INTRODUCTION

TO THE STUDENT TEACHER

This book is designed to provide support and guidance for student teachers who are practice teaching as a component of a teacher education course, either at diploma, undergraduate, or graduate level. Throughout the book we invite you to examine your beliefs and understandings of language teaching and your knowledge and skills as a learner of language teaching as you plan, teach, and reflect on lessons you teach during your teaching practice, as well as those you observe taught by other teachers. The book sets out to help you better understand what to expect from your teaching practice, how to prepare for it, how to work with those who will be arranging and supervising your teaching practice, and how to plan, teach, and learn from your teaching practice experiences. Throughout the book we present accounts by student teachers, cooperating teachers, and supervisors that will enable you to compare your experiences with others involved in practice teaching.

TO THE SUPERVISOR AND COOPERATING TEACHER

In this book we adopt a "reflective approach" to teaching practice. By this we mean one in which student teachers are shown how to explore and reflect on the nature of language teaching and their own approaches to teaching through their experience of practice teaching. Rather than presenting prescriptions on how to teach, the book is built around core chapters that describe a contemporary perspective on the nature of second language teaching and teacher learning; other chapters examine the issues involved in working in a cooperating teacher's classroom and developing teaching skills through observation and supervised practice.

Throughout this book, in most cases, we speak directly to student teachers, since we want the book to provide them with a basis for planning, learning, and understanding different aspects of language teaching. However, the book is also designed to be used by

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instructors as the core component of a practice-teaching course. Some chapters will most usefully be employed before teaching practice commences (e.g., Chapters 1 to 4) but can also be returned to during practice teaching. The remaining chapters can be used in the sequence that best suits your needs. We suggest that you come back to the issues the various chapters raise throughout your practicum. Some discussion questions and activities can be assigned after your student teachers have completed a chapter; others can be used some time later.

TERMS USED IN THE BOOK

We have adopted the following terms throughout the book:

- *Practice teaching* and *teaching practice:* We use these terms throughout as synonymous with the term *practicum*, which is also used in the literature.
- *ESOL:* This general term stands for *English for Speakers of Other Languages*. It applies to situations that are sometimes referred to as *ESL (English as a Second Language), EFL (English as a Foreign Language)*, ESP (*English for Special Purposes*), or *TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).*
- *The student teacher*: This term refers to the person completing a practice-teaching experience.
- *The cooperating teacher*: This is the classroom teacher in whose class the student teacher is carrying out his or her teaching experience. This person is referred to as a *master teacher* or *mentor teacher* in some schools.
- *The supervisor*: This is the faculty member or teacher trainer in charge of the practice-teaching course.
- *The host school or institution:* This is the school where the practice teaching takes place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER **1**

Learning to Teach Through Practice Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Practice teaching is a part of most teacher education programs in language teaching and is intended to provide a link between the academic courses you studied in your university or other institutional TESOL program and the "real" world of teachers and students in a language-learning classroom (Brenes-Carvajal 2009; Farrell 2007). Many teachers find their practice-teaching experience to be one of the most useful courses they took during their teacher preparation, as these teachers confirm:

Teaching practice gave me a taste of teaching proper. It presented to me the tip of what to expect and thus allowed me to prepare myself better mentally for real teaching.

Mariana, Brazil

Practice teaching gave me the chance to observe my cooperating teacher, and this allowed me to make different mental notes about how to deal with problems that sometimes come up in a lesson.

Yono, Japan

I learned a lot from teaching practice. It allowed me to put some ideas and thoughts from my teacher education courses into actual practice. It provided a kind of testing ground for me to try out different approaches to teaching.

Mee-Ho, Korea

Practice teaching serves a number of goals (Baird 2008). Perhaps the most obvious one is for you to have an opportunity to apply some of the things you have studied in your academic and teacher-training courses. Your coursework will have included not only the theoretical knowledge expected of today's language teachers – often derived from courses in areas such as second language acquisition, linguistics, and discourse analysis – but also the practical knowledge derived from coursework in areas such as methodology, materials design,

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and language assessment. The content of such coursework is usually selected on the assumption that as a teacher, you will be able to access it and use it in your teaching.

