



## Refashioning the Practicum by Emphasizing Attending and Reflective Skills

In their 1970 guidelines for teacher-preparation programs (TPPs), TESOL's founders promoted practicum experiences that include "systematic directed observation, supervised teaching practice and progressive teaching responsibilities." TPPs with field experiences as centerpieces of their programs have been more effective in meeting the increasing demands teacher educators and their trainees face in today's performance-assessment and accountability-driven environment. Alternatives to traditional practicum structures that are more learner centered and grounded in practice provide a panoply of possibilities for those who structure TESOL preparation programs. Refashioning the practicum in ways that promote and sharpen teacher-learners' attending skills and their desire to reflect deeply and systematically on practice is the framework used here to consider the selection of innovative ideas TESOL and other teacher educators are using to strengthen their TPPs. Reorienting such programs so that theory is driven by authentic classroom experiences would align with the intent of TESOL's founders.

**A**s a Peace Corps math teacher in Ghana, I lost my voice for a week when dusty harmattan winds whipped down from the Sahara during the dry season. Able only to whistle, I wrote the initial equation of an algebraic problem on the board, looked for students to raise their hands, whistled while pointing to one of them, wrote the student's response for the second line, and continued in this fashion till the problem was solved. The same procedure worked in doing proofs in my geometry class. I realized that week that *my* voice was not necessary in getting students to think about and grapple with

*their* math problems. That lesson about giving voice to students transferred to my ESOL teaching later on in Thailand and New York City, not to mention decades of work with teachers since then.

While supervising a practicum student in the TESOL MA Program at Teachers College, Columbia University, I worked with a student teacher who was an extremely verbose and engaging speaker. However, upon viewing a videotape of one of his initial ESL classes and tallying how many times and lines he and his students spoke, that novice teacher realized how few chances the ESL students had to communicate. Reflecting on my “silent way” experience in Ghana, I suggested that my mentee feign laryngitis during his next class and see what happened. The student teacher was startled by how much the students had to say and how they could take initiative and control of the classroom discourse. His gift of gab and fear of silence, combined with a lack of confidence in his students’ communicative competence, now came into question in the context of his heightened awareness. His identity as an ESL teacher was being transformed from one who had all the power and voice to one who could begin to subordinate teaching to learning, as Gattegno and proponents of the Silent Way were touting at the time (Gattegno, 1976). The video review, tallying of classroom talk, and the experiment with silence afforded by practice teaching brought to his attention an issue that could have remained hidden from him for some time.

Teachers all too often remain unaware of many issues related to their own and their students’ classroom behavior. Good and Brophy (2003, pp. 24-25) list many such issues/problems teachers are often oblivious to, including teacher domination, overuse of factual questions, and lack of attempts to motivate students, stay with them in failure situations, or place emphasis on meaning. Practicum and other clinical experiences, if well structured, can arrange for teachers to attend to and reflect on a wide range of behaviors, both those highlighted in their teacher-preparation programs (TPPs), which presumably are at least in the periphery of their awareness zone, as well as those that are not. As powerful as such experiences are in the development of teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions, the practicum per se did not have TESOL’s official stamp of approval as a necessary component of TESOL teacher-preparation programs until the 1970s.

### **Historical Context of the Practicum in TESOL**

Though the first course in “Teaching English to the Foreign Born” was offered at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1911, it was not until the TESOL Guidelines Conference in 1970 that the practicum was officially recommended as an important component

in the design of TESOL teacher-education programs (Norris, 1977). This was a recognition by the fledgling TESOL organization, established only four years earlier, of ideas already in circulation. As Michael West asserted in 1959 (reprinted in Fanselow & Light, 1977), “Practice-teaching is the part of the training course which affects the student-teacher more intimately and has the greatest effect upon his real efficiency in the classroom ... [it] acts as a filter separating the practicable from the ideal” (p. 123). The list of competencies expected of graduates of TPPs, according to TESOL’s new guidelines, were to be “demonstrated through the actual teaching responsibility under experienced supervision” (Norris, 1977, p. 32), and teacher-education programs were guided to include a language-teaching practicum, defined as “systematic directed observation, supervised teaching practice and progressive teaching responsibilities which contribute to experience and competence in the primary roles of the English-as-a-second-language teacher,” which were specified in the guidelines (Norris, 1977, p. 34). In addition, the guidelines called for “opportunities for systematic, directed observation of a variety of English-as-a-second-language teaching situations for children, adolescents, and adults at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of instruction” (p. 34).

Acheson discovered in his 1975 doctoral research (condensed in Fanselow & Light, 1977) that it was not until the 1940s that TESOL TPPs began to be offered on a regular basis in the US and Britain and that the first master’s degree program (again at Teachers College) was initiated in 1945. By 1974, 69% of the 40 American master’s TPPs and 78% of the nine British diploma TPPs in Acheson’s survey offered “practice teaching.” The California ESOL Specialist Credential proposed in 1974 by CATESOL also adhered to the TESOL Conference’s guidelines. Practice teaching was the third most-cited course by the programs Acheson surveyed on both sides of the Atlantic while Linguistics and Phonetics and Methods and Materials ranked first and second, respectively. Twenty years later Palmer’s survey of 94 TESOL programs in the US and Puerto Rico showed that the practicum was still the third most-offered course in the curricula of those programs (Palmer, 1995). Nevertheless, a review of more recent studies of BA TEFL programs points out that “a common complaint concerns the lack of practical aspects and the limited number of observation opportunities” (Erkmen, 2013, p. 164). Trainees in practica mention how challenging their initial student teaching is (Farrell, 2003; Johnson, 1996), and Johnson argues for how important it is to prepare trainees for the practical realities they will face as they transition to the everyday issues of school life.

