

## **Teachers Talking about Teaching: Creating Conditions for Reflection**

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### **Abstract**

*Reflective teaching refers to teachers subjecting their beliefs and practices of teaching to a critical analysis. One way to promote reflective practice is for teachers to form teacher development groups. This paper reports on one such teacher development group in Korea. The focus of the report is the role co-operative talk played during group meetings in assisting four English as foreign language (EFL) teachers to reflect on their professional practice. Results show that interaction in the group was complex and that there were two interactional phases in the process. Interaction in Phase I was mostly between the group organizer and the participants. However, Phase II was represented by more sustained interaction among the participants themselves. Some of the outcomes of the study discussed include the use of silence and choice of topic, the type of talk and the role of the leader in both phases. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used as a guide for other groups of EFL teachers who come together to reflect on their work.*

### **Introduction**

This paper tells and attempts to interpret a particular story (Van Mannen, 1988). It is a report about a group of four English as foreign language (EFL) teachers (including the group organizer) who met on a regular basis in Seoul, South Korea in order to reflect on their practice. The paper highlights the role co-operative talk in the twelve group meetings played in assisting these EFL teachers to reflect on their professional practice. The paper starts by defining such terms as reflection and conversation as used in this study. Next, the rationale for the focus and methodology of the research is presented. Finally, the results and implications are outlined and discussed.

### **Definitions**

## *Reflection*

Reflection is a popular term in recent teacher education literature. However, not all researchers are in agreement as to the exact definition of what the term reflection means. Louden (1991), for example, makes the following observation about reflection:

The educational uses of the term have carried forward and built on this ordinary language sense of reflection in a wide variety of ways, perhaps so wide as to make the term unusable without careful redefinition. (p. 148)

Additionally, Hatton and Smith (1995) identify some key unresolved issues concerning reflective teaching. For example, they ask the following questions about the reflective process: Is reflection limited to thought process about action, or more bound up in the action itself? Is reflection immediate and short term, or more extended and systematic? That is, what time frame is most suitable for reflective practice? Is reflection problem-centered, finding solutions to real classroom problems, or not? That is, whether solving problems should be an inherent characteristic of reflection? For example, group discussion and journal writing are widely used as a tool for reflection but they are not problem solving.

These are important questions that have no easy answers. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the merits and demerits of various definitions of this concept. Rather, it is noted that many teacher educators consider reflection to be important to develop among teachers. Thus, what is important is to define what this concept means for the study outlined in this paper. For the purposes of this paper, reflection is defined as members of the group learning to subject their personal beliefs of teaching and learning to a critical analysis, and thus take more responsibility for their actions (Korthagen, 1993).

## *Conversation*

Speier (1973) states that people “seek each other out for the predominant purpose of talking” (p. 36). This ‘talking’ does not involve just producing sentences, but is also a form of social exchange. Speier (1973) points out that: “Talk is interactional. Instead of a model of language use and of a language user, we need to develop a model of interaction and of the use of interactional abilities” (p. 59). The focus is on the interactional skills of language users rather than linguistic ones. So, in this paper, the talk (or conversation) of the participants was analyzed rather than their linguistic skills, to see how this talk created opportunities (or blocked them) for participants in the group to reflect on their work.

## **Rationale for Focus and Methodology**

### *Why A Group?*

I initiated this teacher development group because I was influenced by Senge’s (1990) idea that groups could complement individual members’ strengths, and compensate for each member’s limitations all for the common goals larger than individual goals. Additionally, in order for our group to be successful, we agreed that we would try to, as (1990) suggests, “suspend assumptions and enter into genuine thinking together” (p.

10). Thus, we thought that the group would be more beneficial for reflection than individuals reflecting alone.

Additionally, the group participants were all from different institutions because often individuals reflecting within their home institutions encounter resistance from others, especially those of higher rank. This resistance can develop because of the non-hierarchical structure of collaborative groups, and as such, if participants come from the same institution, rank must be put aside if they are to be successful collaborators.

Furthermore, James (1996) points out that teachers who come together in a group can become more confident agents of social change. James (1996) says:

The question for teacher educators becomes not: 'What can we do to assist individuals to change?' but, rather: 'How can we enable reflection in the context of a group, in such a way that people together develop confidence in themselves as 'strategic agents', who can make a difference within their social worlds? What can teacher educators do to enable such reflection and empowerment (p. 82).

The group members in this study all came from different institutions (see section on participants). They came together in order to become more confident, and reflective teachers (Zeichner & Liston, 1987).

## **Research Methodology**

### *Why this type of research?*

In TESOL, Donald Freeman (1996) voiced a concern about the relationship between research and teaching: he wondered about the relationship between teacher's knowledge of classroom practice and how research can express that knowledge. Freeman (1996) pointed out that teachers know the story of the classroom but "usually do not know how to tell it because they are not often called upon to do so, nor do they usually have opportunities" (p. 90).

