

How professionals think: Private speech in teaching

Deryn P. Verity

Osaka Jogakuin College

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The phenomenon of private speech can aid teacher educators in evaluating the classroom performance of their teaching trainees. Occurring in both oral and written forms, private speech offers a limited, but revealing, "window on thinking" that can help the observer understand whether a novice teacher's lack of mastery over a task is momentary (reflecting a brief lapse of control due to stress, distraction, etc.) or is reflective of a deeper lack of competence. Private speech, which is directed at the self rather than the listener, functions to orient the speaker to his or her own activity, or to regulate that activity. This paper looks at two contexts in which private speech functioned to help a teacher gain, or regain, control over the task of teaching. Vygotskian, or sociocultural, theory is used as a basis of the discussion.

プライベート・スピーチというすばらしいものが、教職を担当する教員の中では、評価のためのツールとしてそれほど周知されていない。しかしながら、プライベート・スピーチは授業のタスク活動に精通した知識が新入教員に、その時点では欠けているのか（プレッシャーや上の空になって注意が散漫することなどのためにうまくコントロールできないちょっとした過ちを反映しているのか）、あるいはその能力がより深いレベルで欠けていることを反映しているのかを即座に判断するのに大いに役立つものである。プライベート・スピーチは自ら方向を決めるスピーチであり、時には社会文化理論とも呼ばれている、ヴィゴツキー理論の中核をなすものである。それには二つの機能がある。スピーカーをその人自身が立てた目標へ導いたり、目標を達成しようとする際に活動自体をよりよい状況にしたりする働きがある。口頭で行ったり、記述したりするなど二つの方法があり、限られた内容ではあるが、非常に啓発的で、「思考中の窓」を提供するものであり、プライベート・スピーチは授業実践のトレーナー、教育者、および授業観察者に大いに役立つものである。

Researchers have long sought to expose mental processes to direct observation. One technique used widely by researchers who adopt the Vygotskian paradigm is to give two subjects a collaborative task. In the course of fulfilling the task, the dyad produces dialogue that reflects, if not directly encodes, the reasoning of the speakers. While conversation between two speakers who are trying to solve a problem or accomplish a task together is obviously an example of language being used to help regulate activity, the comments a speaker directs at him- or herself is, perhaps less obviously, also an example of

such language. The phenomenon of self-directed speech, or “private speech,” is one way that an observer can get a glimpse of the speaker’s relationship to the task at hand.

In the case of teacher education, the observer is often a trainer who sees a limited example of the trainee’s teaching activity, one which has often been extensively prepared before the observation. While paying attention to the self-directed speech of the trainee teacher is no substitute for observation over time and in different contexts, it can provide valuable insight into the structure of the novice teacher’s true proficiency during one session or lesson. Briefly put, too much private speech reflects a speaker who is trying to figure out what to do at the same time she is doing it. Novice teachers, quite naturally, are often overwhelmed by the complexity of the teaching task, during which they have to pay attention to their own goals, what goals they perceive the students are constructing, the demands of the task, the multifarious choices of explanation and modeling available to them, and so forth. Self-directed commentary—“thinking out loud”—helps the novice guide her own activity in the face of these challenges.

The expert teacher, on the other hand, handles this complexity automatically. Expert, i.e., highly proficient, activity displays only an occasional breakdown of automaticity. Self-directed commentary represents only momentary loss of mastery, usually caused by an outside distraction, fatigue or some other temporary challenge that is easily overcome.

Private speech is perhaps less well-known than other core Vygotskian concepts, such as the Zone of Proximal Development. The discussion that follows looks at private

speech in spoken discourse and in written discourse, and relates it to the speakers’ level of mastery of the task of teaching.

Understanding private speech through microgenesis

Understanding how speaking functions in either a natural setting or an experimental context is done through *microgenetic* analysis (Lantolf, 2000). This means looking at change—in a speaker’s attitude, proficiency, orientation, etc.—over a relatively short time period such as a single conversation, a single lesson or a single utterance. Vygotskian analysis insists upon the importance of the genetic method (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985), which looks at the change and development of a function or form over time. From this perspective, looking at a speaker’s use of private speech, or self-directed speech (informally known as “thinking out loud”), over the course of goal-directed activity is something like looking at a “mini-narrative” of his or her mental activity. The transcribed discourse is, figuratively speaking, a linguistic video of the activity of thinking as it happens.

