Bettiana Andrea Blázquez
ARGENTINA

Reflection as a Necessary Condition for Action Research

The concept of reflective thought has had an influence on teacher education throughout the twentieth century. Reflective thinking can be viewed as the thoughtful, self-questioning of teachers' actions, experience, or attitudes (Moon and Boullón 1997). If, for example, teachers are not satisfied with the learning success of their students or question their own role in the classroom or the value of their procedures, adherents of reflective thinking would argue that the teachers should plan and organize acts or processes to help them address such concerns.

To give structure to the process of reflection and inquiry, the systematic method called Action research can be applied (Wallace 1998). This methodology refers to classroom investigation initiated by researchers, perhaps teachers, who look critically at their own practice with the purpose of understanding and improving their teaching, and the quality of education (Hopkins 1985). I believe that being reflective is a prerequisite for this kind of action research, and I support that argument through the case study described in this article.

History of reflection in professional practice

During the 1960s a predominant model of learning was the constructivist approach, which emphasized that learning implies reorganising one's prior representations of the world and constructing new meanings in ways that are personal. Basically, this view postulates that novel ideas are incorporated gradually into an existing paradigm through a process of reflection.

Dewey (1938) was one of the pioneers of the constructivist perspective, and his ideas have influenced teacher education to this day. He viewed reflection, which can be triggered by a mismatch between our expectations and what actually happens, as an instrument that can be used to reframe problems in a variety of ways to obtain a range of possible solutions. Dewey's notion was further developed by Schön (1987), who pointed out that a teacher's ability to see a problem from different angles

can be improved by creative problem-solving, which involves reflection not just after an event, but also conscious thinking and acting while the situation is still at hand.
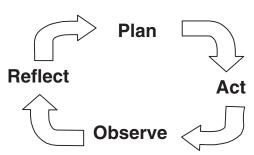
The emphasis on reflection in the constructionist model can serve as a useful framework by which we teachers can understand our own perceptions and behaviours, relate new learning to our prior practices and beliefs, and become the teachers we want to be.

Action research

A fundamental concept in professional development is reframing; teachers are more likely to learn when reflecting on and testing personal theories (Roberts 1998). A reflective model for such research attempts to connect received knowledge, such as facts, data, and theories, with experiential knowledge—what we know from our practical, professional experience—by a continuous process of reflection. This reflective cycle may occur before, during, or after an event in a process of recollection as we struggle with a problem (Wallace 1991).

To solve classroom problems, teachers can resort to Action research, a method that formalises reflection by engaging the practitioners in a critical and reflective attitude (Nunan 1990). Teachers applying Action research attempt to answer questions related to some aspect of their professional practice; to do so they collect and analyse data, reflect on what they discover, and then apply it to their professional practice (Wallace 1998).

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), the cycle of Action research includes the following stages: initial reflection to identify an issue or problem, planning an action (to solve the problem), implementation of the action, observation of the action, and reflection on the observations. The cycle is shown below.

The Action Research Cycle

To illustrate the cycle, assume you are a teacher who has perceived a need or a problem with a class you are teaching (initial reflection)—that is, you have noticed that your students become nervous whenever they give an oral presentation. You reflect on what you see in your classroom and make a detailed plan of action to improve your professional practice. In doing so, you make your implicit criteria and beliefs explicit and design activities to broaden your students' strategies for handling stressful situations. Then you prepare (plan) the information-gathering instruments you will use, such as questionnaires and interviews. You carry out your plan (act) in light of your past experience of such situations, social landscape, and feedback from your students, and you collect data, using the techniques you planned. After the data is collected, you analyse your findings. For example: One of your students might mention that a particular strategy you taught them was very helpful. At the end of this cycle you reflect on what has happened so that experiential knowledge can feed back into received knowledge. In other words, you reconstruct your knowledge through reflection. For example, you might ponder how effective the changes you made in your teaching practices were, what you learned from the changes you made, or what barriers to change existed. Reflecting on barriers to change will likely lead you to continue the action research cycle (Richards and Lockhart 1994).

