Second Language Teacher Education

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Part IV Supervision

The chapters in this section complement the discussion of the teaching practicum in Part III by examining in further depth approaches and options available in supervising student teachers. Despite the extensive use of practice teaching experiences in teacher education programs, the supervision provided within such programs is often left almost to chance. Supervision may be left to a cooperating teacher who has had no training or orientation to the supervision process, or it may be handled in ways that fail to provide the student teacher with the most helpful kind of feedback. These and other related issues are taken up by the contributors in this section.

Gebhard suggests that many second-language teacher educators continually limit themselves when it comes to supervision. He then explores alternative ways of carrying out supervision, and outlines six different models of supervision: directive, alternative, collaborative, nondirective, creative, and self-help-explorative.

Next Gaies and Bowers discuss inservice applications of clinical supervision from the perspective of the supervisor, focusing on the roles supervisors must play in settings where other forms of professional development, such as workshops, are limited or unavailable. They draw a distinction between the teacher as supervisor and as educator, suggesting that, as educators, clinical supervisors must do more than simply focus on technical aspects of classroom management. The discussion is supported by a description of professional development programs in use at the University of Cairo and in Yugoslavia.

Fanselow closes the section with a critical analysis of the view that major aims of supervision are to "evaluate" and to "help" teachers-in-preparation. He provides an alternative view of supervision as a means of encouraging teachers to see common classroom events from different perspectives. A number of practical techniques and procedures are suggested for realizing this alternative view.

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John F. Fanselow

Aims of supervision and observation

When I used to ask teachers to write down comments they recalled from conversations with supervisors or fellow teachers who had visited their classes or had watched videotapes of their teaching, the comments and exchanges between different supervisors/observing teachers and the observed teachers seemed very different from each other. Others have found this too. Gebhard (this volume, Chapter 10), in a review of different models of supervision – different ways of making comments or of having conversations about lessons between supervisors and teachers – uses these labels: *directive, alternative, collaborative, nondirective, creative, and self-help-explorative*.

Although the conversations I asked teachers to recall often indicated an overall tendency to be, say, more collaborative than directive, or more directive than nondirective, I consistently saw elements of many distinct models in the same sets of comments or conversations. I also began to notice that all the distinct models had the same aim: to provide a means for a more experienced person to help or evaluate a less experienced person. Two sources on supervision in second language teaching use the following words and phrases to characterize the purposes of the supervision models they describe: *functions as an arbitrator, commenting, evaluating, helping, provides* (Freeman 1982: 21); *to direct or guide, to offer suggestions, to model teaching, to advise teachers, to evaluate* (Gebhard, this volume, p. 156). All of these words indicate that the person doing the visiting, no matter whether that person is following a collaborative model, creative model, or any other, is there mainly to help or evaluate the practice teacher, fellow teacher, or inservice teacher-in-training.

On first thinking about it, what could be more reasonable than designing models of supervision that provide ways for experienced people to help or evaluate inexperienced people? But thinking about the idea of *help* in other contexts provides a different perspective. Haven't you

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heard children shout to parents or teachers words like, "Let me do it – don't show me," or "Don't give me the answer"? When referring to the need of children to be allowed to do things on their own, Montessori (1967: 309) made the plea, Let them fill their own buckets. As Alinsky (1971) reminded us:

It is a human characteristic that someone who asks for help and gets it reacts not only with gratitude but with a subconscious hostility toward the one who helped him. It is a sort of psychic "original sin" because he feels that the one who helped him is always aware that if it hadn't been for his help, he would still be a defeated nothing. (p. 93)

The type of resentment Alinsky mentions is not necessarily universal. Some people seem to like to be helped and expect to be told what to do as well. For them, evaluations containing prescriptions of what to do are welcome. In discussing the appropriateness of different models for teachers at various stages, Freeman (1982) highlights the value of help and evaluation by pointing out that beginning teachers, for example, seem to prefer models and direction to collaboration. But even while pleading for help from the cooperating teacher or supervisor, many practice teachers assert, "The most valuable part of practice teaching was seeing other teachers teach!" Seeing other teachers teach is not the same as being told what to do by an evaluator, nor is it being helped by someone.

