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Pavilion **e**t

Contents

The elephants in the classroom

Craig Thaine shows how to use your learners in continuous professional development.

After teachers have graduated from an initial teacher education or teacher training course, their real development begins. It could be argued that that this process never ends and teachers become, in effect, lifelong students 'never detaching him- or herself from the constructs of education' (Narasaki, 2015: 706).

Continuous professional development (CPD) can be initiated by the individual teacher or by the institution she works for (Richards, 2015). Teachers quickly realise that their pre-service tool kit has a limited repertoire of skills that does not allow them to deal with a full range of teaching and learning situations. They are often highly motivated to explore language and methodology in more depth, so they feel more able to respond to learners. Institutions are often keen to provide novice teachers with support as they realise this will motivate their staff and help them to maintain a good level of teaching. Schools may also have to adhere to some kind of compliance requirement that asks them to demonstrate they offer some form of CPD to their teachers.

This article will look at three CPD activities: observations, case studies and a lesson study programme. What they have in common is the potential to include learners as part of the CPD activity. Students have often spent a long time sitting in English language classrooms, and they can have insights that could benefit less experienced teachers.

The observation

Observing less experienced teachers is a common way of managing CPD from an institutional perspective. Often observations form part of a range of CPD activities offered by a school, and there may be an in-house rule that indicates teachers will be observed at least once a year. Conversely, an observation may be initiated in response to concerns raised by a learner, for example: *the teacher never corrects us; we don't speak enough; I don't understand her explanations.*

In this situation, an academic manager may decide to observe a teacher with two aims:

> **"The observer can look at what the teacher is doing and try to work out whether there is some connection between learner behaviour and the teacher's activity. In this sense, the role of the observer is a kind of learner advocate."**

1. offer the teacher support and guide her in terms of her classroom delivery

2. assuage the learners and be seen to be doing something

Understandably, novice teachers often not do not perceive the observation as supportive. They may see it as intimidating or an imposition. However, the academic manager needs to balance the teacher's discomfort with the learners' needs to feel they are making progress and getting good quality teaching.

In the literature surrounding observations (Bailey, 2006; Randall & Thornton, 2001), the discussion tends to focus on the relationship between the teacher and the observer. Mention is sometimes made of the way an observer will influence the mood or atmosphere of the classroom during an observation. However, there is little reporting on learners' behaviour and learning during observation lessons, and the focus remains strongly on the relationship between the two protagonists of the observation 'story'. It's as though the other 15 or so people, the learners, were not there. They are like the elephants in the classroom.

Observations are multifaceted events in which the learners play a central role. An astute observer should focus carefully on what is happening to the learners in a lesson. For example, the following behaviours can often be quite revealing: when learners are unsure of instructions; when they do not understand a language item; or when they fail to get on task or finish
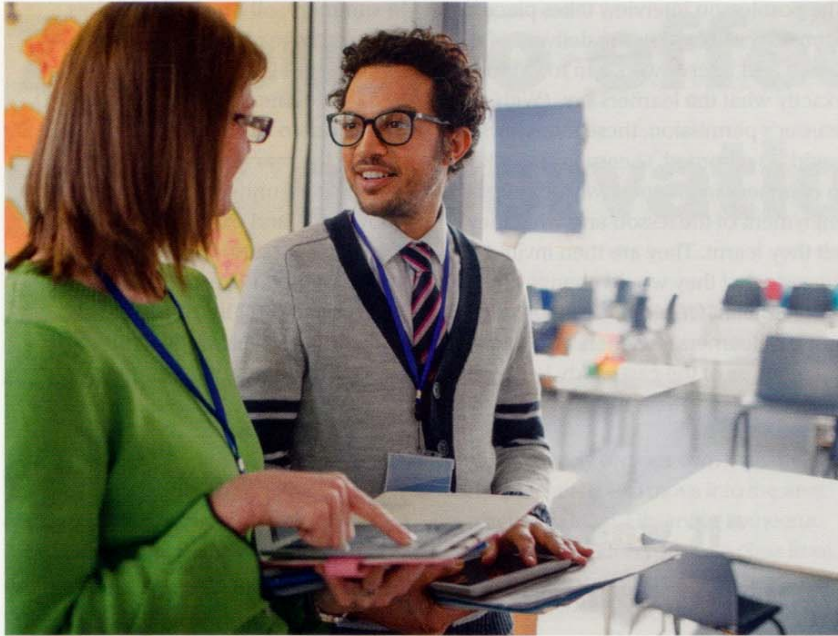
a task. The observer can look at what the teacher is doing and try to work out whether there is some connection between learner behaviour and the teacher's activity. In this sense, the role of the observer is a kind of learner advocate. Feedback to the teacher can be framed in the following way: 'So what was happening for the learners at that stage in the lesson? Did they all get on task straight away? Why not? Did they understand all those words?'