In this article, I reflect on my work in K-12 teacher education as

well as TESOL MA programs for those wishing to teach adult, community college, intensive English program, and university students or EFL students outside of the US and weave into this article research and practical ideas from those diverse contexts as they pertain to re-fashioning the practicum in TPPs while adhering to the important guidelines on reflection our TESOL founders envisioned.

### **Performance Assessment in the K-12 Realm**

The Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) movement in general K-12 teacher-education programs that influenced the TESOL guidelines of the mid-1970s was a precursor to teacher-education reforms in the 1980s. Those reforms led to “program designs representing more integrated, coherent programs” that forged “stronger links among courses and between clinical experiences and formal coursework, in part by using pedagogies that are connected to classroom practices” (Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 392). A later study of nine teacher-education programs found that “more coherent programs, those with a strong vision of the type of teaching they were aiming to develop and consistent goals across courses, were more influential and effective in supporting student teacher learning” (Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, p. 393). Such programs are sometimes referred to as clinically rich TPPs.

According to Ann, McEvoy, Peng, and Russo in the School of Education at the State University of New York at Oswego (n.d.), there are several differences between traditional and clinically rich teacher preparation. Traditional programs are usually characterized by candidates’ taking courses before student teaching, limited interactions between mentor teachers and education professors, student teachers being mostly left on their own during student teaching, and theory preceding practice in the curriculum. In stark contrast, in clinically rich programs candidates take courses concurrently with the immersion experience, there is extensive interaction between their mentors and education professors, they are supported and monitored more as they are immersed in clinical experiences, and they are forced early on to connect theory with practice. Many programs, such as ours at the University of the Pacific, embed clinical experiences early and throughout the TPP “so that prospective teachers develop an image of what teaching involves and requires” (Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 398). Hammerness and Darling-Hammond point to research that supports the view that “providing novices with these early practicum experiences actually provides a conceptual structure for them to organize and better understand the theories that are addressed in their academic work” (p. 398).

One challenge, then, for TESOL TPPs is to refashion their programs to be (more) clinically rich, weaving clinical experiences into a coherent web with course work and other experiences. Performance assessment demands on TPPs that train K-12 teachers, including TESOL specialists, are strongly influencing practicum experiences in those programs.

The CBTE movement half a century ago has again reared its head in the cyclical nature of seemingly reasonable ideas being revisited or reinvented. Performance assessments of teaching are at the forefront of “educational reform” in mainstream education with multiple professional measures being called for in systems such as the Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT) and the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA).

One dramatic change from the 1970s in the US is that TPPs that train and provide credential programs for K-12 teachers, almost all of whom will work with English learners in California and elsewhere in the US, have to conform more to state and national standards than in the past. Coughlan and Jiang (2014) declare that “we teach in an age when the state is increasing its mediation of the pedagogical relationships between students and teachers, and between teacher candidates and teacher educators” (p. 385). They also caution that “if learning to be a teacher is ... a process marked by individual and cultural differences based on variations in experience, background, and learning styles, and taking place by constructivist processes of reflection and building on previous experiences,” which we as TESOLers take for granted, “then evaluation instruments that take a standardized view of learning and that place the evaluator in the position of marking where and whether the learner measures up to standard contravene that model of learning” (p. 385). This poses a serious dilemma for educators in all contexts.

The tentacles of such evaluation instruments, performance assessments of teacher candidates linked to Common Core standards for K-12 students, have a wide reach, and some say they have the possibility of strangling TPPs. The demand for assessment instruments is subjecting many TPPs to relationships with for-profit companies, such as Pearson (so prominently visible in the publishers’ exhibits at TESOL conventions), which hires teachers and teacher educators as external scorers of the edTPA, for example. The extra workload on teacher educators to meet the increasing expectations that state and national standards demand of them makes it easier for higher education institutions to outsource the scoring of the performance of their teacher-education students, as our TPP has, which risks “making teacher education a big business enterprise that is driven by profit and

a production mind-set” (Sato, 2014, p. 423).

Proponents of such performance assessments of new teachers point to a “shift from an old model of input measures (grade point average, credits taken, content knowledge examinations) to output measures (performance assessments, portfolios and observations of teaching practice)” (Coughlan & Jiang, 2014, p. 375). The PACT instrument, developed by a consortium of 16 higher education institutions, is aligned with the California Teaching Performance Expectations for beginning teachers working toward a teaching credential. It focuses on planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection on a series of lessons on a topic a candidate chooses. After choosing a unit of instruction and describing his or her teaching context, a teacher candidate then submits lesson plans, a video clip of instruction, the assessment plan connected to the lesson plans, and a written reflection for evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

So what do the scorers of videorecorded events and observers focus on when determining how fit new teachers are for their chosen profession? An analysis of nine assessment instruments widely used in US TPPs by Coughlan and Jiang (2014) concluded that

almost all beginning teacher standards refer to creating a supportive environment, planning using the appropriate content standards, using assessments effectively to monitor student progress, and engaging students as active participants. However, within these commonalities, different programs and/or instruments reflect their particular commitments. (p. 378)

All these instruments include opportunities for student teachers to attend to and reflect on some aspects of what they are doing (and why) at the planning and implementation stages of their practice teaching. A lingering question, though, is whether they are doing so in a somewhat superficial manner that will provide TPPs with just enough evidence to show their accreditors that they are doing due diligence in training future teachers (see Clark-Gareca, this issue).

There are more sophisticated observation schemes and instruments that TESOLers and those in general education have been trained in (Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada, 1984; Allwright, 1988; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Fanselow, 1987; Good & Brophy, 2003; Pianta & Hamre, 2009; Wajnryb 1992). Such schemes focus student teachers on many detailed and nuanced aspects of classroom interactions and discourse that heighten their attending skills and offer untold opportunities to reflect on teaching-learning. Unfortunately, the more sophisticated schemes are time consuming to learn and difficult to weave into K-12

TPPs that are scrambling to keep up with all that is being demanded of them by the current standards by which their programs are being judged (or “held accountable”).

