

**INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING****Dr. Jadal M. M.****S.S.B. College of Education, Shirampur, Dist.:- Ahmednagar.****ABSTRACT**

More research needs to be conducted in the area of reflective practice in order to 'validate' it as a legitimate and reliable means of professional development for teachers in general and ESL teachers in particular. Such research may include an evaluation of the prevailing approaches in teacher education. This paper focuses on such teachers where six college level teachers of English who were committed to improving their classroom practice set about task of reflecting on themselves and their teaching. The reflections led to a series of processes. They found themselves gaining a deeper understanding of several classroom issues, and developed because of the understanding, alternative conceptions of teaching and later native ideas in their classroom and they found the experience empowering and transformative in their personal growth and professional development. Observing and transformative process over a period of a year and a half from the records the teachers have maintained with remarkable prescience and from the discussions the researcher has drawn some conclusions which have significant implications for ESL teacher Learning.

KEYWORDS: peer observation, Professional Development, Reflective Practice, Video Recording.

INTRODUCTION

In our country, the Guru once stood only next to God. In many invocations, he was called on as many gods in one. But today he or she has no such place, Tertiary-level teachers of English in today's India are in an even more unenviable position. Although placed at the loom of history at a time when society's demands on English are growing at an unprecedented scale, there are openly expressed doubts on their ability to successfully carry out the tasks on their own. In several States, not excluding Andhra Pradesh, lack of faith in them is obvious – College. Teachers of English are being obliged to prove themselves even for those tasks for which they have more than adequate equipment and obvious potential. The need to regain lost ground is urgent. (Tickoo 2009:18-19.)

AIM OF THIS STUDY:- The Principal aim of this study is to examine how reflective practice enables ESL teachers to make sense of their professional world as well as make significant and worthwhile change with themselves and in their teaching practices, The study has a secondary aim as well. In general educational research, 'teachers' ways of knowing', which are referred to as the 'new scholarship' or 'practitioner research' (Anderson and Herr 1999), are gaining recognition. The knowledge produced by teachers out of their own realities as professionals is increasingly being regarded as legitimate. The process of legitimizing this knowledge calls for a broad-based movement that seeks to examine and make public the new scholarship. This study is an attempt in that direction in the ESL context in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW:-

Nunan (1992) reports on the planning processes employed by nine teachers with different levels of experience and concluded that the teachers' plans had a significant impact on their lessons, although their lessons were substantially modified during instruction.

Johnson (1992) studied six pre-service ESL teachers, using videotaped recordings of the lessons they had taught and stimulated recall reports of the instructional decisions and prior knowledge that influenced their teaching. She found that teachers most frequently recalled making interactive decisions in order to promote student understanding (37%), to promote student motivation, involvement (17%), instructional management (15%), curriculum integration (9%), subject matter contents (8%), students' language skill (8%) and students' affective needs (6%) (Johnson, 1992:127).

Katz(1996) made a study at a large urban state university in the United States that serves a large and diverse student population. She used two audio-recorded, formal interviews with each teacher, one at the beginning and one at the end, journal writing and conducted classroom observations, documented via extensive field notes, which were transcribed and conducted research to understand the instruction of writing to both native and non-native users of English.

Gray (1998), a teacher and teacher trainer used interactive learner/ trainee diaries as a part of a short pre-service teacher training courses and found that by listening to learners' voices, trainees can get access to essential affective factors in teaching-learning process.

Towndrow(2004) investigated the relatively unexplored field of reflective journal writing by an on-line tutor working with a group of Chinese learners of English attending an intensive communication skills program at Singapore.

Procedures for carrying Out reflective Practice:-

Several strategies and techniques have been developed to investigate classroom teaching by reflective practitioners. They are a. Self-Monitoring, b.- Teacher Support Groups, c.- Peer Observation, d.- Teaching Portfolio, e.- Critical Incident Analysis, f._ Team teaching, g._ Action Research, h.- Diary / Journal Writing.

CASE STUDIES OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE, ESPECIALLY IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING LEARNING**Description of Subjects:-**

After attending program on reflective practice, six teachers teaching undergraduate ESL classes at colleges in and around Solapur, Maharashtra, decided to carry out reflective practice through one or more means for their own on-going professional development. The participants were heterogeneous in different aspects, such as age, qualification, training, experience, and place of work. They teach students of similar profiles learning English as second language.

Teacher A is an English teacher working in a degree college in one of the tehsils of Solapur. He has a Master's degree in English, and is interested in phonetics. He has not undergone any special training in teaching English as a second language, but he has taught English for 29 years in an Intermediate and Degree college. He teaches mostly rural students, who are from Marathi medium schools. He has acted as a resource person at workshops on communication skills and English grammar for English teachers working in the rural areas of Solapur. He has attended four refresher courses, one train-the-trainer program, one career guidance-training program.