However, it would also be possible to include the learners more fully in the observation process. A teacher and an observer will often determine a focus for an observation. For example, the teacher may ask the observer to check whether she is checking the meaning of new language clearly in the lesson. The teacher could also let learners know that this is the focus of the observation and, after the lesson, the observer could facilitate a discussion that includes some if not all learners.

Teachers may be reluctant to expose themselves in this way, but this can be considered in relation to the goodwill that can be earned by allowing the learners to contribute to the CPD discussion and feel that they are stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. Learners are more likely to be motivated by and have

respect for a teacher who is keen to develop professionally and curious to gain insights from her students.

A key role for the observer to play in this process is careful management of the pre- and post-observation phases of the event so they are not threatening to the teacher. This would involve the following.

- Careful negotiation of the observation focus with the teacher, ensuring it is something that will be useful for the teacher and it is something learners will be able to comment on

- A clear description of the aims of the observation to learners

- Articulating the observation focus for learners in such a way that it is easy for them to understand – it should also aim to be constructive and elicit positive as well as developmental feedback

- Sensitive elicitation of the learners' perspectives in follow-up discussions

CPD and case studies

Focusing on observations is usually linked to a school's investment in CPD. Conversely, teachers can initiate their own personal, learner-centred CPD. One very straightforward way to do this is by means of direct feedback from learners about the content of a course

programme and the way it is delivered. This, in effect, can take the form of an intensive form of needs analysis.

In 2016 (Thaine), I conducted a case study of advanced level learners in order to determine students' and teachers' perceptions of what it means to be an advanced level learner. One striking feature of this case study was the high level of methodological awareness that learners demonstrated. Clearly, they were at a high level and had spent many hours in English language classrooms. Their comments about how a teacher could address their specific needs were very insightful and sometimes at odds with the perceptions of the teachers I spoke to in the case study. It was a helpful reminder of the fact that learners at all levels are constantly making judgements about teaching, and their opinions can be extremely useful.

A suggested procedure to carry out this kind of investigation is as follows.

1. Provide learners with a questionnaire asking them to rank and comment on their needs in terms of language skills and systems – be sure to include some open-ended questions.

2. Ask learners to discuss the questionnaire in class in small groups – monitor and clarify anything they do not understand.

3. Get them to think about and write up their answers as a homework activity.

4. Collect in the questionnaires and collate the information – identify four or five key themes that emerge from the questionnaire.

5. Ask learners about these four or five points – again it may help to get them to talk about these in small groups and then have an open class discussion.

In the final feedback discussion, it is important to maintain an open mind and to invite learners to comment on methodology. It pays to do this early in a course and, in order to avoid any awkwardness, the teacher can

ask learners to refer their previous learning experiences in terms of their methodological preferences. It is also important that the teacher responds to issues that are raised and implements constructive suggestions made by the learners.

A case study of this nature is a simple form of action research (AR). This suggests that much can be gained by ensuring learners are included in any AR study that teachers carry out. Edwards & Burns (2016) reported on research they conducted on teachers who had participated in an AR programme in Australia between 2010 and 2013. One of their four key findings was that AR meant teachers have a stronger sense of connection with their learners. They drew this conclusion:

'The development of a more reflective mindset together with the use of research skills learnt while conducting AR (such as seeking students' opinions) seem to have led the teachers to establish more open, collaborative approaches to their teaching.'

(Edwards & Burns, 2016: 11)

A Lesson Study approach

A more elaborated approach to CPD and learners' involvement can be found in general education. Dudley (2014) has developed a CPD framework called Lesson Study. This aims to get teachers working together planning and delivering a series of lessons. It aims to focus on practical, classroom-based knowledge as a way of helping teachers perceive student learning with greater clarity.

In the Lesson Study process, teachers work in small groups to plan and deliver a minimum of three research lessons. There is peer observation of the lessons and after each lesson is delivered the approach to the subsequent lesson is renegotiated. A core component for each lesson cycle is an interview with some 'case' learners in the class. These are key students who have been identified as demonstrating a range of abilities in the learner group.