As a result of this keen interest that practice teachers and many inservice teachers have in seeing others teach, my fear that helping people can lead to resentment toward the one providing the help, and the fact that prescriptions from a supervisor's evaluations can be demeaning and decrease the teacher's authority and responsibility, I see the need for an aim of supervision and observation different from the ones frequently practiced and described in the literature. Whereas the usual aim of observation and supervision is to help or evaluate the person being seen, the aim I propose is self-exploration – seeing one's own teaching differently. Observing others or ourselves to see teaching differently is not the same as being told what to do by others. Observing to explore is a process; observing to help or to evaluate is providing a product.

Besides leading to resentment, help can also lead to "learned helplessness" (Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale 1978). Helpful prescriptions can stop exploration, since the receiver, as someone in an inferior position being given orders by someone in a superior position, may easily develop the "ours is not to wonder why" syndrome.

A conversation reflecting the aims of the usual models might go like this: "Here I am with my lens to look at you and your actions and tell you or discover with you what is right and what is wrong and needs to be improved; I will then prescribe better activities or collaborate so we or you alone can discover better activities." A conversation reflecting the aim of

observation I am suggesting might go like this: "Here I am with my lens to look at you and your actions. But as I look at you with my lens, I consider you a mirror; I hope to see myself in you and through your teaching. When I see myself, I find it hard to get distance from my teaching. I hear my voice, I see my face and clothes and fail to see my teaching. Seeing you allows me to see myself differently and to explore variables we both use." Although supervisors may consider their roles so set that empowering teachers to make decisions seems impossible, such redefinition is possible in any field. The role of managers in relationship to workers, for example, is presently undergoing change in many companies.

Although observing others does not automatically lead to seeing oneself differently, mainly because the aim of seeing others to help them is so usual, over time an increase occurs in comments like these: "That teacher said 'Ok, now' to mark changes in activity just as I do"; "How little each of us walks around"; "That teacher spoke to students at eye level some of the time; I do so only during breaks."

The model I am describing grows out of a range of sources, not only my examination of many transcripts of teacher-supervisor conferences. For example, Jarvis (1972) argued that in order for teacher preparation programs to be truly responsive, they need to shift "the responsibility for the decision-making to the classroom teacher... It is perhaps time to train the teacher to analyze his situation and make his own decision for his situation" (p. 201). As Freire (1970) points out, learning "consists of acts of cognition, not transferrals of information" (p. 67). Each of us needs to construct, reconstruct, and revise our own teaching. He reminds us that for learning to take place we need to resolve the "teacher-student contradiction" (p. 67).

When we observe others to gain self-knowledge and self-insight and when we generate our own alternatives based on what we see others do, we construct our own knowledge and engage in the type of learning Freire has advocated. In a discussion of education, Abbs (1986) has this to say: "Authentic education is to be found in that act of intelligent exploration... the first priority of teachers should be to secure the necessary condition for the autonomy of teaching and for the freedom to learn" (p. 21). Using the word *supervisor* — a person with super vision — hardly supports our autonomy. When I observe and when I invite others to observe me, I refer to all of us as *visiting teachers* to avoid the use of the word *supervisor*.

Practices

I and others have used various combinations of the following practices in pre- and inservice master of arts and adult education programs. Any-

one genuinely interested in exploring, in seeing teaching differently, and anyone who believes that we can learn about our own teaching by seeing others can use the practices.