In order to identify private speech within the speech of an individual, it is helpful to know what it looks like and what it does. According to Vygotskian theory, private speech first occurs in children when the child appropriates the utterances of others for use in self-directed speech (Lantolf, 2000). This behavior signals the beginning of differentiation between the self and other people. The child hears what his mother says (“Pick up the Legos”), begins to say it to himself while engaging in the activity (“Pick up the Legos” as he picks

them up), first using her exact words (perhaps without fully understanding what they mean) and later adapting them to reflect his growing understanding of language and reality (e.g., later, the child might say “I’m picking up my Legos”). At the final stage of appropriation, the spoken words disappear into silent thought: the child no longer needs to regulate his activity out loud. Recent applications of Vygotskian approaches to adult language acquisition claim a similar sequence of appearance, then internalization, of private speech as L2 activity grows in complexity.

In the Vygotskian perspective, language serves to regulate and orient speakers and the people they interact with, rather than to “transmit information” or “communicate.” Second-language acquisition theorists who have adopted and adapted the Vygotskian paradigm recognize that private speech serves slightly different functions for adult learners, who already have fully-developed cognitive abilities in their first language. Similarities are seen in how private speech helps the speaker regulate his or her own activity in the difficult task of using the L2 (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985). Indeed, not only L2 learners but also adult native speakers make use of the regulatory and orientational functions of private speech when automatic activity breaks down in the face of obstacles such as difficulty, fragmented attention, fatigue, stress, memory overload, or other temporary challenges to automatic functioning (when asked to calculate the sum of two large integers most people have to speak aloud or make notes as they do it; remember the last time you tried to organize a cluttered space and found yourself saying things like “this goes here” and “that one goes with those things” even if you were doing the task alone—these are typical, and

unexceptional, instances of private speech in the daily life of the average speaker, native or not). In such contexts, private speech—like other kinds of utterances that are not directly communicative, such as the use of fillers, and repetitions--can in some cases function as a kind of floor-keeper, during which a speaker retains control of the turn even though the intended utterance is not fully formed.

Private speech in writing and speaking

Speaking is revelatory of cognitive processes in real time, because speaking is coincident with thinking and acting. However, as the insightful work of John-Steiner (1996) has shown, writers can engage in written private ‘speech’ (i.e., self-directed language use) as well. For example, written texts such as lists, diaries, journals and self-directed memos serve to support and focus memory, motive, and understanding. Novice writers, like novice speakers, display marked reliance upon private speech as they struggle to master the complex task of constructing other-directed academic writing (DiCamilla, 1991). While there are obvious modal differences between writing and speaking, private speech in either mode, when compared to social or other-directed speech, tends to display *low syntacticity* or even *asyntacticity*. For example, two nouns written on a scrap of paper may be enough to remind one of the contents of an entire lecture. In addition, *referentiality* is highly reduced. This is typical of intimate discourse: we all have been in conversations where very little identifying information is said aloud, but both interlocutors know exactly what is being talked about: “You know that thing?” “Yeah.” “Well, it happened again.” When your interlocutor is

yourself, you can get by with even more opaque references. Who has not come across a long-forgotten notebook with cryptic notes that were, presumably, comprehensible when they were made? Low-level writers are notorious for their use of opaque references to ideas and arguments they have not bothered to include in their text. When the writing teacher reminds them to think about their audience, this is a reminder that other-directed writing must be transparently grammatical and referential. Private speech is visible in its form, whether written or spoken.

Equally interesting is how private speech *functions* in the context of the speaking, or writing, activity. As mentioned above, private speech normally is used by adult speakers to *orient* themselves to what they are trying to do. The highly proficient speaker's activity may be momentarily interrupted by a brief self-directed comment: the academic presenter who shuffles through his notecards, saying "What's next? Oh, yeah, now I remember!" is an example of a person speaking to himself to orient himself to his momentarily misplaced goal. But the novice may not even know what it is he is trying to do: novice essay writers often spend a lot of time and space at first writing about how they started the task of writing the essay. They may describe their emotional responses to the task, what they think about the topic, how they tried to organize their thoughts, and so on. As novices, they do not know that this kind of information is not part of the essay task itself. As their proficiency in writing grows, they learn to edit out such self-directed commentary, or to include it for deliberate effect. The use of more than momentary self-directed comments may reflect inaccurate task orientation, typically a sign of low proficiency, on the part of the person attempting to accomplish the task.

