An Empirical Study of Business English Reflective Teaching in Colleges[*]

Junqiu Wu

Foreign Language Department, Huaiyin Institute of Technology, 223003, Jiangsu, China

Yongpeng Wu

College of Physical Science, South China Normal University, 511400, Guangzhou, Guangdong

Abstract—**With the initiative of "the belt and road", China pays more and more attention to the business English education due to the abundant need of the business elites. The traditional business English education no longer meets the need of the international competition. To reform the business English education, we start from the teachers and through their reflective teaching to explore the points that needed to be changed. By employing the theory of reflective teaching, adopting methodology of qualitative and quantitative research, the author studies whether reflective teaching will bring about changes to the teacher's teaching concepts and behavior, what changes will be brought about to them and what the effective and practical forms of reflective teaching activities are.**

Index Terms—**reflective teaching, Business English teaching, practice**

I. INTRODUCTION

With the development of China and the new course reform, business English teachers are under high pressure. The contradiction between traditional teaching method and the requirement of the new course reform has become more distinct, and many teachers are frustrated about how to carry on their teaching to adapt to the new environment. Therefore a heated discussion on the question "Whether English teachers can adjust themselves to the modern society or not?" is presented to the public. A lot of studies have proved that there are four main problems confronting business English teachers in China.

First, in the long-term of studying and teaching practice, business English teachers tend to form a fixed thinking pattern and immerse themselves in the traditional teaching models. With the traditional teaching method, teachers pay more attention to what to teach and how to finish their teaching tasks instead of reflecting on their teaching and teach students how to acquire knowledge by themselves. Everyday formal class teaching without sufficient stimulation makes teaching work an easy and repetitive task. Consequently the fixed teaching methods lead to ineffective teaching and students' lower English levels, which has turned out to be a barrier to the progress of education. Second, business English teachers in China lack the consciousness of positive teaching. Most teachers regard business English class as a knowledge transmitting class instead of language practicing class and seldom care about students' learning process, personal characteristics and the effectiveness of teaching. They never consciously think about improving their teaching. Although some teachers have the consciousness of reflecting, they lack professional training and guidance. Thus their reflection stays on a shallow level and cannot achieve the best reflective effects.

These problems show that most business English teachers lack the ability to inquire into and reflect on their teaching, to investigate and solve teaching problems. In order to improve the teaching efficiency, teachers must seek for their self-development (Calderhead, 1993). While it is reflective teaching that urges teachers to see, explore and finally solve their problems concerning teaching practice (Cruickshank, 1981). In other words, reflective teaching is a process in which teachers think, study their teaching behaviors and keep reflecting on the problems existing in their teaching practice (Dewey, 1993). Based on the literature review, this researcher addresses the following hypotheses:

1. Reflective teaching may bring some positive changes to business English teachers.

2. Through reflective teaching business English teachers may concern not only teaching but also learning and simultaneously may change individual teaching behavior.

3. Teaching journals and lesson evaluation may be the effective and feasible modes of reflective teaching.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Research Questions

In order to justify the hypotheses put forward in the background statement, the following research questions are proposed:

1. Will reflective teaching bring about any changes to business English teachers?
2. If so, what changes will be brought about to business English teachers' teaching notions and behavior?
3. What are the effective and feasible modes of reflective teaching?

The purpose of the empirical study is to find out the answers to the above questions through a more detailed data analysis, hoping the research findings will provide some inspiration for teachers in promoting reflective teaching.

B. Research Subjects

In order to implement the empirical study, the researcher chose five business English teachers from Huaiyin Institute of Technology (HYIT) as the subjects of the study for one semester. Three of them are university graduates and two got their master's degree. All of them show a relatively high motivation for reflective teaching than the other teachers due to their personal interest in it. They thought it would be a very good way to improve their teaching. The students were all sophomore of HYIT.