In my experience, trying to observe and supervise with the aim of exploring practices and of gaining insight into one's own teaching does not in itself enable us to stop treating observation and supervision as a means of helping and evaluating others. For people to begin to learn that they can see their own teaching differently by observing others, I and others have found the following practices for collecting, describing, and interpreting observations useful:

1. Short amounts of time have to be set aside for observation and discussion.
2. Segments from observed lessons need to be collected by note taking, taping, or transcribing.
3. The exchanges and activities in the segments need to be grouped in a range of ways.
4. Finally, what was done, as reflected in notes, tapes, and transcripts, needs to be related to notions, beliefs, and goals. Coupling this data collection and analysis with discussions of freedom and the need for each of us to construct our own knowledge helps many visiting teachers to decrease their suggestions to others, to increase their descriptive and analytical comments about the lessons observed, and to relate their insights to their own lessons.

Although allowing time for discussions of observations as part of a teacher's load is a policy I advocate, this policy is rare. Even in teacher preparation programs, there are not always long periods of time for discussions. Rather than putting off observations and discussions until sufficient time is available, thereby virtually ensuring that they will never take place, I recommend limiting observations and discussions to as little as five minutes.

Obviously, seeing five minutes of a lesson prevents us from seeing lesson development. But look how much we notice in one-minute commercials. In many classes, thirty questions are asked in a minute (Hoetker 1968). A dozen instances of feedback — both the treatment of errors and communications made after acceptable student moves — can be seen in a minute as well (Fanselow 1977b). In a thirty-minute period, hundreds of communications are made, each in split seconds (Jackson 1968).

Though short segments provide much data, short discussions force a limit to the number of communications that can be considered and the number of alternatives that can be generated. Since one or two communications often affect what is done and since many of our communications are unconscious, we can only hope to see and later try out one

or two alternative communications per class period. Short time segments do not of themselves lead to fewer evaluative or helping comments or more exploration, however, and that is why the following activities are used.

Collecting and describing data

TRANSCRIBING AND NOTE TAKING

The first step in our observations, no matter how long, is to capture as many of the specific communications as possible by audio- or videotaping, by taking notes, and by drawing sketches or even taking photographs as communications are observed. Later, tapes can be transcribed to reveal details missed in notes and sketches.

Observers can take notes, sketch, and transcribe as they wish. Many put exchanges in dialogue form in their notes. But now and then, one will put teacher communications in the left-hand column of a page and student communications in the right-hand column to highlight them. Many write one line and pause, forgetting that the purpose of looking is to collect data, not to judge the teacher or think of ways to help the teacher. Some prefer sketches to notes, noting the position of teachers and students, their location, or expressions on faces of teacher or students. Others note what is done rather than what is said — movements, objects used, writing on the board.

Except for the instruction that observers are to write down only what happens, not comments about what happens, no directions are given about what observers are to note. Different observers often note different communications, reflecting differences in the values of the observers. Some observers write down things they are interested in seeing in their own classes that they cannot see while they are teaching. Though two observers are likely to capture some of the same spoken exchanges, they are not likely to have the same account of how the exchanges were said or what other communications were made. Discussing what took place and listening to tapes will make clear a central lesson of observation: What we see is not what takes place but what we value as important to see; observing is selecting.

While transcribing exchanges, drawing sketches, or otherwise noting or capturing specific communications, we cannot write comments such as these: "To make the class lively, this teacher needs more activities"; "This teacher should follow the responses with clearer feedback." When not taking notes or transcribing, we tend to revert to our usual pattern of thinking of ways to help or evaluate another. This is a sure way to miss seeing anything differently, a sure way to limit our observations

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by trying to relate them to our preconceived notions of good and bad teaching.

GROUPING ACTIVITIES

As data are collected, the observers, and in many cases the teacher observed, begin to group the communications. For example, if the teacher asks the students to give synonyms for some words and to draw sketches to show the meanings of other words, the two types of tasks are grouped. One possible grouping that emerges has to do with the fact that one task requires the students to speak and the other one requires drawing and silence.

A range of groupings of tasks and activities, rather than just one, is aimed for. Looking at the same exchanges, again, we can group the questions on the basis of who was asked the question. Were students sitting in particular rows asked to perform some tasks more often than students in other rows? Were males asked to perform more of some types of tasks than females? How many tasks did students perform because the teacher requested them to, either by using names or pointing, and how many did they volunteer for?

