Five-Minute Paper as a Reflection Tool in Teaching

Ozlem Koprulu

Dokuz Eylul University, Turkey / Contact: okoprulu10@hotmail.com

Abstract

Being a reflective teacher means developing him/herself continuously, and it requires collecting data about their teaching styles, attitudes and teaching practices and using this information for critical reflection in their courses. In this study, the researcher aimed to change the contents of her courses, materials and teaching techniques in line with the students 'requests and also show that the students' ideas were taken into consideration and they were included in the process of deciding what to do in the courses.. For this reason, "five-minutes papers", which is one of the tools used to achieve formative feedback from learners, was used and two questions were asked to the students:1- "What were your expectations from the course? Have they been met?" 2."Is there anything that should be done differently?". It was administered to the freshmen(49 students) for "Lexical Competence", to the juniors(75 students) for "Methodology" and to the seniors (54 students) for "English Language Testing and Evaluation" courses at English Language Teaching Department in Buca Faculty of Education at Dokuz Eylül University at the end of the 2014-2015 academic year in the last ten minutes of their courses. Students' suggestions were collected and analyzed by the researcher and their positive and negative ideas were collected under some main headings for each course and provided with the number of the students

Introduction

Different teachers have different teaching styles which help them to cope with the routine demands of teaching situations but there may be a danger that the teaching

style may also be an obstacle for teachers' professional development. How can teachers go beyond these routines and become more aware of their teaching styles and practices? One way of achieving this is to observe and reflect on their teaching way and use this information to bring about some positive changes in the teaching situations and ways.

Becoming a critically reflective teacher means to ask "what", "why" and "how" questions such as "What does it mean to be a teacher?", "Where did the ideas I embody in language teaching come from?", "Why do I continue to use them in my teaching?" and "How might I teach differently?" (Bartlett, 1994, p. 206). By asking these questions, teachers begin to have control on changing their classroom life and gain a certain power over their teaching, and this process is called "reflective teaching". Moreover, becoming reflective forces teachers to adopt a critical attitude toward themselves and challenge their beliefs about teaching to face with deeply-rooted personal attitudes related to human nature and learning. Reflective practitioners question existing practices to gain new viewpoints related to their practice and as a result of this, they change their perspectives (Larrivee, 2000). Stephen Brookfield states that among all the pedagogical tasks teachers deal with, getting inside students' head is one of the trickiest and at the same time the most essential (Brookfield, 2017).

Teachers need feedback on their performance to help them identify how to shape and improve their teaching practice better. Their engaging in reflective practice and analysing their own method of instruction and assessment should become a routine part of professional life (OECD, 2009).

Reflection is a three-part process:
- Stage 1: The starting point is an actual teaching episode, such as a lesson or other instructional events. The focus is usually the teacher's own teaching, but observation of another teacher's teaching can also be used.
- Stage 2: The next stage is getting an account of what happened without an explanation or evaluation. There are many different ways to gather information.

- Stage 3: The teacher reviews it and questions are asked and some plans for further changes are prepared. (Murphy, 2001)

By using reflective teaching, teachers can improve their abilities to collect information on what is taking place in classrooms, examine this information to build awareness, to deepen understanding of current teaching and learning behaviours, to pose questions related to their teaching, make informed changes in teaching and continue such efforts over time and share insights with others (Murphy, 2001).

It gained popularity by Cruikshank and Zeichner (as cited in Bartlett, 1994), who defined reflective teaching "as the teachers' thinking about what happens in classrooms, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims" and he sees it as a means to provide students with an opportunity to consider the teaching event thoughtfully, analytically and objectively. According to this definition, the improvement of teaching techniques is seen as the most important way to help teachers develop their teaching practice. The aim of reflective teaching is to produce good thinking habits.

Zeichner and Liston (as cited in Bartlett, 1994) had a different view. They define a reflective teacher as somebody who has the origins, purposes and consequences of their work at all levels. According to them, critical reflection enables teachers to improve their pedagogical habits and skills necessary for self-directed growth.

