Reflectıve Practıcum Class: Somebody's Watchıng You

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ABSTRACT

Reflective teaching is a contemporary issue in foreign language teacher education. This paper reports on the use of video-taped lessons as a tool for reflective practices. Two full-length lessons taught by the prospective teachers of English that are enrolled in the practicum program were recorded by the researchers, and the reflections of the participants were examined through a qualitative approach. The results showed that the prospective teachers' attitudes and in-class practices changed significantly after video-taped reflection feedback.Furthermore, it has been suggested that teacher candidates learn to make analogies by watching entirely different models.In this respect, reflective video-taped activity can be defined as a step-by-step process and at the same time an active element for critical thinking.

Key Words: Reflective Teaching, English prospective teachers, practicum, video-based reflection

INTRODUCTION

Reflective teaching is an approach to second language classroom instruction in which current and prospective teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about their efforts in language courses (Richards and Lockhart, 1994:1). Accordingly, it is a critical exploration of one's own teaching practice and is essential to life-long professional development (Wallace 1998). Dewey (1910) defines reflection as the ability to interpret a task or problem from a number of standpoints rather than a single view determined by a person's assumption and tacit personal theories (Roberts, 1998, p.47).

The purposes of reflective teaching are defined in three-fold: (1) to expand one's understanding of the teaching-learning process; (2) to expand one's repertoire of strategic options as a language teacher; and (3) to enhance the quality of learning opportunities one can provide in language classrooms (Murphy, 2001, p.499). According to Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) a central reason to be interested in reflective teaching is to gain awareness of our teaching beliefs and practices and to learn to see teaching differently (p.4). Farrell (2004, p.27) identifies the following fundamental questions that a teacher should reflect on:

1. What am I doing in the classroom?
2. Why am I doing this?
3. What is the result?
4. Will I change anything based on the information gathered from answering the first three questions?

Brookfield (1995, p.72) outlines six additional points of entry for teachers to enter in self-reflection:
• Teaching Logs: Recording weekly events of teachers' lives that have impressed themselves most vividly on their consciousness.
• Teacher Learning Audits: Responding to questions that are expressly designed to probe how the teachers have changed over the previous 12 months.
• Role Model Profiles: Talking to colleagues that teachers admire and outlining their qualities and abilities that could be emulated.
• Survival Advice Menus: Advising future teachers about how they can survive in a job such as their own.
• Videotaping: Viewing one's own teaching to see how much teacher talk occurs instead of student talk.
• Peer Observation: Inviting colleagues to view their teaching

Video-taping has special value for non-native English speaking trainees because it enables them to focus not only on the nonverbal aspects of their teaching but also to reflect on their communicative competence. As opposed to the limitations of text-based case studies Diaz and Smith (2002) praises the use of technology for examining actual classroom settings. All in all, using digital recordings of practice for analysis and reflection, teachers can engage with their peers to develop a shared understanding of excellent practice. It not only helps trainees notice and respond to both strong and weak aspects of their teaching but also allows trainees to view a DVD immediately and re-examine it many times (Murphy 2001; Barlett, 1990).

One of the main advantages of videotaping provides observation of paralinguistic features such as facial expression, intonation, gestures and other visual clues (Harmer, 2001) This is also essential in adding extra dimension to the reflective teaching.

THE STUDY
RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What are the teacher candidates' opinions about video-based reflection sessions
2. How do you reflect on your current professional practice?
3. Is the reflecting practice helpful for determining the future goals of the teacher candidates?

PARTICIPANTS
The purposive sampling was used to select the subjects of 36 teacher candidates of English as they were expected to have unique ability to explain, understand, and yield information about the problematic discourse. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:202) qualitative research employs this technique when they seek out groups, settings and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur. All of the participants were graduated from the department of English Language and Literature and applied for 'The Pedagogical Formation Program' in spring semester of 2014-2015 academic year.