Social constructivism

The constructivist theory was framed in terms of individuals, disregarding that each person's development occurs in constant exchange with his or her social circumstances, such as immediate working relationships, the climate of the schools attended, and other environmental factors. We know today, however, that learners develop their sense of the world through social interactions. Similarly, teachers' beliefs emerge from a complex of social and individual influences, including their own experiences as pupils, personality preferences, public educational theories, and the teachers' relationships with their students, colleagues, and superiors (Richards and Lockhart 1994).

This new perspective, known as *social constructivism*, considers the act of learning to be more than the construction of new meanings. In fact, it results from a dynamic interaction between personal change and social circumstances, and it involves cognition as well as feelings (Williams 1999).

An adequate view of teacher learning, therefore, should recognise this connection between internal development and the person's social landscape. This social element implies that the social constructivist perception recognises collaborative dialogue and talk to be central to "the process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers" (Lange 1990, 250). To take a concrete example, having to explain our ideas so that other teachers can understand them and can interact with us and with each other forces team teachers to clarify meanings and find words for thoughts that might otherwise have been realised only through action. The collaboration required to do this provides teachers with rich opportunities to understand their tacit knowledge and support changing views of themselves as teachers (Roberts 1998). Research shows a link between a favourable school climate—one where teachers are encouraged to talk to each other—and teacher development.

Applying action research to teacher development

One goal of teacher development is to facilitate awareness through reflection (Moon and Boullón 1997). What does this mean in practice? I attempt to answer this question by illustrating how I responded to a problem in my class of 12-year-old intermediate English students. In my discussion I apply Richards and Lockhart's (1994) cycle of Action research.

Initial reflection: A problem and a possible solution

To reflect on my attitude and my role in the classroom, I recorded a lesson. When I reviewed the recording, I realised I had controlled and directed the lesson all the time. Despite the fact that my students had been working in groups that day, I had not played a consultant role to help my students become self-directed. My students were constantly asking me questions such as, "Can you come please?" or "Can you help us?" or "What's the meaning of…?"

My problem, as I perceived it, was that my students were overly dependent on me. Trying to understand what I might have been doing to encourage such dependency, I decided to examine the beliefs that underlie my actions in the classroom. I first had to come to terms with the fact that I was a teacher who liked to have everything under control; I had not been taught that the teacher is *not* the centre of the world. My personality and the role I played in the classroom seemed to affirm teacher-centred methods, which I knew from research (e.g., Roberts 1988) are likely to inhibit learner independence.

However, I do believe in the advantages of student-centred classrooms, and I would like to be a guide rather than the person who "knows it all." When I reflected on my actions in the classroom, it was apparent that my personality and prior experiences were in conflict with my beliefs about teaching and learning. I saw a need to reflect deeply to establish an agreement between my beliefs and my actions in the classroom.

Is such reflection a way to cause change in a teacher's behaviour? Is it possible for a teacher who likes to have everything under control to increase autonomy in learners? To answer these questions, I made "planning decisions" (Richards and Lockhart 1994) as a way to take action and identify opportunities to change aspects of my work.

Planning: The best option

My first planning decision was to establish my objectives:

- To increase my students' independence by having them take greater responsibility for their learning.
- To encourage students to cooperate with and respect each other.

To meet these objectives, I selected project work. According to James (2001), project work enhances learners' autonomy because it requires students to decide what they will do and how they will carry it out. Thus students become responsible for their own learning. Projects can also provide a profitable environment for learners to organise themselves in

groups, to listen to each other, and to work cooperatively (Haines 1989).

The project my students decided upon took six hours over a four-week period. The first day, the students were expected to decide on a topic. Having recognized that my overprotective attitude was not meeting my students' needs, I decided to explore their expectations and desires with respect to choosing a topic. To do this, I adapted a group interview technique from Scharle and Szabó (2000) and asked my students the following questions:

1. How would you like to work?
2. What would you like to create?
3. How would you like to assess your work?

I also prepared a chart to enable the students to set up specific topics, roles, activities, and deadlines. Apart from fostering organisational skills, this activity was aimed at eliciting from the students the kinds of projects they might be interested in working on and allowing them to be creative and have fun (James 2001).