Freeman's (1996) basic premise for putting teachers at the center of telling their story follows a jazz maxim: "you have to know the story in order to tell the story" (p. 89). The teller of the story reported in this paper lived in Korea for eighteen years and is functional in the Korean language. This length of time in Korea as a resident and a teacher has enabled him to become sensitive to certain aspects of teacher education and development in Korea. Thus, he can understand some of the 'story' and use this knowledge to look at the data as an insider who is bicultural. However, even though a participant in this study, this researcher decided to reflect on the other participants' reflections, rather than focusing on his own teaching.

## **Methodology**

### *Data Collection*

The collection of data was accomplished by: (1) Group organizer's field notes and written-up logs; (2) Audio recorded group meetings; and (3) Participants' written reaction-journals.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis began early, as suggested by Ely (1991), and actually started with the very first log notation. From this point, data were analyzed on an ongoing basis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Specifically, a detailed analysis was made of how all the participants used talk in the group meetings. As McDermott and Roth (1978) say: "A person's behavior is best described in terms of the behavior of those immediately about the person" (p. 321). McDermott and Roth (1978) do not look at individuals in isolation while they are communicating. Rather, they see a network of exchanges; they study exchanges, not the people, per se, making them. The contexts and conversations were seen as 'collusional' (McDermott & Tylbov, 1983) in that they result from and contribute to the conditions that organize participation. The relevant parts of the tape were transcribed using the same transcription features as shown in the Appendix.

Additionally, it should be noted that this study is limited in generalization as this researcher is making interpretations of interpersonal relations in a cross-cultural situation. However, in order to be more culturally sensitive, this researcher adopted a research methodology of "culturally contexted conversational analysis" (Moreman, 1988, p. 5). This is important, for as Moreman (1988) says: "All meaning is in relation to a context. Explicating the meanings requires stating the context" (p. 7). What follows is a description of the context of this study.

### *Participants and Context*

Each participant volunteered to join the group and could have withdrawn at any time. The group consisted of two female Asian teachers and two male Caucasian teachers (including the researcher). The two female Asian teachers (T1 and T3) had five years of teaching experience. T1 has a Master of Arts degree in Translation Studies, T2 was finishing a Master of Science degree in Education, and both of these degrees were unrelated to English teaching. T3 has a Master of Science degree in Education with a specialization in English teaching. Both of the Asian teachers are fluent in English. Tom, the organizer of the group, is a native speaker of English and had a Master of Science in Education degree (TESL), and at the time of the study, was teaching in the university system in Korea. Additionally, T1 was teaching part-time at a university in Seoul. T2 was teaching an English class at a private company in Seoul. T3 was teaching full-time at a university in Seoul.

### **Findings**

The participants met for twelve group meetings, all on Saturday mornings. Each group meeting was planned for one hour, but usually lasted two hours. Examples of interaction and discussions from the first meeting are presented first in order to show how the scene was set for the following eleven meetings.

Previous to the first meeting, the participants were contacted and told that this first meeting would be used to explain what the project would entail (Spradely, 1979). At the first meeting they were told that it was up to each participant what they wanted to reflect on during the project. Episode 1 outlines they type of conversation that took place at that meeting.

1.1 T3 :	I want to do my evening class.
1.2 Tom:	Ok!, no problem (...) You don't want to do your day class?
1.3 T3 :	Mm (...) I mean-if you feel that the day class is
1.4 :	better ((Said in a loud voice)), then I can do it
1.5 Tom:	Hmm,
1.6 :	You're-this is-it's not me, it's we. You decide what
1.7 :	class you want to look at. But rather than class, look
1.8 :	at teaching. (...) Yeah, ok?
1.9 T3 :	That makes me-that will make me
1.10:	feel, you know, more relaxed ((Laugh)).

### Episode 1

An analysis of the exchange in episode 1 shows how the group organizer (Tom) and T3 used pronouns ('the cement of conversational structure' (Speier, 1973)) to keep the conversation going. These pronouns ('you' in line 2 is a transform of 'I' in line 1) show how a speaker chooses a pronoun as a direct transformation of a previous speaker's pronoun. Additionally, episode 1 shows how the scene was set for the subsequent group meetings to be used to talk about any aspect of the teachers' work. The next section shows the overall interpersonal climate of the group and then outlines an analysis of the interactional arrangements of selected group meetings.

#### Group Interaction

The interpersonal climate of the group was accomplished by answering the following questions:

1. Who received more communication?
2. Who did not speak very often?
3. Who was absent?
4. Who asked the most questions to individuals or the group?
5. Which pairs communicated most?