I raise these issues and dilemmas facing K-12 TPPs because in some cases TESOL teacher educators may be somewhat constrained from refashioning their programs in innovative ways by the numerous demands on them from the larger sociopolitical context in which they are situated. However, though such constrictions are real, we remain optimistic that TESOL TPPs can stimulate their trainees in many creative, innovative ways. Based on my work as a teacher educator, I am acutely aware that there is more freedom for experimentation in TPPs that prepare teacher candidates for non-K-12 settings. Both types of programs, however, are refashioning the practicum in ways that promote the development of trainees’ attending and reflective skills.

### **Developing Attending and Reflective Skills**

The practicum and other clinical, field-based experiences are where teacher-learners can most easily develop their skills in attending to the cacophony of sounds and stream of images that surround teachers. Anyone who watches toddlers’ attempts to make sense of the world knows how attentive they are to the stimuli around them. That same instinct is one teacher-learners must tap into to get the most of their practicum experiences. By first attending, especially through well-designed arrangements provided by teacher educators, cooperating teachers, and instructional supervisors, they can then more readily reflect on their experiences and what they have pulled out of those experiences for more careful (even systematic) attention.

Attending skills use all the senses. So teacher-learners, like the toddlers they once were, can be exposed to artifacts and experiences that get them to view (video and film clips, instructional materials, live classes and classroom environments, transcripts of their teaching, etc.), listen to (audiorecorded excerpts of their and peers’ teaching, ESOL students, listening materials, TESOL presentations on topics of interest, panels of ESOL teachers who work in a variety of settings, etc.), feel (micro-teaching experiences in practicum seminars, manipulatives for classroom use, unusually shaped objects they can attempt to describe with their eyes closed as an example of an information gap experience, etc.), and even smell and taste (e.g., pungent, putrid, floral, salty, bitter, and sweet things for descriptive purposes) in a variety of ways that get them closer to the teaching-learning dynamic. A variety of stimuli for the senses to attend to is the first ingredient for learning to take place. Just as language learners need input from a variety of sources (Opandy, 1994), the same is true of teacher-learners.

Attending is critical to teachers (and everyone else) in their identity formation. Farrell (2015) cites Anthony de Mello's call for careful observation (1992):

Watch everything inside of you and outside and when there is something happening to you, to see it as if it were happening to someone else, with no comment, no judgment, no attitude, no interference, no attempt to change, only to understand. (p. 25)

Only after attending to our experiences can we truly reflect on them in a way that leads to professional (or personal) growth. Outside of the cacophonous din and dizzying decision-making encounters we face in real classes, we can more easily find the reflective space to consider the details of our craft. As Posner (2000) wrote,

We do not actually learn from experience as much as we learn from reflecting on experience. Reflection on an experience, to put it most simply, means to think about the experience, what the experience means, how it felt, where it might lead, what to do about it. ..." (p. 21)

Posner's simple equation, *experience + reflection = growth*, reminds us that if we do not reflect on what we do, we will stifle or at least limit our chance to grow. If we add "attending" to Posner's equation, our adaptation becomes *experience + attending + reflection = growth*. Of course, the complexity of teaching and of learning about what goes on in the busyness of classrooms should not be viewed in the linear, unidirectional movement that such an equation might imply. There is, instead, an iterative nature to all the components of the equation that may be best visualized by imagining arrows connecting each part of the equation with each other component.

After five years of teaching in Ghana and Thailand and training a new group of Peace Corps volunteers before leaving Southeast Asia (*experience*), I felt successful and confident as an EFL teacher. I was humbled, however, when I first transcribed and described segments of my teaching (*attending*) in one of several practica I took during my subsequent graduate studies in TESOL. Using FOCUS, the observation scheme developed by my mentor and future colleague, John Fanselow (1987), I discovered routine patterns of interaction that seemed set in stone as a result of my Peace Corps training in audio-lingual techniques (*reflection*). Careful analyses of what my students and I were actually doing in class (*attending*) allowed me to carefully consider if my practice was congruent (or not) with the exciting ideas



that were being proposed by proponents of communicative language teaching, Counseling-Learning/Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, functional-notional syllabi, comprehension approaches to language teaching, and so forth (*reflection*). FOCUS opened up myriad alternatives to the patterns I soon broke so that I was open to and excited about experimenting with untold interactional possibilities in my adult ESL classes (*growth*), an excitement that gets triggered every time I engage with a new class of students.

Reflection in teachers' ongoing identity formation is powerful when it carries over to their students' learning and, potentially, to their own efforts to advocate for their students. As Farrell (2015) states,

The whole idea about reflective practice is that through reflection teachers will be able to provide optimum opportunities for their students to learn [because] ... they have become more aware of who they are, what they do, how they do it, why they do it, the results and impact of what they do not only inside the classroom but also outside in the community and society at large. (p. 33)

What are the consequences of practicum teachers' not developing their reflective muscles? According to Posner (2000), nonreflective teachers tend to "rely on routine behavior, are guided more by impulse, tradition, and authority than by reflection, simplify their professional lives by uncritically accepting everyday reality in schools" and find "the most effective and efficient means to achieve ends and to solve problems that have largely been defined for them by others" (p. 21). This can turn teachers into unthinking automatons subjected to scripted instructional materials and to the whims of those above them in the educational and socio-political-economic hierarchy. As educational philosopher Maxine Greene warned and then urged almost half a century ago,

If the teacher agrees to submerge himself into the system, if he consents to being defined by others' views of what he is supposed to be, he gives up his freedom to see, to understand, and to signify for himself. If he is immersed and impermeable, he can hardly stir others to define themselves as individual. If, on the other hand, he is willing ... to create a new perspective on what he has habitually considered real, his teaching may become the project of a person vitally open to his students and the world. ... He will be continuously engaged in interpreting a reality forever new; he will feel more alive than he ever has before. (1973, p. 270)

Injecting this feeling of aliveness in teachers early on is one of the challenges of the practicum instructor and all who administer and teach in TPPs. So how can we refashion the practicum to help teacher-learners attend and reflect more intently and intentionally on what they do as a means of forming, or (in the case of my own growth above and that of my supervisee who feigned laryngitis) reforming their identities as ESOL teachers? Luckily, practicum instructors have devised many useful ideas, enough to fill a series of books, but I hope my selection of innovative examples below (with attending and reflective skills in mind) will be useful in generating your own creative tasks that will be catalysts for the professional growth of student teachers in your teacher-education program.