Methods

One of my goals was to increase my own awareness of the way I teach as well as how my students learn, so I decided to keep a diary to record the project work. But because self-observation is limited, I also wanted to include perceptions from a colleague and from the students. Therefore, I asked another teacher to complete two checklists (see Appendix 1) as she was observing a lesson. One list was to record the frequency of certain behaviours by the students; the other was to record characteristics of my behaviour. Given that the presence of an observer might alter my students' behaviour, I also planned to employ a group interview to find out my students' feelings and opinions about their project work and our respective roles in the project (see Appendix 2). A description of what occurred during the project follows.

The Action

1. Classroom Planning

Once the students had decided on the topic for the project—comic strips—I asked them the three questions listed in the planning section above. Their answers demonstrated that most of my students were excited about teamwork, but some others were interested in working individually and considered group work a waste of time. Students have preferences for learning owing to the influence of their learning styles, personality types, or beliefs about how languages are learnt. My role was to develop greater flexibility in their ways of learning (Lightbown and Spada 2000).

The students decided to work in groups of four, and they chose their team members. Three groups wanted to design a magazine and the other two a video. They expressed their interest in sharing responsibility for assessment with the teacher and themselves.

By the next lesson they were so motivated they ran to my desk to show me all the material they had brought. They were absorbed in their work until I told them the bad news—the school could only afford a magazine; there would be no video project. We would have to work within the constraints imposed by the circumstances.

So the students chose the name of the magazine, *Comics For You*, and I gave them a chart to help them plan their work. The chart included such things as deciding the content of the magazine, the role each student would take in its creation, what activities were needed to edit and produce the magazine, and so on. As students worked with the chart, I realised that the aim of the task had not been clear. Maybe we should have had a group discussion about roles before we started the project.

In the end, however, the students—after deciding what information should be included in the magazine (e.g., the history of comic strips, how to draw cartoons, how to make a comic strip)—divided their work according to roles they viewed as necessary for the activities they planned. Since the activities included looking for information, reading, discussing, summarising, writing, drawing, and painting, the students decided that the cartoonists would draw, the journalists would write articles and stories, and the editors would supervise the writing and determine the placement of items in the magazine.

2. Carrying out the project

Many students brought books and information taken from the Internet. Equipped

with this authentic material, they began to focus on content. This required them to apply a variety of reading strategies, such as trying to infer the meaning of words from context before resorting to the dictionary. Later, the students tried to summarise and write articles in English, a task that was difficult for them, perhaps, because during their discussions with each other about what they had understood from the texts, they spoke in Spanish rather than English. To solve this problem, I promised to reward the groups for speaking in English. Although the promise of reward caused the students to use the target language more frequently, the degree of interaction in English was not as much as I had hoped.

Other problems emerged: the students who earlier wanted to edit the video were reluctant to work on the magazine; some group members did not do their fair share of the work; and others found difficulty in organising themselves. But three of the teams did their jobs in a planned and efficient way. Because I had earlier reflected on the need to help my students become independent learners, while they worked on the project I strove to guide their work rather than answering all of their questions.

3. Assessing the work

When their drafts were finished, I asked the students to exchange their work with other groups. They seemed to enjoy making suggestions for improving their classmates' work. When their final drafts were ready, they handed them in and I assessed them. Although none of the groups respected the deadlines they had set in their charts when they planned the project, they eventually gave me their diskettes, and I printed the magazine. The day I displayed their work, they showed happiness and pride as they looked at their creation.

Observation: Analysis of ratings

The aim of applying the student and teacher rating scales during observation was to collect data on what went on in the classroom. The focus of the observations was on behaviour: my students' behaviour, including evidence of independence and cooperation, and my behaviour, specifically the role I played in the classroom and the extent to which the classroom was teacher-centred or learner-centred. To fulfill the need for a neutral observer, I asked a colleague to observe my interactions with the students. After explaining what I was trying to accomplish, I discussed with her how our collaboration would be structured and how she would use the rating scale during her observation.

After the observation, my colleague confessed her initial difficulty in adopting the role of objective observer because of her familiarity with my students' personalities and mine. However, she soon focused on what she was supposed to, and I was pleased that our collaboration placed me as a member of a larger community and encouraged team work, just as a social constructivist approach postulates (Barlett 1990).