Table 1 below shows the answers to the questions posed above.

**Table 1. Answers to the Questions on the interpersonal climate of the group**

QUESTIONS	Group Meetings											
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Who received more communication?	T+T1	All	T	T2	T2	T2	T2+T	T2	T1	T3+T2	T2	
Who did not speak often?			T2					T3	T			
Who was absent?					T3	T3		T1	T1			
Who was a potential leader (asked group questions)?	T	T	T	T+T2	T2	T2+T	T2+T	T+T2	T+T1	T3	T+T3	
Who spoke to whom? (pairs of communication)	T+T1	All	T+T2	T3+T1	T+T2	T2+T3	T1+T2	T1+T2	T2+T3	All	T+T2 T2+T3	

Note. T indicates Tom, the researcher. T+T2 indicates the researcher and teacher number 2.

From a global perspective, two different patterns of interaction seem to have emerged in the group. For example, meetings two, three, and four show that the group organizer was more active than the other participants, while meetings five, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve show a different pattern of interaction. In meetings two, three, and four, the group organizer initiated and received most of the communication. This is probably because the group was still in the initial stages of getting to know one another. Specifically, the group organizer interacted a lot with T1 and sometimes with T3, but infrequently with T2. In fact, T2 did not speak very often in these meetings.

On the other hand, meetings five, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve showed a completely different pattern of communication. In these meetings T2 received most of the communication. Also, he asked the most questions to the group. Thus, meetings one, two, three and four can be called phase I of the group process, while phase II includes the remainder of the meetings (meetings five to twelve).

In order to look at the patterns of interaction in each phase in more detail, each of the first four meetings and the last six meetings (meeting number seven was omitted because only two participants were present) were analyzed schematically by performing a group interaction sociogram (Moreno, 1953). The communication patterns

of the group participants in each meeting after the first one were charted. A group sociogram is constructed by:

1. Drawing a square for each member indicating seating arrangements.
2. Drawing an arrow for each speaker's speech-one arrow every time a person spoke, and the total number of comments/questions written beside the line with an arrow pointing to the direction of the comment.
3. Drawing a line that points away from the individual to outside the group when a participant's comment was directed at the group rather than a specific individual.

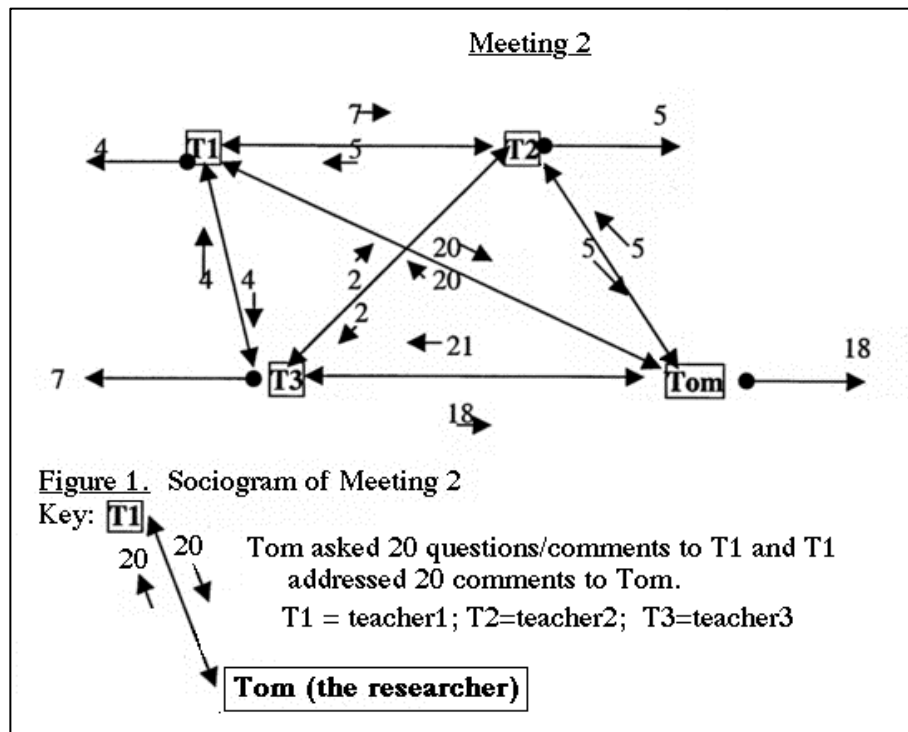
The sociograms show the different levels of involvement of each participant in each of the remaining eleven meetings. Sociograms of selected meetings from each phase are presented in the next section.

