom, analyse and reflect on it. Although the purpose of such activities is still teachers' professional development, the emphasis of this conception of reflective teaching is on organized data-collection. Within this conception of reflective teaching, three slightly different emphases can be identified: (1) classroom-based inquiry, (2) teacher as researcher, and (3) action research. All three involve the collection of data from one's classroom.

1. Classroom-based inquiry

The view of Richards and Lockhart (1994) best sums up the classroom-based inquiry emphasis. Richards and Lockhart stress that their method "aims to develop a reflective approach to teaching, that is, one in which teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching" (p. 1). Richards and Lockhart propose a number of methods for collecting data about one's teaching, as well as a list of substantive issues which teachers can investigate. Although most of the methods suggested by Richards and Lockhart are also employed by educational researchers, the emphasis of Richards and Lockhart is not on teachers conducting rigorous research, but on obtaining first-hand data as a basis for reflection.

2. Teacher as researcher

Some writers have placed more emphasis on the idea of teacher as researcher. One of the proponents of teacher research in second language teaching is

van Lier (1988), who asserts that one way to bridge the gap between theory and practice, as well as that between researcher and teacher, is to induct teachers into classroom research (p. 27). Allwright and Bailey's (1991) rationale for teacher research is that, as there is no best method which will suit every language classroom, what will really help a teacher improve her teaching is for her to understand her learners by means of classroom research. Allright and Bailey refer to this practice as "exploratory teaching" (p. 197).

Nunan (1989) also supports the idea of teacher-researcher. His rationale for teacher research is that rather than following slavishly methods proposed by the gurus in language teaching methodology, teachers benefit from adopting "an experimental approach to incorporating these ideas into their classrooms" (p. 98). For Nunan, "it is far more satisfactory, and professionally rewarding, to establish a small-scale classroom experiment to monitor, observe and document the effect of the new methods or materials on learner language, learning outcomes, classroom climate, patterns of group interaction ..." (p. 98). However, while Richards and Lockhart (1994) are more concerned with the reflection triggered by data collection, Nunan is more interested in teacher research per se. For Nunan, teacher research is organized and collaborative, the result of which should stand up to tests of reliability and validity, and should be publishable.

3. *Action research*

A number of writers in SLTE, while advocating inquiry by teachers, have drawn on the idea of action research from general educational research proposed by, for example, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), Carr and Kemmis (1986), and Elliott (1991). In research on second language teaching and learning, not all writers agree on the same definition of action research (Nunan, 1992, p. 18), but most writers would agree on two defining characteristics: first, action research originates from a problem in classroom teaching; second, classroom inquiry should lead to teacher action. Quite a few writers have suggested action research as a means of promoting reflection practice (e.g., Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Nunan, 1990; Ur, 1996,

p. 328; Wallace, 1991, 1998; Kwo, 1994). But unlike the views of Allwright and Bailey (1991) and van Lier (1988), who advocate teacher research as such, for Wallace (1998), the purpose of action research is “not to turn the teacher into a researcher, but to help him or her to continue to develop as a teacher, using action research as a tool in this process” (p. 18).

Reflective teaching as a means to social justice

This view of reflective teaching in SLTE is markedly different from the others, as this conception is concerned more with what happens outside the classroom than inside. Van Lier (1994) has pointed out that second language teaching does not happen in a vacuum. A host of contextual factors affect what a teacher can do in the classroom. Hedge and Whitney (1996) have also highlighted some power issues involved in ELT. The most representative writer advocating reflective teaching as a means to social justice is probably Barlett (1990).

Barlett (1990) argues that teachers need to critically reflect on certain fundamental issues in language teaching. Barlett follows the line of thinking of Zeichner (1994), and argues that teaching is “engaging the learner, the entire person, both inside and outside the classroom” (p. 204). A teacher’s reflection, thus, should not just focus on day-to-day teaching, but should also address the relationship between the work of a teacher and her membership in society at large. Reflective teaching means thinking beyond one’s instructional techniques; that is, it should also cover the “why” issues, not just the “how to” problems.

Barlett refers to this kind of reflection as “critical reflective teaching”, its advantage being that “asking why gives us the power and we will then be able to transform our everyday classroom life” (p. 205). He then provides examples of questions that teachers should ask under his conception of critical reflective teaching: “What counts as knowledge in second language teaching? How is knowledge in language teaching organized?” (p. 206). The questions that language teachers should continue to explore in cycles of reflection throughout their careers are:

- What do I do as a teacher?
- What is the meaning of my teaching?
- How did I come to be this way?
- How might I teach differently?
- What and how shall I now teach?