The post-lesson interview takes place as soon as possible after the delivery of the lesson and interviewers aim to capture exactly what the learners say. (With a learner's permission, these interviews could be recorded.) Learners are asked to comment in an open way about their enjoyment of the lesson and what they felt they learnt. They are then invited to suggest what they would change about the lesson if it were delivered to another group of learners. Teachers also track the progress of the case study learners.

> "It was a helpful reminder of the fact that learners at all levels are constantly making judgements about teaching, and their opinions can be extremely useful."

This is a more sophisticated approach to CPD that includes the learner's voice. The benefits of it are that it is driven by teachers working collaboratively. It takes place across a series of lessons and is recursive in nature – the focus of the enquiry is renegotiated and refined after each lesson. Furthermore, it seeks learners' opinions on more than one occasion and encourages teachers to link this feedback to learner progress.

In summary, all three approaches outlined here aim to open up some kind of dialogue between the teacher and her learners while pursuing CPD. This is not to say that learners would dictate the teaching and learning process and undermine the teacher's knowledge and expertise. With careful management, tuning into the learners' voices in the CPD process has the potential to offer both valuable insights and create a constructive and co-operative learning environment.

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7 steps to effective peer observations

John Hughes looks at a vital part of professional development.

C lassroom observations can be broadly defined in three ways (Gosling, 2002). There is the observation in which you are observed by a teacher trainer on a training course. Many teachers recall this first experience of being observed because, while being stressful, it's also the moment when an experienced observer gives you feedback and improves your teaching competencies. The second type of observation is when your manager or a senior member of staff observes and evaluates you for quality purposes. The third category of observation is peer observation (also referred to as a *peer review model* by Gosling) in which one teacher observes another in a non-judgemental way, which can then lead to 'self and mutual reflection'. Here are my 7 steps towards making peer observation an effective and rewarding experience for both the teacher and the observer.

1 Reasons for peer observation

Before implementing peer observation (if you are a school manager or director of studies) or before approaching another teacher and asking to observe them (if you are a teacher), be clear as to your reasons. We assume that peer observation is good for our professional development, but it's important to spell out why. Firstly, it's an opportunity for teachers to get ideas from each other and share good practice. Secondly, at a departmental level, it can be an effective way to build a sense of supportive collegiality among teachers. Thirdly, the teacher who observes has the chance to develop their ability to analyse a lesson which will both help them to reflect

more effectively on their own teaching and – potentially – to move into the area of teacher training. Observing someone else's lesson also lets you see a class from a different perspective; this can be useful if you are watching the type of students, in terms of language level and age, that you normally teach. Finally, being an observer affords you time 'to consider areas of your teaching to work on and the chance to see how others handle classroom practice' (Hughes, 2015: 109).

> **"... not all teachers in a school may welcome being observed by their peers; perhaps they are at a stage in their teaching where being observed is still stressful or that they see no benefit to it."**

2 Creating the right conditions for peer observation

Sometimes peer observation occurs organically; in other words, one teacher informally asks another teacher to

observe her. Perhaps it's a teacher who perceives a problem with a class and turns to a colleague for help. The colleague can observe the class with fresh eyes and give feedback. However, at an institutional level, peer observation is sometimes implemented because 'it will be good for everyone'. This may be true, but in order to be successful, certain practical issues need to be agreed upon at the outset. For example, if teachers observe each other they will need to be given the additional time to do this. The students also need to be informed in advance or they may feel uneasy if there's an anonymous visitor observing their classroom. Finally, not all teachers in a school may welcome being observed by their peers; perhaps they are at a stage in their teaching where being observed is still stressful or that they see no benefit to it. Approaching teachers to be peer observed needs handling sensitively and the reasons (see step 1 above) need to be explicitly stated.

3 Establish protocols for observing

Following on from step 2, if you are setting up peer observation among all the teaching staff, it's worth having a meeting in which you not only state the reasons and get everyone's support but also establish the protocols of observing. Most teachers have not been trained to observe and therefore their only point of reference is either being observed by a more experienced trainer (perhaps on their initial training course) or by someone at management level. What you need to avoid in a peer observation

context is a situation where the observing teacher – based on their experience of being observed in the past – assumes that their role is to give feedback to their peer on how they should 'teach better'. That is not the purpose of peer observation. The relationship between the teacher and observer is one of equals. Make sure everyone understands the responsibilities of being a peer observer and that you should 'observe others in the way that you would like to be observed'. You could even establish a set of rules together for everyone to follow such as 'Arrive on time, sit at the back, don't get involved unless invited to do so, only discuss your feedback with the teacher (not other people)', and so on.