### **Innovative Approaches to Developing Attending and Reflective Skills**

Many if not most TPPs engage their candidates in reflective practice. The teacher performance assessments mentioned above in the K-12 realm, for example, include a reflective piece in which teachers consider what they learn from the lessons they plan and video-record. The TESOL literature is rife with sophisticated and practical ideas about reflexivity and reflective practice and how to promote it in teacher education (Edge, 2011; Farrell, 2004, 2015), including practicum experiences.

At the conceptual level of reflection, Edge (2011) writes:

We are constantly called upon to act. Inevitably underinformed, only sometimes mindful of the risks involved, lacking in certainty or overconfident, optimistic or fearful, sticking with routine, determined to experiment, or relying on our ability to improvise, frequently oblivious of unintended consequences, we act. While theory strives for simplicity, action remains resolutely complex, multi-dimensional, and embodies the beating heart of our learning. (p. 119)

The practicum setting clearly reflects an arrangement for such action. He goes on to say:

... there is no meaning without action, and, with action, meaning is inevitable. These are the meanings that count, the meanings that we express through our actions. Action is the medium through which we demonstrate what we have learnt and through which – mediated by reflection – we continue to learn. (p. 119)

Farrell (2004) conceptualizes and actualizes the reflective process in *Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers*. Group discussion, classroom observation, journal writing, and creating teaching portfolios as aids to reflective practice are just some of the topics readers can reflect on. Here is an example of a “reflection break” in his book that follows one in which teachers (-in-training) outline their life histories:

- What critical incidents in your youth shaped you as a teacher?
- What critical incidents in your college years shaped you as a teacher?
- What critical incidents in your early teaching days shaped you as a teacher?
- What general critical incidents in your career have shaped you as a teacher?
- Do you teach in reaction to any of these incidents? Explain. (p. 96)

Take a moment to consider your own responses to these questions. By taking Farrell’s breaks, practicum students can acquire the mind-sets and habits of being reflective practitioners in very personal as well as professional ways.

Like Farrell, Kurtoğlu-Hooten (2013) pushes her practicing teachers to reflect on their teaching, but she also has them think about the levels of reflection they attain while student teaching, forcing metacognition on their reflective practice. First, they plan lessons in groups of three to four as well as individually and teach their own lessons while being observed by their peers and a supervising tutor. They then receive oral feedback in groups, followed by written feedback. As practicum participants develop “webportfolios” (i.e., e-portfolios) using PebblePad software, one of the pages to which they can post messages is a blog titled *Learning From Teaching Practice*. To encourage her trainees to develop their “reflective skills,” she asks them upon completing their portfolio tasks (regarding, for example, a critical incident, the contextualization of a lesson, and error correction) to also consider at which level(s) they are according to descriptors of reflective levels by Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills (1999). The descriptors, which are ordered from lower to higher levels of reflection, are as follows:

Level 1 – reporting an event as it occurred; Level 2 – responding to the event in a spontaneous and emotional manner; Level

3 – relating to the event in terms of past experience and knowledge; Level 4 – reasoning about the event in terms of alternatives, examining assumptions, and conceptualizing characteristics of the occurrence; Level 5 – reconstructing the event in terms of theories that can be applied to a broader range of experiences. (Kurtoğlu-Hooten, 2013, p. 20)

She asks them to aim for Levels 3 and 4 for their e-portfolio work and reminds them that they will need to show evidence of Level 5 work on their major practicum assignments. These levels suggest a rubric for reflection that could be integrated into a variety of practicum and other TPP experiences. Though Farrell and Kurtoğlu-Hooten work with practicum students on reflection very intentionally by naming activities “reflection breaks” and having students rate their levels of “reflective skills,” other teacher educators do so more implicitly in the tasks they ask of their trainees. As Farrell and Kurtoğlu-Hooten’s work demonstrates, classroom observation demands a high level of attending and reflective skills.

### **Classroom Observation: Attending on Action**

A well-structured, guided observation component (or “systematic directed observation,” as called for in TESOL’s 1970 guidelines) in a TPP is an obvious starting point in developing student teachers’ attending skills. Day (p. 43) suggested that observations can help them in

1. developing a terminology for understanding and discussing the teaching process
2. developing an awareness of the principles and decision making that underlie effective teaching
3. distinguishing between effective and ineffective classroom practices
4. identifying techniques and practices student teachers can apply to their own teaching. (p. 43)

Baecher touts “video-mediated teacher reflection” (2011) as a means to support ESOL teachers’ observation skills and autonomous reflection. She contrasts her initial design of how she used videos with her MA TESOL candidates with a later refinement. At first, each of her teacher candidates uploaded a complete lesson to an in-house video server. After a supervising faculty member viewed and then discussed the lesson with the teacher, the candidate chose a five- to eight-minute clip to post to a video library of teaching and to present to his or her

classmates and practicum instructor. The presentations had limitations from creating lots of anxiety in presenting the clips and avoidance of critical feedback by peers to limited depth in observations and more concern with classroom management than with ESOL-specific pedagogical concerns.