C. Method

After in-depth interview with the five business English teachers, the researcher identified their targets of reflection respectively based on their main problems in teaching. A questionnaire was given to students of the five teachers for their comments on English teaching. This questionnaire served as a starting point for the comparison of the different results before and after the reflective teaching is adopted. Then, after a semester's study, the same questionnaire was given to the students again. The comparison of the different results before and after the reflective teaching is adopted. The author analyzed the comparison of the different comments to show the changes of the teachers. The author also compared students' scores before and after the study for the purpose of illustrating the different teaching outcomes.

D. Instruments

The instruments used in this study are interview, questionnaire, tables, and graphs (Elliot, 1991). The interview with the five business English teachers to help them reflect their teaching includes the following questions:
1. Do you reflect on your teaching?
2. Are you satisfied with your teaching? If not, then what are the problems and the contradictions in your teaching?
3. Do you find any ways to solve the problems in your teaching?

The questionnaire is composed of ten statements. Each statement has four choices: A= High Satisfaction, B= Satisfaction, C= Ordinary, D= No Satisfaction. The informants are demanded to choose one closest statement that corresponds to their opinions.

The information collected from the interview, questionnaire, and class observation will be analyzed and presented by the researcher by tables. The comparison of students' scores is shown in graphs.

E. Procedures of the Research

Reflective teaching aims to solve problems occurring in teaching practice (Osterman, 2004). Different teacher has variety of specific teaching problems (Needly, 1986). In order to guide their reflection, the writer first helps them to state clearly their specific problems in business English teaching through interview and list their problems before the implementation of reflective teaching activities. The following table offers the five teachers' problems in teaching and what they reflect on.

TABLE 1:
TEACHERS' TEACHING PROBLEMS AND CONTENTS OF REFLECTION

Participants (Teaching Experience)	Problems	Reflections
Teacher Y (10 Years)	The contradiction between language points and business knowledge expansion	How to deal with the relationship between teaching language points and broadening the business knowledge
Teacher L (2 Years)	The teacher's lack of confidence in teaching due to Students' indifference.	How to enhance students' initiative and cultivate self-confidence in teaching
Teacher C (5 Years)	Students' fear about her and the unfriendly class atmosphere.	How to handle the relations with the students and achieve a harmonious class atmosphere
Teacher S (6 Years)	Students' disinterest in learning business English and difficulties in vocabulary learning	How to help students learn words effectively
Teacher G (10 Years)	Students' frustration in listening practice	How to help students establish confidence in learning business English

To implement reflective teaching, this research adopts the following reflective teaching activities: teaching journal, collective lesson planning, peer coaching, and action research. Then the researcher collects and analyses the data through interview, questionnaire, class observation, and teaching journals.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF BUSINESS ENGLISH REFLECTIVE TEACHING

In this part the researcher will discuss the process of helping business English teachers reflect on their experiences, with the emphasis on experiences in teaching practice. Before the research began, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research and that the findings were not to be used to evaluate them as individuals, but rather to describe

the activities and interactions among them. More importantly, the author emphasized that the aim was to consistently reflect their teaching concept and behavior instead of judging them or their teaching, thus allowing trust to grow between the participants and the researcher.

A. Teaching Journal

Keeping a teaching journal serves two purposes: one is recording events and ideas and the other triggering insights into teaching for the purpose of later reflection. (Richards & Lockhart, 1996)

In teaching practice, many different topics from classroom experiences can be explored through teaching journal, including personal reactions to events happened in classroom or in school, questions or observations about problems in teaching, descriptions of significance of lessons or school events, and ideas for further analysis or further recommendation.

The following procedures are recommended for keeping a journal (Bailey1990&Walker, 1985).

1. Make entries on a regular basis, such as once or twice a week, or even daily if possible. It may be useful to spend five or ten minutes after a lesson to write about it or record it.

2. Review your journal entries regularly. Those that might not have been obvious when written or recorded may later become apparent. As you review your journals, ask yourself questions like what do I do as a teacher; what principles and beliefs direct my teaching; what do I teach the way I do; what roles do learners play in my classes; should I teach differently.