### Phase I

Phase I consisted of the first four meetings. Three aspects of conversation analysis are presented and compared in each section: the use of silence, topic and talk.

#### Silence

Silence was an important technique used by the participants in the first phase. In most cases the group organizer broke these periods of silence in all the meetings of this phase. For example, this pattern (silence and the group organizer breaking it) occurred in the second group meeting. The sociogram of this meeting is shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1. Sociogram of Meeting 1**

Figure 1 gives a visual of the interaction of meeting two. This sociogram shows that there were a lot of questions asked by the group organizer to the group (18) and not many questions asked to the group by the other members (T1=4; T2=5; T3=7). Also, the group organizer (Tom) asked a lot of questions to T1 (20) and T3 (21) but not many to T2 (5). The other members' interaction with each other ranged from a maximum of 7 questions (T1 to T2) to a low of 2 questions (T3 to T2). So the group organizer tended to be the source of most of the questions/answers. A reason for this question/answer technique used by the group organizer could be, as Speier (1973) has suggested, 'conversational tying procedures' in which the group organizer was trying to keep the conversation going. One of these techniques according to Speier (1973) is 'question-answer sequence' where one participant directs questions to the other who is then obliged to respond. However, in this group meeting the question/answer sequence also included periods of silence from the respondent. An example of this is outlined in episode 2 where T2 was talking about his experience of being observed while teaching.

2.1 T2 :	No, eh, I sort of...he may have disturbed me. I didn't know about, I was a bit nervous
2.2:	of. I had an image of what a good class is and my class was different from that.....
2.3 Tom:	What? What
2.4 T2:	Eh, well I sort of-they didn't want to talk. I did five activities.....
2.5 Tom:	What about your (to T3) experience?

### Episode 2

In episode 2 the group organizer did not let the silence continue over ten seconds, and to break it (in this case), he asked questions (line 2.3; line 2.5).

How can this silence be interpreted and the fact that the group organizer always broke the period of silence? The exchange above shows that the six seconds of silence in Line 2.2 was not a sign that T2 had finished his turn; rather, he continued on with the same line of thought in line 2.4 after the group organizer asked a question. However, T2's second period of silence of eleven seconds (line 2.4) seemed to signal to the group organizer to take over the conversation again. He did this by asking T3 a question (line 2.5). Consequently, it seems that silence played a different role for T2 in both examples in episode 2.

The patterns of interaction in the first four meetings were similar to the pattern in meeting two: question-answer-silence sequence with the group organizer breaking the silence by asking questions. This silence by the participants in the first four meetings may be a normal development of groups of strangers meeting for the first time. Thus, it is not seen as a bad aspect of the development of this teacher development group. Additionally, this silence extended to the issue of choice of topic for each of the first four meetings.



## Topic

In addition to breaking periods of silence in the first four meetings, the group organizer also set the agenda for each meeting and directed the topic of discussion. Topic, according to Speier (197), is defined as an element of “conversational structure around which participants organize their concerted interactions” (p. 91). From the fourth meeting the group had already established a practice, at least tacitly, that the group organizer would open each meeting with a topic, but when he tried to structure the topic in the fourth meeting, he found that the other participants avoided any direct comments. An example of this type of exchange occurred in the fourth meeting when the group organizer asked T2 if he wanted to share an experience he had had in his class (that the group organizer had observed) the previous day. Episode 3 outlines this exchange.

3.1 Tom:	T2, you want to talk about your experience yesterday
3.2 T2 :	What?..eh.the.eh
3.3 Tom:	We were talking about pacing
3.4 T2 :	I was interested in how...eh.eh...T1. I was interested last week in how you used
3.5:	taekwondo..eh.. How you personalized your topics from Western books.
3.6T1 :	The important thing is I did not realize what I'm doing in my class. From the last
3.7:	meeting and the word ethnography...eh, made me to think about the culture aspect.

### Episode 3

This exchange in episode 3 shows that T2 did not follow the topic that the group organizer had initiated (line 3.4). Furthermore, when the group organizer had thought the topic was going in several different directions and he tried to bring it back again, the other participants did not come back to the original topic. Instead they continued on their own topics or remained silent.

The question of who controls the topic is closely related to the establishment of social relationships. This is done by ‘raising a topic’ and/or ‘shifting the topic’ and/or ‘closing down a topic’ (Speier, 1973). In the example above, the group organizer raised the topic in a rather formulaic way: by asking T2 a direct question. However, T2 avoided answering the question by first asking for a type of clarification (line 3.2). When T2 was asked again, it seems that he tried to close down the topic by shifting topics, in this case asking T1 a question (lines 3.4 and 3.5). So, the regulation of topics seems to have been an important issue for the group. In phase I, the group organizer raised most of the topics; however, these topics were not always taken up by the other participants. Also, periods of silence were broken by the group organizer in this first phase rather than any of the other participants. These patterns changed dramatically during the second phase of the group.

