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**A Mutual Learning Experience: Collaborative Journaling
between A Nonnative-Speaker Intern and Native-
Speaker Cooperating-Teacher**

Authors

Jerry G. Gebhard

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Toshinobu Nagamine

Yatsushiro National College of Technology

Author Biography

Jerry G. Gebhard holds a doctorate from Teachers College, Columbia University. He is director of Doctoral Studies in Composition & TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He has taught in Thailand, Japan, China, Hungary, and the United States.

Toshinobu Nagamine is currently a full-time lecturer in the Faculty of General Education at Yatsushiro National College of Technology. He is also a PhD candidate in Composition & TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He has taught in Japan and the United States.

Abstract

Teaching journals have been used in the TESOL field for both preservice and inservice teachers to promote reflection and awareness and to explore their teaching beliefs and practices. Although the various benefits of teaching journals have been reported on previously, the use of collaborative teaching journals has not received much research attention in the field. In this article, we report on a collaborative teaching journal kept between a graduate student intern (Japanese) and a cooperating-teacher (American) and discuss the value of keeping a collaborative teaching journal for meaningful ESL/EFL

teacher development.

Keywords

Journaling, a teaching journal, a collaborative journal, teacher development, teacher education, internship, nonnative-speaker and native-speaker cooperation

Introduction

There are a number of activities second/foreign language teachers can use to critically reflect on their teaching beliefs and practices, such as those discussed in Bailey, Curtis, and Nunan (1998, 2001), Freeman and Cornwell (1993), Gebhard and Oprandy (1999), Johnson and Golombek (2002), Murphy (2001), Richards and Nunan (1990), and Richards (1998). One of the activities that have emerged as a way to promote critical reflection is that of keeping a teaching journal. Since “the act of writing begins a reflective, analytic process” (Bailey et al., 2001, p. 48), a teaching journal is regarded not only as a recording tool of teachers’ thoughts, ideas, and practices, but also as a tool to promote teachers’ reflective teaching (Bailey et al., 2001; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001).

In this article, we report on the use of a collaborative journal kept between ourselves – a nonnative-speaker (NNS) graduate student intern and a native-speaker (NS) cooperating-teacher: the former with three years of teaching experience, and the latter with twenty-five. Stimulated by the work of Brock, Yu, and Wong (1992), Cole, Raffier, Rogan, and Schleicher (1998), and Matsuda and Matsuda (2004), we decided that our journal would be collaborative. Our goals were to process a single journal in which we focused on issues, problems, and concerns within a class we were both teaching.

Literature Review

Educators in the TESOL field have written about the methodology of processing a teaching journal (Bailey, 1990; Bailey et al., 2001; Burton & Carroll, 2001; Gebhard, 1999; Jarvis, 1992), as well as concentrated research efforts on the use of journals. For example, researchers in the field have focused on journal entries as a way to understand novice teachers’ “evolving perceptions of themselves as teachers” (Brinton & Holten, 1989, p. 344), teaching issues and shifting awareness (Holten & Brinton, 1995;

McDonough, 1994), personal learning experience about power and communication (Esbenshade, 2002), and teachers' common concerns and pressing needs (Numrich, 1996). Other researchers have looked into the reflective nature of journal writing. Farrell (1998) studied three Korean teachers' journals to consider if "regular journal writing promotes reflective thinking" (p. 92), while Richards and Ho (1998) studied teachers' narratives and questions to interpret "whether journal-writing experiences developed teachers' sense of critical reflectivity over time" (p. 157). Yahya (2000) took her research one step further by studying the ways teaching journals seem to help teachers solve teaching problems, as well as how sharing journals can possibly contribute to teachers' professional growth.

Much of the methodological and research literature on teaching journals focuses on teachers keeping either a diary-like journal (intrapersonal) or a dialogue journal with a teacher educator. However, Brock et al. (1992), Cole et al. (1998), and Matsuda and Matsuda (2004) looked into the use of journals as an interactive experience between teachers. These three collaborative groups processed a single journal that they passed from person to person, each writing about teaching issues, problems, and concerns, as well as responding to each other's questions. Their discussion of problems (e.g., managing time to write; maintaining their interest) and benefits (e.g., insight into reflection; a new awareness of beliefs and teaching practices; redefinition of themselves as teachers) provided insight into the collaborative journaling process the authors began in 2001.