4 Meeting before the observation

If you have a meeting for all staff before the peer observations, you could spend some time discussing the format for the observations and what the peer observer might be looking for. Working together, you could all agree on an observation task or proforma that everyone completes. Alternatively, once the teacher and observer have been paired, they could be given time to meet and discuss what the teacher hopes to gain from being observed and what the observer wants. For example, the teacher might feel that there's an aspect of their teaching which they would like to improve. They can ask an observer who they 'trust and respect' (Foord, 2009: 55) to observe and make notes only on the aspect in question. Afterwards, the two colleagues get together and discuss the notes. Similarly, the observer may have an area of their teaching which they feel weak on and would like to observe a particular teacher in order to gain some ideas.

5 Providing different types of observation forms

Not all teachers will identify an area they wish to be observed on and anyway, peer observation doesn't have to focus on what the teacher does. It might focus on the students' participation in the lesson or the observation could be

about the observer trying to discover something that will help them improve their own teaching. A well-designed observation task or form can achieve this. For example, this simple sentence completion task requires the observer to complete each sentence about the lesson they are observing:

- *The first thing I noticed about the students when I walked in was that …*

- *A really interesting aspect of the lesson was …*

- *One thing the lesson reminded me to do is to …*

- *One question I have for the teachers is …*

Notice how these sentences force the observer to focus on the students, the whole lesson and then she is encouraged to compose a question for the teachers. This means afterwards that when the teacher and observer meet, a dialogue is being encouraged rather than the observer making value judgements about the lesson.

6 After the observation

Not all peer observed lessons have to be followed with the teacher and observer meeting up, but in most cases it provides a sense of completion as well as a great opportunity for development. It might simply be 10 or 15 minutes after the lesson in which they briefly talk about the experience and the observer thanks the teacher for letting her attend. Much will depend on what was agreed beforehand. If the teacher wants help with an area of their teaching, then the observer will need to make suggestions and talk about the lesson. Alternatively, a less experienced teacher who observed might want to ask the teacher why they approached parts of the lesson in a certain way. This kind of post-class discussion should take the form of a dialogue rather than one-way feedback. Any issues arising from the discussion could also become the subject of the next observation in which the two people reverse their roles; for example, if there was an issue of classroom management in the first observed lesson, maybe this could also be the

focus of the next observation. This kind of ongoing and investigative approach to peer observation between the two people is its most successful outcome.

7 The self-observation alternative

Finally, if you have read this but don't find yourself in a context where it is possible or practical to peer observe, then one alternative is to observe yourself. In a previous article for *Modern English Teacher* (Hughes, 2017: 36–37) I reported on the growing use of mobile technology by teachers to record their lessons with phone cameras and audio recording apps. Some teachers take photos of their board work, some record and listen to what they say, and others video record a lesson to give them an extra 'eye' on the classroom. It's a useful solution if you can't invite another teacher along to your lesson, or you could even share your images or videos with another teacher for comment after the lesson.

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Reflective practice: a process of discovery

Celine Kearney looks at ways of reflecting and some of the benefits.

Why engage in reflective practise? As teachers we have enough to do creating resources and assessments, teaching and supporting students, assessing, marking, moderating, and attending various meetings, within and across teams. We might also be doing research, writing for publication, and possibly supervising students doing their own research. Why would we willingly add another task?

The answer to that question depends on the person responding to it. From my own experience, I've been required to reflect on teaching practice as part of language teaching qualifications, in exercises which view and analyse classroom practice as part of a wider organisation or institution. In another context I've been encouraged by an academic leader, as part of professional development, to do reflective practice, focusing on my own classroom practice. In both situations, they have been opportunities to understand the multiple issues at play around me and to consider how and why I responded at the time and how I might better approach the situation in future.

What is involved in the process of reflection? Language teacher educator Professor Jack Richards (2017: 43) suggests that critical reflection is a three-step process:

- examining a teaching situation or experience

- asking questions about the purpose, meaning, and consequences of teaching actions and events

- rethinking beliefs and understandings in the light of new awareness and knowledge

Strategies for reflective practice

How you engage in this process depends on your reasons for doing reflective practice, your individual preferences, and perhaps the possibilities which your teaching team holds. How often, and how much time you can give to it depends on your context: you may start with set time frames or they may change as you engage in the process.