It can be seen from these questions that Barlett's conception of reflective teaching moves beyond the sphere of instructional effectiveness.

Conceptions of reflective teaching in SLTE: A summary

In mainstream teacher education, Griffiths and Tann (1992) have lamented that the term "reflective teaching" has been used so much that sometimes "it is nothing more than thinking" (p. 71). The above outline demonstrates the lack of consensus as to what constitutes reflective teaching in SLTE. Reflection teaching could simply mean thoughtful practice; it could also be represented as a more elaborate model such as that proposed by Wallace (1991) and Ur (1996). Some writers see reflective teaching as a disposition by teachers to think more about their practice, while others emphasize classroom-based inquiry as a basis for reflection. Reflective teaching, for some writers, is a model for preservice teacher preparation; for others, it represents action by serving teachers to develop their professional attitude and competence. For Barlett (1990), reflective teaching leads to teacher empowerment, as language teachers acquire a critical understanding of their role in the wider society.

Roberts (1998) has commented on the vagueness of the notion of reflective teaching in SLTE: "... the term reflection is vague. As a result there may be great variation in the nature of 'reflective activities' in language teacher education programmes because providers conceptualize it differently. Reflection may be seen as conscious self-assessment according to the formal criteria of one's initial teacher education course at one end of the scale, to the exploration of tacit personal metaphors of teaching at the other" (p. 53). Roberts contends that we should resort to the notion of reflection first put forward by Dewey (1910), and define reflection as "the ability to inter-

pret a task or problem from a number of standpoints rather than a single view determined by a person's assumptions and tacit personal theories" (Roberts, 1998, p. 47).

The Practice of Reflective Teaching in SLTE

The literature on reflective teaching in SLTE shows that reflective teaching is implemented in two ways. One way is to attempt to organize a reflective curriculum for preservice teacher education. The other is to promote certain activities that will foster reflective practice among serving teachers.

Reflective curricula for second language teacher preparation

As shown in the review in the first section, some writers, such as Wallace (1991) and Williams (1994), think of reflective teaching as a model of teacher preparation. In general teacher education, Cruickshank and Applegate (1981) have prescribed a set of procedures for implementing reflective teaching in preservice teacher education programmes, especially in relation to the teaching practicum. It would be interesting to see how the idea of reflective teaching is realized at the programme level within SLTE.

On the whole, the literature on SLTE is not short on suggestions of principles for implementing reflective teaching in preservice programmes, but there has been a scarcity of actual attempts at designing what may be called a reflective curriculum for preservice programmes. Lange (1990), for example, proposes that a preservice programme that aims to nurture reflective teachers should consist of the following five components: (1) competence in a second language, (2) understanding of how the target language is taught, (3) practice in the application of knowledge about the subject and teaching in teaching situations, (4) opportunities to reach an understanding of both the art and the craft of teaching, and (5) evaluation of teaching. Similar efforts in proposing principles for a reflective curriculum have been made by Williams (1994), Richards (1998), Roberts (1998), and Wallace (1991).

Pennington (1996) contends that, in organised inservice teacher development programmes, development of reflectivity may be carried out in the context of an innovation in teaching, where teachers are introduced to and try out a new teaching idea (e.g., process writing) or new materials. They then elicit feedback from others, and reflect on such input. Based on this input, teachers then formulate further goals and strategies to implement their new understandings. This process is to be repeated as cycles of input-reflection-action. As to the substantive issues, Pennington suggests that a reflective teacher development programme might progress in three stages concentrating on topics to do with (1) classroom tasks, (2) theory and practice, and (3) ethics and politics, respectively.

Despite the suggestions that have been made, with a handful of exceptions, there have not been many actual attempts in implementing a reflective approach at a programme level. Wallace (1991) has described the design of a four-year B.Ed. (TESOL) in the UK, and Lange (1990) a postbaccalaureate programme in TESOL in the USA, that has incorporated certain course components that emphasize the interface between theoretical input and field experience. Stein-Kamhi and Galvan (1997) implemented a project that adopted a "critical reflection approach" to teacher development. A group of 25 Egyptian EFL teachers were paired with local ESL teachers in a school district in the USA. The Egyptian teachers observed ESL classes taught by the local teachers. After lesson observation, guided reflective activities were conducted to help the Egyptian teachers reflect on their own practice. However, the efforts described above are still far from what may be called "a whole-programme approach" to the preparation and development of reflective teachers.