Students' ratings

The first rating scale (see Appendix 1) has to do with my students' behaviour; the results are shown in part I. Characteristic A refers to the decrease in dominance of the teacher over the class and the increase in learners' active participation and collaboration among themselves. Results show that 40% of the students were *always* active participants in their group work, and 60% were *frequently* involved in their activities. These same percentages for Characteristic B indicate that the students listened to each other, which may suggest that the students, to a certain extent, shared opinions and ideas.

Characteristic C showed whether students encouraged and praised others in the group. Results indicate that 40% of the students were *sometimes* supportive, and 60% *rarely* were. This outcome suggests that the students might not be used to being praised by teachers, so they do not praise their classmates.

Characteristic D focused on whether the students interacted in English. Results show that they were reluctant to use the target language in their groups. Only 20% of the students *sometimes* talked in English, whilst 80% *rarely* did so. Such behaviour may stem from their over-reliance on the teacher as well as their preference for using their mother tongue. Clearly, interaction in English needs to be improved.

Results for Characteristic E indicate that the majority of students preferred to ask the

teacher rather than try to solve their problems themselves. This attitude was *always* shown by 20% of my students, *frequently* shown by 40% of them, and only *sometimes* shown by the remaining 40%. Clearly, there was a need to develop the students as autonomous beings who act independently of the teacher and do not wait to be told what to do. But personality traits, preferred learning styles, and cultural attitudes might have limited the development of autonomy. Thus, even motivated learners might assume a passive role if they believe that the teacher should be in charge of everything that happens in the classroom, or if their uncertainty requires the constant supervision of the teacher. This information largely confirms that it is necessary to foster autonomy—and thus develop a sense of responsibility in students—by encouraging students to make decisions about their learning. However, that is not an easy task, as it entails changing the roles of both the students and the teacher (Scharle and Szabó 2000).

As regards self-check devices, Characteristic F results show that 60% of the students *frequently* applied useful strategies for understanding the meanings of unknown words in Internet texts, whereas 40% of them only *sometimes* applied useful strategies. These strategies have to do with understanding the meaning of these new items from context, making associations with what they know already, and using the dictionary only as a last resort.

The data shown for Characteristic G reveals that 60% of students *always* worked cooperatively when carrying out the activities, 20% were *frequently* helpful, and 20% *sometimes* were. The results suggest that a fair number of students behaved responsibly and were willing to cooperate with the teacher and their classmates to everyone's benefit.

The most impressive results are those for Characteristic H, which show that the students managed to divide their work effectively. About 80% of the students *always* managed to split up their duties efficiently, whereas 20% *frequently* did so. This demonstrates a successful and organised division of activities and work. Further, according to the observer, team members seemed to have taken decisions respecting the roles they had identified and assigned within the group.

Finally, the degree of occurrence of Characteristic I, which refers to whether students seemed to enjoy working in groups, shows that most of the students were actively involved in the tasks, since 60% of them were *always* enthusiastic about team work, and 40% *frequently* seemed to like working with their groups.

Teacher's ratings

As noted earlier, with the intention of recording and becoming aware of my behaviour and role in the classroom, I asked my colleague to complete two rating scales. Her observations of my behaviour are presented in Appendix 1, Part II.

Characteristic A attempts to determine if the teacher is able to do less of the work. Results demonstrate that I *frequently* managed to do so, thereby helping to enhance the students' autonomy and providing substantial evidence to suggest that the students worked quite independently.

As shown for Characteristic B, I was *always* able to step aside and monitor what was going on. The high frequency of this item may be interpreted as a sign of my ability to keep an eye on my students' work and provide pedagogical skills instead of controlling their production (Bailey 1996).

Results for Characteristic C suggest that I was *frequently* able to relinquish some of the classroom management responsibilities. To accomplish this objective, I tried to view the students as partners in achieving common goals and to consistently delegate functions, decisions, and tasks.

If learners are to assume responsibility for decision-making, the teacher should speak as little as possible and give students maximum opportunity to interact with each other verbally. Characteristic D data demonstrates that, according to the observer, I *frequently* talked less than the students, although it would have been better if the students had used more of their target language and less of their mother tongue.

