Sustainable Reflective Teaching: 
A Teacher Workshop on Exploratory Practice

Over the past 25 years, reflective practice has become an essential component in second language teacher education and ongoing professional development for language teachers as they connect and interrogate learned theories, experiential knowledge about the classroom, and prior beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching (Wright, 2010). Of the many reflective teaching models available, Exploratory Practice (Allwright, 2003, 2005; Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Hanks, 2016) has gained in popularity among language teachers for its holistic orientation that encourages language teachers and learners to look at classroom life not as ‘problems’ that need to be solved, but rather as ‘puzzles’ one tries to understand better. A primary goal in the framework is to understand the life of the classroom in a manageable, sustainable way in order to develop understanding without leading to teacher burn-out. Thus, Exploratory Practice encourages drawing on pedagogical resources that are already part of teachers’ good teaching practices (such as class discussion) and, importantly, including learners in the ongoing reflective practice.

This three-hour, interactive workshop introduces foreign language teachers to the Exploratory Practice model. In it, participants will become familiar with the major tenets and constructs of Exploratory Practice, and learn about the experiences of collegiate foreign language teachers who have worked with the framework so as to understand how the model can be used to support teachers’ professional development. Throughout the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to work on their own personal Exploratory Practice projects as they develop puzzle topics, identify resources for exploring their questions, and consider the role that learners in particular can play in deepening their understanding about classroom life.

Dinner will be provided. RSVP to sshortt@emory.edu September 11.