The innovation reported in Kwo (1994, 1996) probably comes very close to the idea of a whole-programme approach. This one-year preservice programme at The Hong Kong University was designed in such a way that the timing of the field experience and student teaching, the learning modes, and the stated roles of trainer and student teachers, would work together to effect a reflective approach to SLTE. For example, student teachers partici-

pated in three weeks of field experience four weeks after the commencement of the programme. This provided, in Wallace's (1991) terminology, an opportunity for them to gain and operate between "received knowledge" and "experiential knowledge". Then, prior to the Main Teaching Practice in the second term, student teachers prepared trial teaching sessions and then taught the lessons to their peers. At the same time, they practised videotaping lessons in preparation for the Main Teaching Practice. They also viewed videotapes of live English lessons in order to enhance their classroom observation skills. During the Main Teaching Practice, the student teachers had to conduct an action research project, and keep a log on their experience during the Teaching Practice. The student teachers worked in pairs and they videotaped each other's lessons as well as conducted peer coaching sessions using the videorecordings as a basis for discussion. After the third week of the seven-week Teaching Practice, an interim class meeting was held where the student teachers exchanged and reflected on their experiences in the first three weeks. After the Teaching Practice, reflection exercises were designed and structured for all student teachers to engage in reflection first privately, then in class sessions.

Promoting reflective practice among serving teachers

In addition to the principles for implementing reflective teaching at a programme level in preservice programmes, a range of methods and tasks have also been proposed by various writers to equip serving teachers with the skills for fostering reflective practice.

Writers who emphasize classroom inquiry as a basis for reflection often suggest techniques for collecting data, as well as substantive issues for inquiry. Richards and Lockhart (1994), for instance, suggest the use of journals, lesson reports, surveys and questionnaires, audio or video recording of lessons, lesson observation, and action research, as means of data collection. They further suggest the following substantive topics for investigation:

- teachers' beliefs,
- language learners,
- teacher decision making,
- the role of the teacher,
- the structure of a lesson,
- interaction in the second language classroom,
- the nature of language learning activities, and
- language use in the classroom.

In a similar vein, Nunan (1989), who advocates teacher research, has also suggested a number of substantive issues for teachers to investigate. At the same time, some writers who advocate action research as a stimulus for reflection, notably Wallace (1998) and Nunan (1990), have produced detailed guidelines and examples showing how to conduct action research, as well as what to investigate, in the second language classroom. Thorne and Wang (1996) have described the implementation and development of a pioneering action research project in the Sino-British MA in English programme at Beijing Normal University.

Wajnryb (1992) has produced a detailed guidebook which advocates classroom observation as a means for furthering teachers' understanding of their own teaching. Wajnryb explicitly states that his design of classroom observation tasks is guided by the model of Schon's 'reflective practitioner' (p. 9), that is, "a teacher who is discovering more about their own teaching by seeking to understand the processes of teaching and learning in their own and others' classrooms" (p. 9). Wajnryb (1992) offers specific procedures of classroom observation to investigate seven dimensions of language teaching: the learner; language; learning; the lesson; teaching skills and strategies; classroom management; and materials and resources

Other strategies for stimulating reflection have been suggested. Jackson (1997) has called for the use of the case method in developing teachers as reflective second language teaching specialists. Ho (1995) has suggested using lesson plans in a lesson series as a means of reflection to help teachers bring about self-development in teaching.

Another noteworthy development is the publication of a number of second language teaching methodology coursebooks which purport to adopt a reflective approach to teacher development. For example, Parrott (1993), advocating a task-based approach to develop teachers' reflective practice, provides teachers with a bank of ready-made activities which teachers may use immediately either individually, or better still, in groups in a teacher development programme. Tanner and Green (1998) provide specific classroom tasks, and ideas for lesson observation and journal writing, that deal with language teaching techniques such as teaching the macroskills and presenting and practising new language.

Reflective Teaching in SLTE: A Critique

From the above review, it can be seen that reflective teaching is no longer a novel idea in SLTE. Yet, it is also obvious that the notion of reflective teaching has remained vague, and the question of how to implement reflective teaching is marked by uncertainty. This section suggests some issues which writers in SLTE may need to address if they are to promote the idea of reflective teaching further. This critique focuses on two issues: the need for conceptual clarity, and the need for empirical evidence.