Information collected for Characteristic E shows that I *always* advised my students without imposing my own views on them. This result led me to believe that group work reduced my dominance over the class and, consequently, I played the role of facilitator or consultant.

Like that of colleagues, the learners' perspective can also contribute to the interpretation of a classroom event (Wallace 1998). The next section reports and analyses information obtained through an interview with the students as a group and compares this data with that discussed earlier.

Observation: Analysis of the group interview

Each student was given a series of questions related to the project (see Appendix 2) and told to write as many answers as possible. They then shared their responses with each other and I wrote them on the board.

Most of the students said that they liked the project work, which is fundamental in keeping motivation high. They also said they felt comfortable in their groups and, more important, experienced a sense of belonging.

Apparently, student-to-student interaction fosters confidence because it allows students to talk freely without any authority judging their ideas (Tsui 1996). The data gathered through the Students' rating scale, particularly Characteristics A, B, and I, supports this, as most of my students enjoyed working in groups and appeared to have been active participants who listened to each other. However, two groups admitted they had experienced discomfort due to the lack of affinity between the members of the group. This could explain the result for Characteristic C of the student scale, which shows that 60% of the students *rarely* encouraged or praised members of their groups. Their learning styles might have influenced their behaviour in groups, since those who prefer working individually and are fond of teacher-centred instruction might not have felt at ease, and therefore might have played a less cooperative role.

As regards the use of the target language, the majority of students acknowledged that their interactions with other students were in Spanish, which is consistent with my colleague's observation in relation to Characteristic D (on the student scale) and my diary.

According to the students, they sometimes needed help from me, and I guided their work. One student commented: "She did not impose opinions. She helped us and she was always looking at what we were doing." From this comment I infer that, although some students had a degree of dependence on me, most perceived me as monitoring their work and serving as an adviser. This conforms with my colleague's observation of my behaviour, specifically the results for Characteristics A, B, D, and E.

Other students affirmed that they had shared information to help each other or solved problems independently. They also made comments suggesting that they were able to manage their own learning and could rely on themselves. Thus, there seems to be a correlation between the students' opinions about their own cooperative and independent behaviour and what my colleague found as she observed them, particularly with respect to Characteristic E (on the student scale).

The students expressed satisfaction with certain aspects of cooperative teaching, such as assessing each other's work, which earlier—before I learned to relinquish control—might have seemed foreign to them. They indicated their satisfaction by such comments as "I liked looking for information!" and "I enjoyed correcting my partners' work!" Such comments support the results for both the students' behaviour (Characteristic F) and the teacher's behaviour (Characteristic C).

The students also found dividing work into different roles very successful, as evidenced by such comments as "I was the editor and I learnt how to control what was going on in the group!" and "We could organise ourselves in a better way!" These statements are consistent with the information collected by my colleague (student Characteristic H), who detected a high degree of effective work.

The most interesting task for most of the students was creating their own comic strips. Other students were pleased about getting to know the history of comic strips. Some groups said they were most frustrated by being unable to edit videos. Still others claimed that they did not work cooperatively and in a responsible manner. However, this last claim does not seem to correspond with the data gathered by the observer, which indicated that the students worked cooperatively to a high degree (Characteristic G). To improve the project, the students suggested getting started earlier to allow more time to organise themselves and carry out their tasks.

When I asked the students what they had learnt, some said "vocabulary," but most gave more rewarding responses, such as "working in groups" and "dividing responsibilities." Overall, it appeared that project work helped the students and me play different roles in the classroom.

The results collected through the two methods—the closed-end rating scales my colleague used and the open-ended interview I conducted with the students—are quite similar, suggesting that the combination of the two assessment methodologies worked well. The rating scales elicited specific information, and the questions enabled me to explore my students' opinions and feelings.

Reflection: Answers to my questions

After collecting and analysing data, I can now answer the central question that was the starting point of this research: "Is reflection a means for causing change in teachers' behaviour?" I can also answer my other question: "Can a teacher who likes to have everything under control increase the autonomy of learners?"