The purpose of the questions and the grouping is not to imply that, for example, using names is better than pointing or getting volunteers. The questions are asked so that the same tasks or activities can be grouped and categorized on the basis of a range of characteristics. When we look at, say, a dessert menu, we see many characteristics. We have categories such as high calorie or low calorie, sweet or semisweet, high or low cholesterol, easy or difficult to prepare, for children or adults, and so on. By seeing that there are many ways to group the same communications, we basically are developing a checklist of options and the multiple characteristics of each.

As such lists and groupings expand, ways to vary our teaching — use different options — become more and more evident. Each activity, and the groups it fits in, provides at least one more variable, with a distinct range of characteristics, that we can manipulate in our own teaching. Each grouping also reminds us that communications have multiple dimensions, a fact that is hidden by one-dimensional terms often used to judge teaching, such as *great pace*, *nice grammar work*, or *fine communications*.

Data are also grouped by making lists. For example, one teacher may give the answer to a question after a student cannot answer, and another may give a clue rather than the entire answer. Thus, we have two specific items on a list of feedback possibilities. Clues, too, may be given in various ways. A teacher may sometimes say, "The word starts with a g." Another time the teacher may say, "It has two syllables" or "It is a

noun." One of the insights that come as lists are developed of what is observed in distinct areas of teaching such as feedback, group work, and so on is that the range of activities observed in any one class is often small, but across many teachers the range becomes great.

USING TECHNICAL LANGUAGE

If transcribed communications are merely listed without being grouped or categorized, the list can become very long, of course. By grouping different communications on the basis of inferences we make about them, the value of category labels – technical language – becomes apparent. Thus, from the descriptive statement "Students gave synonyms," an observer and teacher might infer that memory was required but that no motor control was, as in the case of drawing sketches to show the meaning of words. Then, looking at communications from our own or other classes and seeing other activities that require memory alone or memory plus motor control, subsequent communications can be compared with the first ones in the category. The feedback activities listed, such as the distinct clues given, can also be compared and grouped. "Clues given with spoken words" versus "clues given with symbols on the blackboard" would constitute one way to distinguish clues, for example.

After a few discussions between observers (visiting teachers) and the teachers observed (visited teachers), the following general categories inevitably arise: questions that require students to share previous knowledge versus those that require information just presented; tasks done individually or in groups; answers for which the teacher is interested in the form of what is said versus the meaning; questions teachers know the answers to and those they do not know the answers to; communications containing experiences of students and those using language for its own sake; student-to-student communication and teacher-to-student or student-to-teacher communication. Observers are reminded to develop categories that refer to at least two dimensions of any item in order to keep in mind the aim of seeing multiple dimensions of any communication.

The categories for the lists made and the groupings can cover whatever areas that observers and teachers want, as long as the focus is on the data: transcripts, sketches, photographs, notes, and actual recordings as well, when possible. This concentration on the collection and grouping of data makes it difficult to think of helping or evaluating anyone.

Lortie (1975), among others, has said that one of the critical problems that teachers face is that they do not have a language to discuss what they do: "What students [practice teachers] learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical" (p. 62).

Lortie (p. 73) maintains that the absence of a common technical vocabulary limits the ability to analyze as well as the acuity of the observations that teachers make.

Giving category names to the groups of communications and lists of activities provides a technical language, since those noting the similarities and differences between communications and activities constantly have to go back and forth between data and names applied to distinct types of data until they agree on a fit between the terms and the data. Once teachers and observers have developed some technical terms, coding systems developed by others can be introduced. The one I introduce most frequently is my own, called FOCUS (Fanselow 1987b). COLT (Allen, Fröhlich, and Spada 1984), TALOS (Ullmann and Geva 1982), or any other coding system can also be used (Long 1980).

