Facilitating reflective practice via Instant Messenger Cooperative Development

Andrew Boon
Faculty of Global Communication, Toyo Gakuen University, Japan

Abstract

Reflective practice may be considered an important part of the teaching process. By reflecting on their action, teachers can continually examine their classroom teaching and embrace possibilities for professional growth and change. This article describes how teachers can utilize Instant Messenger Cooperative Development (IMCD) (Boon, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2015); an online framework for reflecting on pedagogical practice. To illustrate IMCD in action, it examines a session in which a teacher explores ways for her learners to recycle and review language learned in previous lessons. The article then discusses the benefits of IMCD as an aid for reflecting on and finding workable solutions to pedagogic puzzles with the hope that readers of the article may go on to utilize IMCD for their own reflective practice purposes.

Keywords: Computer-mediated communication, instant messenger cooperative development, reflective practice, teacher education

Introduction

By its very nature, teaching is a repetitive action (Prabhu, 1990). Every working day, we enter the familiar environment of the classroom to help our learners achieve specific lesson objectives by using a mixture of the skills, values, and knowledge we have acquired from our practical experiences of teaching (and learning) as well as those transmitted to us from others via our own studies of pedagogy (Handal & Lauvas, 1987). However, if we never consider, question, or challenge our actions and how they may affect our learners in the classroom, we run the risk of our teaching becoming overly routinized; a mere mechanical process (Prabhu, 1990). Rather than being alive to the pedagogical possibilities that can foster learning in the classroom as we reflect in and on action (Schön, 1983), we may find ourselves simply just going through the motions. In order to thwart this "enemy of good teaching…overroutinisation," (Prabhu, 1990, p. 174), it is important for us to reflect on our pedagogical practice. By doing so, we position ourselves as the initiators of our own professional growth and

Direct all correspondence to: bromleycross@hotmail.com

change; we continually examine our values, beliefs, and assumptions (Zeichner & Liston, 2014); we continually engage in determining the best course of action to facilitate learning in our classes; and we seek workable solutions to puzzles and dilemmas as and when they arise.

This article describes how teachers can utilize Instant Messenger Cooperative Development (IMCD) (Boon, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2015); an online framework for reflecting on pedagogical practice. To illustrate IMCD in action, it examines a session in which a teacher explores ways for her learners to recycle and review language learned in previous lessons. It then discusses the benefits of IMCD as an aid to reflecting on classroom action with the hope that readers of the article may go on to utilize IMCD for their own reflective practice purposes.

Literature Review

Instant Messenger Cooperative Development

Instant Messenger Cooperative Development (IMCD) is adapted from Edge's (1992, 2002) Cooperative Development (CD) framework in which two teachers meet face-to-face to support each other's critical self-reflections of their classroom practice, to make the interactional space available for the exploration of specific puzzles or issues, to help each other develop new understandings, and to determine plans of action that can be implemented in future classes. IMCD enables two teachers to interact online via Instant Messenger (IM) text chat, so it dispenses with the need for the actual physical proximity of the interlocutors. As a consequence, this may increase the opportunities for reflective practice as teachers can schedule online IMCD sessions with their peers and work together at any time and from any geographical location.

In an IMCD session, two teachers agree to suspend the interactional rules of ordinary text chat. Instead, they work together within the roles of either 'Explorer' or 'Understander.' The Explorer has the freedom to decide on a pedagogical puzzle or issue they wish to explore. The Explorer then has the opportunity to return to the event in question and reflect on it (Schön, 1983); to articulate their thoughts about it; and to consider the pedagogic rationale for and consequences of their actions undertaken in the midst of teaching. The Understander works to support the Explorer by maximizing the interactional space available for reflection and for the Explorer's ideas to develop during the session. CD and IMCD are grounded in Rogerian principles. Rogers (1961, 1980) believes that the power for a deeper level of understanding and change lies within the individual and their "actualizing tendency towards growth and fulfillment" (1980, p. xi). Thus, the important

role of the Understander is to remain non-judgmental. The Understander must refrain from giving judgments, suggestions, recommendations, advice, or steering talk into the perceptual world of the Understander. Not being required to contribute to the ongoing IM chat from one's own perspective, the Understander is thus free to focus wholly on understanding what the Explorer is communicating (Curran, 1978). By being understood by the Understander, the Explorer feels empowered to articulate more and may move from reflection and heightened awareness to discovery of a potential way to manage or solve the puzzle or issue, and a plan of action of what to do in subsequent classes (Edge, 1992, 2002).