It is useful to decide whether you prefer to work alone or in a group. As an individual, if you are a person who likes to talk issues through, you could record your thoughts on a device. You may prefer to sit and engage with your own thoughts: a pen and a hard-covered notebook, are my choice, in a quiet space. You might prefer to discuss issues face to face in a group.

In a group you can draw on colleagues' understanding and experiences to explore and develop new understandings of teaching issues, and to work towards resolving

difficulties, as Richards explains (2017: 45). Members function as 'critical friends' who respect each other's point of view, and give constructive feedback, with the intention of supporting change and solving problems. The group decides how often to meet and possibly formally appoints a facilitator. Alternatively, you might use a device and a programme which lets you engage online with people on your team or others from a wider group, colleagues in other cities, parts of a region or even countries.

It's in the ongoing process where the reflection can bring new learning and insights. These may be formalised in a record process shared with a group, or kept in your own notebooks for further revisiting and reflection.

Critical reflective practice?

How do you critically analyse a teaching event or experience? Dr Arezou Zalipour draws on Fitzpatrick & Spiller (2010, in Zalipour, 2015) to offer five questions:

- Have I (critically) questioned my actions, behaviours and speech?

- What justification do I have?

- Have I been honest and open with myself?

- Have I learned anything from the experience?

- Have I identified the new learning I need to put into practice?

- What is it exactly that I need to do now?

Dr Zalipour has found that generating reflection can be an emotional journey. It may not be comfortable at first, she writes, but the aim and hopefully the result is that 'our knowledge and practice will improve and continue to develop' (2015: 12). From experience, this process has given me an opportunity to critique my own practices, in the role of teacher, but has also assisted in a growing understanding of the insights, skills and strengths I bring with me into the classroom

developed through other aspects of my life and personal experience.

Writing can be used as a way of knowing and a method of discovery and analysis. Sociologist Laurel Richardson believes that through writing we can discover new aspects of our topic – in this context, teaching language – and our relationship to it (2000: 923). Both writing in a notebook, or on an online forum, and talking issues through, face to face, or online, offer a space to discover new aspects of teaching practice, and a concomitant development of our sense of ourselves as teachers. This illustrates the postmodern, poststructuralist understanding that language does not reflect social reality, rather it is a place where our sense of selves, our subjectivity, is constructed.

Find a like-minded group or ask a trusted colleague to be a critical friend to assist you to reflect on your own written or spoken notes. These conversations may assist you to understand better how to proceed on an issue related to teaching practice, or perhaps inform a decision you are trying to make about where to go next with your career.

Professional development

Reflective practice is an integral part of professional development. Richards (2017) uses two studies to illustrate the trajectory of a professional teaching career. Firstly, Hubermann's (1989) study about three stages in a professional teacher's career, and the attitudes that characterised them: Novice teacher – surviving; Mid-career – stabilisation, experimentation, taking stock; Late-career – serenity, disengagement. Secondly, Garton & Richards' (2008) four stages of a language teacher's career: Starting out; Becoming Experienced; New Horizons; Passing on Knowledge. He suggests we place ourselves onto either of these cycles and consider what the next step might be.

Returning then to the busy life of a late-career teacher. In the past, taking the time, intentionally and purposefully, to reflect on a single

aspect of professional practice has brought clarity and focus for me amongst the myriad tasks and responsibilities that require attention. Following a process over time has brought unexpected insights and positive results I couldn't have anticipated. My next focus for reflection will be the recurring suspicion that, despite the increasing institutional investment in bright shiny new technology and the expectations associated with this for the professional language teacher, pedagogically the emperor might indeed have no clothes.

Take the time to engage in reflective practice in whatever way you prefer. It's an opportunity to deepen your own self-knowledge and understanding of teaching practice. Find what's of value for you. This will strengthen what you offer to your students, your collegial practice with team members, and ripple out into other areas of your life.

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on lots of work to others in his team who have responsibilities of their own. He becomes upset if work is not completed and does not seem to understand how much others have to do. Staff turnover is high.

Explanation: This manager is attempting to delegate; however, in reality, he is overdelegating bordering on abdicating responsibility. In addition, there is little to no consideration of the workload of others. There is also some delusion on behalf of this manager as he creates his own 'time thieves' which are of no benefit to the organisation. A symptom of this overdelegation is low motivation and frustration that results in reducing staff retention.

2) **Situation:** Manager B has a heavy workload and works long hours. She feels a great deal of stress as a result. The work she produces herself is of great quality and delivered before the deadline even if it is rushed, always last minute and often just sent at the very last minute. Motivation in her team is low and the staff often grumble about feeling bored.