Starting discussions with a published coding system can make the idea of categories clear earlier, but there are some disadvantages to their early introduction. If teachers and observers are unaware of the problem coding systems were designed to deal with, they may use the systems in a mechanical way. Starting with published systems can also imply that the observers and teachers working jointly may not be up to the development of categories. On the other hand, going through the steps of gathering data and grouping data often shows the value of a technical language. It is also more likely that somebody else's categories can be made our own if we develop some of our own along the way. When those doing the observing develop the categories, knowledge is being created, rather than buckets being filled (Montessori 1967) or information being transferred (Freire 1970: 67).

Interpreting data

Once a range of communications is captured in the form of data and once activities are listed, grouped, or categorized, interpretations can be made. It must be remembered, of course, that collecting data and listing and grouping them according to jointly developed categories or published ones are not activities free of interpretation. In initial discussions, as in initial collection and grouping of data, most participants interpret data in light of preconceived notions of good teaching. But at this stage, attention is given to showing how the data and lists of categories already reflect values, notions, or theories of teaching and learning. If the data indicate, for example, that the teacher smiled constantly, one participant may point out that a person noted smiles rather than frowns or shaking of the head. As the observer who noted the smiles equates smiles with friendliness, he or she realizes how a belief affected what was observed.

Since it is very common for us all to see, list, and group, as well as interpret, what we see in light of our preconceived notions about teach-

ing, there is no way to prevent such "filtered" data collecting, grouping, or interpreting. But this effect can be counterbalanced. After one observer or teacher says that the teacher's smile showed that the teacher was friendly, other possible interpretations of a smile can be sought. Alternative interpretations emerge from asking what smiles have meant in our classes or by asking for possible negative meanings of smiles. Usually, a comment such as "Well, I often smile when nervous" comes forth. Or one will hear, "I smile sometimes when I want students to like me." Different data from the segment being discussed might also be noted: "The smile was fixed as I recall; I frowned a lot too — look at the sketch you made of me."

To encourage interpretations that are quite different from the normal ones that people with similar preconceived notions offer, participants are taught to ask each other to provide at least one interpretation that is seemingly outlandish or different in intent from the ones given. If all the interpretations are positive, possible negative interpretations can be sought. And if all are negative, positive interpretations can be sought. In the case of the smile, a negative interpretation might be that smiling can be used to keep control. Arguments about the superiority of a particular interpretation are not allowed in the beginning. Rather, the goal is simply to try to remind the participants that each event we see can be interpreted in ways different from our usual ways of doing it because we are each limited by the ideas of reality we have.

Another central lesson that emerges from multiple interpretations of the same event is that each event has more than one cause and that these causes need to be specified precisely. A replay of the videotape or a review of the notes or sketches may reveal some of the exchanges that took place before the smile, exchanges that were not seen because they seemed unimportant: the realization that the smile was perhaps the result of a number of small events that had happened immediately beforehand. By searching for different interpretations, observers and teachers are thrown back to the data, lists, and categories, not to seek support for what they thought when they started, but to seek support for the seemingly outlandish new interpretations. Seeing our own teaching differently is not going to happen if we are simply looking at other lessons and interpreting them in the same way we have been looking at lessons and interpreting them all of our lives.

Data and categories can also be interpreted in relationship to beliefs about teaching the participants have heard about. For example, participants can search for communications that are congruent or incongruent with Smith's (1971) admonition that "information about an error and aid in performing a task correctly are more helpful than discouraging comments about an inadequate performance" (p. 229). If a teacher is heard saying "Why can't you ever do it right?" the participants might

respond at first by saying that the communication seems incongruent. *Seems* is used because "Why can't you do it right?", if said humorously and with a smile, could be congruent with Smith's advice. Such tentativeness among the participants is possible because of a self-developed realization based on engaging in the process of collecting data, listing specific communications and activities, and relating them to ideas over and over again in short segments of time.

Isolating beliefs about language teaching that can be related to data and categories is not difficult. Most articles and books are written to further beliefs or theories. By relating beliefs from the literature to what is actually done and observed in specific detail, participants clarify beliefs and see ways to translate the beliefs into practice. To translate Krashen's notion of "comprehensible input" (see Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982) into action, teachers and observers can first examine exchanges in a range of lessons and then group those that seem comprehensible and those that seem not to be. Barnes's (1976) ideas about "exploratory talk" and "finished talk," about "school knowledge" versus "action knowledge," can be understood, seen, and translated into action only when related to data gathered from lessons.