However, academic courses cannot replicate the actual experience of teaching and many things happen in teaching that coursework does not usually prepare teachers for. Coursework cannot prepare you for such things as adjusting a lesson to respond to learners' difficulty with a planned activity, redesigning a teacher-led grammar practice activity during a teaching moment to turn it into a group task, or dealing with a disruptive student so that he or she does not distract the class from learning (Farrell 2007; Senior 2006). Likewise, reading about peer tutoring or scaffolded learning is no substitute for arranging them to happen in your own classroom. And reading about philosophies of teaching is one thing, but developing your own philosophy of teaching through the experience of teaching is another.

TWO KINDS OF PRACTICE TEACHING: MICROTEACHING AND TEACHING AN ESOL CLASS

Two different kinds of teaching experience are often provided during practice teaching – the first is *microteaching*, and the second is *teaching an ESOL class*. Most of the activities in this book focus on teaching an ESOL class but some of them can also apply to microteaching. We will first explain what each approach consists of and then describe it in more detail.

Microteaching generally involves planning and teaching a short lesson or part of a lesson to a group of fellow student teachers (or sometimes to ESOL students who have volunteered to serve as students in a microteaching class). The microteaching session is followed by feedback on your teaching by your supervisor and your fellow student teachers. It is often conducted as part of a group activity on teacher-training courses, where students are put into groups and asked to plan and teach certain parts of a lesson. They then observe each other and provide peer feedback. In some programs, such as the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), toward the end of the course, candidates teach *whole* lessons, usually of 60 minutes. The lesson you teach or coteach (if several student teachers teach a lesson segment) is normally a language lesson, although sometimes it could be a lesson segment you prepare on other content of your choice, such as a demonstration of how to make or prepare something or a short talk. The purpose for planning and teaching a short lesson (known as a microlesson) rather than a full lesson is generally so that you can focus on a specific teaching skill or strategy (such as, how to open a lesson, how to introduce vocabulary, how to carry out group work) and get immediate feedback on how well you managed to do so, something that may be difficult to do when you teach a full lesson (Wallace 1991). Microteaching can thus be regarded as "teaching in miniature" and is intended to provide a safe and stress-free environment in which to develop and practice basic teaching skills (Roberts 1998).

The second type of teaching experience in practice teaching is teaching an ESOL class. This will normally make up the major part of your practice-teaching experience and may constitute the entire teaching experience if you are not taking part in microteaching (Senior 2006). Your practice teaching will normally involve working with an experienced teacher in his or her ESOL class (your cooperating teacher) and teaching part of lessons or entire lessons for an extended period of time. You will work closely with your cooperating teacher, sharing your lesson plans with him or her (or collaborating on planning lessons). Your cooperating teacher will also observe your lessons and give you feedback on your teaching. In some situations student teachers are actually teaching their own classes, either

in the language institute on campus or because they already have teaching jobs. In such cases the supervisor generally takes the role of the cooperating teacher and assists through regular observation, consultation, and review.

PROCEDURES USED IN MICROTEACHING

Microteaching has a long history as a teacher-training strategy. An approach that is sometimes used is based on a sequence of *plan*, *teach*, and *critique* and has three essential features:

1. The student teacher teaches a microlesson of 5 to 10 minutes.
2. The lesson has a very specific and narrow focus.
3. It is immediately followed by a critique of the student teacher's performance.

This may be followed by a new cycle of *re-plan*, *re-teach*, and *re-critique*. As Wallace (1991) and others have pointed out, this view regards effective teaching as involving the mastery of specific skills and competencies that can be taught and practiced individually. It focuses on the behavioral and managerial aspects of teaching and as a consequence tends to approach teaching prescriptively, an approach often considered suitable for trainees with no teaching experience. The stages that are normally involved can be summarized as follows (Wallace 1991: 99–102):

- *The briefing*: The supervisor presents the skill to be practiced and explains how this can be accomplished (e.g., such as conducting a group activity). The presentation may be through an oral discussion by the supervisor, it may be based on readings or checklists, or it might involve "modeling." Modeling might be through the use of a video demonstration, with or without transcripts of the lesson, or the supervisor might demonstrate how the skill or technique is used.
- *The planning*: The student teachers plan their microlesson, incorporating the skills they have been assigned to practice. They should also prepare a description of the objectives for their lesson, to provide a context for the lesson for the observers.
- *The teaching*: The student teacher now teaches his or her microlesson, either to peers or to actual ESOL students. The lesson is often videotaped. The observers take notes.
- *The critique*: The lesson is discussed, analyzed, and evaluated. The student teacher generally starts by explaining what he or she was trying to do and whether the lesson went according to the way it was planned. If the microlesson was videotaped, the group can review the video and discuss different aspects of what they observed. The supervisor will comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the microlesson and suggest ways in which it could be improved.
- *The re-teach*: The microlesson is taught again. During this phase the student teacher tries to incorporate the feedback that was given during the first teaching.