As Cray and Currie (as cited in Gray, 1998) have stated, "learners have ideas about such issues as the role of the classroom in language learning, the function of the teacher and the appropriateness and the relevance of the various teaching practices." Richard and Lockhart (as cited in Murphy, 2001) define reflective teaching as an approach to second language classroom instruction in which 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 their efforts in language courses. So teachers learn from their personal experiences and gain awareness of their beliefs and practices. Thus, they enhance the quality of learning opportunities they can provide in their classrooms. Through reflective teaching teachers learn "to see teaching differently". Bartlett (1994) states that "If we want to

improve our teaching through reflective inquiry, we must accept that it does not involve some modification of behaviour by externally imposed directions or requirements, but that it requires deliberation and analysis of our ideas about teaching as a form of action based on our changed understandings." According to Ersöz (2012), self-inquiry and self-discovery are so much important and effective in changing our beliefs and behaviours. Reflective teachers engage in systematic forms of inquiry that examine the origin and the results of everyday teaching so that they come to understand the factors that hinder change and improvement (Bartlett, 1994).

Purposes of reflective teaching can be stated as expanding one's understanding of the teaching/learning process and one's repertoire of strategic options as a language teacher, and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities one is able to provide in language classrooms (Murphy, 2001). It also enables teachers and instructors to be able to scrutinize the underlying principles and beliefs which define the way they teach. Furthermore, it provides instructors and teachers with an opportunity to identify professional and personal weaknesses and strengths and to promote deeper understanding of student learning.

There are different ways of gathering information for reflective teaching, and some of them are: a-formative feedback from learners which includes five-minute papers, teacher-assessment surveys, questionnaires and student focus groups; b-formative feedback from other teachers (peer collaboration, dialogue with a supervisor and classroom observation); c-self-generated sources of information (retrospective field notes, teaching journals, lesson plans and audio/video recordings); d-summative feedback from learners at the end of the course, and e-action research (Murphy, 2001, p. 500).

Formative assessment involves giving useful advice rather than marks or grades and it is developmental and provides ongoing educational feedback which can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. The goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning.

In this paper, five-minute paper will be explained as it is the tool used for gathering information in this study. It was chosen as a reflection tool because questions could be designed to make students think critically instead of making them

repeat what in their book. Questions can also be used as a quick and easy way to achieve instant feedback about courses and students' ideas in a short time. Due to these reasons, they are a very efficient and versatile instructional strategy.

Five-Minute papers

Five –minute papers have been defined as pedagogical assessment tools which can enable students reflect on course content and material, and they can provide insights on improvement of instruction. Furthermore, this technique helps teachers learn what students think about the course and what additional support they need. It is a direct way of learning how learners perceive and respond to their teacher's effort and provides feedback on whether the teacher and the students have similar ideas about the courses. Moreover, students can also be asked to add a question and in this way the assessment becomes an integrative task, which makes it a very adaptable tool (Richards, 2015). A physics professor at the University of California originally developed this technique. Later it was modified by Wilson in 1983 and became popular with Cross and Angelo in 1988 to provide instructors with anonymous feedback on what students are learning in the class (Ashakiran, 2016). Cross and Angelo (1988; as cited in Vian, 1994) define five-minute papers" as a technique which provides a quick and simple way to collect written feedback from students The teacher asks students one or two questions to which students are asked to react.

Tabulating the responses and taking notes of any useful comments are all the analysis needed. Five-minute papers can be used as frequently as needed both at the beginning and at the end of the courses. Comparing responses over time can help teachers to see changes and developments. They are quick to administer, easy to analyze and well-suited to use in large classes. The last five to ten minutes of the lesson will be enough to ask a few open-ended questions such as "what is the one thing you are likely to remember from today's class?" It is most useful if teachers emphasize that the aim is to provide formative feedback about how the courses are going, and students can write their ideas in their mother tongue as the purpose is to learn about students' ideas and feelings about the courses.

Some advantages of this technique are:

- They can provide a bridge between successive class periods.

- They can improve the quality of class discussion

- They are an effective way of involving all students in class. It sends a message that each student has something to contribute.

- They can function as an ongoing learning journal.

- They can help teachers identify course concepts that are most important.

- They serve to build a good teacher-student rapport and establish "real dialogue". Students can discover whether their point was common to others and whether their teacher valued it. In addition, students begin to see their teachers as responsive to their needs, which contributes to a cooperative climate. (Cuseo, 2015).

Some disadvantages are as follows:

- If students are asked to use them too often, they may lose interest.

- Although the use of it is simple, its application is not very popular due to the lack of awareness of its existence and because of the belief that it would be too time consuming to analyse students' replies.

- Questions can be ambiguous and difficult to answer in a short period of time.