In addition to relating data and categories to beliefs about learning, we can relate them to goals. If our goal is to ensure that students can obtain literal and implied meaning from what they hear and read but we never ask any inference questions of them, then our practices are not congruent with our goal.

Relating data to notions in articles and books brings us to another activity that can be used in the observations and discussions of teaching: reading. Just as one goal of working in pairs and groups is to provide multiple perspectives, so reading is used to provide different angles. When our partners give us a different view of a lesson, we have to take our usual lenses off, for a few seconds at least, to try to see what they have seen. Published notions, both of ways of looking at teaching (Bateson 1972; Mehan 1979) and ways of teaching (Haskell 1987), show us different maps of similar territory that require us to try on a range of different lenses.

Self-observation and the notion of opposites

Transcribing, listing activities, grouping communications, categorizing and relating these activities to our notions, beliefs, and goals — all show the great number of different ways of seeing variables, relationships between them, and consequences, if these activities can be done in pairs or groups. However, often we cannot find even one person to observe us or to be observed.

The basis for getting multiple perspectives when we are in a group is

simply to juxtapose different individuals' perceptions. This same idea of juxtaposing, of using opposites, can also be used to provide different perceptions when we are alone. If in our own classes we see the students always sitting in chairs during speaking lessons, we can ask ourselves to juxtapose — to give an opposite posture. In this case two opposites come immediately to mind. Students and teacher alike can sit on the floor, if the room is carpeted, or everyone can stand. Though much conversation outside of the classroom takes place when we are standing, the point of juxtaposing or contrasting opposite situations is to see situations not seen before, not to argue about the absolute superiority of a particular format. And although some may object to standing or to sitting on the floor, by precluding alternatives based on what people might think, we close off inquiry and tend to limit what occurs to our preconceived notions of good and bad teaching.

In addition to generating alternatives by looking at aspects of the classroom, we can compare the communications in a class with those we see outside of a teaching setting. Using our chair example, we can compare where we sit in a teaching setting with where we sit in a nonteaching setting, such as a dormitory room, living room, or park. Finding opposites to what we normally do in a teaching setting or comparing what we do in teaching and nonteaching settings can be extremely valuable in providing the alternative perspectives a partner would supply in pair or group work.

The idea of opposites can also help to broaden the range of interpretations. If the first and only interpretation of a teacher's smile is that the teacher is happy, and no other interpretations come up in a discussion, an opposite interpretation can be offered: "I have interpreted the smile as a good communication; now let me consider a smile a bad communication. Then what could it mean? What are some disadvantages of smiling?"

In second language acquisition research, learner errors were first attributed to the first language of the learners. Then, some began to explain the errors on the basis of developmental stages. Different types of errors were later considered to be caused by different types of tasks used to elicit the sentences that contained the errors (Ellis 1985). What are these but opposite interpretations of the same data? Most fields are enriched by multiple interpretations of the same data, and these multiple interpretations can be generated by considering opposite interpretations to those usually provided.

Even with the concept of opposites to provide different perspectives, self-observation is limited. It prevents us from getting distance from our teaching and seeing our teaching through others. Though transcribing our own teaching gives us some distance from what we do, since the

written record removes our voice, the transcriptions often remain too much a part of ourselves.

Meanings

Given the aim I advocate for conversations about teaching, labels often used to classify conversations about teaching, as well as the words in the conversations, take on new meanings. "Ask questions more rapidly" is *not* necessarily a prescription or an offer of help in a conversation in which exploration and seeing teaching differently are the goals. The meaning need *not* be, "Do this because I who visited your class know more than you do and you need help." Rather, the meaning can be, "Try this to see how it alters what has been happening. I am going to ask questions more rapidly too; perhaps different reasons to ask questions both slowly and rapidly will become apparent. We can compare tapes when we have some descriptions of both quick and slow questions." On the other hand, when a visitor in the role of a person in charge says, "You might try a slower pace," though the modal *might* is used, the meaning can be a "helpful" prescription. The message can mean, "I know, and I want you to do what I say." Exploration can be inhibited or completely stopped because the underlying intention of the words can be to show who is in charge.