Table 1.1 on page 6 outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages of microteaching.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Short, so less stress compared to teaching a whole lesson • Very focused on one aspect of teaching • Opportunities to try out new ideas • Safe environment • Opportunities to "try again" based on feedback	• Short time may stress some people • "Teacher" may not be able to establish a rapport with the class • Student / teacher expectations of what can be achieved may be too high • "Decontextualized" lesson, so it may be difficult to get students involved

Table 1.1   Advantages and disadvantages of microteaching

ADVANTAGES OF MICROTEACHING

The standard approach to microteaching as described above seeks to develop mastery of a number of specific teaching skills that are considered core competencies of a novice teacher. Skills that could be the focus of this approach include questioning techniques, error correction techniques, or explaining lesson procedures (see Appendix A). In addition, student teachers can develop confidence through microteaching and an awareness of some aspects of their teaching style because they are teaching in a safe environment. For example, they can try a particular technique and know that they do not have to get it right the first time because they will obtain feedback that will enable them to try it again based on the comments they receive. The usefulness of these experiences is confirmed by these teachers:

Microteaching allowed me to observe my fellow trainee teachers. This allowed me to spot the good points and sometimes the not so good points of different student teachers.

Sarah, Canada

It provided a kind of testing ground for me to try out new teaching techniques.

Mark, United States

One of the advantages I felt was that the different lesson plans that were shared by all peers throughout the two weeks were all very useful. Also, the supervisor's feedback after microteaching was most helpful at this stage in my teacher development.

Oswaldo, Spain

DISADVANTAGES OF MICROTEACHING

By its nature, the approach to microteaching discussed in the section on procedures focuses on a specific but restricted set of skills and competencies that constitute part of a teacher's repertoire of teaching skills. The assumption is that once "learned," these skills can be transferred to real teaching contexts, an assumption that would be difficult to verify. However, these are generally based on a prescriptive "top-down" view of teaching that does not reflect the broader understanding of teacher knowledge that is described throughout this book. Aspects of teaching that cannot adequately be acquired through microteaching include things that can only be experienced in the context of a real classroom and through interacting with real students – for example, ways of responding to students' difficulties; ways of motivating reluctant learners; an awareness of learners' learning style preferences, motivations, and needs; the development of a personal teaching philosophy; and the theorizing of practice. In addition, a five- to ten-minute lesson imposes an artificial time constraint, and student teachers sometimes say they feel pressured to rush their lessons because the time was so short, as the following comments suggest:

In microteaching, classroom management is not accurately simulated. This is because when we do microteaching, we are teaching our peers and they will not be able to give an accurate representation of a class of 30 real students.

Pamela, Singapore

Because of the unrealistic environment of teaching my peers, I felt that even if my lesson was successful in a microteaching environment, it might not necessarily prove that the lesson would work in the real environment.

Stephanie, United States

A MORE REFLECTIVE APPROACH TO MICROTEACHING

Due to the limitations implicit in the traditional approach to microteaching described in the section on disadvantages, a more reflective approach has been suggested (e.g., by Roberts 1998). In this approach the microteaching experience is intended not simply to provide an opportunity to master specific teaching behaviors and skills, but rather to provide experiences that can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching through processes of critical reflection. The personal understandings of student teachers become the focus. Rather than feedback on microlessons being viewed as corrective in nature, it is seen as a way of uncovering the thinking and perceptions that provide the source of the teacher's planning decisions as well as those decisions and understandings that occurred during teaching. In contrast to the skills view of learning to teach then, reflective microteaching sessions involve thinking about the total teaching act in all its dimensions. As Komblueth and Schoenberg (1990) explain: "The task given to the students is accordingly more holistic and the expectations from the feedback sessions are both broader and less precise" (p. 17). A reflective approach to microteaching is hence one in which the ability to understand and reflect on the cognitive and affective aspects of teaching becomes a central focus of microteaching. The kind of feedback given by the supervisor will mirror this approach (see Chapter 4). Rather than being primarily prescriptive it will be reflective in nature, seeking to deepen the student teacher's understanding of teaching through a process of dialogue and reflection (Miller 2009).