In the practice of reflective teaching, the teachers in HYIT were offered two approaches to writing journals. One is the stream-of-consciousness approach, that is, teachers have to keep a record of teaching behaviors and feelings and reflection about their teaching (Schon, 1988). Teachers can write a reflective part in the lesson preparation book regardless of words, grammar, or organization. This exploratory writing can generate lots of ideas for further review and analysis. The other is the edited approach. Each week teachers were asked to upload one teaching journal to the school BBS to share and discuss with each other. Some examples of the author's observation are listed below.

B. Collective Lesson Planning

Collective lesson planning means that teachers get together to discuss the class target, the key problems and the difficulties as well as the ways to solve them (Shavelson, 1973). The main purpose of this method is based on the unity of the teaching to avoid students' excessive learning disparity caused by teacher's individual behavior. What's more, in practice the collective lesson planning was turned into a mere formality for the lack of inspection. Obviously this collective behavior, deficient in operability and persistence, cannot benefit the promotion of teachers' reflective abilities. Facing this reality the researcher offered a more practical cultivating method to combine the individual with the collective in practicing reflective teaching in HYIT. The procedures are as follows:

First, each teacher chooses a topic to prepare and write the teaching plan in details. Later he will explain his lesson planning in the group, including teaching target, key point, teaching procedures and methods and students' cognitive status. Second, group members will discuss possible problems and give suggestions of appropriate teaching procedures. Third, the teacher in charge of that subject summarizes other teachers' opinions and refines his teaching plan. This process is actually a conversation between individual and the collective in which self-reflection in relation to theoretical discourse and experimental discourse occurs. When the teacher teaches his class with the refined plan, we can either organize class observations or video record for later discussion.

TABLE2:
TEACHERS' COMMENTS ON COLLECTIVE LESSON PLANNING.

Teacher	Teachers' comments on collective lesson planning
Y	It helps us save time and energy to deal with other teaching problems.
L	Collective lesson planning avoids my making mistakes and broadens my visions.
S	This practice develops each teacher's advantages and helps us learn from each other's strong points
C	It puts into effect the requirements of the new curriculum reform and stresses the man-oriented concept.
G	It has significantly improved the teaching effect. Besides it helps establish harmonious relationship among colleagues.

From the results of the interview we can see that collective lesson planning has achieved a good practical effect, and it is beneficial to the growth of novice teachers and the development of the experienced teachers. It also helps teachers reflect on and adjust their teaching strategies and teaching techniques accordingly.

C. Peer Coaching

Peer coaching is a procedure in which two teachers collaborate to help each other improve some aspect of their teaching. Robbins (1991) defines peer coaching as follows: 'A confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices, expand, refine, and build new skills, share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace'(p.1).

In the reflective practice activity, two teachers in a group help each other, one of them is experienced and the other is not. They plan a series of activities to explore the teacher's teaching collaboratively. The experienced one adopts the role of coach or "critical friend" during the procedure of teaching and classroom life. During and after the process, the coach provides feedback and suggestions to the other teacher (Schon, 1988). It is better if the feedback and suggestions

are nonjudgmental and non-evaluative. It means that each teacher still has the main responsibility for his or her professional development. For example, we adopt the informal conversations which are a series of informal conversations between a teacher and a colleague about teaching, focusing on what is happening in the teacher's classroom, what problem may occur, and how these problems can be addressed. The frequent conversations and discussions between teachers are the most widely-used ways of reflective teaching (Zeichner, 1981).

IV. Analysis and Discussion

After one semester's implementation of the above reflective activities, the researcher evaluated the effects of reflective teaching and studied the effective and feasible modes of reflective teaching through class observation, interview, questionnaire and comparison of students' scores before and after the study. By analyzing critically the findings, the researcher presents recommendations for reflective teaching.