In what follows, we describe the context of our journaling experience and our process of keeping the journal. Subsequently, we, the intern (NNS) and the assigned course instructor (NS), each give an individual analysis of the journal content in relation to issues we raised. Finally, we offer our opinions about the value of keeping the collaborative journal from our individual perspectives.

Our Teaching Context and Decision to Keep a Journal

We both opted to teach an ESL section of ENGL 101: College Writing, a four-credit fourteen-week compulsory course for all freshmen at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The course includes a one-and-a-half hour class meeting twice a week and required individual writing conferences. The ESL section of the course was designated for NNS students, as well as one of the internship sites for students in the graduate program who want to gain teaching experience. The ESL section that we were

to teach during the fall semester of 2001 was composed of twenty-five NNS students. At the time of our journaling experience, one of us, the course instructor, Jerry, was a professor in the English Department for seventeen years and had taught the course many times. The other, an intern, Toshinobu, was a second year doctoral student in the program with three years teaching experience, including teaching Japanese to undergraduates at the university.

It should be noted that a collaborative journal was not a required task for student-teachers to complete the internship; it was our voluntary exercise. We decided to keep the collaborative journal as we planned the writing course. We thought that this journal would help us to clarify the roles that each of us might take to meet the students' needs as writers and new students to the university and local culture. Through this journal we hoped to communicate our observations about what went on in class, as well as our experiences with individual students during writing conferences. We also wanted to record our thoughts about teaching, the problems students were having, the use of a selected text, and anything else that might help us in our decision making about what to do during our bi-weekly ninety-minute class meetings and required writing conferences outside classroom hours.

In addition to our hope that we could meet the students' academic and expressive writing needs, our collaborative journal was also born out of an interest in our own professional development. We wanted to gain further insight into our teaching beliefs and practices, and in particular, to explore our teaching by systematically writing in a teaching journal.

The Collaborative Journaling Process

We decided to keep an electronic journal in the form of a Microsoft Word file and exchange the file twice a week. We each kept a floppy disk and a printout of the journal, and when we received or wrote entries, we would add them to the file. We decided to include our observations of what went on in class, of conferences with individual students, questions we wanted to ask each other, perceived problems, and any other content we felt would be relevant to reach our goals. We kept the journal for twelve weeks and wrote a total of twenty-seven entries by the end of the course.

At the end of the semester, following the advice of Bailey (1990), we both read and analyzed the journal entries for "recurring patterns or salient events" (p. 215). Observed recurring patterns or events were categorized into major themes (or codes) for

qualitative analysis (cf., Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each of us individually reviewed themes, reflected on them, and wrote up an analysis report for later cooperative analysis (cf., Bailey et al., 2001). By so doing, we hoped that we would be able to gain insight for mutual, as well as individual, professional growth. We also presented our collaborative journaling process and analysis at an end-of-the-semester eat-and-talk meeting with graduate program students who did their internships at other sites.

The Content of the Journal: Issues Raised

The process of writing and responding to each other's journal entries, as well as reflecting on the collaborative experience as a whole, led us to identify issues that are unique to each of us. In this section, the authors, Toshinobu and Jerry, discuss our issues, each in our own words, namely, in the form of a first-person narrative. We add excerpts from the journal to highlight points we make.

Issues Raised for Toshinobu, the Intern

The Issue of Being Accepted by the ESL Students

I wanted to feel comfortable interacting with the students in class. Being a NNS intern, however, I was very anxious about the ESL students' perceptions of myself. This is evident in the following entry:

Last week after the class some students were making a line to ask you some questions. I was listening to you, standing nearby. I talked to a student waiting in the line to see if I could help her. She asked me a few questions about the assignments, so I answered them. She seemed to understand what I said, but she was still in the line. I thought I answered all the questions she had, so I started wondering what she would ask you. When her turn came, she asked you exactly the same questions... I was listening to your answers to her questions and realized that you gave her about the same answers as mine, but she showed a different reaction to you; she seemed to me that she felt secure when she heard your answers. I started wondering what made her react differently...