In IMCD, the Understander may utilize specific interactional moves to support the Explorer and their particular reflection on practice:

Attending. In CD, 'Attending' involves the Understanding showing that they are truly listening to the Explorer via body language. In IMCD, 'Virtual Attending' is established via both Explorer and Understander being able to see when the other person is online via a green light notification and when they are typing a message via a three-dot animation that appears within the IM chat window. This provides the interlocutors with the notion of social presence; that the other person is still present in cyberspace and attending to the ongoing chat.

To facilitate turn-taking during an IMCD session, the interlocutors use a signal – "Ok?" to indicate to each other when their turn-at-talk has finished. The handover cue lets the Understander or Explorer know that they can take their turn and eliminates any potential overlapping IM discourse that may be distracting for both participants.

Reflecting. Reflecting is considered to be the core skill of the Understander (Mann, 2005). Once given a turn-at-talk, the Understander reflects back their understanding of the ongoing articulations of the Explorer. In the reflecting move, the Understander tries to capture the essence of what the Explorer has communicated; the Explorer's developing thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. The move serves as an opportunity for both parties to check that understanding is taking place in the session and allows the Explorer to hear their thoughts restated but in a more focused and explicit way by the Understander. If reflected incorrectly, it provides the opportunity for the Explorer to clarify what they meant. If reflected accurately, the Explorer is encouraged to build from the discourse and move forward with the exploration.

Focusing. If the Explorer has articulated a number of different ideas in an IMCD session, the Understander may provide opportunities for the Explorer to focus more deeply on one of them. Rather than suggesting overtly which direction the Explorer should take, the Understander

summarizes the areas mentioned thus far and invites the Explorer to accept or reject areas to examine further or to continue with the exploration in more general terms. The focusing move may not always be initiated by the Understander in a session. An Explorer may naturally move towards a specific focus as a particular session progresses.

Thematizing & Challenging. To help with the development of new ideas, the Understander may initiate a thematizing move by bringing to the attention of the Explorer potential thematic links articulated that may be connected, may have gone unnoticed by the Explorer, and may benefit them in reflecting further. Similarly, the Understander may initiate a challenging move to make the Explorer aware of two statements they have articulated that appear to contradict one another. Rather than being an attack on the logic of the Explorer, the move is utilized by the Understander only to assist the Explorer's continued reflections. For each move, the Explorer may wish to acknowledge the possible connection or contradiction and explore it further, or disregard it, and move on with their exploration in the IMCD session.

Why IM?

Boon (2005) argues that text-based IMCD allows the Explorer and Understander greater time to formulate their articulations than face-to-face verbal CD. For the Explorer, there may be more time to organize ideas, to think more carefully about how to communicate them, and more consideration as to how to craft a coherent and cohesive text message so that it can be understood clearly by the Understander. In this way, text chat "has the power to be highly conducive to reflection" (McMahon, 1997, p. 17). For the Understander, the IM format creates a permanent record of the ongoing interaction and enables the Understander to scroll back through the discourse before reflecting in order to review what the Explorer has typed. In face-to-face CD, due to the ethereal nature of oral discourse, the Understander must rely wholly on their memory of what the Explorer has said.