A. Findings of the Empirical Study

1 Teachers' changes in both teaching notions and teaching behavior

The researcher finds that both teachers' teaching notions and teaching behavior have undergone great changes after applying the reflective teaching. The research result supports hypothesis one and hypothesis two. Though the teachers have faced with different teaching confusions and problems, they have one change in common that is they all begin to shift their teaching center from teaching to learning consciously. Their changes are showed as follows:

TABLE 5:
TEACHERS' CHANGES AFTER REFLECTIVE TEACHING

Participants and their problems	Changes of teaching notions (from teaching journals and interview)	Changes of teaching behavior (from class observation)
Teacher Y How to deal with the relationship between teaching language points and broadening business knowledge	Instead of explaining the language points many times, teacher should guide the students to find the language rules by themselves.	Teacher Y now spends less time on the activities of language forms and increased the activities on language content.
Teacher L How to enhance students' initiative and cultivate self-confidence in teaching	It is very important to respect students and predict the possible difficulties in the teaching process.	The time arrangement for each teaching links is more appropriate and students have more chance to practice.
Teacher C How to handle the relations with the students and achieve a harmonious class atmosphere	There needs to be more interactions with the students.	Now teacher C becomes an amiable teacher in her class and increased her interaction with the students.
Teacher S How to help students learn words effectively	Vocabulary learning should take students' English level into consideration.	Teacher C now can control the difficulty degree of the task and makes the task explain more clear that before.
Teacher G How to help students establish confidence in learning English	It is very important to bring the initiative of students into full play.	Teacher G tends to be more patient and offers more positive feedbacks and encouragement to her students.

Reflective teaching is a cycling up process. By applying it, these teachers have found their new reflective targets after the first round of reflection.

Teacher Y often asks his students questions as follows: what have you learned from this class? What do you think you should do in today's homework? Do you have any suggestions about this class? While teacher Y still thinks it is hard to meet every student's needs, especially in business teaching class.

Teacher C now offers more chances for the inferior students to practice English, and assigns different homework for them. But she soon found that concentrating too much on the inferior students will neglect the great majority of the students.

In class teaching, teacher G presents more positive feedbacks to students for she found that encouragement can stimulate students' enthusiasm about learning English. Now her chief worry is that students will overlook their mistakes.

Teacher L spends more time in designing teaching activities in order to improve students' chance of participation. Now she is afraid of losing her dominant position.

Teacher S now uses the internet, multimedia and other information technologies to facilitate her teaching. She asks the students to collect the relevant information on internet before the class. All these stimulated students' enthusiasm for learning business English. But it seems that those who are introverted students still do not like to participate in the class interaction.

2 The effective ways of practicing reflective teaching

Reflective teaching has brought about great changes to teachers' teaching notions and behaviors (Xiong Chuanwu, 1999). When asked what the effective ways of promoting reflective teaching are, they all reply that they are peer coach, teaching journal, collective lesson planning, and collective lesson evaluation. The result partially supported the third hypothesis that teaching journals and lesson evaluation may be the effective and feasible modes of reflective teaching.

Peer coach offers benefit to both the coach and the teacher. The coach is happy to help another colleague and meanwhile revitalizes his own teaching through the coaching process. The collaborating teacher also benefits in the

peer-coaching relationship by learning from a reliable peer and getting constructive feedback on his teaching. Peer coaching also reduces the sense of isolation that teachers, especially novice teachers tend to feel.

Journal writing offers a simple way of becoming more aware of one's teaching and learning. It's easy to operate and can also benefit the other teachers as well.

Collective lesson planning and evaluating provides a supportive context in which teachers can work together to try out new teaching materials and approaches. It can also develop collegiality between colleagues.

In the process of interviewing the teachers who have adopted this approach, the author had strongly come to realize that teachers' working enthusiasm about reflective teaching has been significantly promoted and their reflective ability is strengthened. Now most of the teachers enjoy writing reflective journals and attending reflective lesson evaluating and their journals reflect on their teaching situations.

3 Students' feedbacks

The improvement of teachers' reflective abilities is bound to have positive influence on their teaching qualities. In order to check the effectiveness and feasibility of reflective teaching, 718 Students were given a questionnaire (see appendix 1) to evaluate their teachers' class teaching and the feedback rate was 100%. Also we made an interview with students.