Even a comment such as "The quick questions were great" can be seen as a description rather than as a judgment if the aim is exploratory. In such a context, the *great* could refer to the execution of the direction rather than to the technique itself.

Words in our conversations, to be judgments, must imply that the speaker or hearer is attributing good or bad, superiority or inferiority, to a practice. If "good lesson" is said or heard to imply that you or a teacher you visited did what was prescribed — what the speaker or hearer considers to be the right way to do it — then a judgment is probably being made in our communication. The words must be heard in relationship to the aim of our conversation and the role of those having the conversation. In the conversations I advocate, judgments are avoided because they tend to close off exploration. They tend to end, rather than continue, a process.

Some label an emphasis on data and description *objective*. I avoid both the terms *objective* and *subjective*. The meaning of a *lot* in "You asked a lot of questions" is not subjective because of a *lot*. Nor are 42 and 2 *objective* in "You asked 42 questions in 2 minutes." Both statements can be judgments or descriptions, depending greatly on what the speaker's and hearer's aim is and the role each is assum-

ing. Again, if the words are used to see differently, as a means to explore – suggesting the importance of comparing the asking of 42 questions in 2 minutes with 22 in 2 minutes or a few with a lot – then they are both simply descriptive. If the words are used because the speaker or listener – the visited or visiting teacher – is against frequent questions or feels that asking a lot of questions is *not* the thing to do, both groups of words are likely to be judgments. Both can be implied, helpful prescriptions to use fewer questions if they come from, or are addressed to, a teacher who believes “good” teachers do not ask frequent questions.

There is a reason that explanations or proof to support categories or interpretations have not been mentioned. Observers do not request explanations like “Why did you smile?” And teachers do not give such explanations: “I smiled because I thought at that moment the class needed reassurance.” These exchanges tend to lead to arguments and can be seen as veiled attempts to support or strengthen the authority of one of the participants. In the model presented here, explanations are replaced by what a person did; what the characteristics were of what was done; how these related to beliefs, theories, or goals; and multiple interpretations of the data and groupings and the relationships among these.

Trying to see how the same words that for so long meant one thing can begin to mean something else is, of course, not something accomplished only by going through a series of steps. Nor indeed is seeing differently – exploration – a point to reach, but rather a tendency, a movement toward.

This tendency, this movement toward, as well as the tendency back toward the usual conversations, is noted by recording the discussions among teachers and observers – visited and visiting teachers. The exchanges in the discussions are dealt with in the same way as exchanges from classes: Short transcriptions are made, communications are grouped and coded, and multiple interpretations are made. They are related to the beliefs upon which this model rests – the trust that can come from joint effort without external evaluation; exploration; multiple perspectives; multiple causation; the idea that much of what we do in classes, just as outside the classroom, is beyond our awareness; and the notion that helping another from a superior position can lead to resentment and dependence.

The discussions of the observations often show confusion, struggles to group and categorize data. They also contain examples of simple causation (“The repetition of the sentence made them learn it”), prescriptions (“You should never put the directions up on the board when they are in their books”), and all the other normal types of conversations we usually have about teaching. But now and then the

teaching act is discussed in a way that is congruent with the beliefs of this model.

Conclusion

Judgments and predictable prescriptions are *not* limited to conversations about teaching. In a critique of Vincent Canby’s movie reviews, Canby (1986) reminds us that using words like *charming*, *sincere*, *buoyant*, *funny*, and *clever* to review films “amounts to an alarming aesthetic” (p. 30). He goes on:

One is accustomed to seeing invocations of charms, etc., as measures of value ... in ads for Calvin Klein, Christian Dior, Clinique, and Club Med. But these are hardly the supreme values that one would expect in a serious reflection on art ... They are, indeed, precisely the values such a reflection should question. (p. 30)

If we discuss teaching with words implying judgments like *exciting*, *boring*, *flowed smoothly* – all variations of *good* and *bad* – we limit our perceptions in the same way that such one-dimensional, uncritical words limit our perceptions of film and other forms of art.