Explanation: This manager is not micromanaging as there is no attempt at all to delegate. The result is that this manager experiences a great deal of pressure. While there have been no delays as a result of this style of working, it could be argued that it is only a matter of time before she burns out or fails to deliver. Delegation would not only motivate the team and make better use of their time but would also make the manager happier and shorten her working day.

3) **Situation:** Manager C often 'works from home' and is late when she does arrive to the office. Team members complete tasks in her absence, but these are often not of a great standard. No developmental feedback is given to team members on tasks completed, though there is no shortage of criticism if standards are low. Support from this manager is rarely offered, given or asked for.

- fears over being able to trust staff
- concerns over quality or belief that the work of the manager will be of superior quality to that of their team
- worry that providing work for staff will result in damage to the relationship between manager and team members
- fear of overloading staff or that staff will complain if work is delegation to them
- practical concerns over the speed of task completion
- concerns over staff expertise, preparedness, readiness to work without direction or motivation

What to delegate and what not to

A quick brainstorm of things what could or could not be delegated may yield ideas such as these:

You can delegate …

… everyday routine tasks
… general clerical duties
… minor decisions
… routine client questions
… minor problems
… anything staff are expected to do when you are not present
… jobs that can develop or motivate people

… tasks where a staff member has an extra strength or skill
… day-to-day business
… task that will be repeated and are worth the investment of training time

You should not delegate …

… emergencies or crises
… tasks when the explanation will be too long if it is a one-time task
… staff motivation problems
… something where others lack the special skill, strength or qualification
… anything where you must represent to stakeholders
… personnel issues such as hiring and firing and disciplinary action
… highly confidential matters
… matters you are legally responsible for and require your approval

Delegation errors

What delegation errors are being made here and what is going wrong here?

1) **Situation:** Manager A loves to talk and network. He spends a great deal of time away from the office and from those he manages, attending events, conferences and meetings which seem to accomplish nothing in terms of the bottom line. As a result of his frequent absences, he passes

Embracing students' cultural backgrounds

Jeffrey Wilang and **Michelle Garcia** describe activities that will turn passive learning into a fun-filled classroom.

Why do our students respond passively during lesson review? Are they progressing? How are we doing? We used to ask these questions until we shared our concerns with our colleagues in a research forum. Interesting insights were suggested including creating a less-competitive classroom, promoting less-individualistic activities, and considering the learners' cultural orientations or backgrounds. Accordingly, for foreign English teachers in Thailand, the above insights might be helpful to 'connect' with our students and become culturally responsive in the language learning process. A quick search of non-literature sources pointed out several characteristics of Asian students. Specifically, Thai learners are characterised as passive, shy, quiet and unreflective learners as well as having 'less good' proficiency in English. On a positive note, they are reported as compliant, motivated, totally attentive, disciplined, respectful, obedient. In this article, we would like to provide the background of our teaching context, discuss the importance of culturally-sensitive review activities, share our observations and recommend some review activities that we find useful and beneficial to both teachers and students.

'Embracing Students' Cultural Background in Review Activities'
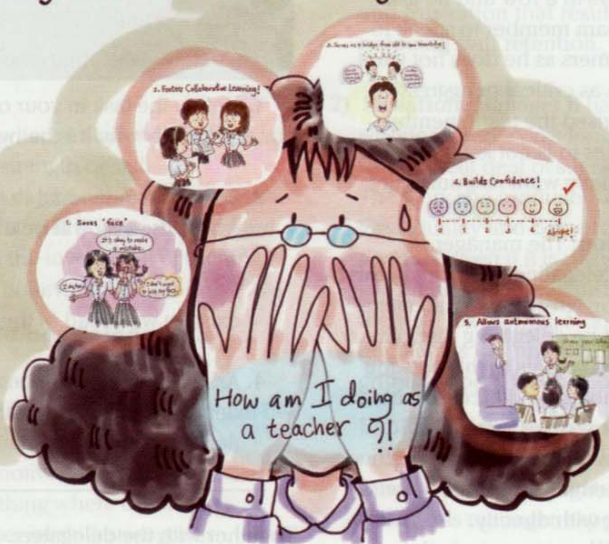
Thai EFL classroom context

How many of us teachers have been skipping the review section for fear of not getting the responses from our students? Have you ever experienced asking questions and answering your own questions?