This study tries to show that the use of five-minute papers as a reflection tool can help teachers and prospective teachers to understand that students' ideas can provide them with invaluable information about their teaching styles and problems, and in this way, may help them develop their way of teaching, make necessary changes to achieve more effective learning and incorporate students to the process and build better rapport between the teacher and the students.

In this study, two questions were asked to the students: "What were your expectations from the course? Have they been met?" and "Is there anything that should be done differently", and the questions were expected to find out:

- What are the positive ideas and suggestions of the students related to the three courses, "Lexical Competence, Methodology and English Language Testing and Evaluation"?

- What are the negative ideas of the students related to these courses?

It is assumed that this study will shed light both for teachers and prospective teachers who want to improve themselves pedagogically and show them how to use one of the reflective teaching tools hoping that it will inspire them to use reflective teaching in their own classrooms to find solutions to their problems, make students join in the teaching- learning process and learn their students' ideas related to what happens in the classroom.

Methodology

In the study, qualitative research method which requires collecting textual data and examining it using interpretive analysis in order to discover patterns of behavior and thinking was used. A qualitative research study uses the participants' own words so that it can give readers a sense of entering the participants' worlds and sharing the experience of being there with them (Heigham & Croker, 2009). It focuses on understanding the process of what is going on in a setting.

The participants are randomly chosen 49 freshman (16 males and 33 females), 75 junior (15 males and 60 females) and 54 senior students (18 males and 36 females) attending English Language Teaching Department in Buca Faculty of Education at Dokuz Eylül University during the academic year of 2014-2015. Their age range is 18 to 23. Two classes were chosen from each grade and totally there were six classes. Sophomores were not included in the research as the researcher did not have any lessons with them during that term.

In order to learn the freshmen, juniors and seniors' ideas and suggestions about their courses and to make necessary changes in these lessons, "five-minute papers", which is one of the reflective teaching tools, was used. Two questions were asked to the students: "What were your expectations from the course? Have they been met?" and "Is there anything that should be done differently?" (Murphy, 2001). These

questions were taken from Murphy's book and similar questions could be found in different sources which are ready for teachers to use.

Freshmen answered the questions for "Lexical Competence", juniors for "Methodology" and seniors for "English Language Testing and Evaluation" courses. It was administered in the last 10 minutes of the lessons.

For each course the researcher listed three negative and three positive statements and suggestions which were most frequently provided by the students. All responses were analyzed and the main findings were used to make necessary changes in the courses mentioned.

Results

"Lexical Competence" Course

According to the students' responses, three negative and positive most frequently provided ideas and suggestions were as follows:

Negative Ideas

18 students stated the following ideas and suggestions:

1- *"We could have learned more advanced vocabulary."*
2- *"More examples could have been used to explain the meaning of new vocabulary."*
3- *"Slides, pictures and videos could have been used to make the meaning of new vocabulary items clearer."*

Positive Ideas

41 students stated the following ideas and were happy with the design of the course:

1- *"We expected an increase in our vocabulary knowledge and it did."*
2- *"We did not like to learn new words but two weeks later in this lesson we realized that we were learning new words without getting bored."*
3- *"Your way of teaching was active and your attitude was positive."*

"Methodology" Course

Participants' most frequent responses were as follows:

Negative Ideas

33 students wanted some changes:

84

1- *"More examples of reflective teaching tools and more visual information such as videos could have been incorporated in the lessons."*

2- *"We could have made more discussions by forming groups with different students."*

3- *"There must be more breaks. The lesson is too long."*

Positive Ideas

42 students did not want any change:

1- *"Working in pairs and talking about what we remember in two minutes help us understand the topic better. My partner helps me realize my mistakes and we listen to the lesson more attentively."*

2- *"The teacher gives us some words related to the topic and want us to use them in sentences at the end of the lesson."*

3- *"The teacher's attitude is positive so we feel comfortable which makes learning better."*

"English Language Testing and Evaluation" Course

Seniors' most frequent responses were provided:

Negative Ideas

16 students expressed their suggestions for the course:

1- *"We could have checked real students' exam papers."*

2- *"Criteria for our presentations could have been clearer."*

3- *"Lessons could have been shorter."*

Positive Ideas

38 students stated positive ideas about the course:

1- *"We gained a great deal of information about how to prepare exam questions to test different language skills and how to evaluate them."*

1- *"'What is the most important thing you have learned today?' question helped us to reflect on what we learned."*

2- *"We gained useful information to help us in our future exams we have to take to be appointed as a teacher."*

Discussion

In this part changes and improvements made for each course and some comparisons with other research in literature were presented.