## Phase II

Globally, the communication patterns of the group (as represented in table 2) show a dramatic change in interaction during phase II. From the fifth meeting onwards, different pairs, excluding the group organizer, interacted with each other. Individually, T2 received more communication from the other participants and he also asked more questions to the group. This suggests that he may have begun to emerge as a potential group leader other than the group organizer. A detailed examination of the transcripts of these group meetings reveals the types of interactions that may have contributed to instances where the other pairs were able to communicate with each other. As meeting five seems to have been the turning point from phase I to phase II, a schematic representation of this meeting is outlined in figure 2.

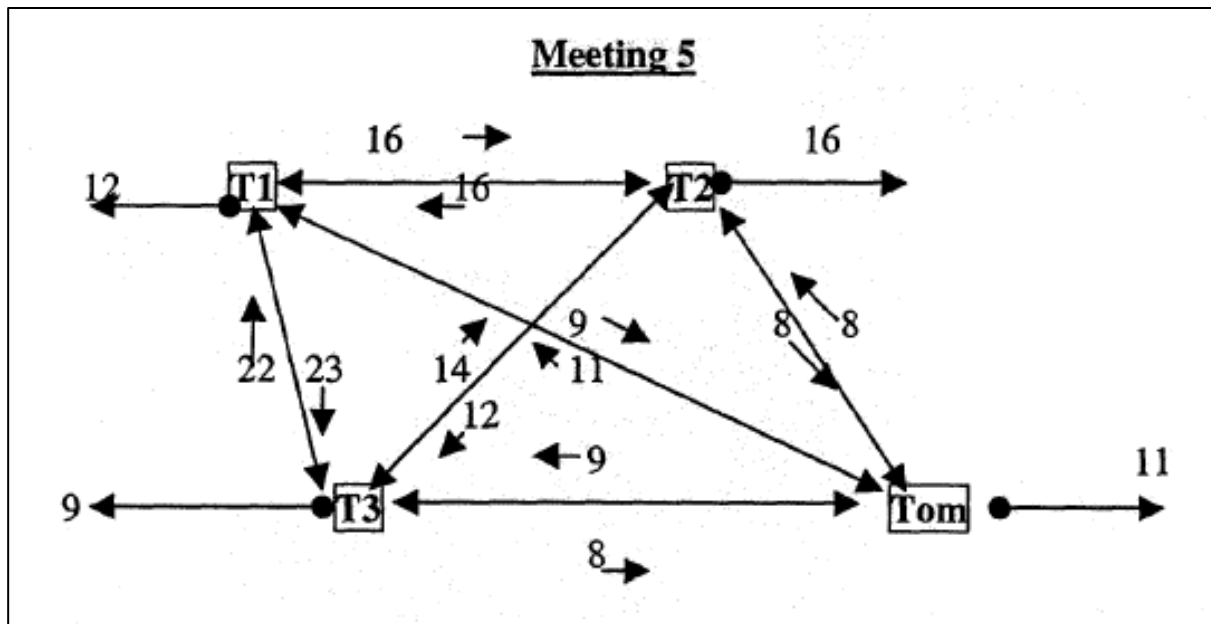


Figure 2. Sociogram of Meeting 5

The sociogram of meeting five shows a dramatic change in the interaction patterns of the group participants from those of the second meeting (see figure 1). For example, T2 asked the most questions (16) to the group. Also, there were more sustained interactions between the group participants: between T1 and T3 (22/23), between T1 and T2 (16/16) and between T2 and T3 (14/12). Another pattern (different than observed during phase I) that emerged was that the participants were not readily taking up the topics the group organizer introduced at the beginning of the meetings. Additionally, the group organizer did not intervene when the conversation hit periods of silence.

For example, episode 4 outlines how topics during meeting five that were chosen by the group organizer were met with resistance from T2; however, this time the group organizer remained silent when the topic paused. Ironically, the topic was what to do with silent students.

4.1 T2: Well, there are some things that are really not helpful to talk about eh, like eh,  
 4.2: like a student-I got a student who talks a lot and he's not really good and I don't want  
 4.3: to burden you with my personal problems, eh, that's not very helpful I think, for all of  
 4.4: us....There's the group aims and personal aims. Eh, my personal aims are different.  
 4.5 T3: Ah, no, I don't think so. No, that's your, you know, teaching right. So we are taking  
 4.6: about your teaching, you know, you got some kind of a different experience, so that's  
 4.7: a really good thing.  
 4.8 T1: Who knows I might ((laugh)) have the same burden with you ((laugh)).  
 4.9 T2: But we don't know really, do we? So I'd like to best, to keep it to myself and if  
 4.10: someone's bigger burden, eh, they go first.