The Study: IMCD as case study

The session featured in this article is taken from a multiple case study of IMCD (Boon, 2015). In the 2015 study, Boon examines individual IMCD cases (individual sessions, individual IMCD participants, or individual themes of exploration that may be contained within one session or stretch over a number of consecutive sessions) to build a rich, descriptive, and holistic understanding of the 'quintain' (Stake, 2006) or phenomenon

being studied; namely the IMCD framework itself. The case study builds on Edge's (1992, 2002) original work by providing a cross-case genre analysis (Swales, 1990) of the various interactional moves utilized by each Explorer and Understander as they interact online together to co-construct their particular session. Each grounded genre analysis of an IMCD session contributes to a description of the 'quintain;' the IMCD framework, and to how it may be potentially used by others. The next section provides the analysis of a single case; an individual IMCD session in which the Explorer explores one theme, finds a satisfactory way forward, and thus, does not need to extend the exploration over a number of different sessions.

Analyzing an IMCD Session

There are two participants. The two interlocutors in this session are the author as Understander and a participant who was recruited to take part in the IMCD study via recommendation from her course tutor on a distance learning master's degree in TESOL. The participant undertook seven sessions between 9th October 2010 to 24th March 2011. In this article, the participant's sixth IMCD session conducted on 24th November 2010 is analyzed. It should be noted that the original call for participants invited teacher-researchers or teachers undertaking post-graduate study programs to participate in IMCD sessions as Explorers in order for them to seek ways to overcome obstacles they were experiencing with their research projects (Boon, 2015). However, after utilizing five sessions to explore issues related to her master's research, interestingly, the participant decided to revert back to the original usage of CD / IMCD (Edge, 1992, 2002) for sessions six and seven and reflect on different pedagogical puzzles at her institution.

IMCD sessions were conducted via Skype IM, converted into an HTML document, and copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document. Transcription of IMCD session data involved adding line numbers to the text to facilitate analysis and referencing and removing the screen names of participants to ensure their anonymity. Names were changed to 'E' for Explorer and 'U' for Understander. Grammatical or spelling mistakes made by the Explorer or Understander when typing were retained in order to represent the IMCD text as it was originally constructed during the session.

IMCD session data were coded by conducting line-by-line coding in which the author read through the transcripts and used the 'text highlight' feature of Microsoft Word in order to 'color' or identify the different moves used by the Explorer and Understander. Under each highlighted move, the author inserted a text box and wrote a short memo (Charmaz, 2006) regarding his analytical thoughts and feelings as to what was happening in the discourse as well as the particular lexis used by the participants. Memos were then used to conduct comparative analysis across the IMCD corpus to

determine similarities and differences between coded data and to build a comprehensive picture of the particular stages of and moves utilized in an IMCD session (Boon, 2015).

The IMCD session: Pre-session stage

Initiating chat

The pre-session stage involves participants appearing online at the agreed time for the IMCD session. Text chat then needs to be initiated by one of the interlocutors:

> 001] E: 22:30:24
>   Hello U
> 002] E: 22:30:29
>   How are you?
> 003] U: 22:30:39
>   good thanks

In this session, the Understander (the author) is online before the agreed start time of 22:30. As the Explorer's green Skype light appears to indicate that she is now online, the Understander waits for the Explorer to initiate the text chat (Line 1) and then responds accordingly (Line 3).

Small talk or Self-introductions

Another important move in the pre-session stage of an IMCD session is small talk. Small talk may be considered as an essential factor in relationship-building between the Explorer and the Understander. It not only helps to maintain a positive working relationship, but also avoids participants appearing socially impolite by starting the business at hand too quickly. For example:

> 007] E: 22:31:20
>   How was Korea?
> 008] U: 22:31:28
>   was in Nagoya
> 009] U: 22:31:34
>   for JALT
>   …
> 024] U: 22:33:10
>   it comes with time and practice
> 025] E: 22:33:16
>   tis true!

In line 7, the Explorer nominates a small talk topic to be talked about; she enquires about a TESOL conference that the Understander has recently attended. The Understander replies by initiating a repair sequence to clarify that the conference was held in Japan and not Korea. The small talk move extends over a number of turns to include the topic of presenting at conferences and concludes at line 25. It should be noted that for first time sessions with new IMCD participants, the small talk move is usually substituted with 'self-introductions.' This provides an opportunity for the Explorer and Understander to get to know one another and begin to build a positive working relationship. This is key in IMCD as the Explorer must feel that a level of trust and confidentiality exists between them and the Understander in order to feel comfortable enough to reveal personal thoughts about their teaching.