Teacher B is an English teacher working at a well-known degree college in Solapur, the students of which are from good academic backgrounds. The teacher has a Master's degree in English literature. He also has a bachelor's degree in education and special training in ELT through the 'Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching English' from the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages. (now English and Foreign language University), Hyderabad. He has taught English for 32 years, 18 years at the school level and 14 years at college level. He has attended six national seminars and one international seminar. His college has divided the students into four streams based on their linguistic abilities.

Teacher 'C' is working as an Assistant Professor of English at an engineering college in Solapur. He has a Master's degree in English Literature. He has 15 years of experience of teaching English as second language at the undergraduate level. He has had no special training for teaching English.

Teacher 'D' heads the department of English in a reputable women's college. She has a Master's degree in English literature and has taught English for 25 years. She has presented papers in national and international seminars and participation in workshops.

Teacher 'E' had the department of English in a degree college in Akhij, about 110 kms. from Solapur. He has taught English for 31 years. He has a master's degree in English literature. He has not had any training in teaching English as a second language.

Teacher 'F' is a teacher of English working in a degree college in another tehsil of Solapur. He has a Master's degree in English Literature and 9 years of experience in teaching English and communication skills. He has had no training in teaching English.

PROCEDURES ADOPTED FOR DATA COLLECTION:-

This research has maintained separate files for each of the six participant teachers with his / her pseudonym. In the file allotted for each participant the researcher kept a copy of the teacher's profile containing his/her personal details, designation, educational qualifications, years of experience, objective in choosing the teaching profession, and a copy of the transcript of the interview. The information was obtained through interview on various emergent themes/ strategies/ patterns, which were considered important.

Teacher A had opted for audio-video recording for self-observation. The teacher himself arranged for the recording. Later, the teacher viewed and re-viewed the recording and analyzed it, selecting an item for observation through a checklist. Still later, the teacher re-taught the same lessons, and video-recorded it to find out whether the expected improvement had taken place in his teaching.

Teacher 'd' adopted for journal writing. Before she set about the task, she collected information from her students about their learning preferences by administering a questionnaire to them.

Teacher 'F' opted for peer observation. As his colleagues were busy and were reluctant to observe his classes, the researcher himself had to act as his observer. Before observing each class, the researcher had a discussion with the teacher, and the teacher decided on the aspects to be observed by selecting from the observation checklist provided to her. The observer entered the class to be observed five minutes earlier and sat in the last row without disturbing at students. After the class the observations were discussed with the teacher.

POST REFLECTION DISCUSSION:-

The researcher had a 15-minute discussion with **Teacher A**. When he was asked to respond on the importance of video recording, he expressed his satisfaction. He said that he would prefer video recording to journal writing, as the former helped not only in improving his teaching skills but also in assessing the learning capabilities of the students.

Teacher B expressed his satisfaction in reflection through journal writing because he was confident that it raised his self-consciousness about his own teaching. From the post reflection discussion, the researcher could notice the teacher's confidence in the usefulness of reflective practice, if followed regularly. He is confident that journal writing definitely helps the teacher, if done regularly. He realizes the importance of a thorough preparation after making self-introspection through journal writing. He expresses his hope of becoming a better teacher if he continues to reflect upon his classes on a regular basis. He suggests that experts in this field should conduct workshops and seminars periodically with a view to helping ESL teachers with guidelines to improve their classroom teaching.

Teacher C feels that reflective practice is an active process, which brings out teachers' capacity for expressing, analyzing and renovating the knot participate in her research, he readily consented as she felt knowledge they use in their classrooms. He also says that the process is retrospective in nature and helps in

improving perception of day-to-day work. The teacher believes that language as a means of communication can be learnt not only through formal instruction but also unknowingly through social interaction. He also feels that accuracy in communication is very important. Like a conventional teacher, she too believes that drill and practice can bring in accuracy in language use. He is of the opinion that students should learn speaking and listening skills so that they can be efficient learners in reading and writing.

teacher D, feels that the effectiveness of teaching depends on the learners' learning preferences. She uses a learner-centered model of teaching minimizing the lecturing and motivating the students asking critical question and using various other means such as jokes, and stories paper, cuttings. She is of the opinion that teaching will be effective if the teacher realizes the learning styles of her learners. To learn the needs of learners, the teacher administers a questionnaire to them, which is designed to elicit information about their learning styles and preference. From her questionnaire survey, the teacher found that the majority of her learners were kinesthetic, auditory and tactile learners. A few students were visual. She therefore, decided to use more listening exercise through tapes, team activities and exercise designed to listen to others., in order to help the auditory learners. She planned to use role-plays and other activity-based methods for kinesthetic learners, and she has also planned for projects so as to give a 'hands-on' experience to the tactile learners. She had strategies for the visual group as well. This teacher also asked her students to answer questionnaire (Willing, K. 1988, pp 106-107) to investigate their learning preferences.