In our classes, we are aware that some of our students are passive, which is quite challenging. We observed that some students' way of learning is anchored on how they view learning from their cultural background, for example: when students are brought up to plainly listen to the teacher and when asking or raising questions is a taboo as it can be interpreted as a sign of disrespect to the teacher. Moreover,

there are also learners who have a bad attitude towards learning due to their negative experiences, for instance a teacher's negative feedback in class. Another issue we usually encounter in our language classes is 'saving one's face'. We noticed that it is in fact one of the reasons why students are apprehensive to engage themselves in class activities especially when students are asked directly to do the task in front of the class. Lastly, many of our learners are forgetful. Nowadays, with so many distractions, for them to be able to remember some specifics of previous lessons is a huge challenge. Thus, with all these issues, teachers need to find ways to assist their students, by providing them with new ways of viewing the lessons to be better in their language learning process.

Small teaching: motivating

In the last article in the series **Hall Houston** and **Andrew Starck** look at motivation.

Motivation is the subject of this final instalment of our series on small teaching. In the seventh chapter of James Lang's (2016) book, *Small Teaching*, he focuses on the emotional aspect of motivation. Instead of inquiring about how teachers can improve motivation in general, he chooses a more specific question: 'How can I elicit and work with the emotions already present in the room to give students frequent motivational boosts throughout the semester?' (p171)

Lang begins his chapter on motivation with a personal story about his children learning musical instruments over the years, commenting on their varying degrees of motivation. His daughters all showed great interest in learning an instrument in the beginning, but after many months of lessons grew tired of practice exercises. His third daughter greatly enjoyed playing and practising music together with her father, which resulted in more enthusiasm for practice, at least for a while. Lang uses this anecdote to relay the importance of positive emotions in learning, and the need for teachers to pay more attention to this aspect of motivation.

Many books and articles for ELT teachers have covered motivation, often promising quick tips and ideas for how to motivate students. Zoltan Dörnyei is the name most often associated with this topic. His article, co-authored with Csizer (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998), 'Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners', provides excellent guidelines (or motivational macrostrategies, as the authors put it), such as 'Create a pleasant,

> "Always reflect on the fact that your students have lives outside of the classroom. Some may be struggling to balance work and school, others might have serious crises in their family. While keeping our standards high, we should also acknowledge that there may be reasons that students aren't as focused as we want them to be."

relaxing atmosphere in the classroom' and 'Develop a good relationship with the learners'. These commandments might seem somewhat vague, but I think most teachers can think of concrete ways to achieve them.

In a remarkable book about classroom management, Scrivener (2012: 116–117) made this provocative statement about motivation: 'you can't motivate anyone'. He argues against teachers who decide to 'sing and dance and perform more at the front of the class' in order to improve motivation. Instead, he advocates instilling more democracy in the classroom, by giving students more choice in what they study, what activities they use, and what methods are used in class. He feels that giving students more options helps to build a student-centered class, where students feel that they are an active part of the learning process.

We believe it's important to get a sense of how students are feeling from time to time. We recommend two activities that are quite simple to carry out, and give you quick insight into the general mood of the class.

In the first one, ask students, 'All stand up, please. Think of an adjective that describes how you're feeling right now.' Then tell the class that you are going to list a few adjectives, and they can sit down when they hear their word. As you call out the words ('happy', 'tired', 'bored', 'excited'), and students begin to sit down, everyone in the class can get a sense of how others in the room are feeling today. Finally, when you run out of words, ask the few students who are still standing to tell you their adjectives (original source: Lindstromberg, 1997).

In the second activity, tell everyone to think of a number between 1 and 10 that indicates how they're feeling at this

- Link the content to what you have been doing in the classroom and for homework.

Post-listening:

- Make inferences from notes.
- Discuss the topic of the recording with classmates.
- Give a personal response to the recording.
- Summarise your notes.
- Share your notes with classmates to make a 'fuller' record of the recording.
- Again, these lists are not necessarily exhaustive so feel free to adapt with your own ideas.

Practicalities

The students don't have to use their smartphones to upload their comments – they could just as well write their reflection on the handout you gave them, but obviously, using the technology will appeal to students, especially the younger ones.

I would suggest doing the first listening log in class so that students have an example to follow. It will probably take 45 minutes, but it is time well spent as you can go through the rationale with your students and this will help 'sell' the benefits of developing their skills via use of the logs. The rationale of using listening logs seems self-evident. The learner is placed at the forefront of the process and this very process is much more fixated on developing the needs of the listener. Reflection is absolutely instrumental here as the learner is, through the use of the questions on the handout (see below), able to consider how effectively or otherwise they are listening to the input. At the same time, the learner is developing autonomy as it his/her responsibility to execute the task. From the teacher's perspective, the results are likely to be more satisfying as he/she is able to properly assess the students' ability to listen and reflect. The verb 'assess' here can also be converted into its noun form, 'assessment', so that the teacher is also able to measure the learners' ability to listen effectively via a more 'constructivist' approach to listening.