Besides orientation, the speaker may resort to private speech when trying to *regulate*, i.e., carry out, the activity itself: saying the numbers of a combination lock aloud while twirling the dial is an example of regulatory private speech; writing a shopping list helps you complete the task of shopping more efficiently, i.e., more expertly. Again, as with the orientational function, the appearance of private speech may represent a temporary breakdown of expert automatic regulation on the task, but it may also reflect lack of ability to do the task at all. To take an example from the world of teaching, an experienced teacher may scribble a few cryptic notes before going in to teach a difficult, but familiar, subject. When faced with an unfamiliar subject or class format, this same teacher—though still essentially an expert—may feel the need to produce quite detailed lesson plans for at least the first few lessons. A novice teacher on the other hand, when faced with teaching even a simple activity, may need to write out the instructions she will give to her students, just to be sure that she remembers them. Just as we can go shopping without a list, having it to resort to helps us achieve the task; the novice teacher can teach without her written instructions, but she may perform better simply knowing that she can resort to them at any time.

Private speech is both a self-directed tool, used for encouragement and reminding ("I can do this, if I just can manage to..."), and a beacon, however involuntary, to the listener ("hold on, I'm having a bit of trouble"). It is this latter function that can serve the teacher educator. Recognizing private speech, and understanding how it functions to indicate orientation towards, and accomplishment of, the task at hand, gives the observing

trainer a psycholinguistic tool that can be used in conjunction with pedagogical and organizational rubrics to evaluate a novice lesson. A brief outbreak of private speech in the midst of fluent social, or other-directed, speech is probably the sign of nothing more serious than momentary distraction. The frequent appearance of private speech in what should be other-directed discourse, such as a classroom lesson, probably signals lack of preparation or mastery.

This insight can contribute to our evaluation and mentoring of not only in-class observations but also associated documentation, such as lesson plans and lesson reports. Rather than require lengthy detailed lesson plans from novice teachers in every situation, it might be more psycholinguistically sound to judge brief, even cryptic, lesson plans as more expert-like (depending on how they were carried out, of course). What a novice teacher writes about a lesson before and after the lesson might be seen as more revelatory of the trainee's insight than what points of theory or technique are adduced to back up logistic and pedagogical decisions. A trainee who fails to distinguish between his or her preparation to teach, and what must happen in the actual lesson, can be judged to still be functioning at a novice level of proficiency.

Private speech in novice activity: Lina's workshop

To really know how well you know something, try teaching it to somebody else. When a novice teacher tries to engage in the metacognitive challenge of converting individual knowledge into strategically other-directed discourse, there are inevitably affective, linguistic, strategic and cognitive obstacles. The expert knows what information, skills, etc.

are necessary and relevant to any given task. She must not only pass on this information in a way that helps the novice accomplish the task, but also help the novice create structures so that previously-acquired knowledge can be related to the new information and skills, and that further new information and skills can be incorporated in the future. At the same time, the learner must not be distracted by the logistics of the lesson; part of being an expert teacher is knowing how to structure a lesson so that the burden of planning is neither ignored nor abrogated to the learners. At all times during the class, the expert teacher must be able to pay attention to the subject matter, the learners, the goals of the lesson, and the time frame.

To illustrate what happens when the complexity of the task overwhelms the novice teacher, this paper takes instances from a transcript of the first few minutes of a workshop given by a young classroom teacher, "Lina," who was making her debut as a teacher trainer in a professional development workshop, and shows how the occurrence of private speech suggests that Lina was unable to fulfill the task of leading a peer-oriented workshop (as opposed to a lesson with children). An enthusiastic, if limited, English speaker, with 4 years of experience as a teacher of English to children, Lina was participating in a professional development conference held in her country (Jordan). This conference was part of a government-sponsored initiative that sought to disseminate innovative teaching techniques and methods by training classroom teachers to become professional developers for their peers.

Lina chose to teach her colleagues how to use a picture dictionary as the basis for several interactive vocabulary

activities (the focus of the program as a whole was English teaching at the junior high school level). In consultation with the senior academic expert mentoring the presenters, Lina decided to begin the workshop with a series of strategic questions. She felt that these questions would dramatically illustrate to the participants, as they counted the hands raised in answer to each one, how little they had used dictionaries through their schooling (whether or not these teachers actually had been under-trained in the use of dictionaries or not is irrelevant to the current discussion; she wanted to start the workshop with a demonstration instead of a lecture).