[Later in the same meeting on the topic of a quiet student]

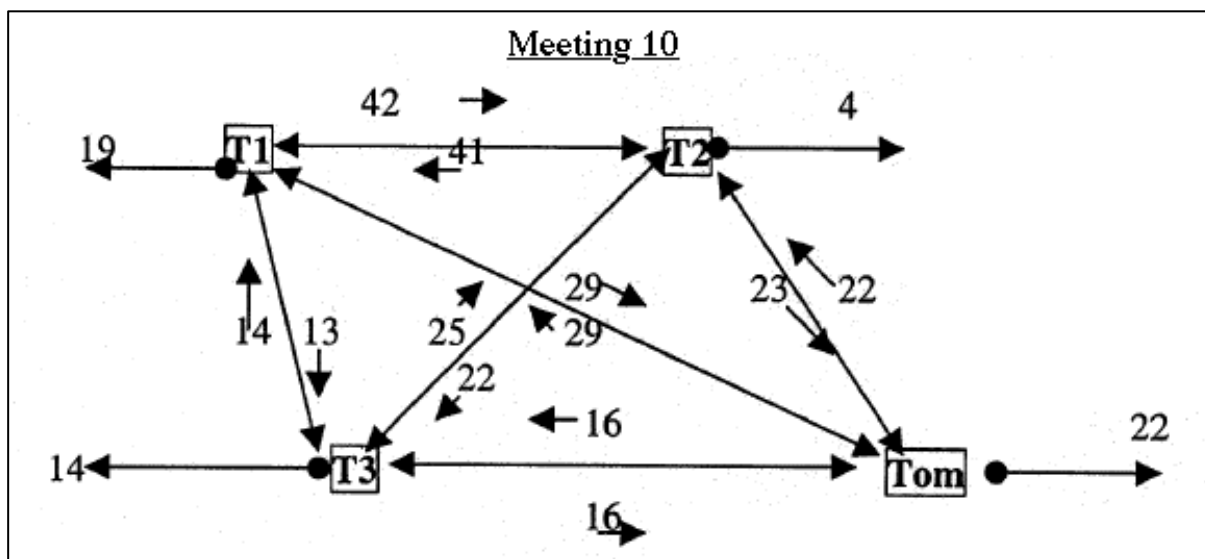
4.11 T1: I changed my teaching method because of that student ((laugh)).....  
 4.12 T3: I'm just curious to know, yeah, to you know, that you just-that student is quiet you  
 4.13: know, I like that kind of student.  
 4.14 T2: | It would be good.  
 4.15 T1: | Sometimes his direction is the same as me.  
 4.16 T3: Why don't you talk to him privately.

#### Episode 4

Episode 4 is one segment of a twenty-five minute period of interaction. In this exchange, T1 after reflecting on her teaching methods and beliefs (lines 4.8, 4.11), gained some personal insight into her practice (line 4.15). T1 realized that her teaching behavior, that of stopping students who talk too much during class, could probably be traced to her own experience as a graduate student. She continued:

Just an idea came to me, that, that, my behavior came from my graduate school . . .  
 Eh, there were many students who spoke English very well, because some of my  
 classmates were born abroad . . .eh..So they are native speakers ((laugh)) . . .So in  
 class when I argue with her it is not the same-I cannot argue with her because he  
 speaks better than-I was mumbling...So I want to side with the shy students in  
 the class because next to me in my class that girl spoke well, so I remained silent.

The example above showed the emergence of new patterns of interaction within the group: no intervention by the group organizer during periods of silence, and topic setting by group participants. During this phase, the participants interacted more and became more involved in establishing the topics. They also became more reflective about their teaching. T2's acknowledgement of the influence of her school days on her teaching is a good example of the result of group conversation that aided in reflection. However, this author does not claim that the increase in interaction by the group participants automatically set up opportunities for reflection; sometimes it had an opposite effect as outlined in meeting ten (shown schematically in figure 3, below).



**Figure 3. Sociogram of Meeting 10**

For example, in meeting number ten T1 wanted to ask the group for some suggestions on how to evaluate her class from her students' point of view, but she did not get any clear answers. This was the topic that started the group meeting and is outlined in episode five, below.

5.1 T1 : Eh, how about testing and evaluation?  
 5.2 Tom : Sure, why not create your own?  
 5.3 T1 : Create our own?  
 5.4 Tom : Yeah.  
 5.5 T1 : Ok.  
 5.6 Tom : Let's create one together.

**Episode 5**

Episode five shows that the opening interaction of meeting ten was supposed to bring everyone into the discussion on evaluation, and, as this was near the end of the semester, it was relevant to all in the group. However, the topic went in different directions when the participants shared personal anecdotes unrelated to teaching.