Getting down to business

The getting down to business (GDTB) move indicates a transition from small talk to beginning the actual IMCD session. It also marks the transition from ordinary IM chat to IMCD interaction in which the Explorer has the sole right to topic nomination, turn-taking is regulated by the agreed signal – "Ok," and the Understander works to support the development of the Explorer's ideas. For example:

```
026] E: 22:33:33
        today I'd like to talk about something
027] E: 22:33:39
        completely different to the subject
028] E: 22:33:44
        we usually tackle
029] E: 22:33:46
        if that's ok
030] U: 22:33:49
        sure
031] U: 22:33:55
        should we get started
032] U: 22:33:55
        ?
033] E: 22:33:56
        i'd like to take this session into the classroom
034] E: 22:33:59
        yes let's go
035] U: 22:34:05
        ok - stepping into roles
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036] U: 22:34:10
        the floor is yours - ok?

In line 26, the Explorer initiates a move away from small talk by indicating the topic she would like to focus on in the session. As the Explorer would like to use the session to explore a pedagogical rather than research issue and thus, is different to what the author has stipulated in the original call for participants, the Explorer seeks permission from the Understander to do so (Line 29). The Understander agrees (Line 30) and suggests the commencement of the session (Line 31). He then indicates a 'stepping into roles' step (Line 35); a ritualized act of signaling the moment in a session for the interlocutors to adopt their assigned roles of Explorer and Understander and to begin operating under the interactional constraints of the IMCD framework. Finally, the Understander offers the interactional floor to the Explorer and introduces the signal – "Ok," that will facilitate turn-taking during the session (Line 36). This places the onus on the Explorer to begin their exploration at the next turn of talk and marks the transition between the pre-session and session stages.

The IMCD Session: Session stage

Setting the scene

Directly after the GDTB, the Explorer begins the first move of the session stage by providing the Understander with important background information regarding the particular pedagogical puzzle to be investigated. In the setting the scene (STS) move, the Explorer may provide information about time, area or initial focus of the session, the current state of thinking of the Explorer, the various characters involved, and the pedagogical puzzle or obstacle that the Explorer wishes to seek a resolution to. For example:

037] E: 22:34:38
        Once a week, on a Tuesday afternoon I 'lead' a grammar workshop
        lesson
038] E: 22:34:55
        this takes place in our all new and fabulous Self access centre
039] E: 22:35:34
        that has tip top internet access, as well as some software on
        computers for students to use
040] E: 22:35:43
        they can also work from books
041] E: 22:35:58
        do paper based studying if they like

042] E: 22:36:17
     I teach these people once a week only for 1 1/2 hours
043] E: 22:36:21
     they're mixed ability
044] E: 22:37:17
     and given the nature of workshops I guide and facilitate
045] E: 22:37:38
     so the issue is
046] E: 22:38:16
     I teach them only once a week - I help them, I see that they
     understand, get them to use the language and then they disappear
047] E: 22:39:07
     the next week their context may have changed and they may be
     focused on something entirely different
048] E: 22:39:11
     which is wonderful
049] E: 22:39:28
     but I want to do something
050] E: 22:39:50
     that will further (what's the word)
051] E: 22:39:54
     substantiate?
052] E: 22:40:15
     what they did the week before... just a little something
053] E: 22:40:18
     ok

Here, in line 37, the Explorer provides the temporal setting for the particular exploration (*Time*); a class that she teaches on Tuesdays. She then goes on to orient the Understander to the particular area she wishes to focus on in the session; a grammar workshop lesson that takes place in the self-access center at her institution. The Explorer explains the various equipment and material that is available for the learners (*Characters*) (Lines 39-40). However, there is an implicit sense of frustration (*State*) with the Explorer as she juxtaposes the "new and fabulous" (Line 38) center with the length of the class - "once a week for only 1 ½ hours" (Line 42), the level of the learners - "mixed ability" (Line 43), and the pedagogical issue she is experiencing in her classes (Lines 45-48). She explains the "issue" (*Obstacle*) as being one of learner retention of the language learned given the ever-changing objectives of each lesson. The learners study in the class only once a week, make use of the particular grammar and lexical items learned, but then move on to different language tasks the following week. The Explorer states her pedagogical aim or concern (*State*) is to seek ways to have her learners recycle the language items they have studied in the