The following data shows how this well-planned opening fell to pieces in the event. Rather than rely on the prepared drama of questioning, Lina displays the following behaviors in her first few utterances in front of the audience (the full transcript of these first few minutes is given in Appendix 1. The following series of utterances comprise all the speaking of the first few minutes of the workshop). By their irrelevance to her stated goal, their misplaced logical assumptions, and their inappropriate linguistic features, these instances of private speech indicate a nearly complete lack of mastery of the task at hand.

Excerpt 1.

Lina: Um, unfortunately the number is not so big in here. Let's get on with the questions. As usual, I am a teacher so I ask all the time.

In Excerpt 1,

- a. She comments on the number of attendees, even though this topic has nothing to do with the topic of her workshop. If the comment were other-

directed, her use of the adverb “unfortunately” would suggest that a “fortunate” (or better) number had already been established in the understanding of the audience. But as this is the first minute of a workshop, clearly it has not. Thus, this is an example of private speech. She had already established to herself the number of attendees she had expected, or hoped for.

- b. She uses a definite article, presupposing that the audience knows which “questions” she is referring to. The use of the definite article in the case of first mention reflects a high level of shared knowledge. This comment is directed at herself, not at her attendees. This is a good example of private speech being used both to orient and to encourage herself in her own activity.
- c. She makes another seemingly irrelevant remark: everyone in the room is a teacher, so she does not need to introduce herself as such. And her habitual behavior is not in question here, since most of the attendees have never met her before.

Excerpt 2.

Lina: [monotone] So how many people here took a class where use of dictionaries

In Excerpt 2, she makes an attempt to employ her prepared opening gambit. However, she does not distinguish the question from the preceding remarks. Her intonation is neither presentational nor conversational. Instead she recites the “question” as if she is trying to remember it. From the viewpoint of private speech, she is trying to help herself

remember what she had planned to do, rather than actually doing it.

Interrupted by a person who comes in looking for extra chairs, she then apologizes to her audience, even though the interruption is not her fault. Then she says that everything is “okay,” to herself, since the audience has not indicated that anything is wrong. Again, she is encouraging herself, and the stress of task, plus the stress of the interruption just as she was getting started, has pushed her private reassurance into vocalization as private speech:

Excerpt 3.

[outside interruption]

Lina: I’m sorry, I’m sorry for everything, *but it’s okay.*

In Excerpt 4, Lina tries to regain control of the workshop by resorting to her planned introductory gambit. However, she needs to repeat the question marking (“how many”) three times, and even then, a listener must ask for a repetition. Apparently, the repetition of the question words indicates to her listeners that a question is being asked, but the lack of focus in what has preceded this question results in requests for clarification which show that the question itself is not taken in. Indeed, one participant tries to reword the question to make it clearer, further indicating that Lina’s position as manager of the workshop is hardly more visible to her audience than to herself:

Excerpt 4.

Lina: How many, how many of you took a class where the use of dictionary is required in the

university? How many?

[Participant: Would you please repeat the question?]

Lina. How many people here took a class where use of dictionary....

[Participant: A course.]

In reply, Excerpt 5, Lina rephrases her question gambit into a statement. She talks about herself, indeed, about her own cognition (“I remember”), a common strategy used by novices. Sharing personal experience in lieu of doing the task itself is self-directed speech, reassuring the speaker, if nobody else, that she is able to fulfill the task (compare this to the case of the novice writer, discussed earlier, who writes up the history of his own preparation for the task of essay-writing rather than writing the essay itself).

Excerpt 5.

Lina: A class, for example, I took a class in translation, *I remember* that we used, monolingual and even bilingual dictionaries.

In the next few lines, it seems that Lina does get back to fulfilling her goal of demonstrating through raised hands the differences between dictionary use at the tertiary level and that at the elementary level. She manages to keep her self-directed utterances to a brief, but frequently repeated, “okay,” which is certainly private speech, since she has no reason to judge the participants’ answers as either acceptable (okay) or not:

Excerpt 6.

Lina: Okay, yeah. How many? [softly] Can you just raise... Oh, all of you? Did you use dictionary in the university?

[Participant: Yes.]

Lina: Okay, that's fine. What about secondary level? How many of you took a class where use of dictionary is required? How many? Okay. Look, the number is decreased. Okay. What about the basic level? Let's see the basic level. Okay.