In response to the above entry, Jerry, the cooperating-teacher wrote:

You believe that she needed to ask me to feel secure, as I am the "professor." This fairly much shows the issue of having to teach someone else's course. I am the one who the students perceive as the one with power and answers. It really isn't fair to you. Labels! Aren't they powerful? ... Students are very fast at

understanding power relationships. We both need to be very aware of our way of talking to each other and the students and truly share the teaching responsibilities.

I was under pressure at the beginning of the internship: I often wondered if the students could really accept me as a teacher despite the fact that most of the students might have expected to be taught only by a NS instructor. If I had received the aforementioned reaction from the student after I had actually taught her, then I would not have worried too much, considering the lack of sufficient teaching experience and knowledge base compared to Jerry. When I noticed the student's reaction, however, I had not yet started teaching the class; I was merely observing the class.

Instead of allowing me to escape from the reality of the situation, Jerry helped me face it by writing, for instance, the following entry:

I am sure that the students see you as an "intern." As you were introduced as a doctoral student doing an internship, how else can they see you! So, this is the way it is. I doubt that the students will ever see you as a co-professor of the course.

Responding to the above entry, I wrote as follows:

I do not believe that they see me as a co-professor of the course, which is absolutely impossible. I am a doctoral student doing an internship. Unlike non-academic ESL programs, College Writing 101 is a course that students see you not only as a teacher/instructor but also a professor. This fact might be one of the factors that affect how students see you and me... It is all about the power relationships among students, you, and me. I strongly believe that it is impossible for students to perceive a professor and an intern to have an equal status, especially, if most of the students in class are from Asian countries.

While exchanging such journal entries, I started realizing that I was too sensitive to students' perceptions, and that I needed to accept the reality of the internship site. As my journal entry shows, I realized that I should confront this issue while discussing my concerns with the cooperating-teacher. Without the collaborative journal, I would not have been able to touch upon my insecurity with Jerry.

The Issue of Developing a Sense of Collaboration with the Cooperating-Teacher

It was very challenging to me, at least in the beginning of the internship, to give feedback or to offer suggestions about Jerry's teaching. Firstly, I knew that Jerry had a

lot more teaching experience than I did. Thus, when I started the internship, the temptation was to copy Jerry's teaching style, rather than to develop my own teaching. Secondly, in my culture, an intern-instructor rarely offers suggestions or feedback to his/her cooperating-teacher; only experienced, often older, teachers can critique inexperienced, younger teachers in Japan (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Having an understanding of my cultural background, Jerry replied with the following:

I imagine that it isn't easy for you to give your opinion on the professor's teaching and interaction with the students. But, if you could step back and simply see me as another teacher that would be useful. Like most teachers, I cannot always see what I am doing in the classroom as clearly as someone who is observing it. Can you offer me any productive feedback?

In order for us to conduct the class collaboratively, I had to develop a sense of collaboration with Jerry and change my attitude towards him. Jerry's journal entries, such as the one cited above, helped me start developing a sense of collaboration, which enabled me to feel that the class became 'ours' later on. Interestingly, it was our interactions in collaborative journaling outside of the class that developed my awareness and attitude. The positive change in my attitude can be clearly seen, for example, in the following entry in which I gave feedback to Jerry for the first time.

Because of some of the things you mentioned in this journal, I think I started feeling that the class is "ours" and that I will be able to give some feedback to you. ... One thing that I would like to suggest is that we should ask students to type all essay drafts in that I realized that there are discrepancies in the number of words per page due to different notebook papers... This may not be a significant matter, but this is something that I noticed while I was assessing their writing.

I also asked a few questions to deepen my understanding of Jerry's teaching beliefs and practices.