In an effort to overcome those limitations, she implemented a more “learning-based approach” in her revision of this assignment. She formed groups of three to four candidates around the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This was followed by six stages of a “collaborative video inquiry project,” as Baecher (2011) describes:

After candidates had reviewed their full-length lesson video and selected and transcribed their clip, they drafted a letter to their peers stating what they noticed in their clip related to the teaching of the skill, seeking input from the group. The other members of the group then viewed one another’s clips and responded via email. Teachers then participated in an online exchange to discuss the similarities of their clips, and what the clips indicated to keep in mind when teaching that skill. Then the group presented their clips in seminar to their classmates. Each member of the group showed their video and the rest of the class took notes or completed a tally sheet provided by the presenting group. (p. 1)

In their reflective writing about the project, Baecher’s teacher-learners “reported that the assignment was very valuable . . . as both a window onto the teaching of others, and as a means to become more comfortable with allowing others a window onto their own teaching” (2011, p. 4). Her own takeaways were how much more detailed the candidates’ observations were because of the creation of transcriptions, how self-reflective they were through “the process of excerpting and analyzing one’s own teaching,” how much they inquired into their own teaching by posing questions for others in drafting their letters to peers, how much they got from viewing their peers’ classes (particularly those with a bit more experience), and how common themes in teaching emerged through their collaborative conversations (p. 5). Baecher’s revised model allowed for a more social kind of attending in which her teacher-learners could “see together” and “talk shop” at a deeper level and in a less threatening environment than that produced by the initial assignment.

Lengeling (2013) describes another useful video observation activity, one that uses ethnographic note-taking techniques while viewing clips of films about teachers, such as *Stand and Deliver* and *Free-*

*dom Writers*, followed up by observations of 10-minute clips of videos of real ESOL teachers. Student teachers are asked to write their notes in three vertical columns, labeled “time,” “description,” and “reflection.” In the ethnographic tradition, they are “not to assume from the outset that we already understand what we see, but to describe it as best we can” (p. 64). “We keep our inferencing and our tendency to evaluate to a minimum,” but with “as detailed a record as possible of what was seen ... more meaningful description, plausible interpretation and in-depth understanding can be worked out later” (p. 74). Students first practice making their own notes and then share them with classmates to see what they did and did not observe. After that, they explore their interpretations and understandings before considering the positive aspects of the teaching and those the teacher could improve upon. Finally they come up with compliments and/or suggestions they might give to the teacher.

Before the initial note-taking step, Lengeling provides a scaffold by listing themes for her trainees to consider while observing the videos, including “error correction, achievement of aims, lesson planning, teacher and students’ use of the language, movement, rapport, grouping and management, teaching techniques, use of didactic materials, and the giving of instructions” (p. 66). When reviewing the students’ notes, she pushes them to be more descriptive. For example, when a student wrote that clear instructions were given, Lengeling asked if he could remember the exact words used and why he felt they were clear. This use of ethnographic notes in her BA TESOL program, another arrangement for student teachers to carefully attend before deeper reflection, is finally carried over to her trainees’ peer observations.

Another classroom observation activity that facilitates attending to real-time action both during and between classes is “teacher shadowing.” Cincioğlu (2012) had practicum students follow cooperating teachers for a full day, observing and interviewing them in an effort to investigate their everyday lives as teachers. According to Erkmen (2013), Cincioğlu found that shadowing “effectively raised awareness about classroom practice and school life in ways not possible in course lectures, or via the observation of individual lessons. It also triggered individual interests and priorities in developing specific professional skills” (p. 164).

In her own study of BA TEFL teacher candidates taking a Classroom Management course simultaneously with their practicum, Erkmen also had her students spend a whole day with their mentor instructors. Before that day, they read about Doyle’s (2006, cited in Weinstein, 2007) six features of a classroom environment, that is,

multidimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictability, lack of privacy, and history, thus giving them criteria to consider while shadowing. Then they wrote a prospective report about their expectations of the day and generated a research question to investigate in depth by a) reading from books and research studies and b) asking their mentor instructors for their perspective on the question/topic. Finally they shadowed the teacher but with the requirement not to be judgmental or critical of any of their mentor's actions. After the day-long experience, they immediately wrote a reflective report, including "the extent to which their expectations had been met and whether the questions that they had formulated earlier had been answered" (p. 168). This ungraded report was followed by a graded writing assignment that combined their experience, answers from their interview with the mentor, and readings/research related to their research question/topic. Finally, they gave 15-20-minute presentations of what they learned about their topic to their fellow practicum participants.

Recurring topics that Erkman coded from student teachers' projects included dealing with misbehavior, motivation, rapport with students, lesson planning and preparation, teaching methods, use of L1, and use of technology. The variety of topics attended to and reflected upon from teacher shadowing is reflective of how many teaching-learning issues also emerge from carefully constructed classroom observation activities, such as video-mediated teacher reflection and more targeted tasks that use observation schemes and instruments. Such activities and tasks ready practice teachers to later, as professionals, meet one of the "key indicators" of INTASC's Standard 9, which is for a teacher to show that she or he "uses classroom observation, information about students and research as sources for evaluating the outcomes of teaching and learning and as a basis for experimenting with, reflecting on and revising practice" (Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, cited in Reed & Bergemann, 2005, p. 9).

### **Attending to and Reflecting on All That Jazz and Teaching**

Using a more out-of-the-box observation activity, Underhill (2014) pushes his teacher-learners to forgo the tight, often rigid stick-to-the-plan approach for a more spontaneous, improvisational kind of teaching that keeps them loose for the unpredictable occurrences that mark so much of the teaching-learning dynamic. He has them attend to a YouTube video of Count Basie and Oscar Peterson doing a slow jazz improvisation together, melding their contrasting styles. Beforehand he asks them to "notice what is going on and between the

musicians” and “notice what you see, hear and feel to be going on ... and enjoy it!” (p. 61). He found that teachers note in the musicians’ interactions

“... there was eye contact ... they watched each other ... like a conversation ... clearly enjoyed themselves ... pleasure and humour ... really listened to each other ... drew in the audience ... somehow subtly negotiated when to take the lead and when to support the other ... relaxed and alert” (p. 61).