When **teacher E** was asked to reflect on his experience, the teacher spoke with optimum about the value of reflective practice. The post- reflection discussion reveals that the teacher believes in reflective practice as an effective means of self-evaluation and of developing sensitivity to students' learning . He opted for journal writing. The teacher said that he had no idea of 'Reflective Practice' as a theory or as a concept but that his teaching depended purely on thoroughly thinking about the previous class he had taught. Documenting his reflections was a new experience for him. The teacher prefers story telling as his teaching strategy . He relates classroom situation to day-to-day experience. He prefers divergent question while teaching and referential questions while summing up. When he was asked to respond to his own "reflective practice" through journal writing , he sounded skeptical but spoke with considerable enthusiasm about the value of journal writing in developing one's writing ability.

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

FINDINGS BASED ON TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE;

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

On reflection , Teacher A found himself planning for his lesson carefully such that his students were able to learn vocabulary through practice, though it was basically a time-consuming activity.

Similarly, **Teacher B** set up a time bound practice exercise to sustain her students' interest while teaching reading comprehension.

Teacher C was found to plan his lesson dividing the duration of the class equally among all her students, thus finding the time to motivate his students to interact in English both with him among themselves. Time became an important factor for making his students summarize and recall the words and expression learned from the text, and he was able to manage it with ease.

Teacher D's decision about timing was interesting . She decided to teach grammar in the afternoon sessions, being conscious of the mood of the students.

2. Decisions about solving the students' problems through reflective practice:-

The teachers could also assess the kinds of problems that students had in understanding certain concepts and instructions. Though the classes differed slightly in 'personality' and 'perception', surprisingly, the kinds of problems that the students faced were rather similar. The teachers could identify the students' problems, tried out different method of explanation within the lesson series, and thus arrived at workable method of solving the students' problems.

3. Better decisions about the use of visual aids and inventing new strategies through reflective practice:

The reflective practices of five of the six teachers indicate significant improvement in their classroom practice in terms of teaching strategies and teaching aids. Reflective Practice has evidently helped them think about alternative strategies and teaching aids to make their classroom teaching more effective and interesting.

4. Building on the familiar:-

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

5. Opportunities for active involvement:-

Data indicate that reflection enabled the teacher participation to realize the need for providing opportunities to their students to interact with the teacher, text or with their friends during the class.

6. Taking advantages of wide variety of resources:-

The significant that occurred due to reflection among the teacher participants is that they were motivated to think and prepare for the class in advance and to select teaching materials appropriate to the level of their students.

7. Developing a sense of belonging with the classroom:-

Reflective practice enabled the teacher participants to realize that making students feel at home in the classroom would greatly facilitate learning. The data show the teachers attempting to make their students feel at ease in several ways, in particular, through the elicitation method. This developed in the students a sense of responsibility and belonging.

8. Sensitivity to learners' difficulties:-

The significant insight that the teachers derived from their own reflections was that , for effective teaching –learning to take place in the classroom, the teacher should be sensitive to the difficulties of the students in the learning process and that each lesson should be planned keeping the learners' difficulties in mind.

9. Seeking advice and outside support:-

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

10. Utilizing effective classroom management strategies:-

Reflection made the teachers realize the need for effective classroom management as a significant requisite for effective teaching. All the teacher participants were found to realize the significance of group activities for creating interaction among their students.

11. Maintaining flexibility and a positive attitude:-

Yet another significant outcome that the data analysis indicates is that the teachers understood the need to have a positive attitude towards their students and that they realized that flexibility in attitude and action in classroom would make the students learn better.

12. Promoting learner autonomy:-

Reflective practice helped the teachers realize both the need to give freedom to the students to choose the activity or the lesson to be taught and the necessity for creating a climate conducive to learning in the classroom.

13. Integrating language skills and resources:-

All the teacher participants learned to integrate language skills while designing activities for their students . By means of group discussions and pair work among the students , the teacher participants learned to integrate listening, speaking and reading skills. Teachers A & C encouraged their student to use

the internet to gather information for classroom activities. Teacher E made his students utilize the library resources to collect information related to the lesson prescribed, and the task served to integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

CONCLUSIONS:-

This research may well be regarded as a contribution to that emerging core sources in second language teacher education. The researcher hopes that by bringing teachers' ways of knowing through reflective practice into scholarly discussions, this study will strengthen the struggle, waged since the 1980s, to gain validity for inquiry-derived knowledge through reflective practice in ways afforded to disciplinary or theoretical knowledge, which still remains foundational to second language teacher education.

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