I decided to write these two questions here because I would like to hear your ideas/opinions: (1) I have found some students talking with one another and/or using a computerized dictionary to check some words or phrases while you were talking. I thought these students might have to be called upon and told to stop whatever they were doing, but then, I thought this idea might have occurred to me because I was taught in Japan that teachers need to be authoritative... What do you think?; and (2) I have noticed that some students tend to use their native

languages to communicate with each other while they are working in groups...
 Could you tell me what you think about the use of the international students' first languages in a writing class?

Thus, I gradually developed a sense of collaboration with Jerry by changing personal aspects of teaching and learning to more mutual, collaborative ones.

The Issue of Problem-Posing and Problem-Solving

When I started one-on-one conferences with the students, I found that some students were too anxious about grammar. Thinking about how the students' anxiety about grammar might interfere with their learning to write, I wrote:

... some of the students who had conferences today became nervous once we started interacting. I wondered why for a while, and I realized that they were a little worried about showing their work to me because they seemed to think that I would correct their grammar and spelling right in front of them, and that the number of corrected errors/mistakes would affect their grades... I told them in class that I would not even try to look for grammatical errors/mistakes, but some of them showed their great anxiety about being assessed in terms of grammar and spelling. In fact, most of the students asked me a question such as "Is my grammar OK?" or "How can I improve my grammar?" It seems to me that most of the students are concerned about their grammatical skills instead of writing skills.

Jerry wrote this in response:

I have done more conferences than I can recall and have had the same questions and comments as you. As for the questions about grammar students have during the conferences, I have found that this is often the first question students ask: "How is my grammar?" Such a question is natural for students to ask. After all, many students coming from other countries... are not really taught how to write an essay. They are asked to write an essay... Then, the teacher marks up their papers with red ink, and almost all the feedback is on grammar. So, when you say, "It seems that most of the students are concerned about their grammatical skills instead of writing skills," you are very exact about why students ask questions like the ones they do.

Jerry and I discussed the students' anxiety about grammar and generated a new teaching idea, i.e., to give a twenty-minute grammar lesson once a week. Jerry wrote about this idea as follows:

I have a question for you --- Do you think a twenty-minute grammar lesson on Thursdays would be something the students would appreciate? We could do this, using the students' grammar problems and the other book, *Grammar Troublespots*, which we haven't used yet. Would you like doing this? Each week pick a different grammar point to cover? I actually don't know if this would be useful to the students or not. After all, they have had years of grammar already! But, maybe they would feel one of their needs is being met and it could be useful if they actually used the grammar points in their papers. Let me know what you think.

Jerry's entry cited above stimulated me to think of a contextualized grammar lesson. Accordingly, I proposed a lesson plan in my journal entry, and then I took on the responsibility to conduct twenty-minute grammar lessons. After we started implementing the teaching idea, we saw some positive change in students' behavior in writing conferences.

This whole experience of posing a problem, planning an action, and implementing the action to solve the problem became a great opportunity for me to develop as a teacher. Since we were keeping the collaborative journal, I was able to reflect upon the entire teaching process and become aware of how and what we were doing.

The Issue of Teaching Awareness

As I wrote entries and reflected on them, I could objectively and critically view my teaching practices and teaching assumptions, and such entries helped me to see my teaching differently. For example, I included entries in which I analyzed and reflected on a few tape-recorded writing conferences. Part of such entries reads:

When I listened to the tape a few times, I was annoyed... Let me explain why... Obviously, as we can see from the transcript, I was interfering with his speech, saying "OK" or "yes" a lot. ... I also found my tendency to ask questions while students were talking. ... After listening to a couple of other recorded conferences, I found several parts where I interrupted students' speech while they were talking. That is, I tend to interfere with students' speech

unconsciously, which I will definitely have to modify in terms of students' language learning anxiety. ... There may be some students who have low language proficiency and might not be able to keep talking if I interfere with their speech.