One of the lessons Underhill draws from their noticings is “that in improvisation, there is some kind of *background* structure holding it all together, and a *foreground* in which the spontaneity and interplay is taking place. The background frames the foreground, providing boundaries and even scaffolding” (pp. 61-62).

Connecting all of this to lesson planning, Underhill adds, “As the unpredictable starts to occur in our lessons, so we depart from the plan to attend to what needs doing. And the class becomes a living interaction rather than an enactment of a script” (p. 62). Among the implications he mentions for supervisors in pre- and in-service TPPs are these: (a) “include feedback on ‘off-plan moments’” and (b) “look for turning points in lessons” (p. 66). He suggests leaving space in observation instruments for recording attempts at improvisation so that teachers can “Explore, bring to light, make visible the processes of improvising itself, the loss of security, the process of engaging usefully with the unexpected input that a participant brings to the situation” (p. 66). As for turning points in lessons (i.e., “where different things could have happened”), Underhill asks three questions aimed at “creative speculation,” not at criticism:

1. What could have happened, and what did?
2. What could have happened, but did not?
3. What could have happened, but did? (i.e. What would you never have predicted, yet it happened?) (p. 66)

By raising awareness of the place of spontaneity in teaching, Underhill helps teacher-learners connect what happens in the bigger world outside of the classroom, such as in jazz sessions, to how they view themselves as teachers (see Oprandy, 1999, for more on this topic). Underhill’s ideas are reminiscent of Fanselow’s (2010) prodding teacher-learners to look for patterns in classroom communication and consider alternatives, including the opposite of what they may think normal and reasonable—just to see what happens, as jazz improvisers do.



### **Organizing Observations: Two Possibilities**

Besides peer observations, the use of video and films, and the usual one-on-one, supervisor-supervisee preobservation, observation, postobservation cycle, which is so well discussed elsewhere (e.g., Bailey, 2006; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999), there are other not-so-common organizational structures for observing practicum students. Other live-observation arrangements in sites where several practicum participants are doing their practice teaching include dipping in and out of classrooms and using instructional rounds. Both of these arrangements facilitate attending to and reflecting on teaching-learning.

In my experience there is an efficiency and power in moving quickly from one room to another for 10- to 15-minute glimpses of classes conducted by practice teachers (even if their cooperating teachers are the ones who may be teaching at times). Lots of observational data lending themselves to follow-up discussions of what was observed can trigger useful discussions of issues that are offered by a variety of classes in the same school context. If a few practice teachers can accompany a supervisor for at least some of the time he or she is popping in and out of classes, quick confabs following observations can allow for a comparison of notes and “noticings.” Another variation on this theme is for a supervisor to do longer observations of two to three practice teachers on a given day, followed by an on-site seminar session (with all practice teachers at that site), highlighting or pulling from the student teachers themes that emerged from that day’s lessons. Even those who were not observed usually resonate with the observational data and themes, bringing up examples from their own practice-teaching experiences. The idea of dipping into classes can be combined with another organizational structure that holds great promise for TPPs, that is, instructional rounds.

Instructional rounds are patterned after medical “grand rounds,” during which the symptoms, problems, and treatment of patients are presented to doctors, resident interns, and medical students. After attending to all the details of a particular patient’s case, sometimes with the actual patient present to answer questions, there is a sharing of ideas about how to proceed in the treatment of the patient. Because it is increasingly rare for the actual patient to be present, medical rounds more commonly turn into lectures—and at times an actor portrays a patient. Many teaching and research hospitals now include streaming videos of grand rounds presentations. Marzano (2011) offers guidelines for how groups of teachers (or, I would add, student teachers) can implement instructional rounds to visit a lesson, collect observational data, and discuss instructional practice with peers.

Marzano’s guidelines for conducting rounds (pp. 80-82) empha-

size that they are *not* for evaluating the observed teacher and are best done in 10-15 minutes with groups of three to five teachers plus a lead (well-respected) teacher. Notes are taken either on specific foci of interest to them as individuals or one focus for the group decided upon in advance (e.g., questioning strategies, use of visuals/graphic organizers, error treatment, classroom management, interactional patterns, transitions from one activity to the next). Also, no rubric is used, just notes on teacher and/or student behaviors related to the observational focus/foci.

Marzano suggests that when debriefing rounds, the leader should remind the group that the purpose is *not* evaluation, that what is discussed stays there, including what was observed in the class(es), and that observers should *not* offer suggestions to the teacher unless she or he explicitly asks for feedback. Often in a round-robin fashion, members of the group reflect on their experience using a “pluses” and “deltas” format, in which positive behaviors are noted plus evidence and questions/concerns (deltas) related to the observed behaviors/strategies are raised. Any observer can opt not to share his or her analysis.

The three main lessons from rounds, according to Marzano, are that teachers (or teacher trainees) can (a) identify practices they already implement and wish to continue to use, having seen another teacher doing so effectively; (b) reflect on and critically reexamine practices they use in light of what they observed; and (c) consider new practices/strategies to try. Video streaming of rounds, as practiced in many medical schools, could expand the reach of the practicum in developing the attending and reflective skills of teacher-learners in TPPs, as can other creative uses of technology.

### **Technology and the Practicum**

An obvious change in practicum experiences since the TESOL Guidelines Conference of 1970 is in the use of technological tools to facilitate student-instructor and supervisee-supervisor interaction. These include tools

1. For student-teacher interaction, such as learning-management systems (LMSs);
2. For student interaction, such as web- or app-based social media, in-class polling and voting tools, online questionnaires, shared documents that can be edited by many practicum participants, and analysis tools for drawing, mind mapping and concept mapping, and online simulations;
3. For online teaching, such as teleconference teaching and videoconferencing;

4. For teaching both face-to-face and remotely at the same time;
5. For teaching asynchronously with discussion forums;
6. For collaborative video inquiry (as mentioned above); and
7. For using corpora.