previous lesson (Lines 49-52). In line 53, the Explorer then signals the end of her current turn (Line 53).

Reflecting

As previously mentioned, the reflecting move is central to the Understander's role in IMCD. The Understander reflects back what the Explorer has typed to catch the core meaning of the articulation; to give the Explorer the opportunity to read a carefully crafted summary that has been made more explicit, coherent, and focused. This enables the Explorer to reconsider their articulations through the Understander's version and reflect further on the issue at hand. The Explorer also confirms the correctness of the Understander's reflecting move or clarifies any potential misunderstandings that have occurred:

> 055] U: 22:40:28
>   Ok - let me check
> 056] U: 22:40:50
>   so you have a weekly grammar workshop with a mixed ability
>   class for 1 and a half hours
> 057] U: 22:41:08
>   the facilities are great in terms of the resources with multi-media
>   and books which the students can use
> 058] U: 22:42:00
>   However, you feel a lack of connection between lessons in terms
>   of students leaving the classroom and a week later having new
>   contexts and new goals they wish to achieve
> 059] U: 22:42:23
>   this is okay but you would like more of a connection - just a bit
> 060] U: 22:42:27
>   is that right?
> 061] U: 22:42:28
>   ok?

Here, in line 55, the Understander begins his reflecting move with a hesitation marker – "let me check," to signal to the Explorer that there will be a short delay while he is in the process of constructing a response. He then attempts to reflect and summarize what the Explorer has articulated in her previous turn-at-talk. In lines 58-59, the Understander focuses on what he believes to be a perceived lack of connection between lessons conducted by the Explorer and her desire for them to be more linked so that language learned in one lesson can be utilized in the next. In line 60, the Understander ends his move by seeking confirmation of the accuracy of his reflection – "is

that right?" This demonstrates his wish as Understander to support the Explorer by ensuring he has understood her correctly. He then passes the floor back to the Explorer in line 61 by utilizing the agreed signal.

Clarifying

Once the Explorer receives the interactional floor, it is important for them to begin the next turn-at-talk by either confirming the accuracy of the Understander's reflecting move or clarifying any misunderstandings or important omissions. This can be seen in the following turn:

> 062] E: 22:42:54
>   Pretty much, yes.. it's not so much me wanting a connection
> 063] E: 22:43:17
>   as not wanting them to just stick their notes in their bags
> 064] E: 22:43:32
>   and never look at them again …

In this session, the Explorer evaluates the Understander's reflecting move as "pretty much" correct (Line 62), but then moves to clarify a misunderstanding made by the Understander in line 59. She clarifies that her pedagogical aim is not one of having a connection between lessons (Line 62) but of having her learners be able to review the language they have learned and make subsequent use of it. She provides an anecdote of a student who recorded vocabulary from a newspaper article in a notebook but began the next lesson on a new task without reusing the lexis; thus, leaving her to "wonder what happened to the words he learned last week" (Line 71).

Articulating potential responses

Once an issue, puzzle, or obstacle has been articulated by the Explorer in an IMCD session, the next move is often to articulate a potential response to try to seek solutions to resolve it. Responses are a working through of possible ideas, options, routes, and directions that the Explorer could take. The potential responses move is usually couched within indefinite, uncertain, and tentative lexical and grammatical terms:

> 073] E: 22:47:24
>   I'd like to create some way
> 074] E: 22:47:37
>   of getting them to recycle what they did the week before
> 075] E: 22:47:45
>   so that it's not lost
> 076] E: 22:47:48
>   ok

Here, the Explorer articulates a potential response to the issue of having her learners recycle language from the previous lesson. Her response is structured at the level of possibility; a future action or desire that may or may not actually happen – "I'd like to…" (Line 73). By specifying a wish to find a way to help students to recycle the language, the move is a step towards the Explorer fulfilling this pedagogic aspiration.