This study has attempted to demonstrate that the inclusion of the five-minute papers as a reflection tool in teaching will greatly help teachers to analyze their teaching practices and styles better and understand students' ideas about the effectiveness of their courses. It also shows that it is possible to incorporate students to the decision making process.

According to the students' most frequent responses, some changes and improvements related to each course were provided.

Lexical competence course

Groups of four students were formed and each group was given a specific topic. In order to explain the meaning of new vocabulary items about that topic, the students were required to use example sentences, pictures and slides. Thus, the students had more visual clues about new vocabulary items and learned more words.

After some lessons, the students chose 10 of the new words they learned in that lesson and made up a story using these words, both in class and as homework assignment (mnemonic technique). After some lessons, vocabulary games related to the words they learned were played. More advanced vocabulary items, idioms and phrasal verbs were included. They checked each other's knowledge by asking the newly learned words to one another in two-minute sessions in pairs.

Positive comments made the researcher realize that the students were happy with the attitude of the instructor and the way of teaching so she decided to continue showing the same attitude and way of teaching.

Methodology course

Some videos about classroom observation and student focus groups were included. Also some examples of journal entries and sample questions which could be asked in student focus groups were provided as photocopies.

Groups were formed with different students so that students can have the opportunity to hear about the ideas of different students. Furthermore breaks were given more frequently.

The students were content with working in pairs in which they checked how much they remembered in the lesson and they were also happy with the positive attitude of the instructor. As a result, the researcher continued using them.

English language testing and evaluation course

They checked the dictation exams of some students given as an example in our book. More examples of various tests were included (cloze tests, listening, reading and writing tests, multiple- choice).

Criteria for presentations were clearly stated and given to the students in a written form. We talked about how they would score the tests in their presentations. Similarly, breaks were given more often.

In addition, through positive comments the researcher realized that the students were content with the information they gained to prepare questions for various language skills. Consequently, the researcher decided to continue using activities and materials which worked well with the students.

Lang (2016) used five–minutes papers in his lessons and asked these two questions to his students: "What was the most important thing you learned today?" and "What question still remains in your mind?" According to him, these questions have multiple objectives. They require students to remember something from the class and do some quick thinking by reflecting on the material and the main points of that class. Likewise, in this study, students reflected on the course material and provided negative and positive ideas.

Cuseo (2015) used minute papers mostly at the end of his lessons to have students reflect on the most important concepts discussed in the class that day, which is similar with our study in which students provided answers about important parts of the courses. He also uses them at the beginning of class to activate students' ideas on the topic. He periodically uses them during the class period after discussing a key point to trigger students' reflection before introducing another point. He thinks that

they are very efficient and versatile instructional strategy. He used a wide range of questions such as "What was the most useful idea discussed in today's lesson?" or "What was the most memorable thing about today's class?"

According to a study conducted by Navaneedhan (2016), reflective teaching develops critical thinking and promotes experiential learning and it enhances personal growth, which is line with the results of this study.

The results of another study conducted by Fatemipour (2014) revealed that the application of reflective teaching procedure had a significant effect on teachers' ability. In addition, the results demonstrated that the teachers changed their teaching preferences and considered alternative activities in order to improve their teaching effectiveness based on their reflection recorded through keeping diaries. Similarly, in this study, the researcher made some changes in the teaching practices and materials used in the courses which helped her to have better adjusted classes.

In another study Ashakiran (2013) used "One-Minute paper" in the class and at the end of the study participants reflected that the use of "One-Minute Paper" was thinking-centered, engaged them throughout the topic and provided liberty for them to ask questions. Similarly, in this study, the students were engaged with the course material and how courses went.

In Whittard's (2015) study, findings showed that students valued the use of "One-Minute Paper" because it demonstrated respect for them; this helps to create an atmosphere of trust which can encourage an active approach to student learning, which is in compatible with this study which demonstrated that the students' ideas were important for the instructor.

Conclusion

Teachers who use various reflection tools make changes in their attitudes and ideas which may help their professional development as well as improve the support they provide for their students. According to the feedback achieved from the students, the instructor made necessary changes and improvements to have better-adjusted courses. Reflective teaching is not an easy process because it necessitates a major shift in emphasis in our thinking and acting. Becoming reflective forces us to adopt a critical attitude to ourselves as language teachers.