I included a variety of entries in which I reflected on my teaching and was able to gain awareness because of the feedback from Jerry. When I was asked to teach the class alone while Jerry was away, it became clear to me that I had developed much confidence in my teaching. I was fully aware of what I was doing as a teacher, both in and outside class. Here is an example of what I mean. I wrote about how I could make use of the knowledge I had gained from meeting with each student in writing conferences:

... I realized that my tutorial experience in writing conferences had helped me effectively teach the (last) two classes. I had known what kinds of problems they (the students) had and how they had been working on their drafts before I taught these (two) classes. I think I could prepare the possible questions or issues that they were concerned about well in advance through the writing conferences. I could give clear examples to show my points because I did talk about them with every single student in the writing conferences. I could handle all the students' individually different questions because I had known every single student's problems and thought about what kinds of suggestions I should give.

In response to the above entry, Jerry wrote the following with reference to Schön's (1983) work on reflective teaching. This kind of response was exactly what I needed to gain more awareness of my teaching.

I see that (your experience during the past week) has given you a chance to gain a little more insight into your teaching. Your journal entries show me that you had a positive experience. I especially appreciate the awareness you gained from working with students during writing conferences. ... I also see that you gained experience reflecting-in-action. A few times you wrote about your in-class spontaneous teaching decisions. For example, in the entry on November 13, you wrote about a change you made while teaching because the students were not prepared; they didn't do the homework. As such, you decided not to do a whole class activity and to have students read silently in class then talk in groups (something like that!). The idea is you changed what you had planned to

do based on the circumstances. This shows a flexibility that is seen in experienced teachers who can think fast based on an understanding of the students' abilities, difficulty level of the materials and task, and other complex factors.

The collaborative journal became a place where I reflected and reported on my teaching as well as a place where I could get immediate feedback on my reflections from the cooperating-teacher. Such reflections and feedback helped me gain awareness of teaching to further improve my teaching practice.

In what follows, Jerry, the cooperating-teacher, discusses his issues in his own words.

Issues Raised for Jerry, the Cooperating-Teacher

The Issue of Collaboration

One of the issues that I needed to face early in the semester was my expectation of having a collaborative relationship with Toshinobu. I had initially thought that if we could be on more equal footing, than we would be free to converse openly about our teaching and the consequences this seemed to have on the students. I knew that this would not be easy for Toshinobu, but I attempted to persuade him to treat me as just another teacher in several early entries. For example, in my second journal entry, I wrote:

If you could step back and simply see me as another teacher that would be useful...I am simply a teacher with different and more varied teaching experience. We have the opportunity to teach a course together, and it would be great if we could get beyond the traditional perception of me as a supervisor/more powerful person and simply see me as another teacher.

However, although Toshinobu tried to accommodate me, I soon realized how difficult this was for him to do. I realized that it would take time to create a relationship of parity between us. First, I am much older and have many more years of teaching experience. Second, a given rule is that the cooperating-teacher is of a higher status and is expected to tell the intern what to do as a teacher, rather than to collaborate about what could be done. Third, Toshinobu comes from a culture steeped in a traditional *senpai-kohai* (a companion who is ahead – companion that is behind) mentoring relationship. It is much easier for him to accept me as the more powerful dominate influence on what we do in this class.

However, Toshinobu surprised me. After the first few weeks, I recognized that Toshinobu was exceptionally motivated to work collaboratively with me. In his words:

This journal will definitely give me ample chance to express my ideas, thoughts, and my own voice as a teacher, and importantly, we will be able to communicate frequently and closely.

The Issue of Empowerment

As the cooperating-teacher, one of my issues became how I can provide opportunities for Toshinobu to develop as a teacher. I wanted him to gain more than just my classroom teaching techniques, the way I was using portfolio assessment, and how I solve classroom problems. I wanted to empower him to experience his own informed teaching decisions. As such, based on issues and problems Toshinobu raised in the journal, I tried to provide more and more chances for him to take on the responsibility for teaching the students. For example, after Toshinobu wrote about a problem with students wanting more emphasis on grammar, I asked him if he wanted to teach a weekly twenty-minute grammar lesson. I also asked him if he would like to do all the required writing conferences with students outside of the class, as well as to teach for two weeks while I was away. He gladly accepted all these responsibilities.