After the Understander initiates a reflecting move summarizing the Explorer's aim and motivation (Lines 78-79):

> 078] U: 22:48:25
> So, it is finding a way for students to review or reflect on what they got out of the previous lesson
> 079] U: 22:48:48
> so that the lesson wasn't in vain

the Explorer continues to build on her previous turn-at-talk (Lines 73-75) and begins to formulate a possible classroom intervention (Lines 84-86):

> 084] E: 22:50:28
> so, I'm thinking
> 085] E: 22:50:47
> what I need is some kind of sheet to fill in
> 086] E: 22:51:02
> while they work that itself becomes and activity for the next week

She articulates a tentative idea that is in the process of being worked out - "I'm thinking…" (Line 84). The idea is to design a worksheet in which her learners can note down language whilst working on specific classroom tasks. The worksheet could then be used in the subsequent lesson as a review activity.

Building from her articulations of lines 84-86 and the Understander's next reflecting move, the Explorer continues to work through her idea by describing how the activity might hypothetically be put into action in her classroom:

> 092] E: 22:53:19
> an activity that they'd complete in the first 15minutes of the next weeks lesson.
> 093] E: 22:53:37
> They could maybe just make notes while studying
> 094] E: 22:53:58

> and then in the last 15minutes
> 095] E̲: 22:54:05
> turn those notes into questions
> 096] E̲: 22:54:31
> ... i wonder how well that would actually work
> 097] E̲: 22:54:31
> ?
> 098] E̲: 22:54:34
> ok

The Explorer considers having her learners take notes and allocating time at the end of the lesson for them to make individual questions based on the language they have learned (Lines 93-95). The questions would then serve as a review activity at the start of the subsequent lesson (Line 92). However, in line 96, the Explorer signals doubt by beginning to question how effective her pedagogic response might be in reality.

Making a discovery

The main objective for an Explorer undertaking an IMCD session is discovery. Through sustained reflection, Understander support, and heightened awareness of classroom experiences:

> there exists a potential for the discovery of something new, or perhaps the realization of something that had previously been only tacit. To the extent that is appropriate, the discovery may well lead to a plan of action. (Edge, 2006, p. 105)

A discovery may occur at any point within an IMCD session, across a series of sessions, or may occur post-session for the Explorer. In the session featured in this article, discovery occurs after the Explorer's formulation of potential responses to the pedagogical puzzle or obstacle stated in the setting the scene move (Lines 45-52):

> 101] E̲: 22:56:22
> I also think that the making of questions would serve as a nice cap on the lesson
> 102] E̲: 22:56:50
> my only concern really is that if they've written these q's
> 103] E̲: 22:57:05
> to answer the next week then they .... sorry
> 104] E̲: 22:57:12
> i'm answering my own question before I write it
> 105] E̲: 22:58:11

> i was thinking that the learners would be able to answer their q's without much thought because while creating the qs they'd be very aware of the answers -but actually that's a gem

106] E: 22:58:21
> it'll make them learn

107] E: 22:58:24
> more

After a reflecting move by the Understander, the Explorer retakes the floor in line 101 and moves from doubt (Line 96) to a positive justification for the potential response she has formulated in lines 92-95. However, she immediately returns to a feeling of uncertainty about her idea – "my only concern really is…" (Line 102). Yet, this thought process is interrupted, as the Explorer changes direction in mid-text to indicate that she has discovered a way forward – "Sorry." (Line 103). Rather than it being problematic that her learners will be answering their own questions in a subsequent lesson as a review activity, she comes to a realization that her plan does have pedagogic value as - "it'll make them learn more" (Lines 106-107). This is an instantaneous live discovery or "Eureka moment" (Boon, 2005) that is lexically signaled by the use of meta-language – "I'm answering my own question before I write it…but actually that's a gem" (Lines 104-105) to indicate that the discovery has just occurred to the Explorer.

Trialing and making further discoveries

