Reflective Teaching in
Second Language Classrooms

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Jack C. Richards and Charles Lockhart
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# Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms

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# *Series editor's preface*

A recent trend in second language teaching is a movement away from "methods" and other "external" or "top down" views of teaching toward an approach that seeks to understand teaching in its own terms. Such an approach often starts with the instructors themselves and the actual teaching processes, and seeks to gain a better understanding of these processes by exploring with teachers what they do and why they do it. The result is the construction of an "internal" or "bottom up" view of teaching. The approach is often teacher initiated and directed because it involves instructors observing themselves, collecting data about their own classrooms and their roles within them, and using that data as a basis for self-evaluation, for change, and hence for professional growth.

It is this "reflective approach" to teaching, as it applies to second language classrooms, that Charles Lockhart and I have illustrated in this book. Reflective teaching goes hand-in-hand with critical self-examination and reflection as a basis for decision making, planning, and action. The book focuses on a number of important dimensions of teaching, including teachers' and learners' beliefs, teacher decision making, and teachers' and learners' roles. It introduces the significance of each issue along with related theory and research and then presents a number of exploratory tasks and activities, such as journal writing, peer observation, and action research, which teachers can carry out in their own classrooms. Each chapter thus promotes the role of reflection, self-inquiry, and self-evaluation as a means of professional development.

Jack C. Richards

# *Preface*

*Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* is designed for use in pre-service and in-service teacher education programs offering a teaching practicum or courses on classroom observation, theories of teaching, or language teaching methods and approaches. Instructors can use the book as a basis for either individual or collaborative teacher development activities, including peer observation, self-evaluation, program evaluation, and action research.

Each chapter presents an important dimension of teaching and poses questions that form the basis for classroom observation and investigation as well as critical reflection. The suggested small-scale investigative tasks can be carried out by teachers or student teachers in a variety of classroom situations.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to classroom investigation procedures, including teaching journals, lesson reports, surveys and questionnaires, audio and video recording, observation, and action research. Chapter 2 examines how teachers' ideas and beliefs about teaching and learning can influence their classroom practices. Chapter 3 deals with learners' beliefs, goals, and attitudes and how these influence their learning styles and strategies. Chapter 4 discusses the thinking processes underlying teaching and considers three areas of decision-making: planning, interactive, and evaluative decisions. Chapter 5 examines the roles teachers perform in their institutions and their own classrooms, the responsibilities these roles create, and how they contribute to the instructor's teaching style. Chapter 6 explores how teaching events are structured and how different structuring choices can influence the coherence and dynamics of a lesson. Chapter 7 focuses on the nature of classroom interaction, the interaction patterns typical of second language classrooms, and ways in which teachers can influence these patterns. Chapter 8 examines lessons in terms of the activities teachers use to achieve their instructional goals along with decisions to consider when planning and using activities. Chapter 9 focuses on the linguistic dimensions of class-

room interaction and looks at the relationship between language use in the classroom and language acquisition.

The chapters have been ordered for convenience of presentation. With the exception of Chapter 1, they may be used in any order. Chapter 1 should be read first since it describes the procedures for reflective teaching which will be used throughout the book. The remaining chapters are self-contained discussions of important aspects of teaching and can be used in various ways depending on whether the book is used with pre-service or in-service teachers. Questions in each chapter have been included to stimulate further reflection on the topics discussed. Where possible, these questions take into account teachers in both pre-service and in-service programs. At the end of each chapter are suggestions for follow-up activities, such as journal writing, peer observation, classroom investigation, or examples of action research. Throughout the book, quotes from learners and teachers, as well as transcripts from classroom data, are used to illustrate the issues discussed. When no source is given, the examples have been provided by teachers attending courses or workshops which we conducted.

This book was written to provide material and activities for pre-service and in-service courses on language teaching which we have conducted in various countries including the United States, Brazil, Hong Kong, and Japan. We are grateful to the participants in these courses, particularly the students at City University of Hong Kong, for trying out many of the activities presented here and for allowing us to visit their classrooms and explore their teaching with them.

Jack C. Richards
Charles Lockhart