The findings provide evidence that reflection is a powerful instrument to bring about change in the classroom. It enabled me to realise that my earlier teacher-centred mentality had been impeding the autonomy of my students. Reflection enabled me to largely overcome this barrier, my personal traits, and my experiences by allowing me to give my students appropriate control over their learning. Likewise, my students have begun a process of change because of the implementation of project work. My plan of action was effective in that it allowed the students to achieve a greater level of independence, use better learning strategies, and assume responsibility for their own progress. Still, they will need to continue to foster their autonomous work.

From this experience, I am convinced that reflection is an essential prerequisite for Action research. If I had not had a reflective attitude, I would not have detected a problem, analysed data, arrived at conclusions, and implemented changes. Indeed, reflection triggered the methodology of this case study. Moon and Boullón (1997) suggest setting up several linked in-service courses to introduce teachers to reflective thinking. If there were more programmes to develop teach-

ers' research skills, we would become better classroom researchers, would improve the curriculum, and would develop professionally (Nunan 1990).

Lessons learned

Although generally successful, the comic book project had some problems that could have been prevented. The problems and how I would avoid them in the future are briefly noted below.

- Insufficient funds prevented some of the students from accomplishing their wish of editing a video. I should have thought about this limitation before telling the students their idea was feasible.
- To promote greater interaction in English amongst my students, I would use different strategies, such as flash cards with useful phrases.
- The occasional instances of uncooperativeness and discouragement I saw might have been caused by unrealistic deadline pressures. In the future I would allow more time for the groups to sort out their problems.
- I would devise better strategies for monitoring the students' progress so that I would know, while the situation was still at hand, which aspects of the project needed improvement.
- I would, in graduated stages, make the students aware of how they learn and allow them to practice each skill before moving to the next one and eventually to a transfer of roles. In this way, I could play an adviser role, and the students could take greater responsibility for interacting in English, offering encouragement to their classmates, and cooperating with each other.

Conclusion

This case study prompted me to adopt a reflective attitude towards my own beliefs about teaching and my behaviour in the classroom. I became a "reflective practitioner" (Schön 1987, 35), which allowed me to make my beliefs explicit, to analyse data, and to critique the results. In this way, I expanded my knowledge, grew professionally, and helped my students increase their autonomy.

I learned that if we teachers explore what occurs in our classrooms, if we reflect critically on the theories and beliefs that underlie our practice, and we share our findings, then fundamental changes in classroom practices can be accomplished (Gilpin 1999). Without reflection, without making our tacit knowledge and beliefs explicit, our teaching will only be guided by impulse, routine, or intuition (Knezevic and Scholl 1996).

References

Bailey, K. 1996. The role of collaborative dialogue in teacher education. In *Teacher learning in language teaching*, ed. D. Freeman and J. Richards, 260–80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bartlett, L. 1990. Teacher development through reflective teaching. In *Second language teacher education*, ed. J. Richards and D. Nunan, 202–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dewey, J. 1938. *Experience and education*. New York: Collier Books.

Gilpin, A. 1999. A framework for teaching reflection. In *Theory in language teacher education*, ed. H. Trappes-Lomax and I. McGrath, 109–18. London: Longman.

Haines, S. 1989. *Projects*. Edinburgh: Nelson.

Hopkins, D. 1985. *A teacher's guide to classroom research*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

James, P. 2001. *Teachers in action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knezevic, A., and M. Scholl. 1996. Learning to teach together: Teaching to learn together. In *Teacher learning in language teaching*, ed. D. Freeman and J. Richards, 79–96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lange, D. L. 1990. A blueprint for a teacher education program. In *Second language teacher education*, ed. J. Richards and D. Nunan, 245–68. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lightbown, P., and N. Spada. 2000. *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moon, C., and R. L. Boullón. 1997. Reluctance to reflect: Issues in professional development. In *In-service teacher development: International perspectives*, ed. D. Hayes, 60–73. London: Prentice Hall.