STAGES IN REFLECTIVE MICROTEACHING

PLANNING THE MICROLESSON

A microlesson usually lasts from 5 to 10 minutes, as with the skills approach described in the previous section. However, whereas the focus of a microlesson could be a teaching skill, microlessons can include other types of goals related to other dimensions of teaching. For example:

- Making learning stimulating and enjoyable
- Relating a lesson to the learners' experience
- Developing awareness of learning strategies
- Using a reading text creatively
- Developing risk-taking in learners
- Developing motivation
- Managing feedback
- Utilizing student input
- Encouraging student participation
- Becoming aware of one's teaching style

The supervisor might provide a lesson-plan format as a guide for student teachers to follow, including such items as the lesson objectives, teaching procedures, and resources, or the student teacher may decide on the lesson-plan format. Planning might be done individually

or in pairs or groups. An advantage of group planning is that it provides an opportunity to share and compare thinking about teaching and learning and to jointly negotiate a lesson plan. During the planning stage, features of the lesson that observers can focus on during the teaching phase of the lesson are identified. These should include aspects of the lesson related to the teacher, the students, the use of materials, and so on.

TEACHING AND OBSERVING

The student teacher teaches his or her microlesson and the observers complete their observation tasks.

REFLECTING ON THE LESSON

The observers meet to compare their observations of what was achieved. Following this, the student teacher gives his or her account of the experience, commenting on any aspect of the experience he or she would like the group to think about.

Finally the supervisor offers his or her understanding of the lesson. This should include the reflective strategies for giving feedback described in Chapter 4.

A friend of mine recorded me today for the midterm paper and even though I knew the camera was there, I did not feel the pressure I usually feel when being observed. I think I could manage the situation without the teacher's presence because there is enough confidence between me and the students by now.

Hada, Mexico

MONITORING TEACHER LEARNING THROUGHOUT MICROTEACHING

If microteaching is used on a regular basis as part of teaching practice, opportunities need to be provided for each student teacher to teach a range of microlessons and to take part in ongoing reflection on what he or she is learning about teaching and about himself or herself as a teacher throughout this process (Farrell 2008a). This may take different forms, such as keeping a teaching journal, lesson reports (see Chapter 11), or through group discussions.

In order to facilitate a reflective focus in microteaching, one strategy is for student teachers to work in small groups of four to six. One student teacher in each group is given an identical lesson to teach to his or her group. The content need not be related to language skills but could be taken from something the students are studying in their academic courses (e.g., a problem-solving task). Following the 10-minute microlesson, the student teachers are asked to recall the microlesson, reflect on it, and then discuss it in relation to broader, more general teaching issues.

To provide a link between microteaching and teaching in a real ESOL class, it is sometimes possible for the student teachers to gradually expand their microlessons into half lessons and then full lessons, while still teaching their peers in a "safe" environment. In this way, some of the disadvantages concerning the unrealistic nature of microteaching can be addressed: The student teachers now practice teaching for a whole class period, better preparing them to face a real ESOL class.

PROCEDURES USED IN TEACHING AN ESOL CLASS

Whereas practice teaching in a real second language class is regarded as a core component of many graduate and undergraduate TESOL programs (and a required component of many of them), procedures for organizing teaching practice vary from institution to institution. Sometimes well-organized procedures are in place and both the supervisor and the

cooperating teacher are involved in managing the practice-teaching experience. Sometimes, however, arrangements may not have been well developed and formalized and the student teacher may be affected by the lack of adequate administrative procedures. The following issues are normally involved in setting up teaching practice in an ESOL class.

FINDING A SITE TO CARRY OUT PRACTICE TEACHING

Ideally, the institution where you are studying has identified practice-teaching sites and cooperating teachers who are used every year. Some programs may be campus-based (such as intensive English programs or language centers offering courses to the public) where liaison and communication are relatively straightforward. Although such arrangements are convenient, programs of this kind may not offer an experience that reflects the kind of teaching you will do when you graduate. Other programs may take place in schools or institutions in the community that have been selected by the supervisor. Sometimes student teachers are required to make their own arrangements, contacting schools and cooperating teachers. Student teachers who have recently completed their teaching practice are often a source for recommendations in such cases.