According to the plan, at this point Lina was going to point out that very few teachers, and by extrapolation, few elementary school children today, have much exposure to dictionaries. However, she is distracted by a participant's request for clarification, and ends up dropping the original intended goal of the questioning technique completely. She simply offers a general comment of positive feedback, even though the questioner's comment is neither grammatical nor particularly clear. Her "that's fine, that's fine" is probably private speech, used to encourage herself in the face of the complete breakdown of the task as she originally envisioned it:

Excerpt 7.

[Participant: I want to ask something.]

Lina: Yes.

[Participant: You ask about if we use a dictionary or the class.]

Lina: Yes.

[Participant: Or the pupils. Or the teacher. We use them. As the pupils. As a tool in the class.]

Lina: Okay, that's good. Can you raise your hand? That's fine. That's fine.

If, in the first few minutes of the workshop, Lina's self-directed speech serves mostly to encourage herself as she attempts to engage in a complex activity, in the next minutes it fulfills the orientational function of reminding herself what the goals of that activity are. After her question/demonstration activity, she planned to discuss a few of the existing studies of dictionary use in Jordanian schools. However, discussing research findings in a concise, accessible, and audience-friendly way is an extremely difficult task, as expert teachers know. A novice in the art of presenting research to non-researcher audiences, she reverts to talking about how she prepared for the workshop; as a novice, she has not yet fully differentiated between the stage of preparation and the stage of execution:

Excerpt 8.

Lina: So, um, okay, I tried to get some information from researching about the use of dictionaries... and I found Battinger, 1980, stating that there is a relationship between the use of dictionary—what he calls vocabulary behavior—and let's say the achievement of the students in fulfilling their needs in communication. But unfortunately [author, unintelligible] 1994 says that those many teachers in Jordanian schools unfortunately ignore, completely ignore, dictionaries in class. So, they even....

This recital of what she learned is interrupted by a participant who asks if she could elaborate on the arguments presented by these authors. The questioner's interruption, however, seems to distract her even further, and her answer is only marginally other-directed:

Excerpt 9.

[P: Did they justify why?]

Lina: Sure. Sure. And I have some reasons in a handout. Yes, there are a lot of reasons and in fact I reported them in handouts I will give them to you when you leave the session. Anyway, so let me read...He reported that they even ignored the exercises dealing... [interruption from the outside]. So according to myself, I think that we can use dictionaries in our classes. We can activate the use of dictionaries in our classes. Do you agree with me?

Lina reveals her novicehood when she tells the participant how she "has" a handout and "reported" these "reasons" in the handout. An expert presenter would have reassured the questioner that all the research details would be available in handouts at the end of the workshop. Lina, however, needs to remind herself that *she* has the answers and that *she* made the handout. She tells him this twice, and only then assures him that the handout will be made available.

"Anyway, so let me read" reveals, in my opinion, that the question distracted her so much from her intended activity that she needs to remind herself—and only incidentally her audience—that now she plans to read a passage from one of the articles she has mentioned. Unfortunately, the workshop is interrupted by outside visitors again, and she gives up

on this part of the plan. She resorts to summarizing the research opinion in her own words: "So according to myself, I think...." She ends with what sounds like an other-directed request for agreement or disagreement ("Do you agree with me?"), but given her faltering control over the task so far, it is possible that this comment is actually a self-directed comment that has been formulated as an other-direction question: "I hope they agree with me so far."

For the record, it is worth mentioning that Lina's workshop was not a total failure. This discussion of the novice-like features of her initial discourse sequences does not take into account that once the hands-on activities started, Lina's proficiency improved markedly, unsurprisingly because she did have a few years of classroom teaching experience. Running a game with peers is more similar to running a game with children than is discussing research and justifying one's workshop topic. Given that the purpose of the program is to train teacher-trainers by immersing them in the task of workshop presentation, it is to be expected that first efforts would be most novice-like.

Of course, in most teacher training contexts, we cannot record, transcribe, analyze, and then pore over, every instance of a trainee's spoken discourse. But doing it occasionally, for pedagogical rather than research purposes, in the company of the trainee herself, puts another tool at our disposal to help trainees understand how the way they talk to their class can either help or distract their listeners. And when we keep its form and functions in mind while observing novice teachers at work, it can help us formulate judgments about whether the proficiency on display is probably basically solid, or in need of serious repair.