The need for conceptual clarity

First, while most writers have referred to the work of Dewey (1910) and Schon (1983, 1987) as their source of inspiration for advocating reflective teaching, few have discussed critically the relevance of Dewey's and Schon's work for the second language classroom. Roberts (1998) has indeed challenged the relevance of Schon's view of the reflective practitioner for second language teaching. He contends:

It (the notion of the reflective practitioner) is narrow: it applies to only one aspect of professional expertise, creativity, not to expertise as a whole; it is idealised: he offers no empirical evidence that these processes exist; it is ambiguous: it is by no means clear how reflection in action is different from the commonplace idea of reflection on action. (p. 51)

Indeed, the notion of “reflection” itself has seldom been tackled by writers in SLTE. In the mainstream teacher education literature, Bengtsson (1995) also notes that in writings about reflective teaching, the notion of reflection is seldom clarified by writers. He contends that the divergent uses of the term “reflection” indicate that it is fundamentally unclear what reflection really is, and as a result, one cannot identify what it is in reflective teaching that makes it an effective pedagogy, if it really does. Bengtsson examines in depth Schon’s notion of “reflection in action” and “reflection on action”, ideas that many writers on reflective teaching claim to have drawn on. (This is the case among writers in SLTE.) Bengtsson points out that Schons’ concept seems more readily to fit “reflection” in the sense of “thinking” than “self-reflection”, and Bengtsson argues that only true self-reflection will result in self-knowledge, which has pedagogical value.

Wong (1999) has also pointed out the inflated use of the term reflection in the education field nowadays. But instead of clarifying the notion by examining the education literature itself, Wong draws on the work of King and Kitchener in psychology, and that of Hegel and Gadamer in philosophy, in an attempt to highlight the fact that reflection does not just happen. Summarizing the research of King and Kitchener, Wong notes its implication for teacher education:

On the one hand, we are reminded about the limitation of reflectivity in different individuals during certain developmental stages of life If student teachers are individuals having different levels of reflectivity, it is understandable that they cannot reflect upon teaching in the way they are expected (this is particularly true when student teachers are undergraduate students without much college training and life experience). (p. 42)

From Hegel’s notion of “formation”, and Gadamer’s notion of “effective historical consciousness”, Wong poses a number of questions for proponents of reflective teaching. These questions are so important to our clarification of reflection that the lengthy quotation below is considered needed:

How can the facilitation of self-alienated spirit be integrated into teacher education? What activities can be selected or designed for this purpose? What

are the appropriate distance and time for the leaving of the immediacy? How is the level of motivation related to the quality of self-reflection? In what way can the reconceptualization of reflective practice be enriched by Hegel's ideas on free will (i.e., the unity of self-reflection and self-determination)? (p. 45)

What are the hermeneutic situations of teachers in their everyday practice? Do teachers possess an effective historical consciousness? In what ways are teachers' present views an effect of their personal history (in particular of their history as learners) and of the cultural tradition? In what ways are teachers' perceptions on the historical horizon affected by their present views? Are teachers capable of developing genuine conversations? Who are the conversation partners of the teachers? To what extent are teachers aware of the role of prejudice and authority in their judgments on teaching? How can the simultaneous process of widening horizon and of recognizing limitations be facilitated among teachers? (p. 47)

Wong's questions are a timely reminder that there is much about reflective teaching that has yet to be clarified.

The need for empirical evidence

The questions posed by Wong clearly indicate that despite the popularity of reflective teaching, there are many questions which have been left unanswered. For teacher educators, the most immediate question is probably whether reflective teaching is an effective pedagogy of teacher education. Out of a fervour to promote reflective teaching, several writers in SLTE have spoken of the positive effects of reflective teaching. For instance, Bailey (1997, p. 15) offers the following three reasons for her practising reflective teaching:

- Reflective teaching is extremely valuable as a stance, a state of mind, a healthy, questioning attitude toward the practice of our profession.
- It creates a context which promotes professional dialogue as we accumulate substance for our stories
- It helps to clarify our thinking.

While these are no doubt laudable goals, they represent the experience of the writer, a teacher educator who voluntarily engages in reflection for per-

sonal development. Similarly, Richards (1998), also a teacher educator and a fervent proponent of reflective teaching, claims that reflection can help teachers move from a level where they are guided by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking.

The need to define and investigate reflectivity

However, for reflective teaching to establish itself as a credible approach to SLTE, it requires the support of research evidence. What has research said about the effectiveness of reflective teaching as an SLTE pedagogy? Unfortunately, the picture is not that clear. Today, the SLTE research literature is full of accounts of reflective practices (e.g., Bailey, 1997; Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 1998; Flowerdew, 1998; Cosh, 1999; Appel, 1995; Farrell, 1999; Yu, 1997). Many of these accounts are written by teacher educators keen about personal professional development and they would speak of the positive effects that reflection has had on themselves. Occasionally, there are reports on the effect of a reflection strategy (e.g., journal keeping) on preservice or inservice teachers (e.g., Richards & Ho, 1998), and quotations are taken from teachers' journals at different stages to show that reflection has taken place. The nature of reflection, or what constitutes progress in reflectivity, is not often rigorously defined. For example, the distinction between reflective thinking and reflective action (Hatton & Smith, 1995), is often ignored.