Reflecting on the content of our journal entries, I can see how Toshinobu was able to gain some useful experience in making his own informed teaching decisions. For example, as he wrote about in the previous section, he not only decided to tape record his interactions with some of the students during writing conferences, but he used descriptive feedback from analyzing these conversations to make decisions about how to change his interactions with students in the future. I could clearly see that he was applying what he had learned in previous course work on how to make his own informed teaching decisions, and through this process he was indeed becoming more empowered as a teacher (cf., Fanselow 1987, 1988, 1992; Gebhard & Oprandy 1999; Jarvis, 1972).

Teaching Issues

In addition to the issues of equality and empowerment, I had the chance to address a number of teaching issues through my collaborative journal writing. Toshinobu raised a number of issues, and his words gave me a number of things to think

about. One topic he raised was about students' perceptions about what it means to write. He wrote:

When I had the first writing conferences with students, there were a few students who told me that they tended to think in their native languages and translate into English when they had worked on their drafts.

As I thought about this statement, it occurred to me that this might be the reason why some of the students don't write much during in-class writing activities. Some have given excuses such as, "I can't concentrate in class. I write better at home." However, I could imagine that they were embarrassed about their process of writing in their native language, then translating it into English. I could also understand why these students' writing seemed so rhetorically stilted toward their native language. This thought also raised a variety of teaching possibilities: What would happen if I asked all the students to write in their native languages, then, translate? Then, talk about the process? What might happen if I did a series of in-class writing activities that focused on speed and writing, such as to have a contest to see who could list the most items on a grocery store shopping list?

We also discussed other issues, such as when to teach grammar and how to teach students the importance of providing a clear thesis at the beginning of an essay, offering convincing support in the body of the paper to prove the thesis, and giving a strong conclusion. But in economy of space, I will not elaborate on these here.

In the following section we offer our opinions about the value of keeping the collaborative journal from our individual perspectives, again, in our own words.

The Value of Keeping the Collaborative Journal

The Intern's Perspective: Toshinobu

Keeping a journal is generally considered a private act of writing. Thus, it may be challenging for some people to share their journal with others. Since collaborative journaling entails a social as well as a personal aspect of writing, however, there are various benefits not only to preservice/in-service teachers but also to an entire professional community or institution. Unlike an intrapersonal journal, a collaborative journal "creates both an audience for our writing and a relationship with someone who is sensitive to our teaching explorations" (Gebhard, 1999, p. 82).

As can be seen, interns might go through some difficulty redefining themselves as teachers within the power relationship with other teachers/cooperating-teachers. If an

intern is a NNS who is assigned to an ESL internship site (or an EFL class in which a NNS intern is to work with a NS cooperating teacher), there may be some anxieties or concerns that he/she would like to discuss with a cooperating-teacher privately. To support such NNS interns, I would like to emphasize the value of keeping the collaborative journal (see Matsuda, 1999; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004). In my case, I was able to cope with such difficulties, in that Jerry was listening to my voice through the journal and was always aware of the feelings, concerns, and questions that I expressed in the journal during the internship.

When I wrote down any issues, concerns, or questions to share with Jerry, I felt secure because I knew that I would get a helpful response from him. After getting his response, I could explore some recurrent issues and topics in more depth. Reflecting on what he wrote, as well as what I wrote, I was able to deepen my insights into teaching and learning. Taking into account different perspectives was crucial in enabling me to ponder upon some relevant issues. The collaborative journal became sort of a second internship site where Jerry and I gradually built a closer, stronger relationship or rapport. The collaborative journal provided me with a supportive environment where I could explore my teaching beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices efficiently and comfortably.

I often think that it would not have been possible for me to adopt an autonomous attitude towards teaching and learning and develop as a teacher if we had not kept the collaborative journal. Although Jerry and I stopped keeping the journal three years ago, I continue to learn from the meaningful dialogue recorded in the journal every time I read it.