Each of these opens up a world of yet untried possibilities that will test the art and craft of working with teachers in practicum settings. There are also the dangers and challenges that accompany the technological reach of student learners' clinical experiences (see Andersen & Schiano, 2014; Baecher, 2011; TESOL's CALL Interest Section forums and convention presentations for more discussion). In what follows I will touch only on LMSs and tools for student interaction.

Learning-management systems are used in most universities and can include many resources (such as an FAQ repository), discussion forums, electronic links to copyrighted material, procedural information related to the practicum, and so forth. As practicum leaders handle the same or similar questions every year, they can include responses in an FAQ repository. Also, links to readings, lectures, and assignments on any number of topics pertinent to the practicum experience, both in terms of the teaching-learning content and procedural/administrative issues, can cut down time for more substantive discussions and activities during practicum seminars. This allows for flipped classroom experiences. The analytics of LMSs can also allow instructors to ascertain what students are doing, thus offering glimpses of how the course is proceeding. "Online analytics tools give a more dispassionate view of the whole class" (Andersen & Schiano, 2014, p. 248) rather than forming opinions of students early on that may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies regarding the teacher's expectations. Also, it is easy to monitor student postings and submissions and how many students are availing themselves of resource materials.

Tools that enhance student interaction, such as polling and voting tools, can also help judge the pulse of a class and keep everyone attentive. If used in a practicum seminar, substantive questions usually delivered in yes/no, either/or, or multiple-choice formats can immediately show responses in graphs or word clouds, and because students remain anonymous, they are not embarrassed by their answers and, from my experience, they are always interested in comparing their own responses with those of their peers. Such tools may require special hardware distributed to students or software that can be accessed using smartphones, tablets, and laptops. In a similar vein, online questionnaire tools can be used to poll students on practicum-related issues (raised by the teacher or student teachers) before a class meeting—or even as impromptu surveys (if students have laptops)

during classes. As Andersen and Schiano (2014) caution, “You have to think carefully about what kind of data to ask for and the privacy implications of doing instant analysis on live data” (p. 250). When using polling and voting tools, instructors must also consider if they can get the same results with less hassle by means of the old-fashioned tried-and-true techniques of taking a show of hands or of asking questions and writing student responses on the board.

The possibilities for expanding the practicum experience to practically every corner of the globe require only a computer and a broadband connection. Not only is the access to information about language and language-teaching ideas unfathomable, but the opportunities available for real connections with ESOL teachers and teacher educators through blogs and forum discussions are also endless. They can enhance student teachers’ motivation and sense of membership in the club of professionals in which they can immediately take part. Such connections may also lead to awareness of materials of practice that ESOL teachers are using in novel ways.

### **Attending to and Reflection on Materials of Practice**

While the practicum places particular emphasis on student teaching and all that can be learned from such experiences, practica can also extend teacher learning through exercises using samples of students’ work, classroom artifacts/photos, videotapes of classes, and simulated or real case studies (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Though one step removed from being in an actual classroom, attending to and working with such materials of practice can put prospective teachers into the mind-sets of real classroom teachers and their students. Ball and Cohen claim, in fact, that though real-time situations in classrooms lend authenticity, they also interfere with learning opportunities because “being so situated confines learning to the rush of minute-to-minute practice. Better opportunities can be created by using strategic documentation of practice” (p. 14). They add that not only is learning *in* practice important but also learning *from* practice. Learning from materials of practice can be done concurrently with or even before student teaching. An authenticity comes from the materials in practice that presents student learners with a sort of virtual teaching experience.

Consider the example below that deals with a variety of ways teachers can give feedback to ESOL students on initial drafts of their essays. The exercise involves two materials of practice: an actual draft of an ESL student’s essay and a list of possible comments a teacher might write in the margins of the essay (or using the “Comment” option on “Track Changes”). Space does not permit inclusion of the ac-

tual ESL student's draft, which the teacher-learners are asked to read first, think about, and on which they then jot down comments they would make on the student's paper. After reflecting on what feedback they themselves would give, they are presented with possible teacher comments in the list below.

1. You need to use "have known" instead of "know" in sentence #2.
2. You seem to be in admiration of Fernando. You see him as a strong individual. You appreciate his devotion to soccer and his hunger for knowledge. Although some people are irritated by his contrary behavior, you find him a very trustworthy and good friend.
3. I'm curious about how you and Fernando met each other. I wonder if you want to fill in this detail.
4. I don't like the beginning.
5. Your description of your friend Fernando made me think of my friend Nicky, whom I haven't thought about in years. I remember how much I admired her for speaking her own mind!
6. I liked your story about Fernando.
7. I like your image of Fernando in the bathroom, reading in spite of his mother's prohibition. I wonder what the connection is between reading books and Fernando's love of history.
8. I'm confused where you wrote, "He always tries to make something what interfere with the environment." Can you say this for me in another way?

After reading the ESL student's essay, student teachers can rate each comment in the above list on a 1-3 scale, 1 being *Most useful*, 2 *So-so*, and 3 *Least useful*. The reading and rereading of the essay and list of possible comments enables the teacher-learners to attend carefully to materials of practice. Determining which comments they consider more or less useful engages them with those materials, and a follow-up discussion of why they rated each comment as they did gives them a chance to reflect on their own (and their peers') reasoning regarding feedback choices. They can consider such reasons both from their experiences in receiving feedback on their own writing as well as from the mind-set of the teacher they are becoming. Having done this exercise, I have seen a range of opinions about what constitutes effective feedback.<sup>2</sup> Materials of practice put student teachers a step away from the classroom, as do case studies.