Once a discovery has been made, the Explorer may wish to 'trial' it (Edge, 1992) or work through the various steps needed to implement the plan of action successfully in the classroom. The Explorer continues to work to make the plan as coherent as possible. The Understander continues to support this process by reflecting back their understanding of the developing thoughts and ideas of the Explorer. In the IMCD session featured in this article, the Explorer decides to create folders to store her learner's review questions and considers the idea of photocopying them so that they can be used by other learners in the class. This leads her to a subsequent discovery:

124] E: 23:05:06
> the ss doing paper based work could just move to a pc for the last 15 mins.

125] E: 23:05:11
> YES!!

126] E: 23:05:12
> OK?

The Explorer realizes that learners could make their review questions on paper at first and then type them up on the computers in her classroom towards the end of the lesson as it would be easier to store the questions digitally. The Explorer signals this further discovery by use of capitalization of "YES" and the inclusion of two exclamation marks to symbolize her positivity towards this new idea.

After a reflecting move by the Understander that summarizes the discovery and its advantages, the Explorer continues to trial her idea in regards to how learners can use the digital question files to review at the start of each lesson, how they could answer the questions, and how they could best keep records of their responses electronically without saving their answers on the master document – "I don't want to save the files for use as resources with the ss answers on it" (Line 140). After considering the impracticality for her of learners creating many individual review documents, she decides to "scrap the idea" (Line 157) of using the review questions as a resource for other learners. Instead, she returns to her original idea of learners creating review questions for themselves on paper:

> 160] <u>E</u>: 23:16:15
>   back to the paper based idea
> 161] <u>E</u>: 23:16:17
>   and i'm happy

Articulating a planned response

Compared to potential responses, planned responses are more definite or concrete plans of action articulated by the Explorer regarding how they will solve their pedagogic puzzle and bring about change in their classroom. As with discovery, a planned response may occur in an IMCD session, across a series of sessions, or post-session. In the session featured in this article, the planned response is positioned at the end of the session stage and signals a culmination of the Explorer's thought processes:

> 162] <u>E</u>: 23:16:22
>   that's it
> 163] <u>E</u>: 23:16:26
>   i have my answer.
> 164] <u>E</u>: 23:16:50
>   SS study make notes for 1h - 15 mins before end they write q's
> 165] <u>E</u>: 23:17:05
>   which they answer in the 1st 15mins of the next lesson
> 166] <u>E</u>: 23:17:08
>   OK :)

Here, in lines 162-163, the Explorer declares to the Understander that she has reached a satisfactory resolution to her pedagogic puzzle – "I have my answer." She then reiterates her final plan utilizing the present simple tense. This indicates to the Understander that it is indeed a definite future action or planned response (Lines 164-165). Her learners will make notes during her self-study class. During the last fifteen minutes of class time, they will write questions based on the grammar and vocabulary they have studied. These questions will then be used as a review activity at the start of each subsequent lesson.

Ending the session

The Session stage of an IMCD session may end when the agreed time limit has expired or when the Explorer has reached a satisfactory end to their exploration. The ending sequence may be initiated by either Explorer or Understander; however, the Understander must be careful not to bring an IMCD session to a premature close. In the session featured in this article, feeling that the Explorer has reached a natural conclusion to her exploration, the Understander invites the Explorer to end the session:

> 171] U: 23:18:57
>   ok - and that is where you would like to leave it tonight?
> 172] U: 23:18:59
>   ok?
> 173] E: 23:19:14
>   yes i think i found my solution!
> 174] E: 23:19:16
>   ok
> 175] U: 23:19:24
>   stepping out of roles....

Here, there are still 12 minutes remaining in the scheduled session (22:30-23:30); however, the Explorer has made her discovery and articulated a plan of action. Thus, the Understander initiates a potential closing sequence utilizing an interrogative statement as an invitation – "and that is where you would like to leave it tonight?" The Explorer accepts this invitation to end (Line 174) and the Understander initiates a 'stepping out of roles' step as the final part of the closing sequence (Line 175); a step that marks the transition of session stage to post-session stage, an end of the constraints of Explorer and Understander when interacting within the IMCD framework, and a return to the turn-taking mechanism of ordinary IM chat.