**Leadership**

Another aspect of change in the interaction in the group was the emergence of T2 as a possible alternate leader. A detailed analysis of the transcripts of T2's interaction in the later meetings reveals several patterns in his conversational routines that may have implications for future leaders of such groups. First, he paraphrased a lot, which seemed

to encourage the other two participants to continue their interaction. An example during meeting eight (schematically represented in figure 4) shows what happened when the group organizer asked a question to T1 about her oral proficiency testing procedures. This exchange is outlined in episode six.

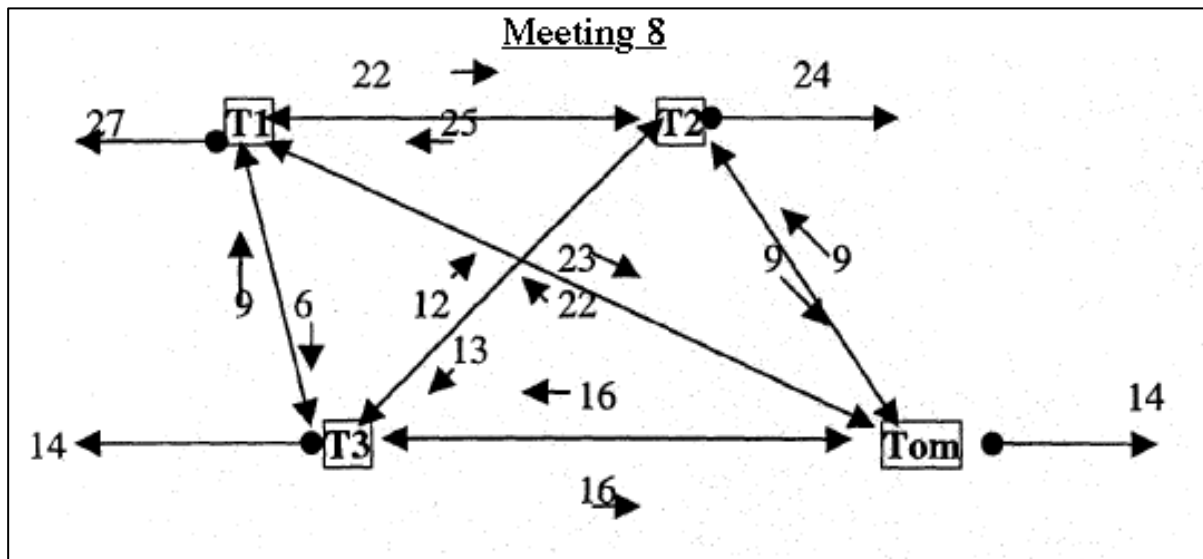


Figure 4. Sociogram of Meeting 8

6.1 Tom: What kind of oral test do you give them?  
 6.2 T1 : We-we've learned how to go about directions so I bring two maps and I ask them  
 6.3: some places, how to go to there and the other one that we learned about the past  
 6.4: continuous from, so I, I brought some copy with some pictures. So I ask my  
 6.5: students-it was yesterday, what, what was she doing, what was she doing?  
 6.6 T2 : Eh...used past continuous, they were brushing their teeth.  
 6.7 T1 : Yeah, yeah. The picture, that's-but I was talked for more than four hours, from six to  
 6.8: ten-twenty.  
 6.9 T2: Got so many students in that four hours. That must have been about eh, eh, twenty  
 6.10: students every hour, so about sixty minutes-three to five minutes each student.  
 6.11 T1: Yeah. At first I usually taught to my students many questions first, but as time went  
 6.12: by ((laugh)) it was late and my students might complain too, so I reduced the time.  
 6.13 T2 : Mm. Mm.  
 6.14 T1 : At first when the students came in I wanted them to relax. So how are, so  
 6.15: something like that. Then my students, they nervous with unexpected  
 6.16: questions.....my unexpected questions  
 6.17 T2 : Ah, Yeah. 'How are you?' That is an unexpected question ((laugh)).  
 6.18 T1: Yeah. ((laugh)). They was shocked by 'how are you?' ((laugh)).

### Episode 6

Episode seven shows T2's empathy with his use of language such as "yeah, yeah" (lines 7.6, and 7.8) and his affirmation of T1's method (line 7.6). Analyses of other transcripts showed that T2 used this method of interaction in most of the meetings after the fourth. Through his use of paraphrasing and his language of empathy (his phatic fill-ins), T2 may have provided opportunities for the participants to reflect on their work.