The usual conversations, full of prescriptive clichés designed to help or evaluate, no doubt provide more certainty than conversations whose purpose is to see our own and others’ teaching differently and to explore reality. In fact, Canby’s *buoyant*, *funny*, and *clever* might be welcome in many conversations about teaching. Conversations between Socrates and others in the Socratic dialogues could not be described in this way! These characters reflect more complexity in their conversations – movement from strongly held opinion to floundering uncertainty to a confused not knowing. Similar stages occur in conversations aimed at seeing teaching differently – exploring. An authentic quest for learning and meaning requires that these stages take place. Neat, pat answers to complex problems were not a part of the Socratic dialogues, nor are they a part of conversations exploring teaching. As Abbs (1986) reminds us in a discussion of Socrates:

To adopt the Socratic view of education would be to reaffirm that education in our culture is primarily concerned with critical reflection ... with sustained inquiry into the various forms of meaning, with the lifelong process ... that goes well beyond the enclosing pressures of the ego and the ephemeral clamourings of party politics. (p. 21)

To observe others and ourselves with the purpose of helping implies not only that we know that one set of practices is consistently superior to another, but that we know what needs to be done in each distinct setting. It also implies that there is a simple cause-effect relationship

between a communication and a result: "Smile and the class will be relaxed"; "Speak slowly and the class will understand." To help another or ourselves means we know what should be done and what practices produce what results. If experience in classes has taught us nothing else, we have learned that each day we and our students are different as a result of ongoing experiences and that practices that seemed to have particular consequences one day have different ones another day.

To *help* means we have something to give another, a product to sell. The whole thrust of the point of view and activities presented here is toward the value of process, not product, and toward the construction of our own knowledge, not the acceptance of the knowledge of others in some type of package, as a product. Freire's (1970: 59) use of *banking* as a metaphor for education that stresses product highlights the aim of many conversations about lessons we observe: the passing of information from one person to another. As Mehan (1979) says:

In sum, providing people with prearranged packages of information is oppressive, for it fails to treat people as responsible for their own lives. Furthermore, these imposed programs often have little to do with the participants' own preoccupations and practical circumstances. Providing people with ways of looking, on the other hand, reminds the participants that they are capable of acting on the world, and that these actions can transform the world. (pp. 206-7)

The model for visiting teachers presented here, like the ideas of Mehan and Freire, all come together in Bronowski's (1956) discussion of the purposes of art and science. For the words *science* and *works of art* in the following quotation, one might consider substituting the words *observation* and *lessons* and *conversations about lessons*, respectively.

The discoveries of science, the works of art are explorations – more, are explosions – of a hidden likeness... When a simile takes us aback and persuades us together, when we find a juxtaposition in a picture both odd and intriguing, when a theory is at once fresh and convincing, we do not merely nod over someone else's work. We re-enact the creative act, and we ourselves make the discovery again. At bottom, there is no unifying likeness there until we have seized it, we too have made it for ourselves. (p. 19)

When we collect and interpret data from observations and reconstruct our teaching, we are, of course, reinventing the wheel. But why not? Why deny others or ourselves this pleasure? By providing pat prescriptions to *help*, we not only deny others or ourselves the excitement of constructing knowledge, we also imply that we ourselves or those we work with cannot construct knowledge. Moreover, helping can stop exploration. Again, Bronowski's (1956) comments are appropriate. To

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him, the process of exploration is the "habit of truth": "In science and in art and in self-knowledge we explore and move constantly by turning to the world of sense to ask, Is this so? This is the habit of truth, always minute yet always urgent" (p. 43).