Private speech in expert activity: The teaching journal

Another way that private speech has been used to foster professional development is through the use of teaching journals, whether hand-written, produced in email exchanges, or entered into a private computer file. This method of dialogue, whether with self or other, is particularly useful when the teacher is facing the multifarious challenges of new circumstances. For instance, Golembek and Johnson (2004) describe how teacher-authored narratives help experienced teachers enrolled in a graduate program conceptualize, as well as record, their professional development. The journal excerpts discussed in this section of the paper come from the teaching diary I produced when my sense of expertise crumbled upon first entering the Japanese university language classroom (Verity, 2000). A teacher with a practical MATESL and a research PhD, more than twelve years of classroom experience, and extensive overseas teaching experience, I used the journal to help me carry out the cognitive and affective restructuring that became necessary in the face of a dramatic loss of self-confidence and automatic functioning during the first half of the first semester I spent at a large national university.

As John-Steiner (1996) points out, diaries and similar written records of activity over time can serve to support both cognitive exploration of the new, and re-articulation of what is already known. Functioning as an extended episode of self-directed discourse, the diary fulfilled the functions of private speech by allowing me to...

1. Use self-directed questions to plan and evaluate:

Week 1: "If 24 people need so much logistical flexibility

(and we have moveable desks in that room) think about managing with 50 or more..."

Week 3: "If they asked twenty questions, it was twenty questions in an hour of class for 53 students. That's not too bad, is it?"

Week 4: "Obviously, [the test] will have dictation, clothing and description vocabulary...but what can it really test? And how can I really grade them?"

Week 5: "Is it possible to even vaguely monitor the activities of so many students--will they actually tell the story...?"

Week 7: "They should do the questions in groups. I wonder how?"

Being my own "other" meant that these questions were directed at myself. First I asked, then I had to answer. The "expert-me" offered philosophy, advice and opinions to the newly "novice-me," musing on judgments "I" had made. The diary was crucial for helping me examine not only what I planned, and what I did, but also how I felt about what I did. Especially in the first difficult weeks, it served as a kind of semiotic workshop, where I could re-organize and re-familiarize myself with my own private array of psychological tools. Each class experience provided a lesson in reality:

Week 1: (before class): "I really believe...that it is more important to review and stimulate basic conversational confidence than it is to try to introduce abstruse concepts and pose intellectual challenges."

(after class): "Maybe I can ask people to sit in corners."

Week 2: "...It's hard to keep a sense of how things are going in the really big classes."

Week 3: "...having the focal words and concepts written down helps them, though it encourages them to write translations immediately."

Week 5: "...the worksheet was kind of a shot in the dark, not really useful or interesting...I really don't think the rhyming worksheet is particularly promising or useful...maybe the clue is to give one worksheet for every five students, so they have to speak"

Week 6: (before class): "I went overboard and mixed everything up, out of order, too so it is even harder than it should be...Anyway, we won't get through more than two or three of the exercises, especially if we stop to check answers after each one, which we should really do...[the exercise] is even harder than it should be. Probably too much."

(after class): "I like it, and will definitely continue with the more difficult exercises next week...but it showed me to lower expectations for the other, less skilled classes."

Week 7: "I think [the lessons] were moderately popular. Probably it would be better to use more content and less [*sic*] numbering and cloze type exercises..."

II. Outperform my competence through mediational artifacts: To keep at least the superficial appearance of expertise intact, I took to writing myself full instructions for using the materials of each lesson:

Week 1: 'Maybe I should give out more cards, so groups will be smaller.'

Week 3: "If time/atmosphere permits, I will use the back-to-back exercise as well...maybe make one person leave the room at first--better whole group focus."

Week 4: "Plan is to have three kinds of listening exercises, all taped..."

Week 5: "...maybe for the larger classes, I should have some kind of follow-up where five randomly selected students have to tell the story in front of the class."

III. Use private writing to compose instructions to myself:

Week 6: "the big problem this week is making up an exam that is reasonable, easy to grade and flexible for all these levels."

Week 7: "I am not looking forward to this [exam], but I did tell them I would give them exams, so I have to do it...in the larger classes, it will be a zoo...The exam is printed on one large sheet, which makes transportation of it much easier; I think I will ask them to fold it in half when they receive it, to keep eyes from wandering. I have pre-counted the exams into separate folders, and I will pass them out individually, asking the S[tudents]s not to turn them over until everyone has one."