Nunan, D. 1990. Action research in the language classroom. In *Second language teacher education*, ed. J. Richards and D. Nunan, 62–81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., and C. Lockhart. 1994. *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, J. 1998. *Language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scharle, A., and A. Szabó. 2000. *Learner autonomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schön, D. A. 1987. *Educating the reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Tsui, A. 1996. Learning how to teach ESL writing. In *Teacher learning in language teaching*, ed. D. Freeman and J. Richards, 97–119. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wallace, M. J. 1991. *Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——. 1998. *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, M. 1999. Learning teaching: A social constructivist approach. In *Theory in language teacher education*, ed. H. Trappes-Lomax and I. McGrath, 11–20. London: Longman.

BETTIANA ANDREA BLÁZQUEZ has an M.A. in ELT and Applied Linguistics from King's College, London University. She has taught English at primary and secondary schools and currently teaches phonetics, phonology, and English II at Escuela Superior de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Patagonia, Argentina.

Observer's Ratings of Student and Teacher Behaviours

Reflection as a Necessary... • Bettiana Andrea Blázquez

I. To what extent are the following characteristics present in each group of students?

Students' Behaviour	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
A. Students are active participants in their groups.	40%	60%			
B. Students listen to each other.	40%	60%			
C. Students encourage and praise others in the group.			40%	60%	
D. Students interact in English.			20%	80%	
E. Students don't ask the teacher; they try to solve their problems independently.	20%	40%	40%		
F. Students employ self-check devices.		60%	40%		
G. Students work cooperatively.	60%	20%	20%		
H. Students manage to divide the work in the group effectively.	80%	20%			
I. Students seem to enjoy working in groups.	60%	40%			

II. To what extent are the following characteristics present in the teacher's behaviour?

Teacher's Behaviour	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
A. The teacher is able to do less of the work.		X			
B. The teacher is able to step aside and observe/monitor what is going on.	X				
C. The teacher is able to relinquish some of the classroom management responsibilities.		X			
D. The teacher talks less than the students.		X			
E. The teacher advises, but she doesn't impose her views.	X				

(Rating scales adapted from Roberts 1998)

started as non-participating observers decided to become involved and stayed on to the finish. Furthermore, the District Resource Center kept a copy of the document to give other students, teachers, and schools for future access.

In addition to promoting exceptional student attendance and teacher participation, the interactive workshop provided an empowering environment, more so than the usual classroom setting, especially for the female students who were initially shyer than their male colleagues. In this case, the female students opened up and collaborated candidly about HIV/AIDS on an equal footing.

Conclusion

In countries with high illiteracy levels, like Zambia, there is a crucial need for educated people to facilitate the essential paperwork and tasks for projects such as one to create awareness about HIV/AIDS. Importantly, the high school students who participated in the project described in this article learned a lot about developing a professional proposal and gained the capacity to plan, organize, and lead, which is an indispensable human resource for a developing country with special problems in health care and education.

Students who participated in this project improved their English writing skills, and are now equipped to apply those skills in a productive way that will provide an impetus for change. Since these students are the future leaders and will be the next generation to grapple with HIV/AIDS, they must be able to combat the pandemic using all available means—including the applied writing skills now at their disposal.

References

ACP–EU Courier. HIV/AIDS: Doubt and hope. September–October 2003.

Brandes, D., and P. Ginnis. 1986. *A guide to student-centred learning.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Phillips, D., S. Burwood, and H. Dunford. 1999. *Projects with young learners.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sᴍɪᴛʜ H. Hᴀʙᴜʟᴇᴍʙᴇ has been a teacher for more than 22 years and currently teaches at the Monze Boarding High School in Monze, Zambia.

Appendix 2 Group Interview Questions*

Reflection as a Necessary… • Bettiana Andrea Blázquez (Continued from page 35)

1. How did you feel about the project?
2. How did you feel about working in a group? (Could you participate? Did you listen to each other? Did you help your partners?)
3. How did you organise your work in the group? (Did you work cooperatively? Did you divide the work? Did you work independently or with your teacher's help?)
4. How did you communicate with your partners?
5. What did you find most interesting or challenging?
6. What did you find boring and frustrating about the project?
7. What did you learn?
8. What would you suggest to improve the project?

(Adapted from Scharle and Szabó 2000)

---

*Students were asked these questions in Spanish so that they would feel confident enough to express their feelings and ideas.