Accepting student teachers on a regular basis, however, is a considerable responsibility for the host institution since, if the institution accepts fee-paying students, they may not feel they are getting adequate instruction if part of their course is taught by a student teacher. Optional free classes are sometimes established to address this issue enabling the student teacher to have a "risk-free" class to teach. Often, however, you will be teaching in a class that is part of the school's regular course offerings. In this case the cooperating teacher will have the responsibility to ensure that the students in the class are receiving competent instruction from the student teacher.

WORKING WITH A COOPERATING TEACHER

Your cooperating teacher may be chosen for you by your supervisor through his or her connections with the host institutions, or you may have to make your own contacts with a school to locate a teacher who is willing to serve as your cooperating teacher. Many schools have a roster of experienced and senior teachers who are able to take on this role. Working with a student teacher is a considerable responsibility for the cooperating teacher since it will involve a lot of extra work for him or her (e.g., when reviewing your lesson plans or when giving feedback on your teaching). Furthermore, working in a supervisory role with a student teacher is often an unpaid addition to the teacher's role, and one for which he or she may have had no special training or preparation.

Cooperating teachers differ in the way they work with student teachers. The best cooperating teachers are expert teachers with a wide range of experience, who enjoy supervising student teachers and can provide supportive guidance and direction to novice teachers. They may not necessarily share your own views about teaching and learning but are willing to listen and to consider different approaches. They are able to find the time needed to meet with you outside of class time and offer constructive criticism as well as encouragement and support (Baird 2008). The following comments describe the approach used by one cooperating teacher:

My feeling is that as a cooperating teacher, supervision should not be just about evaluating student teachers, although this is still part of the process because of ultimate certification, because if this is the case, then the student teachers will just follow what they see in the evaluation forms rather than teach the students to learn English. I do not think that the checklists are really helpful and I tend not to put too much faith in them although I have to fill them

out. What I look for is a student teacher who is trying to create lesson plans that have an overall connection to the curriculum and lessons that are delivered with enthusiasm and creativity. I do not care if the student teacher follows a particular method that I subscribe to but I do care that he or she follows a method that he or she subscribes to and can articulate. So during the feedback sessions I first ask the student teacher what he or she thinks about the lesson and what the students learned and then why he or she thinks this way.

John, cooperating teacher, Germany

COORDINATING THE PRACTICE-TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Arrangements for carrying out the teaching in an ESOL class vary from institution to institution, and the campus-based supervisor may have an active role in planning and coordinating your teaching experiences. Sometimes, however, it may be left entirely to the discretion of the cooperating teacher. In the former case you may be required to teach an assigned number of classes and to perform specific teaching tasks. In the latter case the cooperating teacher may assign teaching tasks to you.

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE TEACHING IN AN ESOL CLASS

In your college program the focus was on learning through academic study, with a focus on learning current findings and assumptions based on theory and research. In practice teaching the focus is not on what you know but on what you can do. And many of the skills you need to master to be an effective language teacher will not have been the focus of your academic studies. So your practice-teaching experience is above all an opportunity to learn more about the *process* of language teaching. If you have a particular interest or area of specialization in language teaching (such as teaching young children or teaching ESP) you may want to complete your practice teaching in a school where you can teach classes of this kind. On the other hand you may wish to teach in a context that is unfamiliar to you, to give you useful experience that can support your career plans (Senior 2006).

At the beginning of the first practice, I was a little nervous but the students made me feel comfortable; they were very kind with me . . . I was very nervous . . . I forgot to ask them their names and most of the time I said, "Excuse me, can you repeat your name please?" I realized that theory is different from practice; it is not the same being a student and being a teacher; your way of thinking changes drastically.

Reina, Mexico

In teaching an ESOL class your practice-teaching experience will typically involve observing your cooperating teacher's classes as well as teaching part or all of the class on a regular basis. Conversations with your cooperating teacher and observation and reflection on your own teaching experiences are important parts of the learning process in practice teaching. In order to gain maximum benefit from your practice-teaching experience you also need to become actively involved in monitoring and directing your own learning (see Chapter 11). Whereas your supervisor and your cooperating teacher will provide ongoing feedback and guidance on your teaching, you can also be responsible for your own teacher learning during practice teaching, and ways of doing so are discussed throughout this book. Table 1.2 on page 11 summarizes learning to teach through practice teaching.