In mainstream teacher education, Hatton and Smith (1995) reviewed sixteen studies attempting to investigate the effectiveness of approaches employed to develop in student teachers a capacity for reflection, and concluded that "there is little evidence of critical reflection on the part of students, most of whom demonstrate the technical and practical types" (p. 38). Hatton and Smith also pointed out two problems associated with this research. First, the definitions of reflection are often inappropriate or inadequate. Second, it is difficult to develop means for gathering and analysing data so that the evidence shows unequivocally that reflection has taken place. From this review, Hatton and Smith formulated five research questions for a study on

the development of reflectivity among a group of preservice student teachers. These five questions are reproduced below. It would seem that they should also form the central concerns of SLTE researchers in the future.

- Have the strategies employed resulted in teacher education students demonstrating evidence of reflective practice?
- If so, what types and patterns of reflection can be identified, and what factors seem important in fostering their development?
- What strategies appear to be effective in producing reflection, and what are the salient characteristics of such approaches?
- How can more effective strategies be developed, and how can the conditions for encouraging reflective practice be improved?
- What is the fundamental nature of reflection, and does the nature of evidence change according to types of reflection?

(Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 39)

Preservice teacher preparation vs inservice teacher development

Furthermore, in research on the effectiveness of reflective teaching on second language teachers, a clearer distinction needs to be made between reflection as an approach to preservice teacher preparation, and reflection as a strategy for inservice teachers' professional development. At the moment, proponents of reflective teaching in SLTE often claim that their strategies are equally effective for preservice and inservice teachers. This may not be the case. In fact, Hatton and Smith's review suggests that a fully-fledged reflective approach to preparing preservice teachers may not really produce critically reflective teachers. (Incidentally, Wong (1999) remarked that students joining a degree programme on education kept on telling her that they were tired of the reminder of reflective practice.)

The effectiveness of reflective tasks and activities

The need for research also applies to the tasks and activities so far suggested for implementing reflective teaching in second language education (e.g., Parrott, 1993; Tanner & Green, 1998; Wallace, 1998). Otherwise, such ideas would only represent a non-prescriptive approach to second language

teacher education, and whether reflection does take place, and how, would remain doubtful. We can't assume, for example, that as teachers build up recordings of their teaching, critical reflection will ensue.

Conclusion

As pointed out by Richards and Ho (1998), the notion of reflective teaching has become a dominant paradigm in SLTE programmes around the world. This has apparently been triggered by two developments in teacher education. First, there has been a general shift of conception in teacher education from the notion of the teacher as technician to that of the teacher as reflective practitioner since the late eighties (Schon, 1987; Zeichner, 1994). Second, towards the end of the eighties, writers in second language teaching (e.g., Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Richards, 1990) began to realize the futility of the continual search for the best teaching method (Prahbu, 1990) and turned their attention to teachers' professional development.

Despite the current fervent support given to reflective teaching in second language teacher education, this review has shown that the notion of reflective teaching has remained elusive. Its meaning varies from awareness-raising, to organised cyclical reflective activities, to a lifelong search of the meaning of being a language educator. Equally worrying is the fact that the nature of reflection itself is seldom addressed. At the same time, there have been few attempts in implementing reflective teaching at the level of an entire teacher preparation programme, so that it is difficult to ascertain the effect of reflective thinking. In fact, overall, there is a dearth of research on the process of reflective thinking and its effect on teaching.

As Barkhuisen (1995) has contended, engaging in activities such as journal writing, lesson observation, and micro-teaching does not necessarily lead to critical reflection. Some of the approaches and activities that have been suggested are not much different from those proposed under the teacher-researcher movement in second language teaching in the late eighties (e.g., Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Nunan, 1989). If such activities are not sustained for a long time and coordinated towards critical reflection, their

effectiveness in nurturing reflective teachers will be even more uncertain. (This problem has been pointed out by Stanley (1998), who proposes a five-phase framework for developing and sustaining teacher reflectivity.)

Given the vast literature on reflective teaching in mainstream teacher education, writers in SLTE would be able to advance their conceptualization further by referring more to this literature. At the same time, we not only need more research on the effect of reflective teaching in second language teacher education, but more innovative attempts at designing and implementing reflective curricula for both preservice and inservice programmes. In the case of preservice teacher education, this should mean innovations at a programme level (i.e., rather than simply devoting an isolated component to reflective teaching). The case of in-service teacher development will be even more complicated because of the practical problems and diversity of teacher backgrounds involved. However, this is a challenge that writers and researchers in second language teacher education must face up to. Otherwise, like many innovations in second language teaching, reflective teaching may become another passing fad.

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