Implications for practice

The implications of recognizing and understanding the forms and functions of private speech are relatively narrow, but potentially very powerful, for observing trainees, peers and more-expert colleagues. Knowing how private speech functions to support the development of expert orientation and expert activity, we can encourage trainees to be more aware of their own patterns of use as far as private speech is concerned. Knowing how private speech differs from social speech can help us, during observations and their feedback sessions, see the true relationship between trainee and task. "Teacher talk" is an area of concern among teacher educators; this particular type of teacher talk is of particular

concern because it not only takes away from student talking time, but because it also signals that the teacher is talking in order to figure out what he or she is doing. A trainee whose pattern of private speech use diminishes over the training period displays a convincing growth of mastery of the complex task of teaching.

Strategizing, planning, evaluating and transforming our activity, and the activity of our trainees and students, pose complex demands. Understanding the role of private speech as a “window to the mind in action” can be of great help when our goal is to make professional judgments explicit. As suggested earlier, it is not possible to analyze closely every practice teaching session. However, looking at such transcripts even occasionally provides the novice teacher with insight into the potential power of what John-Steiner (1996) calls “embedded private speech.” In this use of apparently self-directed commentary, the speaker actually consciously uses a “thinking out loud” strategy to illustrate and confirm the cognitive steps taken by the expert in accomplishing a given task.

While working with novice teachers, we can also encourage them to produce, and refer to, written sources which reflect their thoughts and reactions about what should, and what did, happen in class. At the beginning of the paper, it was pointed out that one of the hardest things to do for a new teacher is to combine all the demands of the teaching task, including trying to figure out what the learners already know and don’t know. Having a written record of their own novicehood can only help developing teachers as they face the challenge of carrying out thoughtful, responsive, and constructive teaching activity. Many teacher trainers often

work with experienced peers in professional development contexts. We often search for appropriate exercises to use with peers who are extremely experienced in classroom practice. Journals and note-keeping about lessons can be introduced in terms of private speech and its functions. Using the example of my own journal, in which I confronted and overcame a nearly crippling sense of suddenly, and unexpectedly, reverting to novicehood, I frequently point out to fellow experts, as well as to novices, how thinking aloud on paper is a good way to cope with and restructure one’s knowledge in the face of new challenges.

Deryn Verity has taught at OJC since 2004. She has also lived and worked in Serbia, Slovenia, Thailand and Poland. Her research interests are sociocultural theory and teacher education.

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Appendix 1

Full transcript of the first minutes of Lina's workshop

Lina: Um, unfortunately the number is not so big in here. Let's get on with the questions. As usual, I am a teacher so I ask all the time. [recital intonation, not genuine question] So how many people here took a class where use of dictionaries [interruption by people looking for some extra chairs] I'm sorry, I'm sorry for everything, but it's okay. How many, how many of you took a class where the use of dictionary is required in the university? How many?

Participant: Would you please repeat the question?

Lina: How many people here took a class where use of dictionary....

Participant: A course.

Lina: A class, for example, I took a class in translation, I remember that we used, monolingual and even bilingual dictionaries. Okay, yeah. How many? [softly] Can you just raise... Oh, all of you? Did you use dictionary in the university?

Participant: Yes.

Lina: Okay, that's fine. What about secondary level? How many of you took a class where use of dictionary is required? How many? Okay. Look, the number is decreased. Okay. What about the basic level? Let's see the basic level. Okay.

Participant: I want to ask something.

Lina: Yes.

Participant: You ask about if we use a dictionary or the class.

Lina: Yes.

Participant: Or the pupils. Or the teacher. We use them. As the pupils. As a tool in the class.

Lina: Okay, that's good. Can you raise your hand? That's fine. That's fine. So, um, okay, I tried to get some information from researching about the use of dictionaries... and I found Battinger, 1980, stating that there is a relationship between the use of dictionary—what he calls vocabulary behavior—and let's say the achievement of the students in fulfilling their needs in communication.

But unfortunately [author] 1994 says that those many teachers in Jordanian schools unfortunately ignore, completely ignore, dictionaries in class. So, they even....

Participant: Did they justify why?

Lina: Sure. Sure. And I have some reasons in a handout. Yes, there are a lot of reasons and in fact I reported them in handouts I will give them to you when you leave the session. Anyway, so let me read...He reported that they even ignored the exercises dealing...[interruption]...sorry, sorry....So according to myself, I think that we can use dictionaries in our classes. We can activate the use of dictionaries in our classes. Do you agree with me?