The Cooperating-Teacher's Perspective: Jerry

When Toshinobu and I began to keep our collaborative journal, I expected that the process would provide chances for both of us to gain awareness of our teaching beliefs and practices, and it has done that. However, I did not expect the process of writing in the journal and talking about our teaching over time to be as empowering as it was for me as a cooperating-teacher. Our written letter-like entries and conversations in and outside class related to these journal entries gave me a much stronger awareness of the ESL students writing and learning problems, anxieties, and writing strategies. This awareness empowered me to make more informed teaching decisions. For example, Toshinobu wrote about his observations on how some of the students tended to sit with

other students who speak their same first language. They tended to use their native language while doing group work activities, especially when we were not near them. They also would whisper to each other in their native languages during silent writing or teacher lectures. I was not especially aware of this, for whatever reason, and because of Toshinobu shared this observation with me, I was able to focus my observations on what was going on with these particular students, as well as explore different ways to group students to see what might happen, such as group students who speak different languages, or group all students by their first language to see what might happen when they knew I did this on purpose.

I also gained a greater awareness of my role as cooperating-teacher. I have had many different roles in my career – Those of ESL teacher, EFL teacher, teacher educator/professor, and teacher supervisor. But, I had only been a cooperating-teacher a few times before. As such, as I wrote in the journal, I was able to record and reflect on my way of interacting with Toshinobu as a cooperating-teacher. I was not his supervisor; I did not grade him; nor was I a colleague of equal standing. Instead, I was in the unique position of being an experienced teacher who was teaching and observing Toshinobu teach in the same class. The wonderful thing about being in this position was that I was able to see my own teaching in his (cf., Fanselow, 1988). For example, as I observed over time how he taught points of grammar, I wondered if I am as capable as he is of predicting the kinds of questions students would ask. This, I thought, had to be one of the benefits of being a NNS of English who had experienced some of the same grammatical accuracy problems as the students in the class (see Matsuda, 1999).

Based on our collaboration, I was able to see student interaction in the class differently, as well as reconsider my beliefs about teaching and learning a second language. For example, I had the chance to consider my beliefs about whether or not students gain something of value by using their first language in the class or if their first languages block them from making progress in the second language. As Cole et al. put this, our collaborative journaling fostered opportunities “to inquire, explore, and discover together” (1998, p. 561). This discovery-oriented learning process empowered us to understand the students and us as teachers.

Through this collaborative journaling experience, I also learned more about teacher development. It is easier to develop our teaching beliefs and practices through collaborative efforts. Edge (1992) contends:

I want to investigate and assess my own teaching. I can't do that without understanding it, and I can't understand it on my own... I need other people: colleagues and students. By cooperating with others, we can come to understand our own experience and opinions. We can also enrich them with the understandings and experiences of others (p. 4).

In other words, "seeking to find myself, alone, is like trying to use a pair of scissors with only one blade" (Fanselow, 1997, p. 166).

Concluding Remarks

In this article, we reported on the use of a collaborative journal kept between ourselves – a NNS graduate student intern and a NS cooperating-teacher. On the basis of the qualitative analysis of our journal entries, we discussed major themes and issues found in the journal content. We also offered our opinions about the value of keeping the collaborative journal from our individual perspectives. As our journaling experience depicts, a collaborative journal is dynamic and constructive, in that the exchange of ideas and thoughts about issues and problems related to learning and teaching enables the writers to work together to improve their teaching practices in a cooperative manner.

Finally, on the basis of our journaling experience, we recommend that other teachers and student-teachers starting the same type of journaling project negotiate goals and expectations, the form and the content of the journal, and the frequency of journaling before they start. As Cole et al. (1998) and Matsuda and Matsuda (2004) assert, this negotiation process is crucial to avoid or solve unforeseen problems in the process of collaborative work. In addition, it is the negotiation process that plays an important role in constructively transforming a private act of writing to a social, collaborative act of writing for mutual professional growth.

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