### **Implications**

The interactions of the group participants reported in this study raise a number of issues that may be beneficial to future teacher groups. If groups of teachers come together to discuss and reflect on their teaching, then it will be important for them to recognize various types of interactions that may or may not provide opportunities for reflection. As Senge (1990) says:

The discipline of dialogue also involves learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning. The patterns of defensiveness are often deeply engrained in how the team operates. If unrecognized, they undermine learning. If recognized and surfaced creatively, they can actually accelerate learning (p. 10)

There was a pattern of defensiveness in this teacher development group and it resulted in different levels of involvement and reflection by each participant. For the first four meetings, the participants were very tentative in their contributions to the dialogue. Additionally, they did not decide on the topics for discussion and did not intervene during periods of silence. The group organizer had to take responsibility for these issues early in the process. This could have been due to the lack of time for the participants to develop trust that would allow them to explore their beliefs in a reflective process. Trust takes a long time to develop and future groups of EFL teachers who want to enter into similar dialogues should take this into consideration. Trust is not a given in such teacher groups and must be earned by each participant of the group. Therefore, the issue of trust should be discussed in the first meeting and each participant could be asked to sign a 'letter of trust' whereby they promise not to disclose any delicate contents of the meetings without permission of the group participants. I asked each of the members if I could report on the group and they granted me permission. Additionally, the participants should decide how they want to deal with topicality: stick to it rigidly or be flexible and talk about what comes out of discussions.

Closely linked to the idea of trust is the question of leadership. A new leader seemed to emerge when the project leader changed his degree of intervention and this emergent leader used active listening skills (paraphrasing and phatic fill-ins). This could be because the researcher was trying to complete the task and the emergent leader was more involved with the socio-emotional aspects of the group. It seems that group leaders may face a dilemma between getting the task completed, while at the same time maintaining good relations with and among group members. Schultz (1989) points out that:

Leaders who are motivated by the need to get a task done may not want to spend a great deal of time on relationship issues. In contrast, leaders who are concerned about fostering good relations may not wish to prod their groups if their

positions were to be put in jeopardy. There is doubtless an inherent contradiction between prodding people to work and also remaining on good terms with them. (p. 113)

Although Schultz (1989) indicates that one leader in a group with a combination of these specialties may be more effective, the group in this study may have benefited from two different leaders. However, it may also be possible for a teacher development group leader to incorporate both traits. Alternatively, a different participant could chair each group meeting and this 'leader' would take responsibility for such issues as silence and choice of topic.

More importantly, the participants seemed to have had a positive and reflective experience. Both T2 and T3 wrote informally about their experiences:

At the 12 group meetings, which were supportive, T led a discussion about things that had concerned the members during the week. The diverse subjects included life experiences, inability to deal with large classes, students' responses to questions in class, handling uninvolved students, material for conversation classes, giving feedback and the concept of what it is to be a teacher.

In a general comment about the whole process both T3 and T2 said that they want:

To encourage ESL/EFL teachers to join groups like this, share their experiences and become able to look at themselves from different perspectives. We believe that the successful sharing that can result from this kind of dialogue group empowers every member of the group.

## **Conclusion**

This paper reported on the interactions during group meetings of a teacher development group in Korea. The paper focused on the role co-operative talk played during group meetings in assisting four English as foreign language (EFL) teachers to reflect on their professional practice. Issues raised by this group, such as trust and leadership, demonstrate the complexity of interactions in such groups. Future groups of teachers wanting to reflect on their work will have to confront and define these issues if they want to obtain maximum benefits from such meetings. Despite the problems that were outlined in this paper, it seems that the participants benefited from these group meetings. This was mostly because of the support each participant received from the group as a whole. Additionally, this researcher hopes that the idea of teachers talking to each other as reported in this paper may encourage other EFL teachers to come together in order to support each other to become reflective practitioners.

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### **About the Author**

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## Appendix

### *Transcription Features*

1. A dash indicates that the speaker has had a false start.
2. Underlined word or parts of words indicate where emphatic stress is being placed by the speaker.
3. Each period inside brackets represents one second of silence.
4. A period without brackets means the speaker came to a full stop, pitch falling at the end, voicing stopped.
5. Double brackets indicate that a comment is being made about the interaction by the researcher.
6. A double vertical connecting line indicates that two speakers are speaking at the same time. It also shows the point of interruption by the incoming speaker.
7. A comma indicates a pause, a drop in pitch, but voicing continues.
8. A word or words in single brackets indicate that I am not sure the content is accurate due to interference.

(a)	(c)	(d)	(e)
It-I <u>really</u> enjoyed (..) class. ((Said in a loud voice))			
(b)	(f)		
Yeah, it was (very) interesting.			
(g)	(h)		
<hr/>			
<u>Note.</u> Adapted from Gebhard (1985).			

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