TABLE 6:
STUDENTS' COMMENTS ON TEACHERS' CLASS TEACHING BEFORE THE STUDY

No.	High Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Ordinary	No Satisfaction
1	30.08%	27.15%	39.63%	3.41%
2	37.38%	33.19%	26.18%	3.25%
3	38.57%	36.80%	21.33%	3.30%
4	40.17%	34.30%	22.27%	3.26%
5	38.23%	35.21%	23.36%	3.20%
6	36.12%	39.29%	21.38%	3.21%
7	34.75%	39.50%	22.22%	3.52%
8	39.47%	36.90%	20.45%	3.18%
9	32.48%	35.53%	27.86%	4.13%
10	36.50%	38.17%	22.24%	3.09%

TABLE 7:
STUDENTS' COMMENTS ON TEACHERS' CLASS TEACHING AFTER THE STUDY

No.	High Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Ordinary	No Satisfaction
1	43.16%	39.25%	15.62%	1.97%
2	51.44%	34.60%	12.08%	1.89%
3	53.26%	32.15%	12.13%	2.46%
4	45.80%	37.96%	13.66%	2.58%
5	42.29%	28.61%	25.92%	3.17%
6	51.63%	35.38%	11.3%	1.69%
7	39.04%	40.50%	18.08%	2.38%
8	47.31%	38.64%	11.75%	2.30%
9	37.60%	40.15%	19.47%	2.78%
10	43.86%	35.60%	18.24%	2.30%

In order to have a better understanding about students' evaluation of their teachers, the author interviewed some students with the following questions of what differences do you see in your teacher compared with the last semester and is there any change in your teachers' teaching method.

From the statistics and the conversation with the students we can find that teachers applying reflective teaching are greatly appreciated by the students. A higher level of satisfaction of their teachers has proved reflective teaching effective.

4 Students' improvement in their English Study

In order to get a rich understanding of the relationship between reflective teaching and teaching outcomes, the author also conducted a comparison of students' scores, concerning that teachers' development has inevitable connection with it. The students are from the ten classes taught by the five English teachers before and after the study. Both of the two tests were all unified examinations organized by HYIT, following the principle of comparability. The statistics include the average score, passing rate, and the high score rate of the ten classes.

Graph 1:Average Score Comparison

Graph 2:Passing Rate Comparison

Graph 3:High Score Rate Comparison
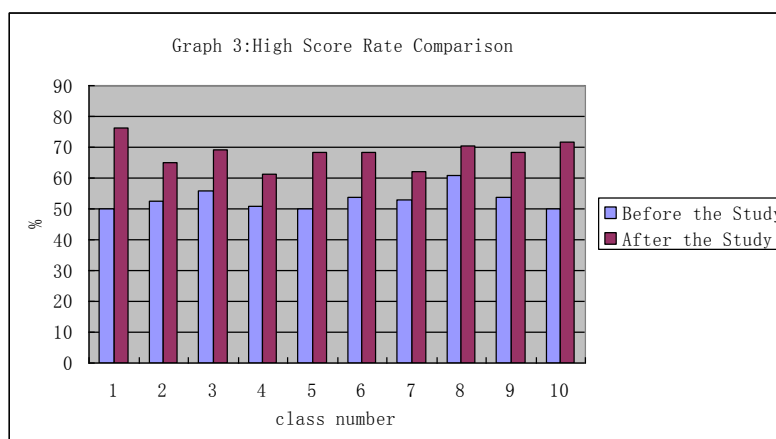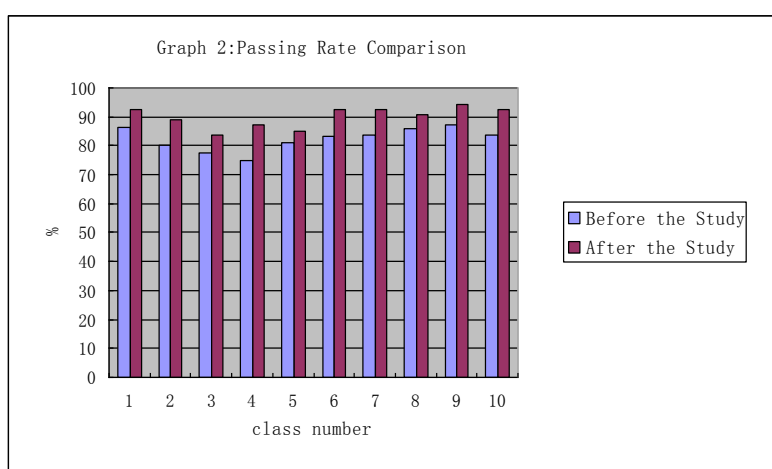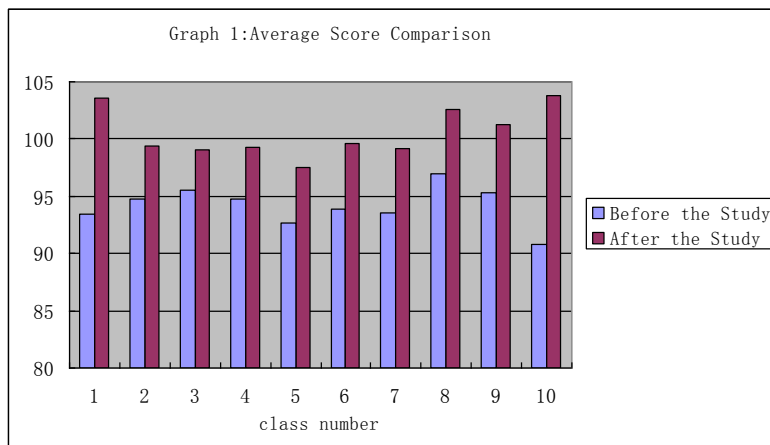
From the statistics we can find that there is a clear rise in students' scores before and after the study. Each class's average score, passing rate and the high score rate are all higher than before. Not only the average score proved the effectiveness of reflective teaching but also the passing rate and the high score rate illustrated that fewer students failed the unified examination and more students got high marks through reflective teaching. It indicates that the teaching outcomes are good after adopting the reflective teaching.