Reflective teaching suggests that experience alone may not be sufficient for powerful impetus for teacher development. Teachers may not be aware of their thought patterns about learning and teaching and they may continue to teach in the same way without knowing whether it is useful or useless for their students. They may also go on following the ideas embedded deep in their mind as a result of previous learning and teaching experiences or some prejudices. Reflective practice enables teachers to see inconsistencies between their thinking and practice, and promotes a conceptual change in their views about teaching. The results of this study enabled the instructor to become aware of some thought and behavior patterns.

Students also value the use of five-minute papers because it shows respect for them and helps to create a positive atmosphere which can lead to an active approach to student learning.

There are some practical implications of using five-minute papers in classes. First of all, students are generally reluctant or shy to talk about how things are going in the classroom or suggest some changes. Five-minute papers can provide them with this opportunity. Secondly, if a learning problem or any kind of problem is common to most of the students, instructors or teachers can learn about it timely. Thus, some parts of the courses can be planned again for subsequent semesters.

In the light of the results obtained from the students, it could be suggested that teachers, instructors and prospective teachers should be aware of the benefits of using five-minute papers to improve themselves professionally and to help students learn more efficiently in their classes. In addition, with the help of in-service training courses teachers can gain knowledge about various reflective teaching tools, not only about five-minute papers, and how to use them in their classes as both teachers and students benefit from these techniques.

Notes on the contributor

Ozlem Koprulu (Ph.D.) is an instructor in the Department of English Language Teaching at Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, Turkey. She conducts research on teacher training, action research and learning styles. Currently, she teaches ELT courses for pre-service EFL teachers.

References

Angelo, T. A. & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass Publishers.

Ashakiran, S. & Deepthi, R. (2016). One-minute paper: A thinking-centered assessment tool. *Internet Journal of Medical Update*, *8*(2), 3-9. Retrieved from: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijmu/article/view/93192

Bartlett, L. (1994). Teacher development through reflective teaching. In Jack C. Richards & David Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 202-214). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brookfield, S. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Cuseo, J. (2015). Advantages of Minute Papers. Retrieved from http://oncourseworkshop.com/self-awareness/one-minute-paper/

Ersöz, A. (2012). Reflections on a seminar at Izmir University of Economics. *The INGED Newsletter*, *1*(3), 42.

Fatemipour, H. & Hosseingholikhani, F. (2014). The impact of reflective teaching on the EFL teachers' performance. *Journal of Education and Management Studies , 4*(4), 796-799.

Gray, J. (1998). The language learner as teacher: The use of interactive diaries in teacher training. *ELT Journal, 52*(1), 29-36.

Heigham, J. & Croker, R. A. (2009). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lang, J. (2016). The beginning and end of classes. Retrieved from https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Beginning-End-Class.

Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: Becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice*, *1*(3), 293-307.

Li, Z. & Ye, Z.(2016). On reflective teaching of EFL teachers in local universities of China: A case study of Leshon Normal University. *English Language Teaching, 9*(6). 154-161. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n6p154.

Murphy, J. (2001). Reflective teaching in ELT. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second language* (pp. 499-513). Boston: Heinle & Heinle Thomson Learning.

Navaneedhan, C. G. (2011). Reflective teaching pedagogy as innovative approach in teacher education through open and distance learning. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, *3*(12), 331-335. http://dx.doi.org/10.5897/JMCS11.028

Porter, P., Goldstein, L., Leatherman, J., & Conrad, S. (1994). An ongoing dialogue: Learning logs for teacher preparation. In J. C. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 227-240). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C. (1995). Towards reflective teaching. *English Teachers Journal Israel*, 59-63. Retrieved from: https://tttjournal.co.uk/uploads/File/back_articles/Towards_Reflective_Teaching.pdf

Ruth-Sahd, L. A. (2003). A critical analysis of data-based studies and implications for nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education, 42*(11), 488-495. https://doi.org/10.3928/0148-4834-20031101-07.

OECD (2009). *Teacher evaluation: A conceptual framework and examples of country practices*. Retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/education/school/44568106.pdf

Vian, L. (1994). Using one-minute papers for immediate feedback of student comprehension of mathematics in the classroom. *Second Annual College Continuing Education Faculty Symposium on Teaching Effectiveness*, 57-65. Retrieved from:

Whittard, D. (2015). Reflections on the one-minute paper. *International Review of Economics Education*, *20*, 1-12.

Zalipour, A. (2015). Reflective Practice. Retrieved from: https://www.waikato.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/360861/Reflective-Practice-June-2015.pdf