### **Case Teaching: A Step Away From Classroom Realities**

Another way to get close to the action that occurs during real classes is through case teaching. Business, law, and medical schools have for a long time employed case teaching in their curricula. In fact, business schools at Harvard, Stanford, Wharton, and others center their teaching around cases (Andersen & Schiano, 2014); nevertheless, “Case teaching is an underused, but very effective way of teaching in a number of contexts” (p. 2). A TESOL practicum or pre-practicum course is such a context. An instructor can embed typically challenging case scenarios within the curriculum, allowing TPP students to reflect on any number of situations they are encountering or will likely face in a practicum.

A well-described case is the usual stimulus for this form of discussion-based, participant-centered, and problem-centered approach, but a provocative reading passage/chapter, film or video clip, news article, or just a question can also be a catalyst for case teaching. What is important is that there should be several alternative legitimate solutions with good arguments for each. As any decision maker has to do in real life, the point of the discussion is to understand the problem, identify solutions, and choose among them.

TESOL cases can be crafted to address common problems practicum teachers face. Consider, for example, the following problem that a hypothetical preservice TESOL candidate may be concerned about:

We are encouraged to have students work in groups so they can practice speaking English more than they can in a teacher-fronted situation. Whenever I put them in groups, I notice that they will often turn to classmates who speak their native language—and then they often put English aside to converse about personal issues that take them off task. Is this a common occurrence in ESL classes? If so, how can I deal with it so students will speak English during group work and stay on task? Maybe group work is not as effective as we think it is.

This case lends itself to a great deal of discussion about the challenges and merits of having students work in groups. In addition, alternative opinions and rationales can be aired and shared among practicum participants and their instructor. Teacher-learners’ emerging beliefs can be connected to language-teaching principles and research, enabling them to probe more deeply into the practicalities of their newly chosen profession. Whether the cases are real or imagined, they “provide us with safe contexts for thinking out alternative solutions to the problems raised” (Bailey, 2006, p. 25).

For many examples of cases written by language teachers from around the world, see Richards (1998). Preparing teachers for cultural diversity has also been facilitated by using case studies (see Kleinfeld, 1998). If you train teachers, Bailey (2006) provides plenty of cases for language teacher supervisors to discuss and reflect on issues related to their roles and skills as they collect data; lead postobservation conferences; evaluate teachers' work; supervise teaching assistants, nonnative-speaking teachers, and in-service language teachers; and work with practicum students. The above-mentioned sources provide models for cases that may best be fashioned by practicum instructors and teacher-learners themselves. The prior or imagined challenges one attends to in actual classrooms provide a great deal of data for teacher-learners to reflect on that is one step closer to the actuality of a lived experience.

Case teaching effectively allows the whole class, rather than just the instructor, to share knowledge, to learn from each other, and

it trains the student not just for finding a solution, but also for arguing for it and shaping it to fit to a context. And most importantly, case teaching surfaces the depth of problems and many alternative perspectives and solutions, more deeply and more extensively than can be done by a single instructor. (Andersen & Schiano, 2014, p. 3)

Though a step removed from real classroom behavior, cases can play a central role in carefully crafted TESOL TPPs.

### **Final Reflections**

Traditional TPPs placed student teaching at the end in hopes of allowing trainees to bring it all together in a tidy package. In contrast, many clinically rich programs now weave field-based experiences throughout their programs, and the stronger ones do so in a coherent way with a set of major themes that are recycled and bounced back and forth between such experiences and course work. The practicum, as the examples above demonstrate, can promote deep levels of attention to and reflection on the teaching-learning dynamic. And there are so many other possibilities that could not be mentioned here (e.g., microteaching, dialogue journals, action research, cooperative development, peer coaching, lesson study, autobiographical narratives connected to one's teaching philosophy, etc.). As Posner (2000) reminds us,

Reflection with no experience is sterile and generally leads to un-

workable conclusions. Experience with no reflection is shallow and at best leads to superficial knowledge. If you merely “do” your field experience without thinking deeply about it, if you merely allow your experiences to wash over you without savoring and examining them for their significance, then your growth will be greatly limited. (p. 22)

By implementing some of the practices presented here, which may be catalysts for developing your own creative alternatives, you will deepen your teacher-learners’ clinical experiences and arrange for them to merge reflection and experience through the development of their attending skills. After surveying novice pre-K-12 ESL teachers regarding what they would want to tell TESOL teacher educators, Baecher challenges university-based teacher educators to do more “collaborative inquiry *with* teachers” than to conduct “studies *on* teachers” (2012, p. 586). She adds,

Researchers have found ESL teachers abandoning the practices that were advanced in their preparation and may assume that implementation failure rests with the teacher and the conditions of the school context, rather than challenging the relevance of the teacher preparation program. By doing so, university programs unwittingly preserve the hegemony of *grand theory* (constructed by researchers) over *craft theory* (constructed by teachers). (p. 587)

In conclusion, she argues, “Without this fundamental reorientation, the disconnect between university preparation programs and teacher readiness for ESL instruction will persist” (2012, p. 587) Refashioning practicum and other clinical experiences is a starting place for the kind of “fundamental reorientation” Baecher challenges us to undergo in the design of our TPPs. Such reorientation would be in the spirit of the guidelines proposed 45 years ago by our TESOL leaders.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In contrast to the kinds of documentation required by the PACT, the Michigan State University (MSU) elementary Field Instructor Feedback Form (FIFF) relies heavily on data from observations. Field instructors, who are experienced teachers or graduate assistants employed by MSU's TPP, observe their supervisees on alternate weeks during the internship year.

<sup>2</sup>See Edge and Garton's *From Experience to Knowledge in ELT* (2009), which is chock-full of abstracts from ESOL student textbooks that they task teachers-in-training to connect to principles explored in their book.

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