METHODS
Students participated in this study were required to videotape a lesson and sent a copy of the tape to the corresponding supervisors. After viewing the videotape, the supervisors arranged a post-lesson conference with the student. Two semi-structured group interviews were conducted with the students.. All interviews were audio-taped for analysis.

DATA COLLECTION
The data were collected during the spring semester of 2014-2015 academic year. The data collection instruments included; video-taped samples; interviews and the self-evaluation journals kept by the teacher candidates during the practicum.
a) Video-taped Samples:

 Participants recorded two consecutive lessons in the same language class. They brought the samples to the class. All of the participants watched the videos and made written records of the teaching practice in general.

b) Interview

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with participants after the video-taped discussion so as to gain deeper insights. Each of the interviews has been tape-recorded. The purpose of the interview questions was to understand whether the use of the video-taped lectures influenced their teaching experience. Examples of the questions are: What are the weak and strong aspects of your teaching? How did video analysis influence your teaching practices? What do you think about the teaching profession?What did you like about being a teacher?What are the advantages of video-taped lessons?

c) Self-evaluation Journals

The participants kept a diary of their own language teaching for six weeks. The diaries were analyzed categorized.

DATA ANALYSIS
The qualitative research design is used to examine the video-taped reflection activities for the teacher candidates.The interview reports and the self-evaluation journals were examined separately.Then the data were coded and categorized via constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All of the participants debriefed with the practicum supervisor immediately after teaching their lesson. They later wrote about critical incidents that occurred during their teaching. Each interview was transcribed and the transcriptions were sorted to seek patterns that emerged from the data. A framework including two categories was generated. These were; the reflections on the teaching performance and the reflections on the teaching profession, the psychological effect of the teaching procedure
FINDINGS
The findings indicated that after watching their performances on the video the teacher candidates evaluated themselves more critically. They defined the video-based reflection sessions as useful and practical. Furthermore, they put forward that this practice shed light on their future goals. The findings are categorized into three themes. The first one is about the participants reflections on their teaching performance during the practicum sessions, and

the second one is about their reflections on the teaching profession in general. The third one is about the psychological effect of the video-taped sessions.

1. Reflections on Teacher Candidates' Opinions on Their Video-taped Teaching Performance

Recent developments in digital video technologies permit teacher candidates to collect, review, and manipulate video to demonstrate their growth as a professional and as a reflective practitioner (Cunningham and Benedetto, 2002). In this study video-taped tool is used during the process of teacher training. The findings revealed that the participants of the study regarded it as a kind of feedback method that has a positive outcome. The participants indicated their comments on the issue as follows:

R1: I think limited time affected negatively all of us. After watching my previous practicum lesson, I realized that this was worse than the others. I had very difficult in managing the class.

R1: After the lesson, I watched the video, and something surprised me. There were very simple mistakes while I was teaching. I couldn't believe myself in making such simple mistakes. However, it was very helpful for me to see my mistakes and correct them, and this assured me to see my body language as well. I can say it was not bad, but it could be better. This video turned out to be a very useful feedback for me.

R1: Thanks to the video, I get it what I need to do and not to do. Making a video and monitoring and employing self-evaluation after watching the video is quite a useful method.

2. Reflections on the Teaching Profession

Research on teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts has shown that teacher candidates approach teaching with a plethora of initial beliefs and ideas about teaching. Reflection enables teacher candidates to construct knowledge through asking questions, critiquing, evaluating, etc., helping them bridge the gap between imagined views and the realities of teaching (Lee,2008). The teacher candidates of this study, conveyed their thoughts on the teaching profession as follows:

R2: Looking back on my teaching experiences I learned that the teacher is the motivator and the most important task is the responsibility. The teacher is the mirror of the class, what she gives, reflects on her back

R2: After watching my performance on the video, I started to believe that it would be very good to be a teacher in the future even though I have never wanted to be a teacher up until now. I think there is only one important reason that makes me love this job. I believe that the only one thing that makes this world livable is the pure and innocent children.