The IMCD Session: Post-session stage

Thanking

Usually the first move of the post-session stage is for participants to thank one another for the session:

> 176] U: 23:19:28
>   ok - thanks for that
> 177] U: 23:19:33
>   interesting session as always
> 178] E: 23:19:42
>   thank you for listening to me babble away
> 179] U: 23:19:47
>   no problem
> 180] U: 23:19:53
>   the babble had direction
> 181] E: 23:20:04
>   it did

Here, the Understander thanks the Explorer and provides a brief comment on the "interesting" nature of the session (Lines 176-177). The Explorer reciprocates and modestly suggests that her exploration may have just been incomprehensible "babble" (Line 178). The Understander then moves to reassure her that her exploration "had direction" (Line 180) as she was able to determine a clear plan of action to resolve her pedagogic puzzle.

Scheduling next session

The post-session stage also provides a good opportunity for participants to schedule future IMCD sessions if they both wish to continue working in this way:

> 195] E: 23:23:19
>   next week?
> 196] U: 23:23:25
>   sure and sure
> 197] U: 23:23:32
>   same time?
> 198] E: 23:23:33
>   very nice!!

In line 195, the Explorer suggests scheduling an IMCD session for the following week which the Understander then accepts (Line 196). In this

particular study (Boon, 2015), the author continued in the role of Understander for every session. However, participants may wish to alternate as Explorer and Understander and use the scheduling next session move to decide upon the specific roles they will undertake in their subsequent session.

Saying goodbye

The saying goodbye move ends the IM chat and can be initiated by either participant:

> 201] <u>E</u>: 23:23:44
>   I hope you sleep welll
> 202] U: 23:23:49
>   will save and sleep
> 203] U: 23:23:51
>   thanks

Unfortunately, here the final 'goodbye' sequence was lost from the original data as the session was saved at line 203.

Conclusion

If we are to keep developing as teachers, it is important for us to find ways to articulate, reflect on, and learn from our individual pedagogic experiences. We need to seek practical means for systematically and continually exploring and challenging what we do, to understand it, to reaffirm it, or to gain new perspectives and ways of thinking about it in order to make changes that can positively affect our classroom teaching and our learners. This article has positioned IMCD as such a framework that can be utilized by two teachers wishing to support one another and engage in such reflective narratives. As an example of the potential of IMCD to facilitate reflective practice, the article has described the various stages and moves of a successful IMCD session. In the session, the Explorer was supported by the Understander and enabled to reflect on her teaching. She was able to question the value of her learners taking notes on specific grammatical and lexical items during a self-study lesson that she facilitated if these items were not then recycled in subsequent lessons. As a result, she could work out a method of having her learners review the language they had learned and develop a concrete plan of action for her particular classroom intervention. When eliciting feedback from the Explorer in the

post-session stage as to whether she felt that IMCD had helped her move forward, the Explorer stated:

> 186] <u>E</u>: 23:21:13
> …it created space for me to get clear on what i wanted and how I could implement my ideas

Thus, it can be argued that IMCD affords teachers the dialogical space necessary to explore, to focus, to achieve clarity of thought, and to discover new insights. Rather than the natural tendency to suppress feelings and thoughts due to fear of judgment from one's professional peers, the non-judgmental interactional online space and Understander support may allow for the Explorer's ideas to flourish and grow as they reflect on their own teaching contexts and determine their own ways forward; the added advantage being that this interaction can all take place from the comfort of one's own room and one's own computer screen. Hopefully, this is not a conclusion for the readers of this article, but the start of their very own successful IMCD journeys.

The author

Andrew Boon is a professor in the Faculty of Global Communications at Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo. He has been teaching in Japan for over 20 years. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Aston University, UK. He has presented at numerous domestic and international ELT conferences and has published many articles on teacher development, motivation, and methodology. He is also author and co-author of various course books and graded readers.

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