The teacher is in effect acquiring a window on the student's experience via their reflection and is better placed to inform the student as to how he/she can improve their listening ability. Finally, the learners' use of technology via their smartphone or tablet is likely to appeal to a generation of learners who have high expectations of new technology not only providing entertainment, but also being effectively integrated into their educational experience.

> **"The onus is on the student to initiate and execute the project from when they decide which recording they are going to listen to."**

Example feedback from teacher:

Listening Log feedback: (name).
Hi,

Thanks very much for your listening log audio file. Here is some feedback for you.

Comments

Thanks for completing the log, Julia. I think you did it very well and you answered all the questions. It was good to hear that the audio file you listened to was straightforward and clear and that the strategies on the worksheet helped you to understand the recording, at least to some extent. ☺

I think it is a good idea for you to listen to more podcasts, especially about topics you are interested in. For next semester we will consider some other listening strategies to help you develop your listening skills.

Mark: 9/10

Thank you ☺

Listening Log feedback: (name).
Comments

Hi,

Thanks for completing the log, Zofia. I found your comments very interesting and constructive. It was good to hear that the listening strategies we discussed before setting the task were useful. You also show insight by recognising the fact that it is important to concentrate and to make careful notes while listening. It was also interesting to hear your comments about the different accents. I think the important thing is to get practice listening to as much English as possible and to ensure you expose yourself to different varieties of English. This will help you tune in better in the future.

Mark: 8/10

Thank you ☺

Listening Log feedback: (name).
Comments:

Hi,

Thanks for completing the listening log and I'm pleased that you found it helpful. It seems that the content contained useful information for you! It's also good that you found the recording relatively easy to follow. Perhaps next time we should think about finding something a bit more challenging!

Please also consider how much the strategies we discussed before listening to the podcast actually helped you in your task. Is there anything you would like to say about the strategies which you chose to use?

Mark: 7/10

Thanks. ☺

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From being intelligible to being themselves: pronunciation for today

Robin Walker suggests EFL and ELF approaches to pronunciation can work together.

When I came into EFL in 1981, the dominant methodology was audiolingualism. New structures were presented to learners, often in surreal contexts, and then drilled extensively in a stimulus-response, behaviourist approach to learning. Meaningful communication was seldom sought since accuracy was the goal. More specifically, native-speaker accuracy was sought, and sought relentlessly. Error was failure to learn, and led inescapably to remedial practice.

This was true for pronunciation as much as it was for grammar, and one of only two accents, RP (Received Pronunciation) or GA (General American), served as the norm, the model and the goal. Other accents were not deemed suitable for EFL, and instructors, ideally, would have and employ one or other standard accent in class. But change, big change, was on the horizon.

1980s – EFL, pronunciation and the communicative approach

The arrival of the communicative approach in the early 1980s had a major impact on pronunciation teaching. Pronunciation was now viewed as a part of meaningful spoken communication, and not just as a part of an abstract linguistic system. The emphasis on native-speaker mastery was seen as both unrealistic and unnecessary, and Abercrombie's (1949)

concept of 'comfortable intelligibility' was resurrected; increasingly experts agreed that 'language learners need no more than a comfortably intelligible pronunciation' (p120).

Another key change in pronunciation teaching with the arrival of communicative language teaching was the almost diametric shift from a focus on consonants and vowels to one on suprasegmental features such as rhythm and intonation. Individual sounds, it was argued, were not the main cause of problems of intelligibility, since '... in the absence of complete mutilation of the phonemes by the non-native speaker, the suprasegmentals will carry the day because they bear the meaning of the message' (Stevens, 1989: 183).

The teaching model continued to be RP or GA, however, and as with the audiolingualism method, the ideal instructor for pronunciation was still seen as being a speaker with the target accent. This continued to marginalise those teachers whose accent was neither, which in practice was (and still is) the vast majority of teachers, myself included.

On paper, attitudes to error softened, and these were now seen more as interlanguage errors than as failed learning in need of remedial attention. The remedy for these interlanguage errors, rather than mechanical drills, was further exploration of the target feature, together with communication activities that would require improved pronunciation for their successful completion.