B. Recommendations

The importance of reflective teaching in English teaching of business has been well demonstrated; while through this year's practice we still encountered many difficulties and problems. To solve these problems, some recommendations are given as follows.

1 Stimulating teacher's initiative in reflective teaching

Because reflective teaching is a teaching research process, teachers need to spend plenty of time collecting information, putting forth hypothesis, testing and evaluating (Xin Yule, 2006). Besides, teachers need to finish

strenuous teaching task and head teacher's work, which might be a big obstacle to reflective teaching practice. Thus we need to communicate with teachers positively and take measures to ensure the implementation of the reflective teaching. To achieve this, we need to strengthen their theoretical learning about reflective teaching to make them understand the significance and necessity of reflective teaching. The educational ministration should check teachers' reflective learning and writing and mark each teaching research group and individuals. The record of their grades will be used as an important basis for performance assessment, promotion, and assessment of the professional titles. The school will also reward excellent teachers.

Although it would cause temporary pain to force the teachers to process reflective teaching, once it becomes a habit and routine teaching work, teachers will learning and reflecting naturally. What's more the school will become study-type school and achieve great-leap-forward development together with the teacher.

2 Seizing the details to process in-class reflection

In-class reflection is found more difficult in the reflective practice compared with reflections before and after class. It is hard for teachers to catch the teaching details to process reflection on the scene, especially for the young teachers. The researcher believes that it has nothing to do with the teaching experiences, but rather the teachers' responsibilities. Only when teachers have sense of responsibilities can they have the ability to pay attention to the details. It means whether the concept of new curriculum standards is carried out and it is a goal of the rationalization, intelligence, and specialization of teaching. To acquire an accurate understanding of the details in class, it needs not only teachers' rich cultural connotations but a presupposition of one's class.

3 Strengthening teachers' teaching research abilities through reflective teaching

Reflective teaching is widely acknowledged as an effective way of helping teachers achieve effective teaching and promoting teachers' professional self-development (Weining, 2005). The practice of reflective teaching can not only promote teachers' sense of responsibilities but also can enhance teachers' ability to create new teaching strategies (Simpson. D, 2005). While in practice we find that many teachers' reflections are still at a low level and cannot guide the teaching practice correctly.