R2: I have always had a positive impression about being a teacher but after the video-taped discussion, I became aware that there are some hardships of being a teacher, but it can be enjoyable too.

R2: I realized that being a teacher is not an easy task, you should give your soul and heart. There exists no more 'you', all your thoughts are your teaching and your students. Your aim is to get the best out of your students. When you do not see the improvement, you get upset. You have to know what type of a student stands in front of you and which methods suit the student best. As a teacher your best way is important as well. You have to be creative and sacrifice your time. You must know what is going on in the world. There are so many responsibilities, so I think one has to be ready for all of that as being a ''real'' teacher means this. As for me whether I am ready is a mystery I will see this in time.

R2: Previously, I assumed that being a teacher was simple, and everyone can do this job if they try it. However when I started to teach in my practicum school, I realized that it was not as easy as it was seen. Every step of teaching need a great importance and knowledge. If you don't have plans while you are teaching, it would be the hardest job in the world. While I was teaching I understood that being a teacher requires so many responsibilities. Each student is a kind of a product of a teacher and this product will build the future generation. So being a teacher includes many wonderful aspects behind it. I believe that if I work harder and love this job much more, I would be one of those people whom they won't be forgotten.

R2: I had a positive impression about being a teacher but I also realized that being a teacher is not just being a teacher at all. Being an English teacher is not just teaching English. Being a teacher is to manage the class, being on the true track to teach, teach the students how to behave, when to talk, what to talk etc. I have my hope to be a good English teacher since I have my belief about that. Believing is the half of the way.

R2: I had worries about becoming a teacher, but now, I honestly feel that I have no hesitation to become a teacher. After watching the videos, I came up the idea that I had prejudices against this profession and myself. Indeed, teaching is something else, beyond my previous thoughts.

3. Reflections on The Psychological Effect of The Video-taped Sessions.

Some of the researchers are on the idea that having someone film you when you are teaching can be a challenging experience. Related to this, the findings of a recent study (Coşkun, 2013) revealed that the idea of videotaping during the teaching practices, watching and critiquing the lessons together with classmates and the supervisor are defined as a stressful requirement of the practicum by the English teacher trainees. However, it can extremely be valuable if it is not taken solely as a self-criticism. In the following reflection, one of the participants reveals her ideas on this matter explicitly:

R3: Watching the videos of myself or my peers gives a clue about how to behave when there is a new profile of students with different schools. Seeing what they did wrong or good was a useful experience, I'll try to do it better or at least not to do it worse. Also, one cannot see oneself, during lecturing so it is a good visual material to see oneself and it is exciting as well as embarrassing. It is better to see a video than being told of the wrongs and getting embarrassed. One day after ten years of time, one could watch the video and say ''Oh, my GOD!''.Nonetheless, it would be a good memory.

R3: When I watched the video, I realized that I was very nervous during the lesson. I think it was out of the students. They forced me to yell at them because they never listen to me and do anything during the class. This made me feel upset.

R3: After watching the videos I changed my mind. I was too strict during my lecturing. My ideal teacher type is rather more friendly, motherly and friendly. I hope I can reach my goals.

CONCLUSION

Research studies in second language learning and teaching clearly indicate that attitude, motivation, and interest of the learner are factors of crucial importance in determining the achievement. Accordingly, visual instructional materials such as video-tapes might be used to promote and sustain motivation and to reinforce language learning or teaching skills. The present study has supported that video-taped lesson can be an alternative model of reflective teaching. Video-taped lectures give opportunity for precise observation. Furthermore, it enables teachers to measure the performances of their students objectively. At this point, we should keep in mind that videotape activities are tools for keeping records of the students and evaluating their performances in turn. In order to promote autonomous learning, teachers may also use this activity as a stimulus for discussion. Consequently, teachers can have students reflect on the various aspects of the learning experience by employing visual aids that can help in the process. To determine the effectiveness of the videotapes on the reflection practices, the evaluation of the types of their future use should be studied in diverse settings.

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