V. CONCLUSION

This research studied the effectiveness of reflective teaching. Five English teachers from HYIT participated in the empirical study. The researcher also completed a review of related literature in order to discover the effectiveness of reflective teaching.

Concerning the main problems being addressed in this paper, three main points are made clear about the practice of reflective teaching. 1) reflective teaching do bring about changes to the teachers' concept and behavior of teaching; 2) teachers begin to concern consciously about learner's needs and regard it as their goal of teaching endeavor to meet the needs of learners; 3) peer coach, colleagues' observing and assessing teaching are considered the most effective and practical forms of reflective teaching activities.

This research result supports the first and second hypotheses that reflective teaching may bring some positive changes to teachers; through reflective teaching teachers may concern not only teaching but also learning and simultaneously may change individual teaching behaviors. However, the result partially supports the third hypothesis that is teaching journal and lesson evaluation may be the effective and feasible modes of reflective teaching. Beside, through empirical study we also find that peer coach, collective lesson planning are also the effective ways of conducting reflective teaching.

Through this semester's reflective practice, the English teachers at HYI have made great progress. By applying the reflective methods, teachers have made valuable achievements like quality journals, teaching cases, and reflective lesson-reporting and lesson-evaluation. At the same time, the favorable atmosphere of English teaching and research offers a platform for the teachers' development. What's more, the teachers' reflective teaching has also promoted students' reflective learning.

REFERENCES

[1] Baily, KM 1990&Walker. (1985). 'The use of daily studies in teacher education programs', In Richards, JC & Nunan, D, *Second language teacher education*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 215-26.
[2] Calderhead, J. & Gates. P. (1993). Conceptualizing reflection in teacher development, London,: Falmer Press.
[3] Cruickshank. DR. & Applegate. JH. (1981). Reflective teaching as a strategy for teacher growth, *Educational Learnership*, vol.38, 4-6.
[4] Dewey. J. (1933). How we think, 5th edn. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company.
[5] Elliot. J. (1991). Action research for educational change. Buckingham: Open University Press.
[6] Gage. N & Berliner. D. (1991). Educational Psychology, 5th edn. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin.
[7] Needly. AM. (1986). Planning and problem solving in teacher education, *Journal of teacher education,* vol. 32, no. 3, 29-33.
[8] Osterman. K. & Kottkamp. R. (2004). Reflective Practice for Educators: Professional Development to Improve Student Learning, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
[9] Pollard.A. (2005). Reflective teaching, 2nd edn. London, Continuum.
[10] Richard, JC. & Lockhart, C. (1996). Teacher development through peer observation. *TESOL Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 7-10.

[11] Robbins, P. (1991). 'How to plan and implement a peer coaching program', Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision Curriculum Development, 7 May, p.18.
[12] Schon. D. A. (1988). Coaching reflective teaching in Crimmett, P & Erickson, G, *Reflection in teacher education*, New York, NY: teacher college press, 12, 19-30.
[13] Shavelson. R. (1973). What is the basic teaching skill. *Journal of Teacher education,* vol. 24, no. 2, 44-51.
[14] Simpson. D., Jackson. M. & Aycook. J. (2005). John Dewey and the Art of Teaching: Toward Reflective and Imaginative Practice, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
[15] Weining. (2005). A Study of Teachers' Reflection, *Educational Science Study*, 9: 23-25.
[16] Xin Yule. (2006). Teaching of Reflection, Sichuan: Sichuan Education Press.
[17] Xiong Chuanwu. (1999). Reflective Teaching, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 3-223.
[18] Zeichner. KM. (1981). Reflective teaching and field-based experience in teacher education, *Interchange*, vol.12, no. 1, 22-24.

Junqiu Wu was born in Shandong, China in 1983. She got the MA of Arts at Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, China in 2010. She was currently a lecturer in Foreign Language Department in Huaiyin Institute of Technology, Jiangsu, China. Her research interest is business English.

Yongpeng Wu was born in Shandong, China in 1991. He is studying master's degree in South China Normal University. He is major in Training in College of Physical Science.